



## TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

*Canberra, Australia, 13–16 January 2020*

### Chairman's Statement

1. We, Parliamentarians from twenty-seven countries from the Asia Pacific, assembled from 13 to 16 January 2020 for the Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF-28) under the theme of 'Parliamentary partnerships to 2020 and beyond', in Canberra, Australia.
2. At the commencement of our Meeting we reflected on the work and life of our founder and Honorary President, the Honourable Yasuhiro Nakasone, who passed away on 29 November 2019, aged 101. Mr Nakasone had served the Japanese people as their elected representative for over five decades, including as Prime-Minister from 1982–1987. He established the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) in the early 1990s and since then had continued to play a leading role in its development. We resolved to recognise his legacy in creating the APPF as a forum for peaceful and constructive dialogue between the parliaments of the Asia-Pacific region and extended our sincerest condolences to his family, Japan and all APPF Member Countries.
3. The Executive Committee Meeting held on 13 January 2020, under the chairmanship of the Honourable Tony Smith MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Parliament of Australia and the 28th President of the APPF, approved the agenda and program of activities.
4. In his opening address, the Honourable Tony Smith noted that Australia has a long association with the APPF. One of the two preparatory meetings establishing the organisation was held in Canberra in 1991. The APPF last met in Canberra twenty years ago for the 8th Annual Meeting in January 2000. Australia's involvement with the APPF is in line with its overall active involvement in similar associations and organisations in the region and its key role in furthering the development of democratic parliamentary practice across the Asia-Pacific.
5. We were particularly pleased to welcome the observer countries here at APPF-28. Delegates from Brunei attended once again and ten Pacific Island countries also attended. Australia has a close relationship with the countries of the Pacific, based on a shared history and close personal connections. We hope that in due course some of our Pacific colleagues will choose to become members of the APPF and join more fully in our deliberations.
6. As we gathered here for the 28th APPF Annual Meeting to discuss the theme of 'Parliamentary partnerships to 2020 and beyond', we were conscious of the difficult global environment that we are all facing. Our region has been impacted by escalating political tension and social unrest. Terrorism in its many manifestations continues to spread violence and fear. The threat to free trade and investment grows. Severe weather events are becoming more frequent and the subsequent displacement of people and loss of property are compounding economic stress. The APPF provides a

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useful platform for us, as a group, to discuss these issues, share our stories, and learn from each other's experiences so as to move forward.

7. We recalled the APPF mission to promote a stronger regional identity and cooperation focusing on peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity; open and non-exclusive cooperation for the expansion of free trade and investment, and sustainable development and sound environmental practices; and non-military cooperation, which gives due consideration to issues relating to regional peace and security.
8. After nearly thirty years pursuing this mission, the APPF has significantly contributed to building friendship, solidarity and cooperation in our Asia-Pacific region. It has demonstrated the role that frank, constructive and respectful dialogue has in ensuring peace, stability, prosperity and harmony in the region.
9. The outcomes of the 28th Annual Meeting reflect our commitment to address the ongoing challenges facing our region. With the focus on parliamentary partnerships to 2020 and beyond, we examined a range of topics through three sessions: political and security matters; economic and trade matters; and regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.
10. Firstly however, in the Women Parliamentarians Meeting, we reaffirmed our commitment to gender equality for sustainable development and shared prosperity. To further this objective we discussed improving access for women and girls to education, innovation and technology and promoting women's empowerment in decision-making at all levels.
11. In the session on political and security matters we stressed the need to protect the integrity of government and parliamentary institutions and examined the drivers of radicalisation as well as discussing ways to promote cooperation towards enhancing cybersecurity.
12. In the session on economic and trade matters our aim was to identify ways of strengthening the institutions for trade and growth. We deliberated on food security and sustainable agricultural development. In addition, in these technologically dependent times, we examined the means to improve participation in the digital economy and to enhance connectivity throughout the region.
13. Finally, in discussing regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region we examined methods to enhance both parliamentary roles and joint action responses to climate change. We also discussed promoting regional cultural diversity and tourism and sustainable development.
14. The Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting concluded with the adoption of nineteen resolutions, the signing of a Joint Communiqué and the handover of the Forum's flag from Australia to the Republic of Korea as incoming host. We look forward to meeting again in Korea next year.