AFPPD ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

Parliamentary Leadership for the Future:

An All-of-Society Approach to the Care Economy and Demographic Resilience



3–4 September 2026
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

REPORT

PART I — DAY 1 | 3 SEPTEMBER 2026 1
OPENING CEREMONY 1
Executive Summary 1
Dr Usmonov Farrukh — Moderator / Master of Ceremony 2
H.E. Alexander Nanta Linggi 2
Mr Pio Smith 3
Hon. Kamikawa Yoko 4
H.E. Dato Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah 5
Conclusions, Commitments and Follow-Up Directions 6
DAY 1 | 3 SEPTEMBER 2026 8
OPENING CEREMONY 8
Session 1: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Pathway 9
Chair: Hon. Dr. Kolakanh Phommvong 9
Ms. Madusha Dissanayake 10
Hon. Maria Gorumali Barreto 13
Ms. Tomoko Fukuda 15
Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion 17
Question and Open Forum Discussion 18
Session 2: Strengthening the Care Economy for Sustainable Development 20
Chair: Hon. Toshima Karki 20
Sai Jyothirmai Racherla 21
Hon. Krisel Lagman 23
Hon. Çiğdem Erdoğan 26
Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion 29
Question / Open Forum 29
SESSION 3: Climate Change and Vulnerable Groups: From Risk to Resilience 33
Chair: Senator Datuk Wira Dr Mohd Hatta Md Ramli 33
Hon. Syerleena Abdul Rashid 34
Ms Dolores Devesi 36
Hon. Sahibzada Sibghatullah 39
Additional Intervention: Hon. Dr Toshima Karki 41
Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion 43
Question / Open Forum 44
SESSION 4: Digitalization and Innovation for Population Dynamics 45
Hon. Tshering Penjor 45
Senator Hon. Sue Lines [online] 46
Hon. Bolotbek Borbiev 48
Hon. Le Phan Kham 51
Chair's Conclusions 53
Question / Open Forum 53
PART II — DAY 2 | 4 SEPTEMBER 2026 55
Session 5: Follow-up Discussion on Outcome of High-Level Ministerial and Parliamentary Session at Women Deliver 2026 Conference 55
Moderator — Dr Usmonov Farrukh 55
Hon. Lork Kheng 56
Hon. Carina Garland 58
Hon. Howard Lee Chuan How 59
Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion 62
Q&A / Open Forum 62
Balancing Children's Right to Information with Protection from Online Harm 62
Cambodia's HIV Response: Community Outreach and Connecting People to Services 63

Session 6: Country Reports 64
Sub-Session 6.1: Report by East and South East Asian states East and South-East Asian States 64
Chair/Moderator: Hon. Deepender Hooda 64
Prof. Keizo Takemi 65
Hon. Kim Nam-hee 67
Hon. Dr Anara Naeem 69
Hon. Hector Appuhamy 71
Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion 73
Q&A / OPEN FORUM 73
Sub-Session 6.2: Report by South East Asian states East and Central Asian States 75
Chair: Hon. Elvira Surabaldieva 75
Associate Professor Dr. Prudit Tejativaddhan 76
Hon. Sri Wulan Sutomo Jasmine 78
Hon. Sheralizoda Muhamadullo 80
Hon. Ovekova Janet 82
Chair's Overall Session Conclusion 85
Q&A / Open Forum 85
Closing Reflection 86
Session 7: Dialogue with Partners on Poverty Eradication — "Getting Ready for the 60th Session of Commission on Population Development - Unpack and assess current regional trends that challenges the efforts to eradicate poverty" 87
Moderator — Prof. Gita Sen 88
H.E. Ambassador Jonibek Hikmat 89
Hon. Dr. Abdel Hady Qasaby 91
H.E. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo 94
Ms. Alexa Johns 96
Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion 99
Q&A / Open Forum 99
Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony 102
CLOSING CEREMONY 108
Hon. Howard Lee Chuan How 108
Hon. Kamikawa Yoko 109
H.E. Dr. Chem Widhya 111
MC'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND FORMAL CLOSURE ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
PART III — 12 KEY THEMES 113
Preliminary Conference-Wide Findings - 12 themes 114
PART IV — APPENDIX 117
Appendix 1: ADOPTION OF THE DECLARATION 117
Appendix 2: AGENDA 119
Appendix 3: List of Participants 124

PART I — DAY 1 | 3 SEPTEMBER 2026

OPENING CEREMONY

Executive Summary

The Opening Ceremony of the **AFPPD Annual Conference 2026** established a strong political and human-centred foundation for the two-day deliberations. Moderated by **Dr Usmonov Farrukh, Executive Director of AFPPD**, the session brought together senior parliamentary leaders, government representatives, UNFPA, civil society and development partners from across Asia and the Pacific and beyond. The opening remarks converged around a clear proposition: demographic transformation is already reshaping economies, families, labour markets and public systems, and it must be addressed through anticipatory parliamentary leadership rather than reactive policy. Across the four principal statements, speakers connected population ageing, changing fertility, migration, urbanisation, youth aspirations, climate pressures and changing family structures with the urgent need to strengthen the care economy and demographic resilience.

A defining message was that care should not be treated as a private family obligation or a residual social expenditure. It was presented as essential social and economic infrastructure: an investment in dignity, labour-force participation, gender equality, social stability and national resilience. Speakers repeatedly returned to the people behind demographic indicators — older persons seeking dignity and security, young people weighing whether they can afford to form families, women balancing paid work and disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, persons with disabilities seeking inclusion, and children whose future opportunities depend on the quality of care and investment they receive.

The ceremony also carried institutional significance for AFPPD. Malaysia's hosting of the AFPPD Global Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur was framed not simply as the establishment of a new office, but as an opportunity to strengthen parliamentary cooperation, national ownership, knowledge exchange and sustained action on population and development. Speakers called for an AFPPD Global that is resilient, financially sustainable, responsive to member priorities and capable of translating demographic evidence into policy, budgets, oversight and action. The session concluded with the official opening of the Conference and a call for the discussions in Kuala Lumpur to generate concrete commitments, stronger partnerships and measurable improvements in people's lives.

Opening Ceremony at a Glance

Moderator / Master of Ceremony	Dr Usmonov Farrukh, Executive Director, AFPPD
Opening speakers	H.E. Alexander Nanta Linggi, Minister of Works, Malaysia Mr Pio Smith, UN Assistant Secretary General, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) a.i. Hon. Kamikawa Yoko, MP Japan, Chair of AFPPD H.E. Dato Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah, President of Senate of Malaysia

Speaker Proceedings



Dr Usmonov Farrukh — Moderator / Master of Ceremony

Executive Director, AFPPD

Role in the Opening Ceremony

Dr Usmonov welcomed delegates, set the tone for the Conference, introduced the four principal speakers and formally guided the Opening Ceremony to its conclusion. He opened with a moment of silence in memory of victims of recent floods, underscoring solidarity with affected communities.

Key Messages and Context

He described the Conference as a platform bringing together parliamentarians, policymakers, international organizations and partners to exchange perspectives, strengthen cooperation and advance shared commitments. Before the official opening address, he highlighted the breadth of participation, stating that 22 countries and more than 100 participants were represented, alongside online participants.

Institutional Significance

He expressed appreciation for Malaysia's support for AFPPD's move to its new home and office in Malaysia, and later emphasized the long-standing active participation of Malaysian parliamentarians in AFPPD.

Conclusion

Following the official declaration of the Conference's opening, Dr Usmonov thanked speakers, parliamentarians, delegates, partners and guests and called for a productive Conference marked by meaningful dialogue, constructive engagement and stronger parliamentary cooperation. He then invited participants to the official group photograph.



H.E. Alexander Nanta Linggi

Minister of Works, Malaysia; President/Chair of AFPPD Malaysia

Key Messages

H. E. Alexander Nanta Linggi framed demographic change as a lived reality already reshaping societies, economies and families. He placed people at the centre of the Conference theme, referring to young graduates seeking opportunity, working mothers balancing family responsibilities, persons with disabilities seeking inclusion, and older generations who deserve to age with dignity, security and respect.

Policy Issues

- Population ageing should be understood as a sign of human progress associated with better healthcare, living standards and longevity, while public policy must evolve quickly enough to respond to its consequences.

- The care economy should be treated as a measure of societal values and as an investment in social stability, economic resilience and national well-being rather than simply a cost.
- Malaysia's response was linked to the 13th Malaysia Plan and a Malaysia Care Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2026–2030, described as supporting preparation for an ageing society, youth development, digital transformation and quality of life.
- Demographic pressures — including ageing, youth employment, climate vulnerability, migration and social protection — cross borders and therefore require cooperation and shared learning.

Parliamentarians' Role

He emphasized that parliamentarians are not merely lawmakers but voices for communities. Their proximity to families' lived experiences gives them a responsibility to translate those realities into meaningful policy and to ensure that demographic decisions are guided by compassion, fairness and inclusion.

Example / Institutional Milestone

He recalled discussions in Tokyo in April 2024 that developed into an aspiration for Malaysia to play a larger role in AFPPD and ultimately to host the AFPPD Secretariat. He said the Secretariat's success should be judged not by its physical office but by the ideas it generates, partnerships it builds and lives it improves.

Recommendations / Call for Action

He urged delegates to ensure that the two-day policy discussions return continually to the people they represent, and called for Kuala Lumpur to become a place where ideas become actions, partnerships become solutions and parliamentary leadership produces meaningful outcomes.

"Behind every demographic statistic is a human story. Behind every decision is a family whose future may be changed by what we choose to do today."

— H.E. Alexander Nanta Linggi



Mr Pio Smith

UN Assistant Secretary-General; UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) a.i.

Key Messages

Mr Pio Smith situated the Conference within a difficult global development environment in which demographic change is accelerating while development financing and public resources are under pressure. He argued that governments must make smarter choices and strengthen systems, but that 'doing more with less' must never mean doing less for people who need support most.

Policy Issues

- Countries across Asia and the Pacific face divergent demographic realities, including rapid ageing, very young populations, changing fertility, migration, urbanisation, climate pressures and transformation in the world of work.
- Domestic resource mobilisation and national ownership are increasingly important as international cooperation alone cannot finance sustainable development priorities.
- Investment in young people strengthens human capital, productivity and future growth; investment in women and girls strengthens economic participation and resilient societies.

- Investment in the care economy enables people — particularly women — to participate more fully in the workforce while meeting the needs of children, older persons and others requiring care.
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights were presented as important to informed life choices and to the resilience of families, communities and economies.
- Efficiency and reform must go together with equity so that fiscal constraints do not disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

Parliamentarians' Role

He identified parliamentarians' power to shape legislation, scrutinize national budgets, hold governments accountable and place population and development issues at the centre of national policy debates. He also stressed their role in building political commitment for investments whose benefits may only become visible over time.

AFPPD's Strategic Role

He described AFPPD Global as a platform for practical exchange, political consensus and the translation of demographic evidence into policy and investment — and as an example of multilateralism in action. He called for the Forum to be deeply owned by members, responsive to national priorities, able to diversify partnerships and resources, and demonstrably valuable to parliamentarians.

SDGs and the Post-2030 Agenda

He recalled parliamentarians' foundational role in anchoring the Sustainable Development Goals in legislation and accountability, and emphasized that they will be equally important in shaping post-2030 priorities, defending human rights and gender equality, and maintaining policy and investment continuity amid global polarization.

Recommendations / Call for Action

He called for concrete commitments to stronger national policies, greater domestic investment, more effective partnerships and stronger parliamentary oversight, and for an AFPPD Global that is resilient, nationally owned, financially stable and equipped to turn evidence into action.

"Resilience is not simply the ability to withstand adversity. It is the ability to adapt, to reform, and to emerge stronger."

— Mr Pio Smith



Hon. Kamikawa Yoko

Member of Parliament, Japan; Chair of AFPPD

Key Messages

Hon. Kamikawa Yoko described the Conference as particularly timely amid profound demographic transformation. She highlighted longer life expectancy, declining fertility, rapid urbanization and migration as challenges that also create an opportunity to rethink how societies organize care, invest in people and build resilience across generations.

Policy Issues

- Every society requires a quality care system, whether care is provided by families, communities, public institutions or the private sector.
- Care remains undervalued in many settings and is disproportionately carried by women and girls, constraining individual opportunity and national prosperity.
- Demographic resilience requires investment throughout the life course — from early childhood and education to productive employment, healthy ageing and dignified long-term care.
- Different countries face different demographic realities; the value of AFPPD lies in enabling parliamentarians to exchange experiences and adapt lessons to their own national circumstances.

All-of-Society Approach

She stressed that governments cannot meet these challenges alone. Effective responses depend on partnership among parliamentarians, local authorities, civil society organizations, employers, workers, researchers, development partners, communities and citizens.

Parliamentarians' Responsibility

She urged parliamentarians to remember the human stories behind demographic indicators and to design evidence-based, inclusive and responsive policies supported by appropriate budget allocations.

Example / AFPPD Engagement

She referred to a recent high-level ministerial and parliamentary gathering in Melbourne involving approximately 100 delegates, which she said encouraged political leaders to uphold commitments related to gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, human rights, evidence-based policymaking, inclusive development and accountability.

Recommendations / Call for Action

She invited parliamentarians to remain closely engaged with AFPPD and continue advancing the Forum's core pillars. She also thanked the Parliament of Malaysia, AFPPD Malaysia, UNFPA and the Japan Trust Fund for their support, noting the importance of opening the new AFPPD office in Kuala Lumpur.

"Behind every demographic indicator is a human story."
— Hon. Kamikawa Yoko



H.E. Dato Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah

Title / Organization

President of the Senate of Malaysia

Key Messages

H.E. Dato Awang Bemee welcomed delegates on behalf of the Parliament of Malaysia and officially declared the Conference open. He emphasized that demographic change is border-less: ageing, fertility, migration, youth development and the care economy are shared challenges requiring shared commitment, knowledge and solutions.

Policy Issues

- Population policy is ultimately about people rather than numbers: whether young people can establish families, parents can balance work and caregiving, and health and social protection systems can meet present and future demand.
- Ageing, changing family structures, declining fertility, migration, youth aspirations and growing care needs are interconnected and affect healthcare, labour markets, pension systems, public finances, cities and communities.
- Traditional family-based care is under pressure as families become smaller, people live longer, children live farther from parents and women participate more actively in paid work. The care economy therefore has economic, social and public-policy dimensions.
- Declining fertility cannot be addressed in isolation from affordable housing, stable employment, work-family balance, childcare affordability and young people's confidence in the future.
- Demographic resilience requires breaking down policy silos because ageing and fertility intersect with health, labour, pensions, housing, education, urban planning, social protection and family policy.

Parliamentary Responsibilities

He set out four responsibilities for parliamentarians: ensuring adequate resources; scrutinizing government policies; legislating where necessary; and keeping long-term demographic considerations within national decision-making.

Learning from Diversity

He emphasized that no single policy prescription will work everywhere. Countries represented at the Conference are at different stages of ageing, fertility transition and demographic opportunity; AFPPD therefore offers a mechanism for learning from both successful and unsuccessful policy experiences and adapting lessons to national circumstances.

Recommendations / Call for Action

He called for anticipatory leadership that looks beyond immediate crises and electoral horizons, and for sustained cooperation among governments, legislators, the private sector, experts, communities and countries across the Asia-Pacific and beyond. He affirmed Malaysia's readiness to work closely with AFPPD, UNFPA, parliamentary partners, civil society and academia.

Three Closing Propositions

1. Demographic change is a fact; societies cannot avoid ageing or changing attitudes, but they can decide how to respond and manage change.
2. Demographic resilience requires long-term thinking about the kind of society to be left to future generations.
3. Effective responses require collaboration among all stakeholders across sectors and borders.

"Parliamentary leadership is not only about responding to crisis. It is about anticipating challenges before they become crises."

