

# **Arab and Asian Parliamentarians' Meeting on Population and Development to Implement ICPD Programme of Action**

**2-3 March 2022**

**Cairo, Egypt**

## **Introduction**

On 2-3 March 2022, parliamentarians from Asia, Arab and Africa held a hybrid meeting in Egypt, to examine how to achieve the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) before 2030. This meeting took place in Cairo, where ICPD was held in 1994.

The event was organized by the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAPPD). The House of Representatives of Egypt hosted it. The event was supported by the Japan Trust Fund (JTF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in cooperation with International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

## **Opening**

The MC for the opening session was Dr. Mohammed Al-Smadi, Regional Coordinator of FAPPD, who welcomed the guests to Egypt.

## **H.E. Hanafi Jabali, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Egypt**

The Speaker welcomed the delegates to Egypt and said the historic House of Representatives was a perfect location to discuss population and development issues. This meeting was held as the world was facing unprecedented challenges. COVID-19 resulted in complex predicaments and suffering and led to a serious deterioration of international economies. This impacted levels of inequality and poverty.

H.E. Jabali said that development and population issues were deeply intertwined and achieving sustainable and fair development was the ultimate goal. It would mean an elimination of food insecurity and inequalities, and improvement in healthcare.

As reflected in the latest UN report, Egypt had paid attention to the SDGs and achieved a quantum leap in development, economic growth, and living standards. Egyptian President H.E. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has recently launched a national protocol on population. H.E. Jabali said that it was crucial to cooperate and live up to the challenges pertinent to population, particularly overpopulation.

## **Hon. Abdelhady Qasabi, MP Egypt, President of FAPPD**

Hon. Qasabi noted that the 150-year-old House of Representatives was a perfect venue for delegates to discuss the crucial issues around population and the SDGs. He said the global population would increase from 7.9 billion in 2022 and 9.7 billion in 2050. The coronavirus epidemic had pushed 140 million people back into poverty, and 800 million people were now suffering from food insecurity, hunger, and starvation. People also faced challenges for security, deteriorating health services, and education—this impacted society's most marginalized. Many states face insecurity, internal conflicts, displacement, and refugee and illegal migration issues.

Egypt's constitution, adopted in 2014, emphasized population and its links to sustainable development, which meant the country had a strategy to achieve these. Nevertheless, it was a massive challenge to provide health, education, and other social services, especially in the face of population growth.

Hon. Qasabi emphasized that inter-regional cooperation was crucial to addressing these challenges, and that this meeting was a golden opportunity to find ways to tackle them and empower women and youth.

### **H.E. Dr. Hala El Said, Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Egypt**

H.E. Dr. El Said welcomed the delegations from Asia, Africa, and the Arab regions and said Egypt treasured the constellation of parliamentarians participating because this would bolster cooperation and integration. The meeting would help develop creative solutions, and delegates could share success stories in population and development.

Population growth indicators show that available resources would not be able to cater to the basic needs of the Arab regional population in health care, education, and other services. The region also had a 12.7% unemployment rate, which exacerbated in certain Arab countries, because the capacities and skills of the new people joining the labor market are not aligned to market needs.

It was concerning that the Arabic human capital indicator in 11 Arab countries was below the international average by up to 0.65%. There was an urgent need to adapt because it indicated an imbalance between resources and population. This could lead to economic pressures, lower GDP per capita, and shortages of basic services like health and education.

This gathering was timeous because it took place two days after the Egyptian state launched the *National Strategy for Householder Development* to improve living conditions for its citizens. The most notable of these initiatives is the Decent Life Initiative which has 58 million beneficiaries. It targeted 4,500 villages countrywide to improve the levels of service provision, including sanitation bettering, electricity, provision, decent housing, job opportunities, gas utility, internet access, and family planning.

H.E. Dr. El Said said that she was grateful that despite COVID-19, the country had achieved a 9% growth rate in the first half of this fiscal year. The national strategy integrates population into all plans, and systems have been developed to regularly evaluate the outcomes.

This national project is underpinned by the need to increase the quality of life of people. One of its pillars includes economic empowerment for women, intending to incentivize them to establish SMEs, and provides them with financing and capacity building. Another pillar deals with women's and children's health services.

### **Hon. Yasuo Fukuda, Former Prime Minister of Japan, Chair of APDA**

Hon. Fukuda noted that Cairo was a place of great significance as it was the site of the 1994 ICPD, which led to the PoA and SDGs that are an integral part of our population and development priorities.

Furthermore, the SDGs include the concept of "human security" of "leaving no one behind". Japan has developed this concept further as a pillar of its foreign policy, after it emerged at the end of the Cold War. He also noted that UNDP published a report titled *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene* and Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi, MP Japan, Chair of AFPPD and Executive Director of JFPF, had co-chaired the advisory committee.

In this era of the Anthropocene, with its rapid increase in human activities' impact on our planet, our current approach to development is widening inequality and impeding human security. We need to live in harmony with the planetary environment by leveraging technology and recycling renewable resources in our economy and society.

This year we would also have the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) to be hosted by Tunisia. Through our parliamentary networks, he hoped to further foster solidarity and trust and work hand in hand towards the common goals.

### **H.E. Dr. Rania A. Al-Mashat, Minister of International Cooperation**

The Minister welcomed the delegates and said the meeting was part of the efforts by the Egyptian House of Representatives to ensure that social protection, care services and empowerment of women and girls were at the front and center of measures for achieving development priorities.

The Ministry of International Cooperation is in charge when international agreements are signed and follow up with different partners and key stakeholders to maximize the benefit from international cooperation and achieve targets for financing projects.

