

REPORT

Meeting of the Egyptian Parliamentary Committees Concerned with Population and Development on People with Disabilities and the Elderly

*United in Action to Activate and Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for the
Benefit of People with Disabilities and to Preserve Dignity with Aging*



Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

October 12, 2024

Introduction

Due to the multiple crises, we face today, the world is not on track to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Preliminary findings from the upcoming 2023 UN Report on Disability and Development indicate that the world has significantly deviated from the path toward achieving many SDGs in ways that would benefit people with disabilities. We must intensify and accelerate our efforts to activate and achieve the SDGs for and with people with disabilities, given that they have historically been marginalized and often left behind.

It is encouraging, however, that with the adoption of the political declaration issued by the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, world leaders have renewed their commitment to achieving sustainable development and shared prosperity for all. This is being done by focusing on policies and actions targeting the poorest and most vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. Coinciding with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3 each year, and the International Day of Older Persons on October 1, the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and in cooperation with the Egyptian House of Representatives, have agreed to hold a meeting of the Egyptian parliamentary committees concerned with population and development to discuss the most pressing and important issues related to people with disabilities and the elderly.

On Saturday, October 12, 2024, the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development held a parliamentary meeting in Cairo. The meeting included the following Egyptian parliamentary committees: the Parliamentary Committee on Social Solidarity and People with Disabilities, the Parliamentary Committee on Family Affairs, the Parliamentary Committee on Health, the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Scientific Research, the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, and the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional and Legislative Affairs. In collaboration with the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the meeting aimed to review the current situation of people with disabilities and the elderly. It also focused on the recommendations issued from previous and current meetings of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, which have been adopted in several Arab and Asian countries.

The meeting was attended by parliamentarians from the Egyptian House of Representatives, the heads of the aforementioned committees, members of the parliamentary committees, the

Egyptian Minister of Social Solidarity, the Minister of Youth, representatives from ministries concerned with population and development in Egypt, as well as a number of civil society organizations. During the meeting, each committee presented a brief overview of the roles, legislations, laws, and regulations that have been enacted as a result of the recommendations announced by the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. These have now become real and effective laws that are applicable in the Egyptian community. The heads and members of the Egyptian parliamentary committees expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Japan and the Japanese people for their support of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. This support has played a significant and effective role in population and development issues in Arab countries and has positively contributed to the implementation of the recommendations issued from the Forum's meetings across various development fields in the Arab region. They highlighted the laws and legislations that have achieved numerous accomplishments and successes in population and development matters. For this reason, they commend the humanitarian and social international role that the Government of Japan provides to our Arab region, as well as the fruitful cooperation that is valued by our countries and peoples toward Japan.

Participants expressed their gratitude for the important and effective role of the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and the partnership that links them with the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. They acknowledged the successes achieved as a result of this collaboration in several Arab and Asian countries. Participants also expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for the important role it plays in various population and development issues, especially during this critical period faced by many Arab countries. They valued the ongoing communication that the UNFPA maintains with parliamentary committees in all Arab parliamentary councils, which has a significant positive impact on collaboration and genuine partnership aimed at achieving a dignified life for future generations.

Parliamentarians and participants highly appreciated the role and cooperation played by the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development through its ongoing communication with Arab parliaments and the committees concerned with population and development. They acknowledged the Forum's efforts in involving them in international and regional meetings and conferences, as well as providing them with population bulletins and reports that have enriched their knowledge and informed their decision-making processes.

SESSION 1

Speakers:

Hon. Dr. Abdelhadi Al-Qasabi: MP, Chair of the Committee on Social Solidarity, Family, and People with Disabilities (Majority Leader in the Egyptian House of Representatives)

Hon. Dr. Abdelhadi Al-Qasabi affirmed that the Egyptian Parliament serves as a model in the legislation enacted across all human rights fields. The Parliament has approved a set of human rights laws that were recommended and advocated by the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development in its meetings held in Arab and Asian countries. Examples include: the National Council for Women Law No. 30 of 2018, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No. 10 of 2018, the issuance of the National Human Rights Strategy, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood Law, the Rights of the Elderly Law, and the Law for the Fund for Honoring Martyrs, Injured, Victims, Missing Persons, and Injured in War and Terrorism Operations and their families. Today's meeting included many important decision-makers in the Egyptian state to shed light on an important segment of Egyptian society: people with disabilities and the elderly. The committees concerned with population and development in the Egyptian Parliament have worked on enacting many legislations that serve the interests of this segment, which Dr. Al-Qasabi reviewed, impressing the attendees with this significant achievement.