— H.E. Dato Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah

Conclusions, Commitments and Follow-Up Directions

The Opening Ceremony did not adopt negotiated conclusions or establish formal deadlines. Nevertheless, the statements delivered by the speakers collectively established a coherent set of political and policy directions that framed the discussions for the remainder of the Conference.

A central message was the need to strengthen parliamentary leadership in responding to demographic change. Parliamentarians were encouraged to exercise their legislative, budgetary, oversight and accountability functions more strategically, while promoting long-term policy

approaches capable of anticipating demographic challenges rather than responding only after pressures emerge.

The Opening Ceremony also reinforced the importance of recognising care as essential social and economic infrastructure. Care considerations should therefore be integrated more systematically across national development planning, labour and employment policies, health systems, gender equality measures and social protection frameworks. This approach was presented as particularly important as societies respond to population ageing, changing family structures and evolving care needs.

Against a backdrop of constrained fiscal resources, speakers stressed the importance of protecting equity and long-term human development. Governments and parliamentarians were encouraged to improve the effectiveness and strategic allocation of public resources without reducing essential investments in vulnerable populations. Greater domestic ownership and resource mobilisation for population and development priorities were also emphasised, alongside continued regional and international cooperation.

The discussions further underscored that demographic realities vary considerably across countries. Policy responses should therefore be evidence-based, inclusive and responsive to specific national circumstances rather than relying on uniform or one-size-fits-all approaches. Human rights, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, opportunities for young people, healthy ageing and access to dignified long-term care should remain integral to efforts to strengthen demographic resilience.

The establishment of the AFPPD Global Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur was highlighted as an important institutional opportunity to strengthen parliamentary cooperation, knowledge exchange and partnerships across the region, while supporting the translation of demographic evidence and policy commitments into practical action.

Taken together, the Opening Ceremony called for the Conference discussions to move beyond dialogue towards concrete commitments, stronger national policies, effective partnerships and sustained parliamentary action. Ultimately, progress should be reflected not only in policy frameworks and institutional commitments, but also in measurable improvements in the lives and well-being of the people and communities represented by parliamentarians.

DAY 1 | 3 SEPTEMBER 2026

OPENING CEREMONY













Session 1: Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Pathway

Session Objective: *To review the gains and lessons learnt from the implementation of youth policies and programs in the region; what is the reality of young people today?*





Chair: Hon. Dr. Kolakanh Phommvong

MP, Lao PDR; Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth

Focus: Partnership for the Demographic Dividend

Session Context

The session examined the opportunities, challenges and policy pathways associated with harnessing the demographic dividend across the Asia-Pacific region. Its objective was to review gains and lessons learned from the implementation of youth policies and programmes and to assess the current realities facing young people. The discussion recognised that demographic circumstances vary considerably across the region and that a youthful population does not automatically translate into economic or social progress. Rather, the demographic dividend depends on sustained investment in health, education, skills, decent employment, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and meaningful youth participation.

The session was chaired and moderated by **Hon. Dr. Kolakanh Phommvong,** MP, Lao PDR, Co-Chair of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth. The speakers announced for the session were **Ms. Madusha Dissanayake,** Regional Programme and Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO); **Hon. Maria Gorumali Barreto,** Member of Parliament, Timor-Leste; and **Ms. Tomoko Fukuda,** Regional Director, International Planned Parenthood Federation East and South East Asia and Oceania Region (IPPF ESEAOR). Together, their interventions provided regional, national and civil-society perspectives on how countries can translate demographic change into inclusive and sustainable development.

Moderator's Short Executive Summary

Hon. Dr. Kolakanh Phommvong opened and guided the session around its central objective of reviewing progress and lessons from youth policies and programs across the region and examining the realities facing young people today. His moderation provided the framework for a broader discussion on how countries can translate demographic change into sustainable development opportunities, with particular attention to the investments and policy responses required to enable young people to contribute fully to their societies and economies.

While his substantive intervention was brief, the Chair helped connect the speakers' different perspectives around several recurring priorities, including education and skills development, access to health services, challenges affecting girls, changing financing realities, social media and access to information, and sustained investment in young people. In closing, he brought these issues together by emphasizing the importance of cooperation among parliaments, governments, civil society and young people themselves in responding to youth needs and harnessing the demographic dividend.

Key Messages

The Chair's framing and concluding remarks reinforced that young people must remain at the centre of efforts to harness the demographic dividend, supported by sustained investment in education, skills, health and opportunities that respond to their changing realities. He also recognized that the challenges confronting young people are multidimensional, extending beyond education and employment to include the situation of girls, access to information, social media and the changing financial environment.

Most importantly, his concluding message underscored that progress cannot be achieved by any one institution acting alone. Effective cooperation among parliament, government, civil society and young people is essential to translate youth priorities into responsive policies and sustainable development outcomes.

Speaker Proceedings



Ms. Madusha Dissanayake

Regional Programme and Intergovernmental Affairs Specialist, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO);

Presentation: Regional Review for the Needs of Young People in the Asia-Pacific Region

Executive Summary

Ms. Madusha Dissanayake provided a regional perspective on the diverse demographic realities facing the Asia-Pacific and stressed that there is no single pathway for harnessing demographic change. Countries with large youth populations need to accelerate investment in human capital to capture the demographic dividend, while countries experiencing declining fertility and population ageing require policies that enable individuals, families and economies to remain resilient throughout the life course. Small island, landlocked and migration-affected countries face additional geographic and mobility challenges requiring tailored responses.

A central theme of her intervention was the changing development-financing environment. With public resources increasingly constrained and traditional reliance on external assistance becoming less sustainable, she called for stronger domestic ownership and resource mobilisation. She positioned parliamentarians as critical actors in this transition because their legislative, budgetary and oversight responsibilities can determine whether demographic evidence is translated into sustained national investment.

Key Messages:

Ms. Dissanayake emphasized that demographic resilience must be understood as both a social and an economic development issue. Investment in young people's health, education and skills is essential, but such investment will not deliver its full potential unless economies simultaneously generate productive employment and opportunities for young people.

She highlighted the need for differentiated policy responses across the region. Youth-bulge countries require targeted investment in education, employability, health and SRHR, while ageing and low-fertility societies require stronger care infrastructure and family-enabling environments. Migration-affected and geographically dispersed populations require innovative approaches to ensure equitable access to opportunities and services.

She further stressed that demographic policies must be connected to **economic diversification, employment creation and gender equality**. Healthy and educated young people need meaningful opportunities to contribute economically; otherwise, countries risk unemployment, high NEET levels and outward migration despite significant investment in human capital.

Policies

- **Demographic resilience and differentiated national policy pathways:** Demographic change should be integrated into national development planning, with policy responses tailored to different demographic realities—including youth-bulge countries, ageing and low-fertility societies, small island states, landlocked countries and migration-affected populations.
- **Human-capital investment across the life course:** Public expenditure on education, health, employability, SRHR, youth development and care systems should be recognized as strategic investment in people, with sustained support across different stages of life rather than fragmented interventions.
- **Domestic financing and national ownership:** Greater emphasis should be placed on domestic resource mobilization and nationally financed demographic and youth programs as external development financing becomes increasingly constrained. This requires moving from donor-dependent pilots towards sustainable national systems.
- **Education, skills and future employment:** Education and TVET systems should be better aligned with labor-market transformation, particularly emerging digital and green economies, while addressing youth unemployment and high levels of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- **Youth health, SRHR and protection of adolescent girls:** Policies should strengthen comprehensive sexuality education and accessible SRHR services while addressing adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and the exclusion of vulnerable girls from education and economic opportunities.
- **Care economy and gender-responsive employment:** Stronger childcare, eldercare, healthcare and social-care systems are needed to address the disproportionate burden of unpaid care on women and support greater female labour-force participation. Employment and demographic policies should similarly be gender-sensitive.
- **Economic diversification and productive employment:** Demographic policy should be connected more deliberately to economic development. Investment in healthy, educated and skilled young people must be matched by productive employment, entrepreneurship and diversified economic opportunities.
- **Responsive service delivery for geographically dispersed populations:** Digital and e-health approaches can help overcome geographic and mobility barriers affecting young people, migrants and harder-to-reach communities, while demographic evidence should increasingly inform subnational and municipal planning.

- **Prevention, resilience and psychosocial support:** Youth policy should incorporate prevention, life-skills development and mental health and psychosocial support, particularly when responding to substance abuse and other vulnerabilities whose causes may extend beyond individual behavior to wider socioeconomic conditions.

Recommendations

Ms. Dissanayake recommended that governments adopt **integrated and context-specific demographic strategies** that connect population dynamics with national economic and social development planning. Rather than applying a uniform regional model, policies should respond to each country's demographic structure, economic circumstances, geography and stage of demographic transition.

She recommended **reframing social expenditure as long-term capital investment in people** and strengthening domestic resource mobilization so that essential demographic and youth programs are nationally owned and financially sustainable. Parliamentarians should use their legislative, budgetary and oversight functions to ensure that demographic evidence informs national priorities and that adequate resources are directed towards education, health, employment, care and youth development.

She further recommended **linking human-capital investment more systematically with economic diversification and employment creation.** Education, TVET and skills-development systems should anticipate future labor-market needs, including opportunities arising from digital and green economic transitions, while employment policies should be gender-responsive and enable young women and men to participate fully in economic development.

Country examples illustrated how these recommendations could be adapted to different national contexts: aligning TVET with digital and green economies in **Timor-Leste**; strengthening comprehensive sexuality education and SRHR access in the **Philippines**; keeping adolescent girls in school and protecting them from child marriage and early pregnancy in **Lao PDR**; developing the care economy in **Malaysia**; and strengthening family-enabling policy environments in Thailand. She also referenced digital health and employment opportunities in the **Maldives**, e-health approaches for nomadic youth and migrants in **Mongolia**, and the integration of demographic intelligence into municipal planning in **Nepal**.

Calls for Action

Ms. Dissanayake called on parliamentarians to:

- **Mobilize sustainable domestic financing for demographic priorities.** Move beyond dependence on donor-driven pilot initiatives by strengthening domestic resource mobilization and embedding youth, demographic and life-course investments within national budgets and long-term development frameworks.
- **Translate demographic evidence into investment decisions.** Ensure that demographic trends and evidence inform decisions on education, health, employability, SRHR, care systems and social protection, with resources directed towards interventions capable of producing sustained human-capital and economic returns.
- **Connect investment in young people with economic transformation.** Align education, TVET and skills development with economic diversification, future labor-market demand and emerging digital and green opportunities so that investments in young people lead to productive employment rather than persistent NEET levels or outward migration.
- **Address demographic inequalities through context-specific responses.** Adapt policies to differing national realities, including the needs of youth-bulge countries, ageing societies, adolescent girls, migrants, geographically dispersed populations and communities facing barriers to essential services.

Conclusions

Ms. Dissanayake's intervention reinforced that capturing the demographic dividend requires much more than having a large working-age population. Countries must make sustained investments in people while simultaneously creating the economic, institutional and social conditions that allow those investments to generate returns. Her contribution positioned parliamentarians at the centre of this process—as lawmakers, budget decision-makers and accountability actors capable of turning demographic evidence into long-term national development.

"The demographic dividend is not only a social-policy issue; it is also an economic-development issue." — **Ms. Madusha Dissanayake**



Hon. Maria Gorumali Barreto

Member of Parliament, National Parliament of Timor-Leste.

Focus: Turning a Youthful Population into Opportunity

Executive Summary

Hon. Maria Gorumali Barreto presented Timor-Leste's experience as a youthful country approaching an important demographic opportunity. She stressed that a large youth population provides considerable potential but does not automatically generate a demographic dividend. The quality of investments and policy decisions made today will determine whether Timor-Leste can convert its demographic transition into sustainable social and economic progress.

Her intervention centred on the need to invest simultaneously in **health, education, skills, gender equality and productive employment**, while strengthening the transition from education into the labor market. She highlighted Timor-Leste's efforts to develop youth policy, expand TVET and employment pathways, improve youth-friendly health services and use demographic evidence to guide policy and planning.

Key Messages

Hon. Barreto's central message was that **Timor-Leste's demographic opportunity lies ahead, but its policy window is now**. Decisions taken during the current stage of demographic transition will shape whether the country's young population becomes a driver of development.

She identified the transition from education to productive employment as a particularly important challenge. Urban-rural inequalities continue to affect young people's access to education and opportunities, while adolescent pregnancy remains a concern for young people's health, well-being and future prospects.

She also highlighted the importance of job creation, private-sector development, entrepreneurship and economic diversification. Technological change means that young people increasingly require technical, vocational, digital and transferable skills that equip them for future labor markets.

Policies

- **National youth policy and implementation framework:** Timor-Leste's National Youth Policy and National Action Plan for Youth 2023–2027 provide an important framework for coordinating investments and interventions responding to the needs of the country's youthful population.

- **Education-to-employment transition:** Greater policy attention is required to bridge the gap between education and productive employment so that investments in young people's education result in sustainable livelihoods and economic participation.
- **TVET and future-ready skills:** Technical and vocational education should be expanded and strengthened alongside digital, technical and transferable skills that prepare young people for technological change and evolving labor markets.
- **Youth employment and economic diversification:** Job creation should be supported through stronger private-sector development, entrepreneurship and economic diversification, reducing the risk that a growing educated youth population remains without productive opportunities.
- **Youth-friendly health and adolescent well-being:** Accessible youth-friendly health information and services should be strengthened, with particular attention to adolescent pregnancy and its implications for young people's health, education and future economic participation.
- **Reducing urban-rural inequalities:** Youth policies should address disparities in access to education, skills, health services and employment opportunities between urban and rural communities.
- **Labor mobility and skills-development pathways:** International labor mobility arrangements can complement domestic employment strategies by providing young people with opportunities to acquire skills and work experience, including through existing and emerging pathways involving Australia, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Japan.
- **Evidence-based youth policymaking:** National and municipal youth profiles should be used systematically to inform policy formulation, public investment and monitoring, ensuring that decisions reflect the actual demographic circumstances and needs of young people.
- **Youth participation and parliamentary engagement:** Mechanisms such as the Youth Parliament should be strengthened to provide young people with meaningful opportunities to understand parliamentary processes, develop leadership and advocacy skills, and communicate their priorities to decision-makers.

Recommendations

Hon. Barreto recommended that Timor-Leste use its current **policy window to prepare proactively for its future demographic opportunity.** Investments made today in health, education, skills, gender equality and productive employment will determine whether the country's youthful population can become a driver of future development.

She recommended strengthening the connection between **education, TVET and employment,** ensuring that young people acquire skills relevant to changing labor-market needs. These measures should be complemented by private-sector development, entrepreneurship and economic diversification capable of generating sufficient productive employment opportunities.

Greater attention should also be given to **equity,** particularly by reducing urban-rural disparities and expanding youth-friendly health services. Demographic and youth data should be systematically incorporated into national and municipal planning, budgeting and program design so that resources are targeted towards identified needs.

Finally, she recommended **strengthening direct and meaningful engagement between parliamentarians and young people,** including through the Youth Parliament, community engagement and collaboration with civil society. This would help ensure that youth policy is informed not only by demographic statistics but also by young people's lived experiences, priorities and aspirations.

Calls for Action

Hon. Barreto called on parliamentarians to:

- **Act within the policy window now.** Accelerate investment in young people's health, education, skills and employment opportunities before Timor-Leste's demographic window fully opens, recognizing that decisions taken today will determine whether the country can capture its future demographic dividend.
- **Strengthen pathways from learning to earning.** Expand relevant TVET, digital and transferable skills while strengthening links between education, private-sector development, entrepreneurship and productive employment so that young people can transition successfully into the labor market.
- **Reduce inequalities in youth opportunities.** Address urban-rural disparities in education, healthcare, skills development and employment, while strengthening youth-friendly health services and measures addressing adolescent pregnancy and other barriers to young people's participation.
- **Institutionalize meaningful youth engagement**. Strengthen mechanisms such as the Youth Parliament and direct parliamentary engagement with communities so that young people's experiences, priorities and aspirations are reflected in policy formulation and national decision-making.