### **Dr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director, UNFPA ASRO**

Dr. Shabaneh said the meeting was a crucial engagement. Population issues were everybody's business, and parliamentarians, economic experts, planning experts all play a vital role in dealing with these challenges.

ICPD in Cairo in 1994 represented a shift away from considering the population in terms of numbers and figures to an approach centered around rights. Investments in the population were aimed at bettering lives, leaving no one behind. Consequently, investment in seniors allows them to live decent lives, as does investment in vulnerable groups such as refugees, displaced persons, people with disabilities in the Arab region.

It was crucial to focus on women's rights and break the cycle of early marriages and female genital mutilation (FGM). Addressing FGM in an amicable manner would no longer work – and it should be legally prohibited, even if this takes a legal fatwa or legal, religious opinion to do so.

### **Award**

H.E. Hanafi Jabali, Speaker of the House of Representatives, presented an award. While thanking delegates, he noted that Egypt had this year enacted a law making FGM a crime.

## **Session 1: Youth Engagement and Women's Empowerment Towards Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action**

### **Session Chair: Hon. Bubaneswara Kalita, MP India**

Hon. Kalita noted that close to 90% of all young people live in developing countries where they face disproportionately high levels of poverty and unemployment. They are the most significant demographic group in developing countries, and because they are interconnected, they are getting better at representing their issues and demanding change. Governments cannot postpone investment in adolescents and youth.

The ICPD PoA had unfinished business. Maternal mortality goals lag in many countries; child marriage is widespread; and young people aged 15 to 24 in Sub-Saharan Africa account for 40% of all new HIV infections. Many girls and young women live under constant threat of violence and abuse.

### **Hon. Ghita Badroun, MP Morocco**

For those who participated in the Nairobi Summit in 2019, there is no doubt that to achieve the ICPD PoA, it is crucial to pay attention to women's empowerment. Empowerment means providing women with an enabling regulatory, cultural, economic, and social environment. This requires collaborative and synergetic efforts which give women power over their lives – including rights to education, freedom of choice (within the home and outside of it), political participation, and access to resources in the economic sphere.

Women's education should include legal empowerment and unfettered access to legal services – and the enactment of laws against discrimination and inequality can help achieve this. Women's self-confidence will increase, and efforts will incentivize them to play a vital role in development.

Hon. Badroun gave an example from Morocco, launched by the King. It had three pillars: economic opportunities, equal job opportunities, and bettering the lives of rural women by providing financing for land. The state had given women the right to own property and also took measures to prevent girls from dropping out of school.

### **Dr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director of UNFPA ASRO**

Dr. Shabaneh said that gender inequality was one of the most significant hurdles that needed to be traversed. In the Arab region, it required strategic and structural solutions. He said the problem comes when discrimination is embedded in society, limiting access to education and health care.

In Asia, there were indications of progress, but COVID-19 unveiled the fragility of the progress – indicating that the changes were not powerful enough to withstand a crisis. During COVID-19, female health centers closed, people were told to stay at home, and staff 'repurposed' to work in hospitals to deal with coronavirus patients. Women's rights and the rights of the elderly were neglected. Emerging from the pandemic, it was now crucial to change the world view which disempowered women.

Dr. Shabaneh related an incident involving a 16-year-old battered woman in Yemen. She was married with two children and abused by her husband and his family. She escaped to one of the shelters supported by UNFPA. Neither laws nor programmes could help her, or her sister, who was locked up for four years because she refused to marry the person chosen for her.

It was crucial to change, and parliamentarians played a critical role in enacting legislation that benefits women. Their involvement should include supervising and monitoring the policies and ensuring adequate budgeting.

Behavior change was of paramount importance because this involved changing attitudes towards women and girls. GBV needs to be eliminated. FGM should be criminalized with aggravated penalties, so it is no longer profitable.

Dr. Shabaneh ended by appealing to development agencies, academicians, and government representatives to create a world favoring women. One that grants her a dignified life with full rights in which she is allowed to make decisions about herself and her body. There was a duty to provide her with information, education, tools, and services to enable her to make decisions in an enlightened matter.

### **Hon. Ajal Mundo Majur Babur, MP South Sudan**

Hon. Babur said that he was honored to represent the Transitional National Legislative Assembly of the Republic of South Sudan. He said that South Sudan became independent in 2011 after a long war. Out of the population, 74% is youth and 42% women. It was, therefore, crucial to address issues around women and youth. UNFPA had set up programmes to address the many challenges relating to the ICPD

PoA, linking population and development. South Sudan has problems with youth unemployment, GBV, early and forced marriages and other traditional practices that negatively impact the population.

It was necessary to carry out general awareness to address the biggest challenges of youth unemployment. Hon. Babur quoted the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, saying the youth are not only leaders of the future but also the leaders of the present. Due to the long war and inadequacy of educational facilities, South Sudan had a high percentage of illiteracy.

South Sudan held a youth summit and devised interventions for at least 20% of the youth to participate in public life, whether in poverty alleviation, climate action, or ensuring peace and security. They were looking to increase employment, promote sexual education and skills development. Projects focusing on HIV/AIDS, GBV, and sexual reproductive health (SRH) were initiated.

Ignoring youth unemployment was dangerous because, without employment, they are often attracted to terrorist groupings. Conflicts and insecurity acted against development objectives, especially in rural areas. Women were particularly vulnerable in terms of GBV, early marriages, and marginalization in all fields. During the internal conflict and civil war, women and children were affected by displacement. They are also vulnerable to issues caused by climate change like floods and droughts. To promote women's participation in public life, the legislature and the executive should have at least 25% women representation.

