

Parliamentarian Joint Statement for the Sixth Asian Pacific Population Conference

On behalf of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, we, the parliamentarian-delegates from Asia-Pacific countries gathered in Bangkok, Thailand on 14-15 June 2013 for the Regional Parliamentarian Champions' Conference on Advocacy for ICPD Beyond 2014, hereby release this joint statement for the upcoming Sixth Asia Pacific Population Conference.

We recognize the crucial roles that parliamentarians play in advocating for the ICPD Program of Action and the Key Actions for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD, with emphasis on the unfinished agenda, ensuring integration of ICPD core issues in the post-2015 development framework, and for holding governments accountable for their commitments in ICPD.

We recognize the important function that parliamentarians perform in passing appropriate legislation, reviewing existing legislation and mobilizing strong support for laws consistent with the ICPD agenda which results in sustainable, cost-effective outcomes for health, society and the economy.

We stress the importance of promoting development of human capital, notably health and education, throughout the life cycle; We further recognize that parliamentarians are in a unique position to ensure that government works in partnership with civil society to address population and development issues effectively.

We reaffirm our commitment to ICPD POA specifically on its core issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender, youth, ageing, migration, urbanization and population and development and believe that the achievement of the ICPD POA is crucial to achieving other internationally agreed development goals and agreements, including CEDAW and the MDGs, and delivering social, economic and environmental justice.

As parliamentarians we are committed to promoting a rights-based approach and good governance in advancing the ICPD agenda.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Reaffirming that the right to sexual and reproductive health is a basic human right;

Recognizing that universal access to comprehensive, integrated and high quality SRH information, education and services, with a particular focus on women and adolescents is integral to the socio-economic development of individuals and nations in the Asia and the Pacific region;

We recommend the following priority actions:

- Make sexual and reproductive health a priority of the health sector, as an integral part of national health plans and public budgets, with clearly identifiable allocations and expenditures;
- Ensure adequate financing for such SRH services and programmes, with particular attention to equity in access;
- Provide an essential package of sexual and reproductive health information and services through the primary health care system;
- Prioritize couples and individuals' access to contraception and information to make free and informed decisions about the number and timing of children, thereby preventing unwanted and unplanned pregnancies and eliminating the need for abortion;
- Eliminate preventable maternal mortality and morbidity through ensuring access to a comprehensive and integrated package of essential quality services, including access to family planning, skilled birth attendants, appropriate facilities, antenatal, postnatal, emergency obstetric and newborn care, necessary nutrition, hygiene, as well as access to the necessary information and education to utilize these services, including management of complications arising from unsafe abortion;
- Significantly scale up efforts to halt the spread of HIV and other STIs to meet the goal of ensuring universal access to HIV education and awareness, prevention, treatment, care and support, free of discrimination and bearing in mind gender perspectives, and the goal of halting and reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS by 2015, including by removing legal and policy barriers that impede access for key affected populations;
- Strengthen health services and health systems to increase capacity for the prevention, early detection and treatment of reproductive cancers;
- Strengthen or enact laws and policies that respect and protect sexual and reproductive rights and enable all individuals

to exercise them without discrimination on any grounds;

- Protect the civil rights of all individuals, by guaranteeing equality before the law and non-discrimination for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, in the exercise of their social, cultural, economic, civil and political rights.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Recalling that the ICPD Programme of Action recognized every woman's potential is fundamental to achieving equitable and sustainable development and that equitable development cannot be achieved or sustained without gender equality and women's empowerment;

Emphasizing that women have the right and the ability to make healthy and informed choices about their health, in particular regarding their sexual and reproductive health; lead lives free of threat of and actual violence in all settings including from intimate partners; and have equal access to assets and resources, as well as equal representation at all levels of governance;

We recommend the following priority actions:

- Improve quality of and access to education for women and girls as a way to foster development and ensure they stay in school
- Implement effective public policies and increase investments in gender equality reforms, particularly those aimed at youth;
- Improve women's economic independence by increasing participation in the formal and informal economy including equal employment opportunities, access to decent work, family-friendly policies, and support for women to establish and build businesses;
- Undertake legislative, administrative, financial and other measures to give women full and equal access to economic resources, particularly women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, assets, investments, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies, inter alia, by means of international cooperation; prioritize and intensify initiatives towards the economic empowerment of women at the grassroots level, including through education and business development agencies, as a way of uplifting their status and increasing choice and opportunities;
- Increase women's participation in decision making and political processes;
- Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and integrate responses to gender-based violence in all sexual and reproductive health programmes and services;
- Revise and implement laws that exonerate perpetrators of violence against women and girls;
- Put in place the necessary policies and mechanisms to address harmful practices and forms of discrimination, including early and forced marriage, trafficking of women and children, dowry and bride prices, son preference, polygamy, female genital mutilation, incest, as well as other harmful practices.
- Invest in men and boys to champion the transformation of norms and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequities and discriminatory practices, increasing their involvement in and responsibility for enhancing gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment at all levels; Fully engage men and boys, as well as families and communities, as agents of change in promoting women's rights, including their sexual and reproductive health rights and in preventing, condemning and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls;
- Systematically integrate responses to gender-based violence in all sexual and reproductive health programs and services, as part of a broader, multisectoral, coordinated response, including within maternal-child health, family planning, and HIV-related services and ensure that all victims/survivors of gender-based violence, including in post-conflict situations, have immediate access to critical services.