Conclusion

Hon. Barreto's presentation demonstrated that Timor-Leste's youthful population represents both an opportunity and a policy responsibility. The country's ability to benefit from future demographic change will depend on whether investments made now equip young people with the skills, health, opportunities and institutional support they need to participate productively in society and the economy.

"Our demographic window of opportunity lies ahead, but our policy window is now."
—Hon. Maria Gorumali Barreto



Ms. Tomoko Fukuda

Regional Director, IPPF East and South East Asia and Oceania Region (ESEAOR).

Focus: Rights, Agency and Meaningful Youth Participation

Executive Summary

Ms. Tomoko Fukuda approached the demographic dividend through the interconnected lenses of **young people's rights, health, agency and meaningful participation**. She stressed that the demographic diversity of the Asia-Pacific means that no single policy template can be applied across all countries. Instead, investment should follow a life-course approach that enables people to remain healthy, educated and economically active throughout their lives.

Her intervention drew particular attention to the rapidly changing environment in which young people are growing up, shaped by social media, digital technologies, climate-related crises, displacement, economic uncertainty, artificial intelligence and online violence. Against this backdrop, she argued that access to accurate, age-appropriate information, comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services is becoming increasingly important.

Key Messages

Ms. Fukuda emphasized that a large youth population does not automatically create economic growth and that countries must invest strategically throughout the life course.

She stressed that **comprehensive sexuality education should be understood as a protective and empowering intervention**, enabling young people to understand their bodies, relationships, dignity and rights and to navigate adulthood safely. Restrictive social norms that limit access to contraception, HIV testing and health services remain significant barriers.

Another major theme was **meaningful youth participation**. Young people should not merely be consulted or included symbolically; they should have genuine opportunities to influence policies, programs and services affecting their lives. She cautioned against tokenistic youth representation and emphasized the need for institutions to create conditions in which young people can participate confidently and effectively.

Policies

- **Rights-based and life-course approach:** Demographic policy should recognize young people as rights-holders and invest in their health, education, dignity, autonomy and opportunities from an early age and throughout the life course.
- **Comprehensive sexuality education:** Young people should have access to accurate, age-appropriate and evidence-based sexuality education that enables them to understand their bodies, relationships, dignity and rights and to navigate adolescence safely.
- **Accessible youth-friendly SRHR and HIV services:** Policies should address restrictive norms and practical barriers affecting young people's access to contraception, HIV testing and care, SRHR information and other essential health services.
- **Bodily autonomy and reproductive rights:** Young people's bodily autonomy and reproductive rights should be protected as fundamental components of health, dignity, gender equality and demographic resilience.
- **Meaningful youth participation in governance:** Youth representation should move beyond numerical inclusion or tokenism. Young people require genuine decision-making space, institutional support and opportunities to influence policies and programs affecting them.
- **Inclusive outreach to marginalized populations:** Health and social-service systems should adopt proactive outreach approaches for communities that may be unable or reluctant to access conventional services, drawing on examples such as the Fiji “Moonlight Caravan”.
- **Responding to emerging risks facing young people:** Youth policies should take account of rapidly changing realities including social media, online violence, artificial intelligence, climate-related crises, displacement and economic uncertainty.
- **Addressing structural inequalities and vulnerability:** Policy responses should recognize the relationship between poverty, exclusion, economic vulnerability and risk behaviors rather than treating young people's health and social challenges solely as matters of individual behavior.
- **Evidence-based SRHR and gender-equality policymaking:** Governments and parliamentarians should safeguard evidence-informed policies on SRHR and gender equality against misinformation, restrictive social norms and policy resistance.

Recommendations

Ms. Fukuda recommended adopting a **rights-based, life-course approach to demographic investment**, ensuring that young people have access to the health services, education, information, social protection and economic opportunities required to exercise agency and participate fully in society.

She emphasized that **comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly SRHR services should be treated as protective and empowering interventions**. Governments should ensure that information is accurate, evidence-based and age-appropriate while engaging families,

communities and young people in constructive dialogue to address misconceptions and resistance surrounding sexuality education.

She also recommended institutionalizing **meaningful youth participation** in governance rather than relying solely on representation targets. Young people should be equipped with the confidence, capacity and institutional support necessary to influence decisions, while organizational leaders should create environments in which youth perspectives are heard and acted upon.

Finally, she recommended expanding proactive outreach to marginalized populations and protecting **bodily autonomy, reproductive rights, gender equality and evidence-based policymaking.** These measures should form part of a wider effort to ensure that demographic policies respond to young people's changing realities while protecting their rights, dignity and capacity to shape their own futures.

Calls for Action

Ms. Fukuda called on **parliamentarians and policymakers to:**

- **Move from youth representation to genuine influence.** Establish mechanisms that enable young people to participate meaningfully in policy, program and institutional decision-making, ensuring that representation is accompanied by the capacity, confidence and institutional space needed to influence outcomes.
- **Protect access to comprehensive sexuality education**. Support accurate, age-appropriate and evidence-based CSE that equips young people with knowledge about their bodies, relationships, dignity and rights, while using constructive dialogue to address misconceptions and resistance.
- **Expand equitable access to youth-friendly SRHR and HIV services**. Remove social and practical barriers to contraception, HIV testing and care and other essential services, while supporting proactive outreach approaches that reach marginalized and underserved populations.
- **Safeguard bodily autonomy, reproductive rights and gender equality.** Ensure that young people's rights and dignity remain central to demographic and development policy and that restrictive social norms do not undermine access to information, services and opportunities.
- **Defend evidence-based policymaking**. Maintain policies grounded in evidence and human rights, particularly where SRHR and gender equality face misinformation, resistance or policy pushback.

Conclusion

Ms. Fukuda's intervention reinforced that young people must be recognized not merely as recipients of programs but as **rights-holders, partners and decision-makers**. Harnessing demographic potential therefore requires investment not only in services and opportunities but also in the agency of young people themselves. Policies will be more responsive and sustainable when young people have the information, rights, support and institutional space to shape decisions affecting their futures.

"Young people should not merely be consulted; they should participate in the decisions that affect their lives."

—Ms. Tomoko Fukuda

Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion

In concluding the session, **Hon. Dr. Kolakanh Phommvong** drew together the major issues raised by the speakers, including education and skills development, health services, the changing financing environment, challenges facing girls, social media and access to information, and the importance of sustained investment in young people.

The session reinforced a clear overarching message: **the demographic dividend is not automatic.** Young populations can become powerful drivers of development only when countries invest consistently in their health, education, skills, rights and economic opportunities and when national economies are capable of converting those investments into decent and productive employment.

The discussion also demonstrated that demographic policy cannot be separated from wider economic and social policy. Youth employment, gender equality, SRHR, care systems, economic diversification, social protection and domestic financing are interconnected components of demographic resilience. Different demographic realities require different policy responses, but the common foundation is sustained, evidence-based investment in people.

For parliamentarians, the session highlighted a particularly important responsibility. Through their **legislative, budgetary, representative and oversight functions,** parliamentarians can ensure that demographic evidence informs national planning, resources reach priority populations, and young people's concerns are translated into concrete policy action.

The Chair ultimately underscored the importance of collaboration, emphasising that **parliaments, governments, civil society and young people themselves must work together** if countries are to respond effectively to the realities facing young people and harness the demographic dividend.

"Harnessing the demographic dividend requires parliaments, governments, civil society and young people to work together."
—Hon. Dr. Kolakanh Phommvong

Question and Open Forum Discussion

Question 1 – Hon. Deepender Hooda, MP India: Meaningful Youth Representation in Governance

IPPF requires a certain percentage of young people and women to be represented on boards and committees. Are member associations receptive to this requirement, what challenges do they face, and how easy is it to implement effectively? And the age definition used by IPPF for young people's representation on governing boards.

Responded by: Ms. Tomoko Fukuda

Ms. Fukuda explained that the 20% youth representation requirement is an accreditation requirement for IPPF membership. However, she stressed that achieving numerical representation does not necessarily result in meaningful participation. Young people may be present on boards without having sufficient confidence or opportunity to influence discussions.

IPPF therefore supports youth groups and youth networks to strengthen young people's confidence and capacity to participate, while also working with executive directors and presidents to create an organizational culture that supports youth empowerment and engagement.

Ms. Fukuda clarified that, for IPPF's board representation requirement, young people are defined as those aged 25 and under.

Question 2 – Ms. Ermalena M. Hasbullah, IFPPD Secretary: Parliamentary Engagement with Young People

How do parliamentarians work with young people outside parliament to understand their problems and bring their concerns into parliamentary decision-making?

Responded by: Hon. Maria Gorumali Barreto

Hon. Barreto explained that Members of Parliament engage directly with constituents, including travelling to rural areas during weekends to communicate with communities. Parliamentarians also engage with relevant government ministries, including the Ministries of Education and Health, regarding programs responding to young people's concerns.

She highlighted Timor-Leste's Youth Parliament as an important mechanism for developing young people's understanding of parliamentary processes and strengthening their ability to advocate issues to government and parliament. Civil society organisations also contribute through technical and vocational training, capacity-building and advocacy support for young people.

Question 3 – Changing Perceptions of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Given the concern among some older people that providing comprehensive sexuality education may encourage young people to become sexually active, what steps can be taken to change this perception and improve understanding of the protective role of age-appropriate sexuality education?

Responded by: Ms. Tomoko Fukuda

Ms. Fukuda acknowledged that changing long-established attitudes is challenging and identified dialogue as one of the most important approaches.

She stressed the importance of presenting comprehensive sexuality education positively—as age-appropriate education that helps young people understand their bodies, build confidence and develop healthy relationships, rather than as education that encourages sexual activity.

She also emphasized that adults need to listen to young people themselves, understand what information they need and recognize that providing appropriate sexuality education can help them navigate adolescence more safely.

Question 4 – Hon. Sri Wulan Sutomo, MP Indonesia: Lessons from Countries Experiencing Demographic Transition

What youth-related policy lessons can countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia learn from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, which have experienced demographic transition alongside economic growth?

Responded by: Ms. Madusha Dissanayake

Ms. Dissanayake emphasized the importance of making the right investments in younger populations before countries age. She referred to the life-course approach and to National Transfer Accounts (NTA) and National Time Transfer Accounts (NTTA) as tools for examining how public investments are distributed.

She noted that investment in health and education alone is insufficient if economies do not generate productive employment. Many countries continue to struggle to move young people out of NEET status partly because of insufficient economic diversification. She therefore stressed that the demographic dividend is not only a social-policy issue but also an economic-development issue.

She further emphasized the importance of gender-sensitive policies, noting that employment and demographic policies must respond to the needs and potential of the whole population, including women.

Question 5 – Hon. Hector Appuhamy, MP Sri Lanka: Substance Abuse Among Young People

With substance abuse and drug addiction becoming an increasing concern among young people in the region, what approaches or programs should countries consider to address this problem?

Responded by: Ms. Madusha Dissanayake

Ms. Dissanayake emphasized two dimensions: prevention and support for young people already affected by substance abuse. Prevention should include soft-skills and resilience-building programs, while mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) should form an important component of the response.

She stressed that substance abuse should not be regarded solely as an individual behavioral issue. Policymakers should examine why young people become vulnerable to substance use, including whether they have meaningful opportunities and hope for their future.

She therefore framed substance abuse partly as a structural and policy issue, requiring responses that address young people's aspirations, mental health, socioeconomic circumstances and opportunities, alongside prevention and treatment measures.

Session 2: Strengthening the Care Economy for Sustainable Development

Session Objective: *To identify and promote strategies for a sustainable care economy that links policies related to vulnerable groups of society.*





Chair: Hon. Toshima Karki

Member of Parliament, Nepal

Session Context

Session 2 examined how countries can strengthen the care economy as an essential component of sustainable development, gender equality and demographic resilience. The discussion moved beyond the traditional perception of care as a private or family responsibility and considered its wider implications for labor-force participation, youth development, migration, social protection and the well-being of children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Particular attention was given to the disproportionate burden of unpaid care borne by women, the structural barriers preventing young women from participating fully in education and employment, the vulnerabilities faced by migrant care workers, and the importance of accessible and sustainable care infrastructure.

The MC introduced **Hon. Toshima Karki, Member of Parliament, Nepal**, as Chair of the session, together with three speakers: **Ms. Sai Jyothirmai Racherla,** Deputy Executive Director, Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW); **Hon. Krisel Lagman,** Member of Parliament, Philippines; and **Hon. Çiğdem Erdoğan,** Member of Parliament, Türkiye. Their interventions addressed complementary dimensions of the care economy: the relationship between NEET and women's labor-force participation; migrant care workers and labor mobility; and the development of comprehensive care systems encompassing childcare, elderly and disability care, work-family balance and protection of the care workforce. These are the speakers identified in the Session 2 working note.

Executive Summary

In opening the session, Hon. Toshima Karki framed the care economy as an important economic and development issue rather than solely a private or household responsibility. She highlighted the broad scope of care—including healthcare, childcare, elderly care, disability services and community-based support—and emphasized its importance to the functioning of families, communities and economies. Her introductory remarks also connected investment in care with demographic change, labor-force participation and the ability of countries to translate their working-age populations into sustainable development gains.

Key Messages

Hon. Karki emphasized that much of the care essential to society remains unpaid, undervalued and insufficiently recognized in conventional economic measures, with women continuing to shoulder a disproportionate share of care-giving responsibilities. She stressed that care infrastructure should therefore be viewed as part of national development infrastructure, as access to childcare, elderly care, disability support and related services directly influences people's ability—particularly women's—to participate in education, employment and economic life.

She further linked the care economy to the demographic dividend, emphasizing that a large working-age population does not automatically translate into development gains. Realizing this potential requires deliberate public policy, appropriate legislation, effective implementation and adequate budgetary investment. In this context, she positioned parliamentarians as important actors in ensuring that care receives greater recognition and is incorporated into national development priorities.

Speaker Proceedings



Sai Jyothirmai Racherla

Deputy Executive Director, Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW)

Presentation: Reducing Challenges of NEET and Increasing Youth and Women's Labour-Force Participation

Executive Summary

Ms. Sai Jyothirmai Racherla examined the relationship between the care economy, youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and women's labor-force participation. She emphasized that although the Asia-Pacific region's large youth population represents significant demographic potential, this potential cannot be realized while large numbers of young people—particularly young women—remain excluded from education, training and decent employment.

Her central argument was that young women's disproportionate representation among NEET populations should not be interpreted as a lack of ambition or willingness to work. Rather, it reflects structural and systemic barriers, including unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, poverty, discriminatory norms and policies, limited educational and training opportunities, and inadequate care infrastructure.

Key Messages

Ms. Racherla stressed that the transition from education to employment is shaped by gender inequality throughout the life course. For many girls and young women, caregiving expectations, early marriage and adolescent pregnancy interrupt education and subsequently restrict access to training, decent employment and economic independence.

She emphasized that these disadvantages are compounded by poverty, marital status and other socioeconomic factors. Consequently, reducing NEET rates requires governments to examine the structural environment surrounding young women rather than relying on short-term employment programs alone.

Her intervention also highlighted the importance of listening directly to young people. Drawing on recommendations emerging from the APFSD Youth Forum, she noted that young people themselves have called for stronger TVET, closer alignment between education and labor-market demand, skills development, digital inclusion, financial literacy, stronger labor protections and meaningful engagement in emerging opportunities such as the green economy.