## **Session 2: Addressing Human Security and Individual Values for Achieving Sustainable Development**

**Session Chair: Hon. Larry Younquoi, MP Liberia**

**Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi, MP Japan, Chair of AFPPD, Executive Director of JFPF**

Hon. Prof. Takemi noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, a new diplomatic space for middle-power countries developed, especially after former U.S. President Donald Trump left the World Health Organization (WHO). This space brought together foundations, like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UN agencies, the GAVI Alliance, and middle countries, and a new type of governance structure emerged. This worked to boost and accelerate access to COVID-19 tools. The response in diagnostics, therapeutics, and changes to the health system was stimulated. The COVAX initiative aimed at getting vaccines to developing countries, which Japan supported, was part of this new order.

Another example was the WHO hub which, in collaboration with the government of Germany, focused on epidemic intelligence through better data and analytics to ensure better decisions in managing public health emergencies. The WHO Academy, the organization's state-of-the-art Lifelong Learning Center located in Leon, France, which will scale up online and in-person blended learning programmes, also fell into this new order. While the International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities (ICMRA) had been around for decades, it was under the pandemic that it harmonized the regulations to enable the speedy regulation for the COVID-19 vaccines.

Hon. Prof. Takemi then explained that the human security concept was not new and was mentioned in the UNDP Human Development Report in 1994. It was now gaining attraction. He co-chaired an advisory body for a special report on how to evoke the concept of human security in the Anthropocene. The result of this collaboration titled *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene* was recently published. (<https://hdr.undp.org/en/2022-human-security-report>).

Human security is focused on three universal freedoms: Freedom from fear, want, and indignity. Key areas of Anthropocene risk include climate change and food security, conflicts, energy loss, and biodiversity loss. From a human security perspective, action is needed globally, and new governance

norms developed. The world faces serious geopolitical conflicts, but parliamentarians could collaborate to create more harmonious societies.

### **Questions and Comments:**

Hon. Lucy Esgenian, MP Syria, noted that people could not access basic services and resources because of a blockade and sanctions and were suffering from displacement caused by war. She asked how Syria could achieve human security.

Hon. Prof. Takemi noted that once policymakers collaborated beyond national boundaries based on shared values, it would be possible to overcome unfortunate circumstances.

### **Mr. Jun Shimmi, Ambassador for TICAD, Ambassador for Special Envoy for UN Security Council Reform Affairs, Human Rights and International Peace and Stability, Ambassador for International Economic Affairs, Japan**

Mr. Shimmi said he would like to give a Japanese perspective on human security and focus on demographic issues. He noted that the 8<sup>th</sup> Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) would take place in Tunisia in August this year. International cooperation is crucial, and human security has a significant influence on the global environment in the era of anthropogenic global issues.

Japan believes it is time to deepen discussions on human security to address the evolving threats of new pandemics and climate change. The international community can only address transboundary challenges through cooperation among countries and overcoming their respective narrower interests.

He noted that youth empowerment, including employment, was an urgent issue. Other issues include ageing society, refugees, measures for child support, nutrition.

COVID-19 showed the world's fragility, and the human security component is vitally important for the world to overcome such challenges. He called on parliamentarians and countries to commit themselves to promoting human security.

### **Questions and Comments**

Hon. Aboubakry Ngaide, MP Senegal, noted that the distribution of vaccines had been uneven and wealthy countries received a more significant portion. There are plans for African countries to produce the vaccines, but this has not been successful so far.

### **Hon. Walaa' Abed Fatah, MP Egypt**

Achieving human security includes not only the mere protection from the harms threatening people's life and dignity, but insuring individual and societies' potentials to satisfy their human needs. This should be done in accordance with laws and human rights in order to address such issues as poverty, illnesses, illiteracy, hunger and different forms of deprivation; politically, economically, culturally socially and even psychologically.

Hence, people protection is the role sought for human development, as part of a complete developmental and multidimensional frame through enlarging human opportunities to set these human abilities as human rights, and create human security.

The idea of human security contributes to achieve freedom from need and fear and to increase human life prosperity as well. Although this relation seems to be a simple equation, it is formulated at the expense of the ecological system. We find here, that human development is exposed to the danger of non-sustainability itself; in other words, the non-continuity of reaching objectives and meeting development needs either for present or future generations.

This has led to non-respect of the human development role in achieving human security, resulting in thinking about a way to formulate the concept of sustainable human development in such a way to make its demands affordable and in balance with the environment preservation. Though sustainable human development has contributed to providing opportunities to guarantee human's future and to go on with the process of development, making it concrete has faced many obstacles reducing it to a theoretical debate, and not more than that.

### **Hon. Dr. Rida Shibli Khawaldeh, MP Jordan**

For many people, the world we live in today is unsafe and full of dangers from many fronts. Protracted crises, violent conflicts, natural disasters, persistent poverty, epidemics and economic downturns cause hardships and undermine prospects for peace, stability and sustainable development. These complex crises give rise to many forms of human insecurity. And when these crises overlap, they can grow exponentially, touching all aspects of people's lives, destroying entire communities and transcend national borders.

The air we breathe, our ecosystems, infrastructure and public health are common goods. Whereas military invasions, internal armed conflicts, and other specific threats traditionally threaten state security, they are certainly harmful, but they are not the only threats to societies. COVID-19 has clearly reasserted this fact, as climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss are more powerful threats. They all contribute, directly and indirectly, to undermining peace.

### **Questions and Comments**

A parliamentarian from Syria asked how a nation can live safely and achieve the SDGs, even when there is no safe drinking water. The presenters answered that providing security and justice was a key requirement to protect investments.

### **Session 3: Human Rights Approach to Address Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Sustainable Development**

#### **Session Chair: Hon. Rasha Ramadan, MP Egypt**

In his opening remarks, Hon. Ramadan said the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, especially rights to health and other political, social, and economic rights. It was crucial to devise new strategies for sustainable development.

