

ASIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL (ARC) REPORT

The global problem on habitat/shelter is growing both in magnitude and urgency as it is being compounded by the negative effects of climate change. As parliamentarians, who are bonded by the common cause of providing safe and adequate shelter for all, we formed this organization – the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH).

From its birth in Yokohama in 1987 until today, the GPH remains the only world organization of parliamentarians devoted to shelter and habitat. In 2000, during the Global Forum of the GPH in Manila, we committed ourselves to furthering the integration and functioning of the Regional Councils of the GPH. In that Forum, I was elected President of the Asian Regional Council (ARC) with then Congressman Constantino Navarro as alternate President. Congressman Navarro was later replaced by Congressman, now Speaker, Prospero Nograles.

As part of the commitment made under the 3rd GPH to revitalize the regional councils of the GPH, the Asian Regional Council (ARC) convened the First Asian Regional Forum in Manila in 2002 where we successfully drafted and adopted our own set of By-Laws. The ARC By-Laws were then discussed in the 4th Global Forum in Berlin in 2003, however, the Philippines was the only ARC member country of the ten (10) Asian countries who attended the Forum which proposed an amendment. This was despite our numerous communications/invitations to the 38 ARC member countries to attend the Forum and elections.

In 2005, the 5th Global Forum was held in Rabat, Morocco. During the Forum, the Philippines convened the ARC to hold elections since the terms of the incumbent officers have expired, since their terms are only for two (2) years. Since only seven (7) ARC member countries, namely Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, and the Philippines, were present in that meeting, a valid quorum was not reached.

In 2006, in preparation for the 3rd World Urban Forum in Vancouver, I wrote to all the member-countries of the ARC inviting them to a Roundtable Discussion which was held as a parallel event. However, in Vancouver it was only the Philippines and Japan which attended the Roundtable which discussed Human Settlements Legislation Developments.

In 2008, I also invited all the 38 ARC member countries to attend the 6th GPH Forum in Bucharest, Romania. However this Forum was postponed. As a result of that postponement, elections of the Asian Regional Council (ARC) of the GPH did not take place.

The 6th GPH Forum was later rescheduled to coincide with the 4th World Urban Forum in Nanjing in November 2008. In that Forum, the GPH Board of Directors met and a Roundtable of Parliamentarians was held on the issue of “Cities and Climate Change.” During the GPH Board of Directors Meeting I expressed the need to convene a regional meeting to elect a new ARC President. I have been president for the past 8 years and would like to pass on this function but I have been unable to do so because it has not been possible to organize an Asian Regional Assembly Meeting. Malaysia and India have both indicated interest in this position during the Meetings in Nanjing.

During the Meeting, I also suggested to the Board if the GPH was interested in becoming an observer in or joining the IPU. Hon. Götz and Senator Cantú declared that it was problematic to join another organization because the danger was great that the GPH would simply cease to exist and because the topics of the GPH would not receive the attention they deserve within the IPU. It was decided that the matter of becoming an observer in the IPU should be put onto the agenda of the next GPH Board Meeting.

During the Roundtable of Parliamentarians, I, together with the following ARC member-countries represented by Mr. Mohammad Saeedi Kia, Minister, Islamic Republic of Iran, Ms. Kumari Selja, Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India, and Mr. Chen Jia Bao, Chairman of Nanjing Municipal Congress, spoke on how climate change is beginning to affect our cities.

The other Asian participants included:

CHINA

Chen, Jia Bao
Ciren, Cuo Mu
Gu, Shan Xiang
Li, Zhi Jia
Liu, Ai Ping
Tang, Qi Rong
Wang, Dejun
Wu, Shuang Long
Yuan, Wen Rong

INDIA

Aggarwal, Manoj
Chattopadhyay, Swapan
Dhingra, KL
Geeta, Sharma
Gupta, Vivek
Rajinder, Paul
Singh, Sunil Kumar
Svresh, H.T.
Selja

IRAN

Hanachi, Simin
Kaab-Member, Abdullah
Khajehdloui, Manoochehr
Pourbart, Sadrolah
Sadeghpur, Sadegh

KAZAKHSTAN

Duisebayer, Ihexenbay

Kiyanskiy, Victor

LEBANON

Hmayed, Ayoub

MALAYSIA

Bin Abdul, Johari
Bin Habibollah, Hasbi
Din Jambri, Samad
Hurhidayu
Kiandee, Ronald
Masir Kujay

SRI LANKA

Dryswamp, H.M.
Palansuriya, Sagara
Perera, Laxman
Wijayarrughe, Dhammrka

Since the valid quorum is 12 ARC member-countries (30 percent of the 38 ARC member-countries), the 8 ARC member-countries present in the Meeting of the ARC held after the Roundtable did not constitute a valid quorum and elections could not be held. At present the following positions are still vacant:

1. **President**
2. **Alternate President**
3. **Vice President**
4. **Secretary**
5. **Adjunct Secretary**
6. **Treasurer**
7. **Adjunct Treasurer**
8. **President of the Consulting Board**
9. **Secretary-General**

As a conclusion to my report, may I make the following recommendations to activate the ARC.

- Malaysia and India, since they have earlier expressed interest in leading the ARC, perhaps could host an ARC Meeting in the first quarter of 2010 so the long-delayed elections could take place.
- Given the weak response to mailed invitations, perhaps the Malaysian or Indian Delegation to the 121st General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) can personally invite Asian Parliamentarians to the proposed ARC Meeting in 2010.
- Malaysia or India can initiate a review of the ARC By-Laws and incorporate provisions for delayed elections.

- Given the available technology, the GPH, for easier dissemination of information, could also maintain a website containing all the important documents, reports, and databases for the reference of ARC Member-Countries.