Policies

- **Adopt an integrated, life-course approach to youth development.** Policies should connect education, health, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), skills development, employment, social protection and care, recognizing that disadvantages experienced during adolescence can significantly affect young women's subsequent education and economic participation.
- **Strengthen education-to-employment pathways.** Education and training systems should be better aligned with labor-market needs, with stronger technical and vocational education and training (TVET), digital skills, financial literacy and preparation for emerging employment opportunities.
- **Address the structural causes of young women becoming NEET.** Policy responses should go beyond short-term employment programs and tackle the underlying factors that disproportionately exclude young women from education, employment and training, including unpaid care responsibilities, poverty, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and discriminatory gender norms.
- **Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.** Care responsibilities should no longer fall disproportionately on women and girls. Governments should strengthen care infrastructure and services and promote a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities within households and across society.
- **Protect young people through decent-work policies.** Labor frameworks should promote fair wages, safe working conditions, reasonable working hours, social protection and protection against exploitation and discrimination, ensuring that entry into employment leads to sustainable economic participation.
- **Strengthen comprehensive sexuality education and access to SRHR.** Young people should have access to accurate information and appropriate services that enable them to make informed decisions, remain in education and avoid preventable disruptions to their health and future opportunities.
- **Eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices.** Educational institutions, workplaces and public systems should remove barriers that disadvantage young women and prevent them from completing education, accessing training or participating fully in the labor market.
- **Institutionalize meaningful youth participation.** Young people should be actively involved in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation rather than being treated solely as beneficiaries of programs.

Recommendations

Ms. Racherla recommended that governments adopt a **coordinated policy response to NEET that addresses structural gender inequality across the life course,** rather than relying on fragmented or short-term interventions. Education, skills development, health, SRHR, employment and care policies should reinforce one another so that girls and young women are able to remain in education, transition into relevant training and ultimately secure decent and gainful employment.

She emphasized that investments in TVET and workforce skills should respond to changing labor-market needs, including digital and emerging economic opportunities. At the same time, governments should address the unpaid care responsibilities, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and discriminatory practices that interrupt young women's education and restrict their economic participation.

Care infrastructure should be strengthened as part of this enabling environment. Reducing and redistributing unpaid care responsibilities would help ensure that caregiving does not automatically prevent women and girls from pursuing education, training or employment. Young people themselves should also participate meaningfully in designing, implementing and evaluating the policies intended to support them.

Calls for Action

Ms. Racherla urged parliamentarians to:

- **Address the structural drivers of young women's exclusion**. Use legislative and oversight powers to tackle the interconnected factors contributing to young women becoming NEET, including unpaid care responsibilities, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, discriminatory gender norms and unequal access to education, training and employment.
- **Protect girls' pathways from education to decent employment.** Strengthen laws and policies that keep girls in school, expand access to relevant skills and TVET, and ensure that young women can transition into safe, productive and fairly remunerated employment.
- **Invest in care infrastructure and redistribute unpaid care.** Use budgetary authority to expand accessible care services and promote a more equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities so that unpaid care does not continue to restrict women's and girls' education and economic participation.
- **Safeguard young people's SRHR.** Champion comprehensive sexuality education and accessible sexual and reproductive health information and services as essential components of young people's health, education and future opportunities.
- **Make youth participation meaningful.** Ensure that young people are actively involved in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies affecting their lives rather than being treated solely as program beneficiaries.
- **Turn commitments into accountable implementation.** Exercise parliamentary oversight to ensure that gender equality, youth development and demographic commitments are backed by adequate budgets, measurable results and sustained political will.

Conclusion

Ms. Racherla's intervention demonstrated that the high proportion of young women outside education, employment and training cannot be addressed through employment initiatives alone.

Her contribution therefore underscored the need for an integrated life-course approach linking education, skills development, decent employment, gender equality. Her central message was that the Asia-Pacific region's demographic potential can only be realized if governments remove the structural barriers preventing young women from participating fully in society and the economy. Achieving this requires not only appropriate policies and programs but also sustained political commitment and meaningful participation by young people themselves.

"The region has ambition. What is now required is the political will."

— Ms. Sai Jyothirmai Racherla



Hon. Krisel Lagman

Member of Parliament, Philippines

Presentation: Migrant Care Workers and Labour Mobility

Executive Summary

Hon. Krisel Lagman examined the contribution and vulnerabilities of migrant care workers, drawing on her experience as a parliamentarian, former local chief executive, registered nurse and someone who had previously worked abroad. She emphasized that women constitute a substantial majority of the global care workforce and that the Philippines is an important source country for migrant nurses, caregivers, domestic workers and other care professionals.

While acknowledging the economic opportunities and income generated through labour migration, she highlighted its significant human and social dimensions. Migrant care workers remain vulnerable to low wages, excessive working hours, insecure employment, recruitment scams, inadequate labour protection, discrimination and various forms of abuse. At the same time, outward migration of care workers can contribute to domestic shortages, family separation and the redistribution of caregiving responsibilities to other family members, particularly women.

Key Messages

Hon. Lagman emphasized that labour migration should be assessed not only in terms of remittances or economic opportunity but also in terms of worker protection, family well-being and the sustainability of national care systems. The feminization of migration means that many women provide essential care in destination countries while their own families and communities must reorganize the care responsibilities they leave behind.

She highlighted the particular vulnerability of care workers employed inside private households, where working conditions are difficult to monitor and where workers may have limited access to formal labour protections or avenues for redress.

Her intervention also demonstrated that even countries with extensive migrant-worker legislation continue to face implementation challenges. Effective protection therefore requires not only laws but also adequately resourced institutions, international cooperation, accessible assistance and informed workers.

Policies

- **Establish comprehensive protection across the migration cycle.** Migrant-worker frameworks should cover ethical recruitment, pre-departure preparation, employment abroad, access to assistance and protection, repatriation, return and sustainable reintegration.
- **Strengthen implementation and enforcement of migrant-worker legislation.** Existing laws should be supported by effective monitoring, accessible complaint and redress mechanisms, adequate institutional capacity and clear accountability for implementation.
- **Protect migrant care workers as workers with enforceable rights**. Policies should address low wages, excessive working hours, insecure and informal employment, recruitment abuses, inadequate social protection, discrimination and other vulnerabilities faced by migrant care workers.
- **Strengthen overseas protection mechanisms.** Embassies, consulates, labour offices and migrant-worker institutions should have sufficient capacity and resources to provide timely legal, welfare, health and repatriation assistance to workers in distress.
- **Deepen bilateral and regional labour cooperation**. Agreements with destination countries should strengthen employment standards, worker protection and institutional responsibilities, particularly where migrant care work takes place within private households and is difficult to monitor.

- **Strengthen social protection and sustainable reintegration.** Returning migrant workers should have access to skills development, livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurship support that enable them to build sustainable economic alternatives following overseas employment.
- **Recognize and support unpaid caregivers.** Unpaid caregiving should be acknowledged as a significant social and economic contribution, accompanied by practical support such as healthcare, skills development, livelihood opportunities and protection against discrimination.
- **Invest in community-level care infrastructure.** Childcare, child-minding, elderly-care and other locally accessible services should be expanded to reduce unpaid care burdens and enable women to work while allowing girls to remain in school.

Recommendations

Hon. Lagman recommended that countries approach migrant-worker protection as a **continuous responsibility extending across the entire migration cycle**, rather than focusing primarily on deployment or responding only after workers encounter difficulties overseas. Strong legislation should be accompanied by effective implementation, monitoring and adequately resourced institutions capable of protecting workers in countries of destination.

She emphasized the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation with destination countries because many protections cannot be effectively enforced by countries of origin acting alone. Embassies, consulates, labour offices and relevant institutions should have sufficient capacity to provide timely legal, welfare and health assistance, while workers should receive clear information about their rights and available protection mechanisms.

Reintegration should likewise become an integral component of migration policy. Returning workers and their families should have access to skills development, livelihood and entrepreneurship opportunities that support sustainable economic reintegration.

Hon. Lagman also recommended expanding practical care services at community level. Her local-government examples demonstrated how childcare and child-minding services can enable parents to participate in employment and prevent older girls from leaving school to care for younger siblings, while elderly-care facilities can reduce the burden on family caregivers.

Calls for Action

Hon. Lagman **urged parliamentarians to:**

- **Strengthen protection throughout the migration cycle.** Ensure that migrant-worker legislation provides effective safeguards from recruitment and deployment through employment abroad, access to assistance, repatriation, return and reintegration.
- **Close the gap between legislation and implementation.** Use parliamentary oversight and budget scrutiny to ensure that migrant-worker institutions, embassies, consulates and labour offices have sufficient authority, resources and capacity to protect workers and respond effectively to exploitation, abuse and other vulnerabilities.
- **Strengthen cross-border protection.** Promote bilateral labour agreements, regional cooperation and stronger engagement with destination countries so that migrant care workers enjoy enforceable protections even when working beyond their country of origin.
- **Invest in sustainable reintegration.** Support policies and financing for skills development, livelihoods and entrepreneurship so that returning migrant workers and their families have viable economic opportunities after overseas employment.
- **Recognize and support unpaid caregivers.** Advance legislation and practical measures that acknowledge unpaid caregiving as a valuable social and economic contribution and provide caregivers with appropriate healthcare, skills, livelihood opportunities and protection from discrimination.

- **Invest in community-level care services.** Champion childcare, child-minding, elderly-care and other accessible services that reduce unpaid care burdens, enable women to participate in employment and help prevent girls from leaving school because of caregiving responsibilities.
- **Use parliamentary cooperation to accelerate reform.** Utilize AFPPD and other regional platforms to exchange legislation, implementation experience and practical models for migrant-worker protection and sustainable care provision.

Conclusion

Hon. Lagman's intervention highlighted both the indispensable contribution and continuing vulnerability of migrant care workers. Drawing on the Philippine experience, she demonstrated that strong legislation and dedicated institutions can provide an important foundation for migrant-worker protection, while acknowledging that significant gaps remain in implementation, monitoring, overseas enforcement, social protection and reintegration.

Her contribution also underscored the wider social consequences of labour migration, including family separation, domestic shortages of care workers and the transfer of unpaid caregiving responsibilities to other women. Through examples from local government, she further demonstrated that practical investments in childcare and elderly-care services can remove barriers to women's employment and girls' education. Her overall message was that labour mobility should ultimately serve a broader objective: a care economy that protects workers, recognizes unpaid caregivers and is safe, decent, equitable, gender-responsive and sustainable for workers, families and societies.

"Our goal should be a care economy that is safe, decent, equitable, gender-responsive, and sustainable for all workers, families, and societies."
— Hon. Krisel Lagman



Hon. Çiğdem Erdoğan

Member of Parliament, Türkiye

Presentation: Strengthening the Care Economy for Sustainable Development

Executive Summary

Hon. Çiğdem Erdoğan presented the care economy as a multidimensional national-development issue that can no longer be treated simply as social assistance for children, older persons and persons with disabilities. She emphasized that care policies directly affect labour-force participation, particularly women's ability to enter and remain in employment, and should therefore be integrated into broader economic, employment, industrial, family and demographic strategies.

Drawing on Türkiye's experience, she outlined an approach encompassing childcare and early education, parental support and flexible employment, elderly care, disability services, community-based models, respite support and financial assistance for family caregivers. A central theme of her intervention was that sustainable care systems must protect not only those receiving care but also the people providing it.

Key Messages

Hon. Erdoğan emphasized that the care economy should be recognized as a vital component of national development, with direct implications for labor-force participation, economic productivity, family well-being and demographic resilience. Care policy should therefore be integrated

systematically with economic, employment, industrial, family and demographic policies rather than addressed as an isolated social-policy concern.

She further stressed that traditional care arrangements, in which responsibility rests predominantly with families—and disproportionately with women—are increasingly unsustainable in the face of changing demographic patterns, family structures and labour-market realities. A sustainable care economy requires a shift towards shared societal responsibility, with national and local governments, the private sector, families, civil society and communities playing complementary roles.

Her intervention also reinforced the principle that accessible and responsive care services can support both social well-being and women's economic participation. Strengthening the care economy is therefore not solely about supporting vulnerable groups; it is also an investment in gender equality, employment, social cohesion and long-term demographic resilience.

Policies

- **Mainstream the care economy across national development policy.** Care should be integrated into economic, employment, industrial, family, social and demographic strategies rather than treated as a stand-alone welfare issue.
- **Develop a comprehensive care system across the life course.** Policy frameworks should address childcare and early education, elderly care, disability support, community-based services and assistance to family caregivers as interconnected components of a national care architecture.
- **Expand accessible and quality childcare and early childhood services.** Childcare and preschool provision should support children's development while enabling parents, particularly women, to enter, remain in or return to employment.
- **Strengthen work-family balance.** Employment and family policies should provide appropriate parental support and flexible working arrangements that enable women and men to combine employment with caregiving responsibilities more equitably.
- **Strengthen elderly and disability care.** Care systems should integrate health, social, rehabilitation and psychosocial support and expand community- and home-based alternatives where appropriate, allowing individuals to remain connected to their families and communities.
- **Support family and informal caregivers.** Families providing care at home should have access to appropriate professional services, respite care and other forms of assistance that reduce excessive physical, emotional and financial caregiving burdens.
- **Formalize and professionalize the care workforce.** Care workers should have access to formal employment, social security and decent working conditions, alongside professional recognition, appropriate occupational standards and certification.
- **Redistribute responsibility for care across society.** Care should be recognized as a shared responsibility involving national and local governments, employers and the private sector, families, civil society and communities rather than being assigned predominantly to women.
- **Address social norms alongside legislative reform.** Public awareness and engagement with civil society, communities and the media should complement legislation and services in promoting more equitable caregiving roles for women and men.

Recommendations

Hon. Erdoğan recommended the development of a **coherent and integrated national care architecture** capable of responding to care needs throughout the life course. Rather than addressing childcare, elderly care, disability services and workforce protection separately, these areas should form part of a broader development framework linked to employment, family wellbeing, gender equality and demographic change.

She emphasized that accessible and affordable childcare and early education should be expanded alongside measures that enable parents to reconcile employment and family responsibilities. At the same time, elderly and disability care should increasingly combine health, social, rehabilitation and psychosocial support, with community- and home-based options available where appropriate.

A sustainable system should also provide stronger support to family caregivers while ensuring that professional care workers receive formal employment, social security, decent working conditions, professional recognition and appropriate standards and certification.

Importantly, Hon. Erdoğan recommended combining **service expansion and legislative reform with measures to transform social norms around caregiving.** Increasing women's labor-force participation will not by itself produce an equitable care system if women continue to carry disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care. Greater public awareness and engagement with civil society and the media should therefore accompany policy reform and encourage care to be shared more equitably within households and across society.

Calls for Action

Hon. Erdoğan urged parliamentarians to:

- **Elevate care as a national development priority.** Integrate the care economy into economic, employment, family, social and demographic legislation and ensure that care is recognized as essential social and economic infrastructure.
- **Secure sustained public investment in care.** Use budgetary powers to expand accessible and quality childcare, elderly care, disability services, community-based care and appropriate support for family caregivers.
- **Protect and professionalize the care workforce.** Strengthen legislation providing care workers with formal employment, social security, decent working conditions, professional recognition, appropriate standards and certification.
- **Promote shared responsibility for care.** Advance policies that distribute caregiving responsibilities more equitably among women and men and across government, local authorities, employers, families, civil society and communities.
- **Challenge discriminatory social norms.** Use parliamentary leadership alongside legislation to promote public awareness and engage civil society, communities and the media in changing the perception that caregiving is predominantly women's responsibility.
- **Strengthen accountability for implementation.** Scrutinize whether care policies and budgets are producing accessible services, improving conditions for care workers and genuinely reducing the disproportionate care burden carried by women.
- **Promote parliamentary exchange and cooperation.** Use AFPPD and other international and regional platforms to share legislative experience, care models and implementation lessons that can be adapted to differing national contexts.

Conclusion

Hon. Erdoğan's intervention reinforced the importance of approaching the care economy as a comprehensive national-development issue rather than a narrowly defined social-welfare concern. Türkiye's experience illustrated how childcare and early education, parental support, elderly and disability care, community-based services and measures supporting work-family balance can be brought together within a broader policy framework.