#### **Dr. Suhail Alouni, Former MP Tunisia**

Dr. Alouni referred to a Scientific journal article that noted that leadership was key to supporting women's rights under the pandemic. It was the role of parliamentarians to secure SRHR for women. Legislators and lawmakers needed to shoulder the responsibility for drafting and adopting relevant laws. In addition, they should monitor the government's performance and assign the necessary resources.

Asian countries had developed guidelines, and the Arab region is considering similar guidelines for parliamentarians. Parliamentarians can lobby their constituents and communicate to them about SRHR for women. He acknowledged that there were difficult times under the pandemic – and women suffered increased GBV and had limited access to other healthcare services. WHO developed a concept known as self-care, which involves adapting SRHR services at the primary healthcare level to include self-care. Self-care will enable families, individuals, or communities to promote health and prevent diseases without the support of a healthcare provider.

The concept was piloted in Tunisia with marginalized and vulnerable communities with the help of civil society. There is a need to train people to practice the self-care approach. Parliamentarians need to regulate the people-centered care channels, including self-care interventions, to ensure quality and protect privacy and confidentiality. These self-care interventions could be a vital package to ensure continuity of services in crises and a pandemic.

### **Hon. Akol Anthony, MP Uganda, Chair of UPPFSP&D, Uganda**

#### **Presented by Mr. Wamala Buyungo Musa, UPPFSP&D Coordinator, Uganda**

Mr. Wamala, on behalf of Hon. Akol Anthony, said that there were many negative consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns, including access to health services, lower income, domestic violence issues, and others.

He asked what Parliamentarians could do to address the impact of the pandemic. First, parliamentarians could work toward empowering marginalized groups through economic empowerment. Second, ensure the funding for reproductive health (RH) services. They could also build a policy and legal framework that favors RH services.

In Uganda, an empowerment fund gives rural women credit and finance to boost their small-scale businesses and agricultural programmes. UNFPA funds a community outreach project. This bridges the gap between the parliament and the community. It allows parliamentarians to explain programmes and get feedback from the community about their challenges.

There is also a programme ‘Books before Babies’ which aims to reduce teenage pregnancies and early marriages. Some women and some communities look at having children as security, which adds to the complexity of dealing with population issues. Mr. Musa said that parliamentarians needed to constantly review the agreements and protocols made at conferences.

### **Hon. Maria Lourdes Acosta-Alba, MP Philippines**

Hon. Acosta-Alba focused on the recently enacted law prohibiting child marriage. One in six Filipino girls is married before they are 18 years old and is practiced in indigenous and Muslim communities in the Philippines. Girls who marry before the age of 18 are less likely to remain in school, more likely to experience domestic abuse, and more likely to die due to complications in pregnancy and childbirth. The likelihood of their infants being stillborn or dying in the first month of life is higher.

In December 2021, Republic Act 11596 was signed into law. It makes the solemnization and facilitation of child marriage illegal, and it aligns the laws to the country’s treaty commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN Human Rights Council resolution adopted in 2019 considers the practice of child marriage a violation of human rights.

The government’s responsibility is to create an enabling social environment through the enhancement of children’s access to and completion of quality education, provision of economic support and incentives to children and their families, and for application of strategic interventions to influence and empower parents and community leaders to discourage and eradicate the practice.



The implementation of the law had resulted in some criticism. A case in the Supreme Court challenges the law because the applicants argue it contradicts Muslim and indigenous peoples' beliefs and cultural practices. Nevertheless, information and education campaign partners and CSOs have been conducting discussions, forums, and consultative sessions on the law with different sectors, particularly the youth sector in the Muslim communities.

### **Questions and comments**

Hon. Ramadan noted that restoring normalcy post-COVID-19 will not be sufficient. The post-COVID world should be accompanied by further commitments to human rights, especially economic, social and environmental rights. Establishing fully-fledged health systems is crucial, and existing structures need strengthening.

The first questioner said he believed the self-care interventions would be successful and asked how these initiatives could be encouraged.

The second questioner noted self-care was also in place before the pandemic and was known as health and RH education. She pointed out that child marriage was not limited to the Muslim community. It was important for parliamentarians to create legislation prohibiting marriage under 18 years.

The third questioner noted that Syria had enacted legislation to set up the public authority for Family Affairs. This department was mandated to review all discriminatory laws against women. GBV has flourished due to international factors and economic sanctions. GBV has spread in the areas controlled by gangs and terrorist organizations – where girls under the age of 11 are married.

## **Session 4: Role of Parliamentarians in Achieving the ICPD PoA and 2030 Agenda**

### **Session Chair: Hon. Parvina Malikzod, MP Tajikistan**

#### **Hon. Amira Alsir, MP Sudan**

Hon. Alsir presented an analysis of the ICPD25 summit held in Nairobi in 2019. The analysis completed in 2020 included the Arab countries that made 59 commitments closely linked to priorities like universal access to reproductive health (RH) and GBV, redress, and others. Universal health care and GBV accounted for many of commitments, with a total of 18. A total of 18 countries committed to gender equality received 16 commitments. Some countries did not commit to providing abortions as an accessible right.

Parliamentarians needed to play a vital role in revitalizing commitment to the ICPD PoA with the aim of leaving no one behind. There are several tracks to this – drafting laws, supervising the performance of the executive and government. There are also non-traditional roles that parliamentarians can play. For example, creating a full-fledged communication system to reach out to society and understand their concerns and fears translate these into legislation. Parliamentarians could also play a role in ensuring that complex legislation can be simplified to be understood by ordinary people.