Dr. Mohammed Al-Samadi: Secretary-General of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAPPD)

At the beginning of his speech, Dr. Al-Samadi expressed gratitude and appreciation to the Government and people of Japan for the support they have provided to the Forum over the past and current years, enabling it to fulfill its mission regarding population and development issues in 21 Arab countries. He informed the attendees about the Forum's mission and objectives, as well as the strategic plan for the coming years. He emphasized the importance of this meeting to discuss and review the status of the recommendations that were approved during previous Forum meetings, the extent to which these recommendations have been transformed into laws and legislations, and their implementation in Arab countries. Additionally, he highlighted the need to address the situation of people with disabilities and the elderly, which is the main reason for this meeting.

Dr. Hala Youssef: UNFPA Advisor

Dr. Hala Youssef praised the fruitful cooperation among parliament members with the United Nations Population Fund, the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, and the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) in Japan to highlight and work towards achieving the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. She stressed the importance of the issues adopted by the Forum, especially the need for a clear roadmap to implement our commitments regarding population and development issues, including the situation of people with disabilities.

She added that the world needs solutions to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that no one is left behind. She noted that this requires more collaboration among all parties to develop strategies benefiting people with disabilities in which they can participate and take the lead. She stated that "innovation and technology can be powerful tools for inclusion. They can enhance access to information, education, and lifelong learning. They can open new avenues for people with disabilities to participate in the workforce and society as a whole on equal footing."

People with Disabilities in Numbers: According to the United Nations, 80% of the one billion people with disabilities live in developing countries. The UN estimates that 46% of seniors aged 60 and older have disabilities. It is also estimated that one in five women has some form of disability, while one in ten children has a disability. Additionally, people with disabilities are among the most affected globally by the COVID-19.

She pointed out that children with disabilities are four times more likely to experience violence than their non-disabled peers. Disabled adults experience violence 1.5 times more than those without disabilities. Moreover, adults with mental health conditions are four times more likely to experience violence compared to those without such conditions. Among the factors exposing

people with disabilities to violence are stigma, discrimination, ignorance of disabilities, and a lack of social support for those caring for these individuals.

She added, "Parliamentarians, through the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, play a strategic role in creating a legislative and legal environment that ensures the readiness and capability of health systems to provide reproductive health services, respond to gender-based violence, and protect health workers in development contexts and emergency situations."



Hon. Dr. Sami Hashim: MP, Chair of the Committee on Education and Scientific Research in the Egyptian House of Representatives

Hon. Dr. Hashim spoke about the importance of education and the integration of people with disabilities into the Egyptian educational system, emphasizing the need to prepare individuals for life and success under all circumstances. He noted the serious challenge posed by artificial intelligence, reaffirming the importance of the education system's readiness to face this challenge and to leverage it for the benefit of humanity, while considering this in the development of curricula that focus on skills and knowledge that gain value through application. He highlighted that the education project sheds light on two of the most critical issues for the advancement and revival of societies: education and empowerment. He explained that Egypt has achieved

unprecedented accomplishments in the empowerment of women, under the leadership of a political framework that is aware and believes that empowering women is a societal necessity.

He added that education is one of the most important issues within the framework of social empowerment in the National Strategy for Women's Empowerment 2023, praising the role of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education in developing curricula. He noted that the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood has prepared a study on the representation of women in the curricula of primary, preparatory, and secondary stages. This study reflects the image of respect for women, their representation in the curricula, and the rejection of violence against women.

He also indicated that the Education Committee in the House of Representatives is currently in the process of issuing a law to establish the Egyptian Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. The aim of this proposed law is to enhance the quality of the technical and vocational education and training system, including institutions and programs, in accordance with accreditation standards and labor market requirements, while serving the state's sustainable development plans and policies. It will establish the general framework for the quality of technical and vocational education and training programs, teaching and learning methods, and the necessary evaluation techniques. Additionally, it will set the conditions for accrediting technical education institutions and training centers, both formal and informal, of all types, including pre-university technical education and technical training.



Ho. Dr. Tariq Radwan: MP, Chair of the Human Rights Committee in the Egyptian House of Representatives

Hon. Dr. Radwan spoke about the Human Rights Strategy in Egypt, emphasizing that the committee prioritizes several important files and issues, with a focus on monitoring the implementation of the goals outlined in the National Human Rights Strategy. This includes its four pillars: "civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, the human rights of women, children, people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly, as well as education and capacity-building in the field of human rights".