She emphasized that sustainable care systems must protect both those receiving care and those providing it, including through formal employment, social security, decent working conditions and professional recognition for care workers. Importantly, she argued that care cannot remain disproportionately assigned to women or families alone; responsibility must be shared across government, local authorities, employers, families, civil society and society more broadly. Her

intervention therefore positioned a sustainable care economy as both a gender-equality imperative and an investment in the well-being and resilience of society as a whole.

"A truly sustainable care system protects both those who receive care and those who deliver it." — Hon. Çiğdem Erdoğan

Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion

In concluding the session, Hon. Toshima Karki emphasized that the discussion had demonstrated the broad and interconnected nature of the care economy. The presentations connected youth and women's labor-force participation, unpaid care, migrant care workers, childcare, elderly care, disability support and social protection, demonstrating that these issues cannot be effectively addressed through isolated sectoral interventions.

Drawing on Nepal's experience with labor migration, the Chair drew particular attention to migrant workers who return home with serious health problems and may face difficulties accessing or affording appropriate healthcare and insurance. Her observation added an important dimension to the session by demonstrating that the care economy must also consider the long-term health, protection and dignity of workers themselves.

The overall discussion established that **recognition of care is necessary but insufficient.** Sustainable progress requires legislation, public investment, implementation capacity and institutional mechanisms capable of translating policy commitments into accessible services and enforceable protections. Care must increasingly be recognized as essential social and economic infrastructure, while unpaid responsibilities need to be reduced and redistributed more equitably.

The session further demonstrated that gender equality must remain central to care-economy reform. Whether addressing young women classified as NEET, migrant domestic and care workers, working parents or family caregivers, the unequal distribution of care repeatedly emerged as a structural barrier to women's education, employment and economic participation.

For parliamentarians, the discussion pointed to a clear responsibility: to translate the recognition of care into laws, budgets, oversight and accountable implementation. Regional parliamentary cooperation through AFPPD can complement national action by enabling countries to exchange legislation, implementation experience and practical models that can be adapted to different demographic, economic and social contexts.

Question / Open Forum

Question 1 — Ms. Ermalena M. Hasbullah, IFPPD Secretary: Parliamentary Action on Vulnerability and Gender Inequality

An Indonesian parliamentarian highlighted the vulnerability of women and young people experiencing low levels of education, underemployment and poverty and asked what parliamentarians across the region could practically do to strengthen existing legislation and translate regional learning into national action.

Response — Ms. Sai Jyothirmai Racherla

Ms. Racherla emphasized that parliamentarians, as lawmakers, possess significant power to create the enabling legislative environment required for gender equality. She highlighted holistic education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and argued that young people require accurate and appropriate information to protect their health and future opportunities.

She described the desired pathway as enabling girls to remain in school, proceed to further education and training, enter decent and gainful employment and remain economically active. Preventing child marriage and adolescent pregnancy is important to maintaining this pathway. Governments should simultaneously strengthen care infrastructure so that caregiving responsibilities are redistributed rather than automatically assigned to women.

Key Takeaway: Parliamentarians should pursue coordinated action across gender equality, education, health, employment and care rather than addressing these policy areas separately.

Question 2 — Hon. Deepender Hooda, MP India: Lessons from the Philippine Migrant-Worker Framework

An Indian parliamentarian highlighted the significant roles of India and the Philippines in supplying migrant healthcare professionals and expressed particular interest in the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers and bilateral labour partnerships. The delegate referred to legislation under consideration in India concerning overseas mobility and worker welfare and asked what lessons could be drawn from the Philippine experience.

Response — Hon. Krisel Lagman

Hon. Lagman explained that the Department of Migrant Workers, established in 2021, was relatively new but already actively addressing migrant-worker needs. Assistance includes legal, medical and financial support to overseas Filipino workers and affected families. She acknowledged that implementation gaps remain and that further work is required.

Follow-Up: Hon. Lagman offered to continue the exchange, share information on implementation lessons and existing gaps, and provide the Indian parliamentarian with a copy of the relevant Philippine measure. The Indian delegate welcomed the offer and highlighted AFPPD's value as a platform for sharing legislation and good practices.

Question 3 — Türkiye: Gender Equality and the Unequal Distribution of Care

A delegate from Türkiye emphasized that unpaid and paid care responsibilities continue to fall disproportionately on women and observed that wars, armed conflict, natural disasters, ecological pressures and economic crises can further intensify the burden.

The delegate argued that the undervaluation of care is connected to the wider undervaluation of women's labour and asked what policies would be most effective in simultaneously addressing the care burden and empowering women.

Response: No substantive response to this intervention was recorded in the working transcript before the Chair proceeded to the next intervention.

Key Takeaway: The intervention reinforced the session's central finding that care-economy reform cannot be separated from gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Question 4 — Hon. Dr. Anara Naeem, MP Maldives: Changing Social Norms Around Care

A delegate from the Maldives asked how countries could initiate awareness programmes in societies where household work and care-giving continue to be regarded primarily as women's responsibilities.

Response — Hon. Çiğdem Erdoğan / Türkiye Delegation

The response acknowledged that similar traditional assumptions exist in Türkiye. As women's labour-force participation has increased, awareness of the need for a more equitable division of caregiving responsibilities has gradually developed.

The Türkiye delegation emphasized that addressing unequal care requires a combination of legislation and public awareness. Parliamentary action should therefore be complemented by cooperation with the media, civil society and other stakeholders to influence social perceptions and promote more equitable sharing of care responsibilities.

Key Takeaway: Legal reform and social-norm change must proceed together if responsibility for care is to become more equitable.

Question 5 — Civil Society: SRHR Protection for Migrant Workers

A civil-society representative asked Hon. Lagman about legal protection for migrant workers experiencing violations of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, highlighting compulsory pregnancy and HIV testing, possible deportation and sexual and gender-based violence.

Response — Hon. Krisel Lagman

Hon. Lagman explained that Philippine embassies, consulates, labour offices and other relevant services play important roles in assisting overseas workers with legal and health needs and repatriation where necessary. She acknowledged that she was unable to provide detailed information during the session on the mechanisms applicable to every form of SRHR violation.

Follow-Up: Hon. Lagman offered to connect the participant with appropriate Philippine experts and contacts who could provide more detailed information on relevant protections and mechanisms.

Question 6 — Timor-Leste: Sustainable Financing and Practical Care Services

A Timor-Leste delegate asked what practical and sustainable approaches countries had found effective for expanding childcare and other care services, reducing unpaid care burdens and increasing women's economic participation. The delegate also referred to Timor-Leste's interest in learning from the Philippine experience.

Response — Hon. Krisel Lagman

Drawing on her experience as a former local chief executive, Hon. Lagman emphasized the important role of local government in identifying specific care gaps and designing practical services. She explained that successful interventions do not necessarily have to originate as national programmes; local governments can respond directly to the constraints experienced within their communities.

She cited adult or senior-care centres as a means of providing safe care for older persons while freeing family caregivers to participate in employment. Child-minding and day-care centres can similarly allow parents to work while preventing older girls from leaving school to care for younger siblings. She also highlighted accessible reproductive-health services as an important part of the enabling environment for women and girls.

Key Takeaway: Governments should identify the practical care constraints preventing women and girls from participating in education and employment and use targeted public services and investment to close those gaps.

Question 7 — Bhutan: Structural Barriers Keeping Young Women NEET

A delegate from Bhutan asked Ms. Racherla to elaborate on the structural barriers causing young women to be disproportionately represented among NEET populations and what parliamentarians and national legislation could do beyond reforms in gender equality, health and education.

Response — Ms. Sai Jyothirmai Racherla

Ms. Racherla cautioned against short-term or "band-aid" solutions and emphasized the importance of addressing underlying structural and systemic causes of exclusion. Women experience intersecting disadvantages affecting access to education, employment, economic opportunities and their ability to pursue their aspirations.

She reiterated that gender equality must therefore be treated as a structural policy objective rather than a stand-alone programme. Time constraints prevented a longer response, and she offered to continue the discussion separately with the delegate.

Key Takeaway: Sustainable reductions in NEET among young women require structural reforms addressing the underlying gender inequalities that shape education, care responsibilities and economic opportunity.



SESSION 3: Climate Change and Vulnerable Groups: From Risk to Resilience

Session Objective : *To build a common vision on impact of climate change to the population, especially for vulnerable groups such as youth, women and girls and elderly people.*





Chair: Senator Datuk Wira Dr Mohd Hatta Md Ramli

Senator, Senate Malaysia

Session Context

Session 3, **"Climate Change and Vulnerable Groups: From Risk to Resilience,"** examined how climate change interacts with demographic vulnerabilities across the Asia-Pacific region. The session sought to build a common vision of the impacts of climate change on populations, with particular attention to youth, women and girls, older persons and other vulnerable groups. It explored how climate-related shocks—including extreme heat, floods, displacement and disruption of essential services—can deepen existing inequalities and undermine health, education, livelihoods, care systems and demographic resilience.

The session was chaired and moderated by **Senator Datuk Wira Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli,** Malaysia, who introduced the three scheduled speakers: **Hon. Syerleena Abdul Rashid, MP, Malaysia,** addressing the impact of climate change on older persons; **Ms Dolores Devesi, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Pacific,** addressing climate-related disruption to education, adolescent girls and health; and **Hon. Sahibzada Sibghatullah, MP, Pakistan**, addressing young people on the front line of climate change and their participation in decision-making. The session subsequently included an additional intervention from **Hon. Dr. Toshima Karki, MP Nepal.**

Short Executive Summary

Senator Datuk Wira Dr Mohd Hatta Md Ramli framed climate change as an immediate and increasingly consequential challenge for populations across the region rather than a distant environmental concern. Drawing attention to recent experiences of flooding and other climate-

related disasters, he emphasized the importance of examining climate impacts through the experiences of people and communities most exposed to them.

He particularly underscored the inequity at the heart of the climate crisis: populations that have contributed comparatively little to global emissions may nevertheless experience some of its most severe consequences. This framing provided the foundation for the session's examination of older persons, adolescent girls, young people and climate-vulnerable countries.

Key Messages

The Moderator stressed that climate change is a current and pressing regional issue whose effects are already being experienced through floods and other extreme events. Climate vulnerability is not evenly distributed, and populations with fewer resources and less responsibility for emissions may carry a disproportionate share of the burden.

He further highlighted the responsibility of parliamentarians to represent these communities more strongly. Following the first presentation, he observed that many of the people most affected by climate change are not those responsible for the highest emissions and argued that parliamentarians should therefore “be speaking louder” on their behalf.

Speaker Proceedings



Hon. Syerleena Abdul Rashid

Member of Parliament, Malaysia

Focus: Climate Change, Population Ageing and Older Persons

Executive Summary

Hon. Syerleena Abdul Rashid examined the intersection between **climate change and population ageing,** demonstrating how extreme heat, flooding and disaster displacement can disproportionately affect older persons, particularly those living alone or experiencing dementia, chronic illness or limited mobility.

Drawing on the personal example of her 81-year-old mother living with dementia, she illustrated a fundamental weakness in conventional emergency systems: issuing a warning does not necessarily mean that everyone can understand or act upon it. An older person may not recognise dehydration, remember a heat warning, use a smartphone, walk independently to an evacuation centre, or leave home without medication, mobility equipment or assistance. Climate resilience, she argued, must therefore be designed around people's actual capacities and circumstances.

Key Messages

Her central message was that **climate change does not affect everyone equally.** For many people, extreme heat may be uncomfortable; for an older person living alone, with dementia or chronic illness, it can become a medical emergency.

She highlighted the convergence of two major transformations: **the planet is warming while populations are ageing.** As the number of older persons increases, governments can no longer design climate and disaster systems as though they constitute a small population on the margins.

She further stressed that vulnerability continues after the immediate disaster has passed. Floods may wash away medication and mobility aids, interrupt electricity supplies and healthcare appointments, and create confusion and distress during evacuation. Relief centres that are crowded, hot or physically inaccessible may create additional risks for older persons.

Another important message concerned **visibility in public policy**. If vulnerability data do not identify older persons and their specific needs, they may also remain invisible in government planning and budgets.

Policies

- **Age-responsive climate and disaster legislation:** Embed the specific needs, capacities and vulnerabilities of older persons systematically across climate adaptation, disaster-risk reduction and emergency-response frameworks, rather than addressing ageing only after disasters occur.
- **Age-responsive emergency protocols:** Establish welfare checks during extreme heat, priority evacuation arrangements for persons with limited mobility, accessible transportation and targeted assistance for older persons living alone, with dementia, chronic illness or other conditions that may affect their ability to respond independently to emergency warnings.
- **Age-friendly evacuation and relief centres:** Set minimum accessibility and care standards for emergency shelters, including ramps, accessible toilets, adequate seating, medication storage and quieter spaces for persons living with dementia, supported by personnel trained to respond to mobility, hearing, visual and cognitive difficulties.
- **Disaggregated climate-vulnerability data:** Require climate and disaster-risk assessments to capture age, gender, disability, health conditions and living arrangements so authorities can identify people who live alone, depend on daily medication or electricity-powered medical equipment, or require evacuation assistance.
- **Evidence-informed climate budgeting:** Link vulnerability data directly to preparedness planning and resource allocation so that older persons who are visible in risk assessments are also reflected in government budgets, services and emergency-response capacity.
- **Community-based preparedness and care systems:** Integrate village committees, residents' associations, neighborhood groups, clinics, religious organizations and volunteers into local preparedness arrangements, drawing on their knowledge of residents who require additional assistance.
- **Climate-resilient health and care infrastructure:** Strengthen clinics and care facilities with reliable electricity, backup power and cooling systems so essential services can continue during heatwaves, floods and other emergencies.
- **Climate-resilient housing and social protection:** Improve the resilience of housing occupied by older persons and ensure that social assistance recognizes the additional electricity, healthcare and other costs climate change can impose on low-income older households.
- **Regional standards and legislative cooperation:** Use AFPPD as a platform to develop shared legislative approaches, exchange effective community-care models and explore common standards for age-friendly evacuation centres across the region.

Recommendations

Hon. Syeleena recommended a transition from **reactive disaster response to anticipatory, age-responsive resilience planning**. The needs of older persons should be incorporated throughout the policy cycle—from vulnerability assessment and legislation to budgeting, infrastructure design, evacuation planning, healthcare continuity and post-disaster support. Governments should recognize that older populations are diverse and that chronological age alone does not adequately capture vulnerability; health status, mobility, cognitive capacity, living arrangements and access to family or community support must also inform preparedness.

She further recommended connecting climate policy more deliberately with **healthcare, housing, social protection and community-based care,** rather than addressing these systems separately. Local networks should form part of formal preparedness arrangements because they are often best placed to identify older persons requiring assistance before an emergency occurs.

At the regional level, she recommended sustained parliamentary cooperation through AFPPD so that countries can **share legislative approaches, effective community-care practices and age-friendly emergency standards,** reducing duplication and enabling countries to learn from one another's experience.

Calls for Action

Hon. Syeleena called on parliamentarians to:

- **Legislate for age-responsive climate resilience.** Parliamentarians should ensure that the needs of older persons are explicitly embedded in climate adaptation, disaster-risk reduction and emergency-response legislation, rather than addressed only after disasters occur.
- **Use budgetary and oversight powers to close protection gaps.** Parliamentarians should demand disaggregated vulnerability data and adequate investment in age-friendly evacuation systems, resilient healthcare and care facilities, accessible housing, social protection and community-based preparedness.
- **Champion ageing and climate resilience as a regional parliamentary priority.** Through AFPPD, parliamentarians should advance shared legislative approaches, exchange effective community-care models and promote common standards for age-friendly evacuation and disaster response.

Conclusion

Hon. Syerleena concluded that climate resilience must ultimately protect both the **safety and dignity of older persons.** Effective climate planning requires governments to know who is at risk, anticipate their needs and ensure that emergency systems remain accessible regardless of age, health status or mobility.