There is a gap between laws and programmes and how these are implemented by ministries and departments of Health, Social Development, Justice, Finance, and Rural Development. Parliamentarians should adopt a new strategic role to ensure proper implementation within the shortest time – people should not work in silos.

Hon. Alsir also said it was important that countries have clear and accurate data that can help them strategize and set priorities. Civil society's role should be advanced in defining and developing strategies

and priorities, building partnerships, creating alliances, and enhancing political will. Coordination with organizations like UNFPA and governments was key as the work continues to improve the lives of women, girls, and young people.

### **Hon. Dato' Kamaruddin Jaffar, MP Malaysia**

Hon. Jaffar said that this meeting was timely to strengthen inter-regional and regional networks of parliamentarians and the commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In Malaysia, the government has taken a firm stance in protecting and empowering women and girls. It was a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The State Women's working committees had been established, and the committees play a crucial role in empowering women and ensuring equal pay in all spheres.

The Parliament of Malaysia has formed several committees that seek to protect and support vulnerable groups, including women. The Special Select Committee on Women and Children Affairs, the Social Development, and the Special Committee on Fundamental Liberties and Constitutional Rights are among them. Members of the parliamentary committees are mandated to interrogate relevant bills and make recommendations on issues impacting women and human rights in line with SDG 2030 and ICPD. The recent tabling of a bill on anti-sexual harassment was a milestone reflecting Malaysia's continuous commitment and firm stance to accord women equal status and rights as enshrined in Article 8 (2) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. This bill received bipartisan support.

Malaysia's 12<sup>th</sup> development plan covering 2021 to 2025 keeps women's advancement and development in focus. The plan seeks to improve women's access to quality services, increase female labor force participation, celebrate women's achievements, and accelerate women's rights for equal education. The 2021 Malaysian budget included special microcredit financing through government agencies. In addition, capacity building programs are held under the micro entrepreneur's Business Development Programme.

Finance was also provided to establish a one-stop Social Support Center collaborating with NGOs for protection and moral support to women facing gender-based violence. Various initiatives have been implemented to empower women and protect them from unforeseen risks.

While Malaysia scores high on women's economic participation, it is lower on political empowerment – especially on the number of women cabinet ministers and parliamentarians.

### **Hon. Issa Mardo, MP Chad**

Parliamentarians play a pivotal role in monitoring and evaluating the SDGs achievements. It will eradicate poverty and achieve welfare and well-being for humanity. While countries have different priorities, various stakeholders are aligned to achieve the SDGs. Parliamentarians could play a significant role in the implementation of the SDGs. Where there are beliefs and ideologies, there could be disagreement, but parliamentarians should develop reasonable strategies to facilitate fruitful discussions.

Following the ICPD25 Summit in Nairobi, action plans were to be developed, and in Chad, commissions were set up, including the Ministers of Planning and Local Development. Chad had achieved a great deal. For example, in 2017, the country developed a law on social protection to deal with GBV. A quota of 30% was set for women employed in the public sector, and this is monitored. The country set up a social dialogue to eliminate harmful practices and discrimination against women. One of the difficulties faced is the simplification of texts – which, even within the parliament, need to be accessible.

## **Questions and Comments**

A speaker commented that assessment of policies was key for parliamentarians. The next speaker from Syria commented that parliamentarians were committed to providing equal access to services, education, health care, clean water, and different services in Syria, while because of sanctions and blockades imposed on Syria, seniors and children have been deprived of medical and health services.

## **Closing Session**

### **Closing remarks: Dr. Fadoua Bakhadda, Regional Director, IPPF Arab World**

Dr. Bakhadda thanks the organizers and noted that the test for fulfilling the ICPD PoA was to ask whether women were enjoying access to reproductive health services or young people were enjoying the rights in terms of decision-making or development.

Unfortunately, the parliamentary competency relevant to population development was not strong in some Arab countries. Secondly, bilateral cooperation needed strengthening, and this meeting was a driver to enhance this. She said she would like strong partnerships with UNFPA and APDA to build solid and robust plans to deal with population and development.

### **Hon. Marie Rose Nguni Effa, President of FPA**

Hon. Effa thanked the organizers and said that continued support was crucial for progress in development and population.

### **Hon. Abdelhady Qasabi, MP Egypt, President of FAPPD**

Hon. Qasabi said it was the responsibility of parliamentarians to restore ethics and values to succeed in development and enable residents of planet earth to live in prosperity. He thanked the delegates and organizers before closing the first day.

## **Day 2: Study Visit**

### **The National Council for Women**

The delegates visited the National Council for Women and were welcomed by Director of the Council, Dr. Maya Mursi.

The National Council for Women is the national machinery for the advancement of women, and its purpose, as mandated by Law 30 of 2018, is to ensure the empowerment of Egyptian women in terms of political, economic, social and cultural rights and as guaranteed by the constitution, and to ensure adaptation of these rights on the ground, considering the solid principles of social justice and equal opportunities, non-discrimination, protection, and empowerment.

In her presentation, Dr. Mursi mentioned the increase in the number of women in the parliament, the government and in other decision-making institutions of the country. She highlighted the role of Hon. Abdelhady Qasabi, MP Egypt and President of FAPPD, on addressing the gender issues and empowerment in Egypt.

The National Council for Women, which was established in early 2000, has extensively addressed the gender issues. It helps to increase women's economic participation, by boosting their access to bank lending, entrepreneurship, equal pay, and more flexible work options. She stated that the empowerment of women was a priority for Egypt, aiming to fulfil the *National Strategy for Women's Empowerment 2030*.

There was a lively discussion between delegates and the host. Both sides shared their experiences and lessons learned in respective countries.