Young People

Stressing that young people can transform the social and economic fortunes of the developed and developing countries alike, which requires investments in health, education, employment, sexual and reproductive health and a commitment to real civic engagement;

Recognizing the potential of harnessing the demographic dividend through comprehensive youth policies that include young people's meaningful participation at all levels of governance, accountability and policy-making;

We recommend the following priority actions:

- Ensuring young people's access to comprehensive sexuality education in and out of school, providing young people with the knowledge, skills and means to make informed decisions about their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health;
- Ensure young people's universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services free of stigma and discrimination, including through the adoption and implementation of national policies;
- Ensure food and nutrition security for adolescent girls and young women;

- Increase coverage and quality of compulsory primary and secondary education, as well as relevant technical and vocational training and national and international school-to-work programmes, so that young people gain relevant necessary information and skills for decent work and livelihood opportunities;
- Ensure the right to decent work for young people through effective policies and programmes.

Population and sustainable development

Recognizing that population growth and decline, changing age structures, urbanization, migration and changing household and family structure influence the opportunities for human development, are in turn shaped by choices people make and are essential to effective planning for inclusive, sustainable development;

Stressing that sustainable development cannot be attained without a sound understanding of population dynamics and the adoption of strategies that incorporate appropriate policy options to manage and support population change as population, poverty, patterns of production and consumption and the environment are closely interconnected and cannot be considered in isolation;

We recommend the following priority actions:

- Further integrate population dynamics into development planning at sub-national, national, regional and international levels in order to comprehensively respond to population and development issues and ensure mechanisms and institutions
- Emphasize the importance of generating, collecting, using and disseminating quality and timely census, statistical and vital registration systems data which is disaggregated for the purposes of planning, monitoring and evaluation

Ageing

We note the unprecedented pace of population ageing in the region, and the need to prepare for its social and economic implications for individuals, families, societies and the global community, but with the right measures in place, there is a longevity dividend to be reaped by current and future generations.

We recommend the following priority actions:

- Eliminate discrimination based on age to ensure that people of all ages are able to contribute to society;
- Ensure equitable access to essential health and social services for the elderly as well as a minimum level of income under national social protection schemes;
- Ensure access to health care, affordability and geriatric care training;
- Mainstream ageing into all gender policies and gender into ageing policies, taking into account the specific requirements of older women;
- Develop appropriate technologies and infrastructure to accommodate the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities;
- Promote policies and legislation that make it easier for people in care-giving roles to combine and share work and domestic responsibilities.
- Develop or strengthen inclusive social protection systems, with particular attention given to older persons and their vulnerability to poverty and social isolation, including the provision of universal pensions and strengthening intergenerational bonds within families to ensure the care, protection, economic security and empowerment of older persons

Education

Emphasizing that education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights, which promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits; and is a powerful tool by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children including persons with disabilities can lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully as citizens.

We recommend the following priority action:

- Ensure universal access to free, quality, comprehensive and lifelong learning education at all levels in a safe and participatory environment adopting a rights-based approach to education, including formal, informal and non-formal education;
- Eliminate illiteracy at all levels.

International Migration

Recognizing that international migration is increasingly being perceived as a force that can contribute to development, and an integral aspect of the global development process;

Acknowledging the important contributions made by migrants and migration to development of countries of origin and destination and consider the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development in order to identify appropriate ways and means of maximizing the development benefits, protecting human rights of all migrants, and minimizing

the negative impacts;

Reaffirming our commitment to the ICPD PoA in the area of migration to promote orderly migration flows and to address the needs of migrants;

We recommend the following priority actions:

- Address the root causes of migration, especially those related to poverty;
- Promote dialogue and establish cooperation between countries of origin and destination, in cooperation with the private sector and civil society, as appropriate, to provide social protection to migrants, especially health care, including sexual and reproductive health services;
- Reinforce and establish bilateral, regional and global cooperation and dialogue to develop a comprehensive and balanced approach to migration;
- Promote comprehensive gender-responsive and rights-based policies and programmes to address the particular vulnerabilities and situations of women and girl migrants, including sexual and reproductive health, risks of violence, exploitation and abuse, where relevant, at every stage of international migration, namely recruitment, pre-departure, transit, arrival, stay and return;
- Emphasize the importance of protecting and fulfilling the rights of all migrants and refugees;
- Promote policies that foster integration and reintegration of migrants and returning migrants;
- Anticipate and prepare for migration related to climate change and disaster risk reduction in vulnerable coastal areas.

Urbanization

Recognize that urbanization is an important and positive transformation, linked to economic growth and a better educated and more productive labor force;

Noting that urbanization can and should also contribute to greater environmental sustainability through more efficient use of resources, and to improved social welfare through better access to services;

We recommend the following priority actions:

- Enhance the economic, social and cultural amenities of smaller- and medium-sized cities in order to promote more balanced growth;
- Anticipate and plan for urban growth to ensure that the growing number of urban residents, including the poor, have secure access to land, housing, water, sanitation, energy and transport, as well as health, education and other essential services;
- Address the living conditions of people in large urban agglomerations, ensuring equal access to quality and affordable basic health and social services, including for those living in rural and peri-urban areas;
- Promote sustainable and integrated rural and urban development and strengthen urban-rural linkages.