Her intervention positioned ageing not as a peripheral welfare concern but as an integral component of climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and demographic resilience.

"Hope is good to have, but it is not a policy." —**Hon. Syerleena Abdul Rashid**



Ms Dolores Devesi

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Pacific

Focus: Climate Change, Education, Adolescent Girls and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Executive Summary

Ms Dolores Devesi brought a Pacific perspective to the session, highlighting how climate change can magnify vulnerabilities among adolescents and particularly girls. Her intervention demonstrated that climate disasters do considerably more than damage infrastructure: they can interrupt education, disrupt essential health services, increase unpaid care responsibilities and expose young people to heightened protection and health risks.

She emphasized that adolescent girls must not be understood only as vulnerable populations requiring protection. They are also **rights-holders, knowledge-holders and leaders** whose experiences and perspectives should inform climate policy and decision-making.

Key Messages

Ms Devesi stressed that climate-related disruption to education can have consequences far beyond the classroom. Cyclones, flooding, displacement and interrupted transport may turn temporary school closures into prolonged absence. For adolescent girls, climate stress may increase unpaid care work and contribute to school dropout, early marriage, unintended pregnancy, transactional sex and other vulnerabilities.

Schools, she emphasized, provide more than education. They connect girls with peers, trusted teachers, information and support networks. When those relationships are interrupted, exposure to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and early marriage may increase.

She also drew attention to **menstrual health and SRHR during emergencies,** particularly where water, sanitation, privacy and essential supplies are disrupted. Climate-related interruptions to supply chains may further affect access to condoms, HIV test kits and other essential health commodities.

A further central message concerned **youth participation.** Young people in the Pacific increasingly see themselves as knowledge-holders, negotiators, organizers and leaders already delivering climate action. They therefore seek genuine representation in the spaces where climate decisions are made.

Policies

- **Climate-resilient education systems:** Strengthen education systems so that learning can continue or resume rapidly following cyclones, floods, displacement and other climate-related emergencies, with particular attention to preventing adolescent girls from permanently dropping out.
- **Post-disaster school-return monitoring**: Move beyond counting damaged or reopened schools by identifying which children and adolescents have not returned, why they remain absent and what protection, health or socioeconomic barriers are preventing their return.
- **Protection of adolescent girls during climate emergencies:** Integrate safeguards against heightened risks associated with prolonged school absence and displacement, including gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, unintended pregnancy, early marriage and increased unpaid care responsibilities.
- **Inclusive climate and family-life education:** Integrate climate education within formal schooling while extending appropriate information and outreach to young people outside the formal education system, including those in vocational training and employment.
- **Explicit integration of SRHR into climate policy:** Name sexual and reproductive health and rights directly within climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and emergency-response policies instead of assuming that broad references to gender will automatically address SRHR needs.
- **Continuity of essential SRHR and HIV services:** Strengthen health and supply systems to maintain access to essential SRHR services and commodities, including HIV-related services, during disasters, displacement and relocation.
- **Menstrual health and dignity in emergencies:** Incorporate access to water, sanitation, privacy and menstrual-health supplies into disaster preparedness and humanitarian-response arrangements.
- **Climate-resilient health systems:** Strengthen healthcare infrastructure, service-delivery arrangements and supply chains so that essential services can continue despite increasingly frequent and severe climate-related disruption.

- **Mental health and psychosocial support:** Integrate mental health and psychosocial wellbeing into climate preparedness and disaster response, recognizing the cumulative effects of repeated emergencies, displacement and uncertainty on young people.
- **Meaningful youth participation:** Establish mechanisms through which adolescents and young people participate substantively in climate policy development and decision-making as rights-holders, knowledge-holders, organizers and leaders—not solely as beneficiaries of programs.

Recommendations

Ms Devesi recommended that climate resilience be understood as **protection of people and rights as much as protection of physical infrastructure.** Rebuilding a damaged school is insufficient if adolescent girls never return; restoring a health facility is inadequate if essential SRHR commodities and services remain unavailable. Climate policies should therefore assess recovery through continuity of education, healthcare, protection and wellbeing alongside physical reconstruction.

She recommended that **SRHR be made explicit throughout climate and disaster frameworks,** accompanied by resilient supply chains and continuity arrangements capable of functioning during emergencies. Menstrual health, privacy, sanitation and access to essential services should similarly be planned for before disasters occur rather than addressed only after needs become acute.

Education policy should also extend beyond formal schooling to reach young people who are outside the education system, while mental-health and psychosocial support should become a recognized component of preparedness and resilience.

Above all, Ms Devesi recommended a shift from **consulting young people to sharing meaningful decision-making space with them.** Young people should have opportunities to influence the policies and programs affecting their futures, building on their existing roles as community organizers, advocates and climate actors.

Calls for Action

Ms Devesi called on parliamentarians to:

- **Protect girls' education as a climate-resilience priority**. Parliamentarians should ensure that climate and disaster policies safeguard continuity of education and actively identify and support girls and other young people who do not return to school following emergencies.
- **Make SRHR explicit in climate legislation and budgets.** Parliamentarians should ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights, menstrual health, HIV-related services and essential health commodities are clearly incorporated into climate preparedness and emergency-response frameworks rather than being assumed under broader gender commitments.
- **Invest in resilient health, education and psychosocial-support systems.** Parliamentary scrutiny and public financing should ensure that essential services can continue during climate-related emergencies and respond to the cumulative mental-health impacts of repeated disasters.
- **Give young people genuine decision-making power.** Parliamentarians should move beyond symbolic consultation and create meaningful opportunities for adolescents and young people to influence climate legislation, policies, budgets and programmes as rights-holders, knowledge-holders and climate leaders.

Conclusion

Ms Devesi concluded by reframing investment in adolescent girls as a core climate strategy. Protecting education sustains resilience; protecting SRHR preserves essential rights and services during crisis; safeguarding mental health strengthens preparedness; and sharing decision-making power with young people advances climate justice.

Her intervention therefore broadened the meaning of climate adaptation from protecting infrastructure to protecting rights, opportunities, well-being and agency.

"Protecting girls' education is climate adaptation. Protecting their sexual reproductive health and rights is climate resilience. Protecting their mental health is disaster preparedness. And giving them genuine decision-making power is climate justice."
— Ms Dolores Devesi



Hon. Sahibzada Sibghatullah

Member of Parliament, Pakistan

Focus: Young People on the Front Line of Climate Change and Climate Decision-Making

Executive Summary

Hon. Sahibzada Sibghatullah examined climate change through the experience of Pakistan, linking the country's exposure to severe climate impacts with its large youth population. He argued that young people are among those most affected by climate disasters, but are also among the first to respond when communities face emergencies.

His presentation therefore challenged a purely vulnerability-based understanding of youth. Young people should be recognized not only as those whose education, employment and futures are threatened by climate change, but also as **responders, innovators, volunteers and partners in resilience** who deserve a meaningful role in climate decision-making.

Key Messages

Hon. Sibghatullah framed Pakistan's experience as an issue of **climate justice**, stressing the imbalance between the country's contribution to global greenhouse-gas emissions and the scale of climate impacts it experiences.

He described how floods can close schools, destroy small businesses, sever roads and prevent access to healthcare. These impacts are particularly significant for a youthful population, while economic distress may create additional consequences for girls, including removal from school and early marriage.

At the same time, he emphasized young people's agency. During floods, young people operate rescue boats, run relief camps, volunteer as health workers, raise funds and use mobile technology to identify affected communities. His central message was that **young people are already on the front line of climate action; what they still require is a seat at the table where decisions are made.**

He also underscored the responsibility of parliamentarians to scrutinize ministries, approve climate budgets and legislate for climate action.

Policies and Recommendations

- **Institutionalized youth participation in climate governance:** Create formal mechanisms that give young people a genuine role in climate decision-making rather than limiting their participation to symbolic representation, occasional consultations or invitations as guests.
- **Climate education and green skills development:** Equip young people with practical climate knowledge and skills relevant to emerging green sectors so they can participate effectively in adaptation, resilience and the transition towards greener economies.
- **Green employment pathways for young people:** Connect climate education and skills development with meaningful livelihood and employment opportunities so that a large youth population can contribute to both economic development and climate resilience.

- **Youth-accessible climate finance:** Develop small, simple and accessible grant mechanisms that enable young innovators, volunteers and community-based initiatives—including those outside national capitals—to obtain resources for locally driven climate solutions.
- Decentralization of climate financing: Ensure that climate resources are not concentrated solely in large centrally administered programs but reach local communities and youth-led initiatives already responding to climate impacts on the ground.
- **AFPPD Youth Climate Network:** Establish a regional mechanism linking young climate actors across Asia and the Pacific to exchange practical experience, innovations and locally generated solutions, with AFPPD serving as a parliamentary convening platform.
- **Strengthened parliamentary climate oversight:** Use parliamentary committees and other oversight mechanisms to scrutinize ministries, review climate policies, examine implementation and hold governments accountable for climate commitments.
- **Climate-responsive public finance:** Strengthen parliamentary scrutiny of climate budgets and expenditure, including mechanisms capable of identifying and tracking climate-related public spending.
- **Effective international climate finance:** Ensure that international mechanisms established to address climate impacts—including the Loss and Damage Fund—are adequately resourced and capable of delivering tangible support rather than remaining institutional commitments without sufficient financing.

Recommendations

Hon. Sibghatullah recommended repositioning young people from **recipients of climate policy to active partners in climate governance.** Their demonstrated roles as first responders, volunteers, health workers, fundraisers and users of digital tools during emergencies provide a practical foundation for greater participation in formal decision-making.

He recommended linking **youth participation with climate education, green skills and employment,** recognizing that participation becomes more meaningful when young people possess both the capabilities and economic opportunities to contribute to climate solutions. In countries with large youth populations, this connection can also support wider demographic and development objectives.

Climate financing should similarly be redesigned so that it is accessible at community level. Small and administratively simple grants could enable young innovators and local organizations to convert ideas and voluntary action into sustained climate initiatives.

At the regional level, his proposed **AFPPD Youth Climate Network** could provide a structured mechanism for exchanging knowledge and solutions across countries while strengthening the connection between youth climate action and parliamentary institutions.

Calls for Action

Hon. Sibghatullah called on parliamentarians to:

- **Institutionalize youth participation in climate governance.** Parliamentarians should create genuine and sustained spaces for young people to participate in developing, implementing and reviewing climate laws and policies—not merely invite them as guests or symbolic representatives.
- **Invest in climate education, green skills and opportunities.** Parliamentarians should use legislation and budgetary decisions to connect young people's climate knowledge and skills with practical pathways to green employment and sustainable livelihoods.
- Make climate finance accessible to young people and communities. Parliamentarians should advocate financing mechanisms that include small, simple and accessible grants so that youth

innovators and community actors—not only large centrally managed programs—can obtain resources to implement local climate solutions.

- Strengthen parliamentary accountability for climate commitments. Parliamentarians should scrutinize ministries, climate budgets and expenditure, and demand evidence that national and international climate-finance commitments translate into measurable implementation.
- **Advance an AFPPD Youth Climate Network.** Parliamentarians should consider establishing a regional platform connecting young climate actors across Asia and the Pacific with parliamentary institutions, enabling exchange of knowledge, experience and locally generated solutions.

Conclusion

Hon. Sibghatullah concluded that young people should not merely be the generation expected to inherit the consequences of climate change. Their demonstrated role as first responders, volunteers and community organizers shows that they already possess the capacity to contribute to solutions.

The challenge for policymakers is therefore to transform youth participation from informal action during emergencies into **institutionalized participation in climate governance, finance and legislation.**

***"Let us count them. Let us fund them. Let us legislate with them, and not merely about them."*—Hon. Sahibzada Sibgh**



Additional Intervention: Hon. Dr Toshima Karki

Member of Parliament, Nepal

Focus: Himalayan Climate Vulnerability, Climate Finance and Climate Justice

Executive Summary

In an additional intervention from Nepal, Hon Dr Toshima brought a compelling **Himalayan and climate-justice perspective** to the session, illustrating how climate change can rapidly escalate from an environmental hazard into a multidimensional human and development crisis. Drawing attention to a recent glacier-related disaster in northern Nepal near the border with China, she described how a sudden climate-related event could destroy in a matter of hours infrastructure, livelihoods and development gains that had taken communities decades to build.

Her intervention demonstrated the interconnected nature of climate vulnerability. Damage to roads and bridges can cut communities off from healthcare and markets; destruction of schools and health facilities can interrupt essential public services; damage to hydropower and other infrastructure can undermine economic activity; and displacement can compound risks for already vulnerable populations. She highlighted in particular the consequences for pregnant women requiring emergency care, older persons and those living with chronic illness or limited mobility, and persons with disabilities who may face additional barriers during evacuation and in accessing emergency shelters.

Against this backdrop, Hon Dr Toshima framed Nepal's experience as fundamentally an issue of **climate justice.** Her central argument was that countries and communities contributing comparatively little to global greenhouse-gas emissions can nevertheless bear disproportionate human, economic and developmental losses. Climate solidarity, she argued, must therefore extend

beyond expressions of concern to tangible international action through accessible finance, technology, early-warning capacity, stronger mitigation and parliamentary leadership.

Key Messages

Hon Dr Toshima emphasized that the climate crisis facing Nepal extends far beyond environmental degradation. The retreat of glaciers and changing Himalayan ecosystems have implications for **water security, food systems, health, infrastructure, livelihoods, economic development and population resilience.** The consequences are also transboundary, given the importance of Himalayan water systems to populations well beyond Nepal.

She stressed that climate disasters can erase development gains with extraordinary speed. Infrastructure that has taken years or decades to construct can be destroyed within hours, forcing vulnerable countries repeatedly to divert scarce public resources towards reconstruction rather than longer-term development. This creates a cycle in which climate vulnerability can deepen fiscal and developmental pressures.

A particularly important dimension of her intervention was the connection between **infrastructure resilience and human vulnerability.** A damaged road is not simply an infrastructure loss when it prevents a pregnant woman experiencing complications from reaching emergency care. An inaccessible evacuation centre is not merely a logistical problem when an older person or a person with disability cannot use it. Her intervention therefore reinforced the need to assess climate resilience through its effects on people's ability to access essential services, safety and protection.

She also highlighted the imbalance between **responsibility for emissions and exposure to climate impacts.** Nepal's experience, in her presentation, exemplified the wider climate-justice challenge facing low-emitting but highly vulnerable countries: those with comparatively limited responsibility for the causes of climate change may face severe consequences and significant costs of adaptation, recovery and reconstruction.

Policies and Recommendations

Hon Dr Toshima called for a stronger international policy response based on the principle that **climate vulnerability must be matched by predictable, accessible and additional financing.** Highly vulnerable countries require resources not only to recover after disasters, but to invest proactively in adaptation and resilience before losses occur. She therefore emphasised the urgency of making adaptation finance and **Loss and Damage financing** practically accessible to countries and communities facing escalating climate impacts, rather than allowing commitments to remain at the level of international pledges.

A second priority was investment in **advanced early-warning, forecasting and real-time hazard-monitoring systems.** For mountainous countries such as Nepal, where glacier-related hazards and other climate events may develop rapidly, timely and accurate information can determine whether communities are able to evacuate and protect lives and critical infrastructure. Strengthening national capacity should be accompanied by regional and international cooperation in **technology transfer and the sharing of satellite, seismic and other relevant monitoring data.** She framed such cooperation as a partnership necessary for collective climate security rather than as charitable assistance.

Hon Dr Toshima further called for stronger action on the **drivers of Himalayan warming and glacier loss**, including reducing short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon and strengthening implementation of mitigation commitments under the Paris Agreement. Her intervention linked global mitigation directly to local survival: additional warming is experienced in vulnerable mountain communities through accelerated glacier loss, changing water systems, flooding, displacement and heightened disaster risk.