He added that the committee, in collaboration with the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, will hold listening sessions and a series of meetings to discuss ways to enhance women's rights, including political, economic, and social participation, as well as issues related to domestic violence and gender discrimination. Additionally, it will focus on promoting children's rights by emphasizing the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and discrimination, while ensuring their rights to education and healthcare.

He continued by stating the committee's commitment to discussing labor rights by studying working conditions and workers' rights in Egypt, including minimum wage, working hours, and occupational safety and health.

SESSION 2

Speakers:

Hon. Dr. Suhair AbdelHamid: MP, Rapporteur of the Health Committee in the Egyptian House of Representatives

Hon. Dr. AbdelHamid spoke about "The New Egyptian Comprehensive Health Insurance: The Strategic Vision for Achieving Sustainable Health Development Goals 2030." She affirmed that the role of the Health Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives is to continuously monitor the performance of the new comprehensive health insurance system, ensuring that comprehensive health coverage is provided to beneficiaries under the system's umbrella and assessing the quality of medical services offered to them. She highlighted the significant advancements and achievements in the infrastructure of healthcare facilities, their state-of-the-art medical equipment, and the introduction of new medical and therapeutic services in line with global medical practices. Notably, more than 4 million medical services have been provided to comprehensive health insurance beneficiaries so far. She emphasized that Egypt is making steady progress toward completing its comprehensive healthcare reform, in alignment with the recommendations of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, which closely monitors every step.

She continued by highlighting the importance of the Comprehensive Health Insurance Law No. 2 of 2018, which came to fruition thanks to the efforts of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development and the Egyptian House of Representatives, as well as the state's efforts to ensure the success of comprehensive health reform. This law holds particular significance as it directly impacts citizens' health, serving as a constitutional obligation to guarantee their access to integrated healthcare. She stressed that life cannot flourish without healthcare, which is ensured through the provision of comprehensive health coverage for all citizens. Furthermore, she pointed out that the progress and achievement of comprehensive

sustainable development goals are closely tied to the quality and accessibility of healthcare provided to the population.

She also praised the presence of promising young leaders at the forefront of the Health Care Authority and its various healthcare facilities, acknowledging their proven competence in managing and operating hospitals under the new comprehensive health insurance system. This aligns with Egypt's strategic vision to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for healthcare by 2030.

Hon. Hend Hazem: MP, a member of the Social Solidarity Committee in the Egyptian House of Representatives and a person with a disability

Hon. Hazem addressed the topic "Persons with Disabilities: Past and Present." She began by expressing her deep gratitude to the Government of Japan for supporting this important meeting, which addresses the concerns of 15 million people with disabilities. She also expressed her honor in participating in this significant gathering.

She highlighted the "Shoulder to Shoulder" humanitarian initiative, which was launched by the National Alliance for Civil Work. The initiative aims to reach all cities across the country, contributing to addressing the current economic challenges. In particular, this initiative supports the most vulnerable groups and low-income families, providing much-needed assistance during these difficult times.

She added that the "Shoulder to Shoulder" initiative is the largest social protection initiative, targeting the distribution of over 5 million food boxes across all governorates. She emphasized that this initiative reflects the strong belief in the capabilities of Egyptians and civil society organizations in achieving true social justice. She proudly noted that 8 seats have been allocated to people with disabilities in the Egyptian House of Representatives, along with free education and healthcare for them, and the 5% employment quota for people with disabilities in both the public and private sectors—an achievement to be proud of.

In closing, she once again expressed her gratitude to the Government of Japan for its support of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, which closely monitors population and development issues in Arab countries, and thanked them for their continued attention to the cause of people with disabilities.

Hon. Dr. Talaat Abdelkawy: MP, member of the Committee on Social Solidarity in the Egyptian House of Representatives and President of the General Federation of NGOs in Egypt, which oversees 18,000 associations

Hon. Dr. Abdelkawy began his speech by extending his gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Japan, the great people of Japan, and all Japanese entities supporting humanitarian and development causes. He also expressed his thanks for their collaboration with the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. He emphasized that this forum serves as the official umbrella for population and development committees within parliamentary and legislative councils in 21 Arab countries, playing a crucial role in unifying efforts on population and development issues across the Arab region.