### **The Olympic Center of the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Egypt**

The next visit was to the Olympic Center of the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Egypt. The delegates were welcomed by H.E. Dr. Ashraf Sobhi, Minister of Youth and Sport. The delegates had an opportunity to observe how the government supports the youth activists, athletes and others in order to empower the younger generation of the country.

Various programmes have been implemented to support young people, with the understanding that the current youths are the future of the nation. The scholarship can be provided to those with outstanding performance and achievements. The delegates visited the youth centers, dormitory and areas of trainings.

The delegates appreciated the Minister and the National Committee of Egypt for hosting this event and were pleased with their experiences in exchanging views and learning the country's strategy to address ICPD PoA and population-related issues.

## **Appendix: Statement**

### **Statement 2-3 March 2022 Cairo Egypt**

#### **Introduction:**

We, parliamentarians, representatives of Arab, Asian and African countries, gathered in the Arab Republic of Egypt on March 2, 2022 to attend the Annual Parliamentary Meeting on Population and Development to implement the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in pursuit of sustainable development goals and others.

Based on the discussions and interventions that took place during the working sessions of the forum, we came to the following recommendations:

#### **First: Adopting the strategic outlook and management of the issue of population and development through:**

- Preparing sustainable national population strategic plans at the level of countries that take into account the population's relationship with the influential local and external resources, variables and developments, including digital developments.
- Providing specialized bodies responsible for managing the population strategy and evaluating its results on a periodic basis, in partnership with all concerned societal parties, think tanks and scientific research institutes and centers.
- Inclusion of the population dimension and its programs in the strategies and plans of all national sustainable development documents, within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.
- Adopting innovative community communication tools and platforms to enhance awareness of the developmental dimensions of the population issue.
- Ensuring societal and geographical participation and inclusion in the population strategy policies and programs.
- Building and developing databases, information systems and population observatories to support the population strategy, and offering alternative options and paths for the planners and decision-makers regarding population issues.
- Employing modern and digital technology to support population plans and programs, including mechanisms for providing public services, communication, awareness and population culture.
- Evaluating and following up with the achievement of the goals and programs of the population strategy in a transparent manner.
- Proposing urgent and deferred legislations necessary to support the effective management of the population issue, in coordination and cooperation with the legislative councils and their specialized committees in each country.

## **Second: Enhancing youth participation and empowering women in society through:**

- National policies to maximize investment in human and social capital and social security
- National policies (to exploit the demographic window/opportunity) in the Arab countries to activate the role of youth in the labor market to support the process of inclusive growth and enhance the competitive advantages of the state
- Policies to improve demographic characteristics, especially education and health, to improve the quality of human capital in each country
- Rational reproductive health policies and the distribution of responsibilities for their implementation among the concerned authorities, and the inclusion of reproductive health curricula in the educational stages
- Re-evaluate and evaluate the experience of family planning programs, and put forward proposals to activate them according to the situation of each country
- Policies to expand women's participation and empowerment in education and the labor market, and identify and support the most vulnerable groups of women in society, such as breadwinners, disabled and divorced women
- Develop joint programs between government agencies, business sectors and civil society to enhance the participation and empowerment of youth and women, especially at the level of localities, rural areas and the poorest.
- Stimulating civil initiatives that support safety nets and social protection, especially for the most vulnerable and needy groups and regions.
- Developing early warning and crisis management capabilities to warn in advance of risks threatening the population, such as epidemic pandemics, and other risks and natural and human disasters.
- Strengthening effective partnerships with international and regional organizations to support population programs for women, especially the United Nations Population Fund.

## **Third: The role of parliaments in strengthening the relationship between population and sustainable development**

- Developing joint work programs between the relevant specific committees in parliaments to propose alternatives and interventions to support the population's relationship with sustainable development, and discuss them with the concerned community parties.
- Adopting Arab parliamentary initiatives to mitigate and defuse the internal Arab conflicts that have left dire repercussions on the population, including internal and external displacement, and change the demographic situation.
- Launching parliamentary initiatives to enhance the roles of the FAPPD (Arab Parliamentarians Forum for Population and Development), and coordinating and documenting its relations with think tanks, relevant Arab and international organizations and agencies.
- Proposing new legislative interventions, or developing some existing legislation related to population and development issues and discussing them with the concerned community parties.
- Following up on the results of evaluating national population plans, policies and programs, and suggest corrective interventions to improve performance and achievement.
- Exchanging experiences with parliaments in different countries of the world regarding population and development issues.

- Exchanging experiences with international organizations concerned with implementing the programs of the International Conference on Population and Development, and holding specialized conferences and workshops to propose alternatives to activating these programmes.

**Fourth: The Forum continues to provide fruitful parliamentary** contributions with the aim of supporting planners and policy makers, and proposing innovative, non-traditional alternatives and approaches to employ the population component and human power, to support sustainable development in pursuit of the quality of life for all our peoples.

**Fifth: The Forum appeals to all countries, international and parliamentary organizations around the world**

-Intervention to resolve situations of chaos, eliminate terrorism and its sources of financing, stop human massacres and the loss of the rights of Arab peoples who have the right to live on the land of their state in security and peace, without interfering in their internal affairs.