Importantly, she introduced **debt and fiscal vulnerability** into the climate-resilience discussion. She argued that countries repeatedly affected by climate disasters should not be trapped in a cycle of borrowing to reconstruct infrastructure that may subsequently be destroyed again. She therefore called for debt relief to be considered as part of the wider climate response for highly vulnerable

countries. This positioned climate finance not only as a question of funding individual projects, but also as an issue of the fiscal space available to governments to protect their populations, rebuild essential infrastructure and pursue long-term resilient development.

At the national level, Hon Dr Toshima highlighted Nepal's reported climate actions, including its **net-zero target for 2045,** strengthened climate commitments, renewable-energy development, electric mobility, forest protection and climate-resilient development. These were presented as evidence of action being undertaken by a highly vulnerable country despite its comparatively limited contribution to global emissions.

At the parliamentary level, she recommended that **climate change, climate resilience and climate finance become standing priorities across the AFPPD parliamentary network.** This would enable parliamentarians to move climate action beyond episodic discussion following disasters and embed it more consistently within legislation, national budgets, oversight and regional parliamentary cooperation.

Calls for Action

Hon Dr Toshima's principal call was for the international community to move f**rom climate sympathy to climate justice.** She urged higher-emitting and better-resourced countries to translate international climate commitments into accessible financing, stronger mitigation, technology transfer and practical support for adaptation and resilience in highly vulnerable countries.

She called on parliamentarians to use their legislative, budgetary and oversight mandates to ensure that climate commitments result in **concrete national action.** Within AFPPD, she urged parliamentarians to elevate climate resilience and climate finance as continuing parliamentary priorities and to use regional cooperation to build stronger collective advocacy for vulnerable countries.

Her intervention also carried a wider regional appeal: **protecting the Himalayas should not be viewed as Nepal's responsibility alone.** The environmental systems and water resources associated with the Himalayan region have implications beyond national borders, making their protection a shared regional and global interest.

Conclusion

Hon Dr Toshima's intervention brought the session's discussions on vulnerability to the level of **international equity and responsibility.** While the three scheduled speakers examined how climate change affects older persons, adolescent girls and young people, the Nepal intervention demonstrated how an entire country's vulnerability can be compounded by geography, infrastructure constraints, limited fiscal space and repeated exposure to climate-related disasters.

Her contribution reinforced the principle that climate resilience cannot depend solely on the capacity of vulnerable countries to adapt using their own resources. It requires **international climate finance that reaches those facing the greatest risks, effective early-warning and monitoring systems, access to technology and data, stronger global mitigation, resilient infrastructure and sustained parliamentary action.**

Most importantly, the intervention reframed climate justice as a matter of implementation. International commitments acquire meaning for vulnerable communities only when they translate into the finance, technology, preparedness and policy measures needed to protect lives, livelihoods and development gains.

"Nepal does not need sympathy. Nepal demands climate justice." **—Hon Dr Toshima**

Chair's / Overall Session Conclusion

In closing, Senator Datuk Wira Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli reflected that the session had addressed difficult and at times distressing realities, but importantly had also generated practical proposals for

responding to them. The interventions demonstrated that climate change is already affecting communities across the Asia-Pacific through multiple and interconnected pathways—from extreme heat and ageing to disrupted education and healthcare, youth livelihoods, displacement and catastrophic damage to infrastructure.

A central conclusion was the **unequal distribution of climate risk.** As the Chair observed, those contributing least to the problem may nevertheless suffer some of its most severe consequences. This principle connected the experiences presented from Malaysia, the Pacific, Pakistan and Nepal.

Across the session, three broader conclusions emerged. First, **climate resilience and demographic resilience are inseparable.** Climate policy must therefore connect with ageing, health, education, SRHR, housing, social protection, livelihoods and care systems. Second, populations described as vulnerable should not be understood solely as passive recipients of assistance. Older persons, adolescent girls, young people and affected communities possess knowledge and capacities that should inform preparedness and policy design. Third, effective resilience requires action **before disaster strikes**—through inclusive legislation, disaggregated data, resilient public services, accessible climate finance, early-warning systems and meaningful participation.

For parliamentarians, the session underscored a particularly important responsibility: to translate the experiences of vulnerable populations into **legislation, budgets, oversight and accountability.** Parliamentary leadership can help ensure that climate commitments are not confined to high-level declarations but result in practical measures that protect people and strengthen community resilience.

Overall, Session 3 reinforced a clear proposition: **climate action must ultimately be people-centred.** Building resilience requires not only protecting those most exposed to climate risks, but also ensuring that they are visible in data, represented in decision-making, supported through public investment and empowered to participate in shaping the solutions that affect their lives.

"We should be speaking louder for them." —**Senator Datuk Wira Dr Mohd Hatta Md. Ramli**

Question / Open Forum

"Question / Open Forum– Not held due to time constraints"

SESSION 4: Digitalization and Innovation for Population Dynamics

Session Objective: *To highlight good practices from Member States in using digital innovation to address demographic challenges.*



Chair / Moderator:

Hon. Tshering Penjor

Member of Parliament, National Assembly, Bhutan

Session Context

Session 4 examined how digitalization and innovation can be harnessed to respond to demographic challenges while ensuring that technological progress remains inclusive, safe and people-centred. The session was chaired by **Hon. Tshering Penjor, Member of Parliament, National Assembly of Bhutan,** who identified the session objective as highlighting good practices from Member States in using digital innovation to address demographic challenges. He noted that the presentations would be followed by an open discussion.

The Chair introduced three speakers representing distinct dimensions of digital transformation across the life course: **Senator Hon. Sue Lines, President of the Senate of Australia,** who addressed child online safety and platform accountability; **Hon. Bolotbek Borbiev, Member of Parliament**, **Kyrgyzstan** who focused on digitalization, youth skills, employment and inclusion; and **Hon. Le Phan Kham of Viet Nam**, who presented Viet Nam's experience in using digital transformation to promote active and healthy ageing.

Executive Summary

Hon. Tshering Penjor framed the session around the practical use of digital innovation to address demographic challenges, providing a platform for Member States to share experiences and approaches. Through the three presentations, the session explored digital transformation from a life-course perspective: protecting children from emerging online harms, connecting young people to skills and economic opportunities, and using digital solutions to support active and healthy ageing.

Key Messages

The session demonstrated that digital transformation is not solely a technological issue but is closely connected to demographic resilience and human development. Its implications vary across generations: children require stronger protection and safer digital environments; young people require digital capabilities linked to education, employment and participation; and older persons require accessible technologies that strengthen health, social protection and inclusion.

Across these dimensions, the discussions highlighted a common concern: digital progress must translate into meaningful improvements in people's lives. Access to technology alone is insufficient unless accompanied by appropriate safeguards, capabilities, opportunities and measures to prevent existing inequalities from being reproduced in digital spaces.



Speaker Proceedings



Senator Sue Lines [online]

President of the Senate, Australia

Focus: Protecting Children and Young People in the Digital Age

Executive Summary

Senator Sue Lines focused on **protecting children and young people in the digital age,** arguing that while social media and digital technologies provide unprecedented opportunities for learning, creativity, communication and participation, they also expose children to increasingly complex risks. These include online bullying, harmful content, exploitation, algorithmic manipulation and pressures relating to body image and mental health. She stressed that many such harms arise not simply from individual online interactions but from systems designed to maximize engagement and capture users' attention.

Drawing on Australia's experience, she described the Government's move towards stronger regulation of social-media platforms, including minimum-age requirements for users under 16, regulatory oversight through the eSafety Commissioner, stronger enforcement mechanisms and plans for a digital duty of care. Her central argument was that responsibility for online safety cannot rest primarily with children, parents and schools; technology companies must also be accountable for the systems and products they design and operate.

Key Messages

Senator Lines emphasized that societies have always adapted laws and safeguards to protect children from emerging risks, and the digital environment should be treated no differently. Digital technologies should continue to provide children with opportunities to learn and connect, but these benefits should not come at the expense of their safety, well-being or healthy development.

A particularly important message was the need to **shift responsibility upstream**. Online safety should not depend only on children learning to navigate dangerous environments; platforms themselves should be designed to reduce foreseeable harms. Regulation, enforcement, platform accountability and safety-by-design principles therefore need to complement education and responsible individual behavior.

She further stressed that regulating digital platforms is not about resisting innovation. Rather, it is about ensuring that innovation and technological advancement proceed together with **responsibility, accountability and care.**

Policies and Recommendations

Senator Lines' intervention highlighted a regulatory approach centred on **child online safety, platform accountability and prevention of digital harm,** including:

- **Age-appropriate access safeguards:** Establishing legal requirements requiring designated social-media platforms to prevent children below the prescribed minimum age from holding accounts.
- **Independent online-safety regulation:** Empowering a dedicated regulator with sufficient authority and resources to investigate compliance, obtain information from platforms and enforce online-safety obligations.
- **Platform accountability:** Shifting greater responsibility for online harms towards the technology companies that design, operate and profit from digital platforms, rather than placing the burden predominantly on children, parents and schools.
- **Digital duty of care:** Developing legal obligations requiring technology companies to identify, reduce and prevent foreseeable harms associated with their products and services.
- **Safety by design:** Requiring child safety and risk mitigation to be incorporated into digital products and services from the outset rather than addressed only after harm occurs.
- **Algorithmic and AI accountability:** Extending online-safety considerations to recommendation systems, engagement mechanisms, algorithms and emerging artificial-intelligence technologies that can shape children's online experiences.
- **Stronger enforcement and compliance**: Supporting digital-safety legislation with meaningful penalties, information-gathering powers and adequate regulatory funding so that compliance becomes an enforceable legal responsibility rather than a voluntary commitment.
- **Responsive harm-removal mechanisms:** Strengthening procedures for responding to recurring online harms and ensuring that users have accessible avenues through which concerns and serious online abuse can be addressed.

Recommendations

Child online-safety frameworks should evolve from predominantly reactive approaches towards **preventive and risk-based regulation.** Governments should ensure that digital platforms assess foreseeable risks to children before products, algorithms and services are deployed, while independent regulators should have sufficient authority, resources and technical capacity to oversee compliance effectively.

Legislative reform should also be accompanied by adequate consultation, public communication and implementation time. Australia's experience illustrates that major digital reforms affecting children and families require public understanding and sustained implementation alongside statutory

obligations. Above all, child protection should be treated as an integral component of digital governance, ensuring that **technological innovation and children's safety advance together rather than as competing objectives.**

Calls for Action

Parliamentarians are urged to place the protection of children at the centre of digital governance. They should:

- **Legislate clear and enforceable duties** requiring digital platforms to identify, prevent and mitigate foreseeable harms to children.
- **Shift accountability upstream** by ensuring that technology companies—not only children, parents and schools—bear responsibility for the safety consequences of platform design and operation.
- **Strengthen and adequately resource independent regulators** so that online-safety laws can be investigated, monitored and enforced effectively.
- **Require safety by design and meaningful accountability for algorithms and emerging AI systems,** particularly where these technologies influence children's behaviour, exposure to content and wellbeing.
- **Exercise sustained parliamentary oversight** over the implementation and effectiveness of child online-safety legislation as technologies and associated risks continue to evolve.

Conclusion

Senator Lines concluded that protecting children in the digital age requires balancing the opportunities created by technology with effective safeguards against its harms. The measure of successful digital transformation, she argued, should not simply be how quickly societies embrace new technologies, but how effectively they protect those most vulnerable to their consequences. Innovation and child protection should therefore advance together, ensuring that the next generation can benefit from digital opportunities while growing up safer, stronger and better prepared for the future.

"We want children to know who they are before platforms assume who they are."

Senator Hon. Sue Lines



Hon. Bolotbek Borbiev

Member of Parliament, Kyrgyzstan

Focus: Digital Transformation, Youth Employment and Demographic Opportunity

Executive Summary

Hon. Bolotbek Borbiev addressed the relationship between **digital transformation, demographic opportunity and youth employment.** His central proposition was that a young population does not automatically generate a demographic dividend. Digitalization can widen pathways to productive employment and strengthen demographic resilience only when technology policy is deliberately connected to skills development, inclusion, labour rights, entrepreneurship and job creation.

He presented digital transformation as a bridge between national demographic and youth-policy objectives and practical opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, decent work and civic participation. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring that digital opportunities reach young

women, rural youth, persons with disabilities and young people from low-income households rather than reinforcing existing inequalities.

Key Messages

A central message was that **connectivity should not be confused with opportunity.** Having internet access does not necessarily mean that a young person possesses an appropriate device, advanced digital skills, accessible content, professional networks or a pathway into employment. Digital inclusion therefore requires moving beyond infrastructure towards meaningful capability and economic participation.

He also highlighted the employment potential of digitalization beyond the traditional IT sector. E-commerce, digital payments, online labor-market platforms, creative industries and digitally enabled agriculture, healthcare, tourism and manufacturing can all generate opportunities. Consequently, digital literacy, problem-solving, critical thinking and the safe and responsible use of artificial intelligence should increasingly be regarded as foundational employability skills.

Young people, he argued, should also be regarded as **co-creators of digital transformation rather than merely its users,** with opportunities to contribute to decisions concerning digital public services, AI, data protection and the future of work.

Policies

Hon. Borbiev's intervention outlined an integrated approach connecting **digital transformation with youth development, skills, employment and demographic resilience**, including:

- **Universal digital capability:** Moving beyond basic connectivity to ensure that young people also have appropriate devices, relevant skills and the practical tools needed to participate productively in the digital economy.
- **Education-to-employment alignment:** Strengthening connections between education and labour-market demand so that digital and technical training leads to meaningful employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- **Integrated skills-to-jobs pathways:** Linking schools, vocational institutions and universities with internships, technology companies, creative industries, entrepreneurship programmes and remote-work opportunities.
- **Future-ready employability skills:** Treating digital literacy, problem-solving, critical thinking and the safe and responsible use of artificial intelligence as increasingly fundamental competencies for employment.
- **Targeted digital inclusion:** Establishing specific pathways for young women, rural youth, persons with disabilities and young people from low-income communities rather than assuming that expanded connectivity will benefit all groups equally.
- **Gender-responsive digital participation:** Connecting girls' and young women's exposure to technology with quality education, mentorship, internships, professional networks, employment opportunities and pathways to leadership.
- **Reduction of territorial inequalities:** Extending digital infrastructure, skills, mentoring and access to markets beyond major urban centres so that geographic location does not determine access to digital opportunity.
- **Modernized labor and social protection:** Adapting employment and social-protection frameworks to remote work, freelancing, platform employment and other emerging forms of digital labor.
- **Safe and trusted digital participation:** Strengthening data protection, cybersecurity and measures addressing harassment, exploitation and online violence, particularly where these barriers affect women and young people.

- **Youth participation in digital governance:** Recognizing young people as co-creators of digital transformation and providing meaningful opportunities for them to contribute to decisions concerning AI, data protection, digital public services and the future of work.
- **Disaggregated labor-market evidence:** Measuring not only the number of digital jobs created, but also their quality, security, location and accessibility.

Recommendations

Digital-development strategies should move decisively from **connectivity to capability and from capability to opportunity.** Investments in broadband and digital infrastructure should therefore be accompanied by investments in education, skills, employability, entrepreneurship and social protection so that young people can translate digital access into sustainable livelihoods.

A comprehensive skills-to-jobs ecosystem should connect education and training institutions more closely with employers and emerging sectors of the digital economy. Particular attention should be given to young women, rural youth, persons with disabilities and low-income communities, for whom connectivity alone may not overcome structural barriers to participation.