He discussed the role of civil society organizations in caring for persons with disabilities and the elderly, as well as in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He emphasized that the Egyptian Parliament's approval of the draft law concerning the National Alliance for Civil and Developmental Work is a major step forward. This law strengthens the alliance's work and its partnership with the state in community and development activities. It provides the alliance with legal legitimacy and a formal structure to organize its activities and agreements with other entities, thus enhancing its ability to serve the community more effectively. He pointed out that the National Alliance previously relied on funds from each individual association as private funds. However, with the new law, the alliance will have its own dedicated budget, enjoying financial, administrative, and technical independence. He explained that this draft law aligns with the role that civil society organizations play in supporting state institutions in nation-building. These organizations provide comprehensive developmental services across all areas of social work, contributing to greater social and economic development for all citizens, particularly those most in need.

He explained that the National Alliance will focus in the upcoming period on reviewing its executive regulations. He affirmed that there will be new developmental plans and programs aimed at enhancing the alliance's contributions to the community. He praised the House of Representatives and the government for agreeing to add a proposed clause to Article 21 of the draft law concerning the National Alliance for Developmental Civil Work. This clause will grant the alliance a 50% exemption from monthly bills for electricity, water, telephone, and gas, which will help enrich the work of these institutions and their developmental contributions. He concluded by stating that the National Alliance for Developmental Civil Work is a vital pillar in the development process and a strong supporter of social protection networks, aimed at achieving community development through service activities benefiting citizens across Egypt's governorates.

At the end of the meeting's activities, the participants expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Japan and the people of Japan for their support, particularly in backing the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development. They emphasized the forum's commitment to various issues, especially during the current crises in the Arab region, which is facing urgent humanitarian challenges due to forced and voluntary migration in several Arab

countries. The participants called on the Japanese government to continue supporting the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development, enabling it to fulfill its mission with integrity and dedication, especially during this period of significant hardship faced by some Arab countries.



Programme

Time	Speakers
10:00 – 10:10	Registration
10:10 – 10:40	Opening: -Hon. Abedhadi Qasabi, Chair of the Committee on Social Solidarity, Family, and Persons with Disabilities (Majority Leader in the Egyptian House of Representatives). -Dr. Mohammad Al-Smadi, Secretary General of FAPPD. - Dr. Hala Youseef, UNFPA ASRO
10:40-11:10	SESSION 1 “Legislative amendments for persons with disabilities and the elderly and its consistency with the recommendations of the Arab Parliamentarians Forum for Population and Development” Speaker: Hon. Abedhadi Qasabi, Chair of the Committee on Social Solidarity, Family, and Persons with Disabilities (Majority Leader in the Egyptian House of Representatives)
11:10-11:30	Discussion (20 minutes)
11:30-11:45	Coffee break & photo group.
11:45-12:15	“United Nations Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” Speaker: Dr. Hala Youseef, UNFPA/ ASRO.
12:45-12:30	Discussion (15 minutes)
12:30-13:30	"The importance of education and the integration of persons with disabilities into the Egyptian educational system" Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sami Hashem (Head of the Education and Scientific Research Committee of the Egyptian House of Representatives)
13:30-13:40	Discussion (20 minutes)
13:40-14:20	"Human Rights Strategy with a Special View on Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly in Egypt"

	Speaker: Hon. Dr. Tarek Radwan: Chairman of the Human Rights Committee in the Egyptian Parliament.
14:20-14:40	Discussion (20 minutes)
14:40-15:40	Lunch break
15:40-16:00	SESSION 2 "The New Egyptian Comprehensive Health Insurance: The Egyptian Strategic Vision to Achieve the Sustainable Health Development Goals 2030" Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sohair Abdel Hamid: Member of the Health Committee of the Egyptian House of Representatives.
16:00-16:10	Discussion (10 minutes)
16:10-16:20	"Persons with disabilities in Egypt "Between Past and Present" Speaker: Hon. Hind Hazem, member of the Social Solidarity Committee in the Egyptian House of Representatives (and a person with a disability).
16:20-16:30	Discussion (10 minutes)
16:30-16:40	Coffee break
16:40- 17:00	"Civil Society Associations and Their Role in Caring for People with Disabilities and the Elderly and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals" Speaker: Hon. Dr. Talaat Abdel-Qawi, member of the Solidarity Committee of the Egyptian House of Representatives, President of the General Union of Civil Society Associations in Egypt.
17:00-17:10	Discussion (10 minutes)
17:10 – 17:20	Closing & Thanks

Organized by:

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

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