## Appendix: Programme

### The Arab and Asian Annual Parliamentary Meeting on Population and Development

2-3 March 2022 Cairo, Egypt

(Note: This is a hybrid meeting with some participants participating in person in Cairo (observing all COVID-19 protocols) and other participants joining online)

For online participants, please join via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83083685897?pwd=TDI4TEVLD2Myc3J0RWhrWHpuWDZuUT09>

Meeting ID: 830 8368 5897

Passcode: 732098

#### Programme

1 March 2022	
	Arrival of participants
	Drafting Committee Meeting (members only)
2 March 2022 – Meeting Day 1	
Venue: House of Representatives of Egypt	
08:40-09:00	Registration (Location: House of Representatives of Egypt)
09:30-10:30 <b>*Cairo time</b>	Opening (Venue: House of Representatives of Egypt) MC: Dr. Mohammed Al-Smadi, Regional Coordinator of FAPPD
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Address by the Host H.E. Hanafi Jabali, Speaker of the House of Representatives</li><li>2. Address Hon. Abdelhady Qasabi, MP Egypt, President of FAPPD</li><li>3. Address H.E. Dr. Hala El Said, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Egypt</li><li>4. Women Council H.E. Dr. Rania Al Mashat, Minister of International Cooperation, Egypt Address by the Organizer</li><li>5. Hon. Yasuo Fukuda, Former Prime Minister of Japan, Chair of APDA (online) Address</li><li>6. Dr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director, UNFPA ASRO</li></ol>
10:30-11:00	Group Photo & Coffee Break
11:00-11:45	Session 1: Youth Engagement and Women's Empowerment Towards Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Hon. Ghita Badroun, MP Morocco [15 min]</li><li>2. Dr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director, UNFPA ASRO [15 min]</li><li>3. Hon. Ajal Mundo Majur Babur, MP South Sudan [15 min]</li></ol>



11:45-12:15	Discussion [30 min] Session Chair: Hon. Bubaneswara Kalita, MP India
12:15-13:25	Session 2: Addressing Human Security and Individual Values for Achieving Sustainable Development
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi, MP Japan, Chair of AFPPD, Executive Director of JFPF [15 min] - online Followed by 5-min Q&amp;A</li> <li>Mr. Jun Shimmi, Ambassador for TICAD, Ambassador for Special Envoy for UN Security Council Reform Affairs, Human Rights and International Peace and Stability Japan [15 mins] online Followed by 5-min Q&amp;A</li> <li>Hon. Wala' Abed Fatah, MP Egypt [15 mins] Hon. Dr. Rida Shibli Khawaldeh, MP Jordan [15 min]</li> </ol>
13:25-13:40	Discussion [15 min] Session Chair: Hon. Larry Younquoi, MP Liberia
13:40-14:40	Lunch
14:40-15:25	Session 3: Human Rights Approach to Address Impact of COVID-19 on Women and sustainable development
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Suhail Alouni, Former MP Tunisia [15 mins]</li> <li>Hon. Akol Anthony, MP Uganda [15 min]</li> <li>Hon. Maria Lourdes Acosta-Alba, MP Philippines [15 min]</li> </ol>
15:25-15:55	Discussion [30 min] Session Chair: Hon. Rasha Ramadan, MP Egypt
15:55-16:40	Session 4: Role of Parliamentarians in Achieving the ICPD PoA and 2030 Agenda
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hon. Amira Alsir, MP Sudan [15 min]</li> <li>Hon. Dato Kamaruddin Jaffar, MP Malaysia [15 min]</li> <li>Hon. Issa Mardo, MP Chad [15 min]</li> </ol>
16:40-17:10	Discussion: [30 mins] Session Chair: Hon. Parvina Malikzod, MP Tajikistan
17:10-17:20	Coffee-break
17:20-17:40	Discussion and Adoption of the Joint Declaration/Comminique Session Chair: Hon. Abdelhady Qasabi, MP Egypt, President of FAPPD
17:40-18:00	Closing Session Moderator: Dr. Mohammed Al-Smadi, Regional coordinator of FAPPD
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director, UNFPA ASRO</li> <li>Dr. Fadoua Bakhadda, Regional Director, IPPF Arab World (online)</li> <li>Hon. Abdelhady Qasabi, MP Egypt, President of FAPPD</li> <li>Hon. Marie Rose Nguni Effa, President of FPA</li> </ol>
3 March 2022 –Study Visit Day -2	
08:45-09:00	Meeting at the Lobby
09:00-15:30	Visit of the cultural heritage of Egypt

15:30-16:00	Travel to the National Council for Women
16:00-17:00	Briefing at the National Council for Women
17:00-17:40	Travel to The Olympic Center / Ministry of youth and sports
17:40-19:00	Briefing at The Olympic Center / Ministry of youth and sports
	Travelling back to hotel
	Departure of participants
4 March 2022	
	Departure of participants

Organized by:

The Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) The Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAPPD)

Hosted by:

House of Representatives of Egypt

Supported by:

The Japan Trust Fund (JTF)  
The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

In cooperation with

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)