Labor and social-protection systems should also evolve alongside technological change. As remote work, freelancing and platform-based employment expand, policy frameworks should protect workers while enabling innovation. Better disaggregated evidence is equally important for determining **who is benefiting from digital job creation, where opportunities are concentrated and whether the employment generated is secure, accessible and of sufficient quality.**

Calls for Action

Parliamentarians are called upon to ensure that digital transformation converts demographic potential into equitable and decent opportunity for young people. They should:

- **Use legislation, budget scrutiny and policy oversight to close the gap between digital access and meaningful economic opportunity,** ensuring that connectivity is matched by skills, devices, training and employment pathways.
- **Champion stronger education-to-employment systems** that connect schools, vocational institutions and universities with employers, internships, entrepreneurship and emerging digital industries.
- **Demand targeted inclusion measures** for young women, rural youth, persons with disabilities and low-income communities so that digital transformation does not reproduce existing inequalities.
- **Modernize labor and social-protection legislation** to address remote work, freelancing, platform employment and other evolving forms of digital labor.
- **Strengthen legal safeguards for data protection, cybersecurity and protection from online harassment and exploitation,** creating digital environments in which women and young people can participate safely.
- **Institutionalize meaningful youth participation in digital policymaking,** particularly in decisions concerning AI, data governance, digital public services and the future of work.
- **Demand disaggregated evidence and accountability for outcomes,** scrutinizing not only how many digital jobs are created but whether they are decent, secure, accessible and geographically inclusive.

Conclusion

Hon. Borbiev concluded that demographic and digital transitions are increasingly inseparable. The fundamental question is therefore not simply whether societies will become more digital, but what kind of digital society they will build and who will have the opportunity to shape it. With appropriate

investment and inclusive policies, digitalization can help young people become skilled workers, innovators and informed citizens while transforming demographic potential into broader economic and social opportunity.

"Access to the internet is not the same as access to opportunity."
—Hon. Bolotbek Borbiev



Hon. Le Phan Kham

Member of Parliament, Vietnam

Focus: Digital Transformation for Active and Healthy Ageing

Executive Summary

Hon. Le Phan Kham presented Viet Nam's experience in leveraging **digital transformation to promote active and healthy ageing.** Against the backdrop of rapid population ageing, he described digitalization as an increasingly important tool for improving healthcare access, social protection, public-service delivery, social participation and financial security for older persons.

He highlighted developments including expanded digital infrastructure, electronic identity applications, digital pension and social-allowance payments, community digital technology teams, electronic health records and technology-supported healthcare. He also presented the **silver economy** as an emerging area of development that could reposition older persons not simply as recipients of care but as people whose knowledge, experience and participation remain valuable to society.

Key Messages

Hon. Le Phan Kham stressed that active ageing involves optimizing opportunities for health, social participation, social protection and financial security throughout later life. Digital transformation can support these objectives by making services more accessible and helping older persons remain connected to families, communities and public institutions.

Community-level assistance was highlighted as particularly important. Youth-centred community digital technology teams can help older persons learn to use smartphones, cashless payments and online public services, illustrating how **inter-generational support can facilitate digital inclusion.**

At the same time, he cautioned that digitalization could widen inequalities between older persons in urban areas and those living in rural, remote and ethnic-minority communities. Sustainable transformation also requires significant long-term investment in infrastructure, specialized human resources and technology platforms.

Policies

Hon. Le Phan Kham's intervention highlighted a policy approach integrating **digital transformation with active and healthy ageing,** including:

- **Integrated population information systems:** Strengthening population databases and information systems to support more effective planning, monitoring and delivery of services for an ageing population.
- **Digital transformation in ageing and care:** Applying science, technology and digital solutions to population management, healthcare, health monitoring and the care of older persons.

- **Enabling legal frameworks for digital health:** Supporting the development of digital platforms, telehealth and smart-health applications that improve older persons' access to healthcare and social-security services.
- **Integrated electronic health records:** Expanding standardized personal electronic health records and progressively connecting health information with national population information systems.
- **Digital social-protection delivery:** Using electronic identity and digital systems to facilitate access to pensions, social allowances and other public services.
- **Digital inclusion of older persons:** Supporting older persons to use smartphones, cashless payments and online public services so that digitalization strengthens rather than limits their independence and participation.
- **Community and intergenerational digital support**: Using community digital technology teams, including young people, to provide practical assistance and strengthen older persons' digital literacy.
- **Closing the ageing digital divide:** Addressing disparities affecting older persons in rural, remote and ethnic-minority communities, where access to infrastructure and digital capabilities may remain limited.
- **Sustainable investment in ageing technologies:** Mobilizing long-term financial, technical and human resources for digital infrastructure, specialized personnel and elderly-care technology platforms.
- **Development of the silver economy:** Linking population ageing with new opportunities in healthcare, elderly care and other age-responsive services, while recognizing the continuing economic and social contribution of older persons.
- **Multisectoral partnership:** Combining state leadership with private-sector participation and international cooperation to strengthen the sustainability and reach of digital solutions for ageing.

Recommendations

Digital transformation should be embedded systematically within national ageing and population strategies, with technology used to strengthen **health, participation, social protection and financial security throughout later life.** Digital health and social-protection systems should be designed around the practical needs and capabilities of older persons, ensuring that the transition to digital services does not inadvertently create new barriers to essential support.

Infrastructure investment should be complemented by sustained investment in digital literacy and human assistance. Community-based and intergenerational models can play an important role in enabling older persons to navigate digital services confidently, while targeted measures are needed for rural, remote and ethnic-minority communities where the risk of digital exclusion is greatest.

The development of the silver economy should also form part of a broader strategy for demographic resilience. Rather than treating ageing predominantly as a fiscal and social burden, governments should recognize older persons as **holders of knowledge, experience and continuing productive capacity**. A structured implementation roadmap bringing together public financing, private-sector innovation, specialized human resources and international cooperation would help ensure that age-responsive digital systems remain sustainable as ageing accelerates.

Calls for Action

Parliamentarians are called upon to place digital inclusion and healthy ageing at the centre of national responses to demographic change. They should:

- **Ensure that national ageing, health and social-protection legislation incorporates digital transformation,** with explicit attention to the accessibility and needs of older persons.

- **Use budgetary and oversight functions to secure sustained investment** in digital health infrastructure, electronic health records, accessible public services, specialized human resources and elderly-care technologies.
- **Champion measures to close the digital divide among older persons**, particularly those living in rural, remote and disadvantaged communities.
- **Support community-based and intergenerational digital-literacy programs** that enable older persons to use technology independently and participate more fully in increasingly digital societies.
- **Promote effective safeguards and accessible service design** so that digitalization expands rather than restricts older persons' access to healthcare, social protection and public services.
- **Create an enabling environment for responsible development of the silver economy,** mobilizing public, private and international partnerships while maintaining a clear focus on older persons' wellbeing and participation.
- **Reframe ageing within parliamentary debate,** recognizing older persons not merely as recipients of care but as citizens whose experience, knowledge and capabilities remain valuable to national development.

Conclusion

Hon. Le Phan Kham concluded that digital transformation offers significant potential to turn the pressures associated with population ageing into **new development opportunities.** Achieving this will require addressing digital inequalities and resource constraints while combining government action, private-sector engagement and international cooperation. When designed inclusively, digital transformation can enable older persons to remain healthier, better connected and more actively engaged while contributing their experience and knowledge to society.

"Digital transformation presents immense opportunities… to transform aging pressure into new development motivation." —**Hon. Le Phan Kham**

Chair's Conclusions

In closing, Hon. Tshering Penjor thanked the three speakers and participants for their valuable presentations, active participation and engagement throughout the discussion. The session brought together three important dimensions of digital transformation across the life course—**protecting children in digital environments, expanding skills and employment opportunities for young people, and supporting active and healthy ageing through digital solutions.**

The discussions collectively highlighted that digital transformation should ultimately serve people and respond to their changing needs across generations. As digitalization continues to accelerate, the session underscored the importance of ensuring that its benefits are i**nclusive, accessible and safe,** while addressing the risks and inequalities that may leave vulnerable groups behind. The session therefore reinforced the importance of shaping digital progress in ways that expand opportunity, strengthen protection and enable meaningful participation throughout the life course.

Question / Open Forum

Following the presentations, Hon. Tshering Penjor opened the floor for discussion, inviting participants to reflect on the experiences shared by the speakers and raise questions on the practical application of digital policies.

Question 1: Regulating Children's Access to Social Media — Lessons from Australia

Ms. Ermalena, from Indonesia asked Senator Hon. Sue Lines to elaborate on Australia's experience in restricting social-media access for children under the age of 16. The delegate was particularly

interested in both the successes and challenges of implementing the regulation, and whether lessons from Australia could help inform similar approaches in other countries.

Response – Senator Hon. Sue Lines:

Senator Lines acknowledged that the legislation had been controversial and had faced significant resistance from social-media companies. She highlighted the importance of allowing a long lead time, extensive consultation and public engagement before implementation. She noted that parental support had been particularly strong and that, by the time the legislation reached Parliament, it received support from parliamentarians across political parties. She further reported that approximately five million accounts belonging to users under 16 had subsequently been removed from social-media platforms.

The exchange highlighted an important implementation lesson: effective digital regulation requires not only legislation, but also consultation, public understanding, political support and sufficient preparation for implementation.

Question 2: Bridging Education and Digital Participation for Young People and Women

A second participant raised a question concerning women's education and digital participation, seeking further information on the proportion of women with and without education in relation to internet and social-media use.

Response:

The respondent referred more broadly to young people, stating that approximately 20 per cent were using the internet without being in education or training. The response emphasised the importance of creating conditions that enable young people to access education and training alongside digital connectivity, reinforcing the wider session message that internet access alone does not automatically translate into meaningful opportunity.

The exchange reinforced the need to connect digital access with education, skills development and pathways to productive participation, particularly for young people who may otherwise remain excluded from the benefits of digital transformation.

With no further questions, Hon. Tshering Penjor closed the discussion by thanking the speakers and participants for their active participation and engagement.

PART II — DAY 2 | 4 SEPTEMBER 2026

Session 5: Follow-up Discussion on Outcome of High-Level Ministerial and Parliamentary Session at Women Deliver 2026 Conference





Moderator — Dr Usmonov Farrukh

Executive Director of AFPPD

Session Context

The session provided an opportunity for parliamentarians and partners to assess progress since the High-Level Ministerial and Parliamentary Session held during the Women Deliver 2026 Conference in Melbourne, Australia, in April 2026. The Melbourne gathering brought together more than 100 participants and culminated in the adoption of a Parliamentary Call to Action. The Kuala Lumpur follow-up therefore moved beyond recalling the commitments made in Melbourne to examine how those commitments are being translated into national laws, public financing, parliamentary oversight, regional cooperation and practical implementation.

The MC introduced the session and its speakers: **Hon. Lork Kheng, Member of Parliament, Cambodia and Vice-Chair of AFPPD; Ms. Megan Connor, presenting the statement of Hon. Carina Garland, Member of Parliament, Australia and Chair of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Population and Development; and Hon. Howard Lee Chuan How, Member of Parliament, Malaysia and Secretary-General of AFPPD.** The discussion was moderated by **Dr Usmonov Farrukh, Executive Director of AFPPD.**

Executive Summary

Dr Usmonov Farrukh framed the discussion as a direct follow-up to the Melbourne High-Level Ministerial and Parliamentary Session. He recalled that the meeting had generated a collective Parliamentary Call to Action and emphasized that the purpose of the Kuala Lumpur dialogue was to determine what had been done since Melbourne and what further action was now required. His framing positioned the session around implementation, continuity and accountability rather than a repetition of previously agreed principles.

Key Messages

The Moderator stressed that the Melbourne outcome should be treated as the beginning of a continuing parliamentary process. He highlighted the importance of collaboration among parliamentarians, national parliamentary groups, development partners and UNFPA, and underscored the value of hearing directly from participants who had been involved in the Melbourne process. His central message was that follow-up must connect regional commitments with visible national action and sustain cooperation across the parliamentary network.

Speaker Proceedings



Hon. Lork Kheng

Member of Parliament, Cambodia; Vice-Chair, AFPPD

***Focus:* National Delivery and Political Commitment**

Executive Summary

Hon. Lork Kheng reflected on the Melbourne forum as an important reaffirmation of parliamentarians' responsibility to protect and advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality and the rights of women and girls. She stressed that SRHR is not solely a health-sector concern, but an agenda of equality, dignity, justice and human rights. Against a global environment marked by conflict, displacement, economic insecurity and growing anti-rights narratives, she argued that progress cannot be taken for granted and that peace, security, gender equality and SRHR are inseparable.

Drawing on Cambodia's experience, she highlighted progress in maternal and child health and HIV, linking these gains to sustained political commitment, public investment, health-workforce development, targeted support for vulnerable mothers and community outreach. She also pointed to Cambodia's mock parliament initiative as an example of moving from rhetorical commitments to meaningful youth participation. Her overarching message was that the Melbourne Parliamentary Call to Action must now be carried home and converted into legislation, budgets, oversight and measurable results.

Key Messages

Hon. Lork emphasized that rights-based development requires sustained political leadership and cannot be separated from broader questions of peace, security and social justice. She warned that conflict and political or economic instability can rapidly deepen vulnerabilities for women and girls. Cambodia's experience, in her account, demonstrates that measurable progress is possible when political commitment is matched by long-term public investment, capable institutions and trusted community networks. She further stressed that meaningful participation must create real opportunities for young people to debate, advocate and influence public life, while regional parliamentary solidarity should enable countries to learn from one another and hold themselves accountable for commitments already made.

Policies

- **Protect SRHR through rights-based legislation and policy.** Strengthen legal and policy frameworks that safeguard sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and the rights of women and girls, while addressing legal, institutional and social barriers that prevent the full enjoyment of those rights.
- **Institutionalise gender-responsive public financing.** Ensure that commitments to maternal and reproductive health, gender equality, youth development and women's empowerment are

reflected in national budgets through adequate and sustained allocations responsive to the needs of women and girls.

- **Strengthen equitable maternal and reproductive health systems.** Sustain investment in trained health personnel, safe-delivery services, support for economically vulnerable mothers and health-equity mechanisms that reduce financial and geographic barriers to essential health care.
- **Expand community-based health outreach.** Integrate trusted community networks into national health strategies to strengthen awareness, early identification, referral and access to services, particularly for rural, vulnerable and underserved populations.
- **Institutionalize meaningful youth participation.** Create structured opportunities for young people to participate in parliamentary dialogue, debate, advocacy and civic decision-making, building on practical initiatives such as Cambodia's mock parliament.
- **Strengthen evidence-based parliamentary oversight.** Establish systematic parliamentary scrutiny of whether national commitments have been adequately financed, implemented and translated into measurable outcomes for women, girls and communities.
- **Reinforce parliamentary cooperation and accountability**. Maintain strong collaboration among parliaments, governments, civil society, UN agencies and regional parliamentary networks to connect national implementation with regional and global population and development commitments.

Recommendations

Hon. Lork's intervention points to the need for a more systematic national implementation pathway linking political commitments to legislation, financing, service delivery and measurable outcomes. Governments and parliaments should periodically review laws and policies affecting women and girls to identify remaining barriers to SRHR and ensure that rights recognized in policy are accessible in practice.

Gender-responsive budgeting should be reinforced by stronger parliamentary scrutiny of both allocations and expenditure. Oversight should assess whether resources reach intended populations, particularly women and girls facing economic, geographic or social disadvantage, and whether investments produce demonstrable improvements in health and wellbeing.

Cambodia's experience also illustrates the value of linking formal public-health systems with trusted community networks. Community organizations can complement government services by extending information and referrals into rural and underserved areas and connecting people requiring assistance with health facilities. Similarly, youth participation should progress from consultation towards institutionalized opportunities for young people to contribute directly to parliamentary and policy processes.

Regional parliamentary cooperation should continue to reinforce national implementation through peer learning, exchange of successful practices and mutual accountability. The Melbourne Parliamentary Call to Action should therefore function not merely as a collective declaration but as a reference point against which parliamentarians can assess and report national progress.

Calls for Action

Hon. Lork called on parliamentarians to:

- **Parliamentarians must take the Melbourne Parliamentary Call to Action back to their respective countries and convert its commitments into concrete national legislation, adequately financed programs and measurable implementation.**