## Appendix: Participants' list

Egypt Meeting Participants' List					
1	Hon.	Elham Khadija	Afghanistan	MP	online
2	Hon.	Abdelmadjid Tagguiche	Algeria	Former Deputy Speaker	in-person
3	Hon.	Fatima Algatari	Bahrain	MP	in-person
4	Hon.	Marie Rose Nguini Effa	Cameroon	President of FPA	in-person
5	Mr.	Binyam Bibai Handi Salomon Delphin	Cameroon	Assistant	in-person
6	Hon.	Issa Mardo	Chad	MP	in-person
7	Hon.	Hassan Omar	Djibouti	MP	in-person
8	Hon.	Fatouma Mohammed Hamadou	Djibouti	MP	in-person
9	Hon.	Deepender Singh	India	MP	in-person
10	Hon.	Bhubaneswar Kalita	India	MP	in-person
11	Mr.	Manmohan Sharma	India	Executive Secretary, IAPPD	in-person
12	Mr.	Samidjo Samidjo	Indonesia	Advisor to IFPPD	online
13	Hon.	Yasuo Fukuda	Japan	Former Prime Minister; Chair of APDA	online
14	Hon. Prof.	Keizo Takemi	Japan	MP, Chair of AFPPD	online
15	Hon.	Teruhiko Mashiko	Japan	MP, Vice Chair of JPFP	online
16	Hon.	Noriko Horiuchi	Japan	MP	online
17	Hon.Dr.	Rida Shibli Kawaldehy	Jordan	MP	in-person
18	Dr.	Samar Haddad	Lebanon	Former MP	in-person
19	Hon.	Larry Younquoi	Liberia	MP	in-person
20	Hon. Dato	Kamarudin Jaffar	Malaysia	MP	in-person
21	Hon.Dato	Sri Rohani Abd Karim	Malaysia	MP	in-person
22	Mr.	Mohammad Sharil Abdul Rauf	Malaysia	accompany MP	in-person
23	Mr.	Mohamad Zasmi Abdul Talib	Malaysia	Senior Secretary	in-person
24	Mr.	Nik Mohammad Nasyron Siyah	Malaysia	NC officer	in-person
25	Mr.	Azri Norfikri Aziz	Malaysia	NC officer	in-person
26	Mr.	Andreu Enkhtuvs	Mongolia	Parliamentary advisor	online
27	Hon.	Ghita Badroun	Morocco	MP	in-person
28	Hon.	Najat Al Astal	Palestine	MP	in-person
29	Hon.	Maria Lourdes Acosta-Alba	Philippines	MP	in-person
30	Ms.	Nenita Dalde	Philippines	MP	in-person
31	Hon.	Ngaide Aboubakry	Senegal	MP	in-person
32	Hon.	Majur Babur Ajal	South Sudan	MP	in-person
33	Hon.	Amera Alsir	Sudan	MP	in-person
34	Hon.	Salam Sankar	Syria	MP	in-person
35	Hon.	Abdul Hamid Alnukari	Syria	MP	in-person
36	Hon.	Lucy Esgenian	Syria	MP	in-person
37	Hon.	Khaled Kourbaj	Syria	MP	in-person

38	Hon.	Abd al Rahman Alawad	Syria	MP	in-person
39	Hon.	Mansuri Dilrabo	Tajikistan	Deputy Speaker	in-person
40	Hon.	Malikzod Parvina	Tajikistan	MP	in-person
41	Mr.	Qahhorov Abduaziz	Tajikistan	Parliamentary advisor	in-person
42	Hon. Dr.	Jetn Sirathranont	Thailand	MP	online
43	Dr.	Souhail Alouni	Tunisia	Former MP	in-person
44	Hon.	Akol Anthony	Uganda	MP; Chair of UPFFSPD	in-person
45	Mr.	Musa Wamala Buyungu	Uganda	NC coordinator	in-person
<b>UNFPA</b>					
46	Dr.	Luay Shabaneh	UNFPA	Regional Director, ASRO	in-person
47	Ms.	Ghada Diab	UNFPA	Project Manager, ASRO	in-person
48	Ms.	Hanan El Rabbani	UNFPA	Regional Human rights/gender Advisor	
49	Ms.	Rafah Trefi	UNFPA	Program analyst	
50	Mr.	Khondker Zakiur Rahman	UNFPA	Technical Officer	online
<b>Parliament and Government</b>					
51	H.E.	Hanafi Jabali	Egypt	Speaker of the House of Representatives	in-person
52	H.E.	Hala Al Saeed	Egypt	Minister of Planning and International Cooperation	in-person
53	Hon.	Abdelhady Qasabi	Egypt	MP; President of FAPPD	in-person
54	H.E.	Rania Al Mashat	Egypt	Minister of International Cooperation	in-person
55	H.E.	Ashraf Sobhi	Egypt	Minister of youth and sports	in-person
56	Hon.	Walaa' Abed Fatah	Egypt	MP	in-person
57	Ms.	Maya Mursi	Egypt	Director, National Council for women	in-person
58	Hon.	Rasha Ramadan	Egypt	MP	in-person
59	Ms.	Zaynab Radwan	Egypt	Head of Protocol	in-person
60	Mr.	Hazem Mohammed Imam	Egypt	Assistant to Chair of Committee	in-person
61	Mr.	Jun Shimmi	Japan	Ambassador for TICAD, MOFA	online
62	Mr.	Shinya Yasuda	Japan	Second Africa Division, African Affairs Department, MOFA	online
63	H.E.	Zamani Ismail	Malaysia	Ambassador of Malaysia to Egypt	in-person
<b>IPPF</b>					
64	Dr.	Fadoua Bakhadda	Tunisia	Regional Director of IPPF AW	online
65	Ms.	Yuri Taniguchi	UK	Resource Mobilization officer	online
66	Ms.	Lamia Grar	Tunisia	AWRO	online

<b>Observers</b>					
67	Prof.	Kyoko Ikegami	Japan	Interim Director of AFPPD	online
68		Media	Egypt	Media representative of Parliament	in-person
69		Media	Egypt	Media representative of Parliament	in-person
<b>FAPPD Secretariat</b>					
70	Dr.	Mohammad Al Smadi	Jordan	FAPPD Regional Coordinator	in-person
<b>APDA</b>					
71	Dr.	Osamu Kusumoto	Japan	Secretary-General; Executive Director	online
72	Ms.	Hitomi Tsunekawa	Japan		online
73	Dr.	Farrukh Usmonov	Japan		in-person
<b>Interpreters and Rapporteur</b>					
74	Mr.	Hany William	Egypt	English-Arabic	in-person
75	Ms.	Rehab Salah	Egypt	English-Arabic	in-person
76	Ms.	Salwa El Battout	Egypt	English-French	in-person
77	Dr.	Essam Abdel Fattah	Egypt	English-French	in-person
78	Ms.	Cecilia Russel		Rapporteur	online