STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum

SPEECH

Thursday, 13 February 2020
The SPEAKER (11:28): For the information of honourable members, from 13 to 16 January this year, our parliament hosted the 28th annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum, known as the APPF, here at Parliament House. The APPF includes parliamentarians from countries in the Asia-Pacific region with which Australia has strong economic, social and strategic ties. It provides a platform to promote a stronger regional identity and cooperation focusing on peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity. The countries attended include Australia’s major trade and strategic partners in Asia and those bordering the Pacific Ocean, on both the western and eastern sides. Over 340 delegates and participants from 19 APPF member countries and 10 observer nations attended the meeting. It was particularly pleasing that parliamentarians from a number of smaller Pacific island countries were able to attend, some with the financial assistance of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Australian Parliament was very well represented by a delegation of 27 members and senators: the members for Dawson, Newcastle, Lyne, Moore, Perth, Solomon, Curtin, Page, Cooper, Groom, McEwen, Hinkler, Lalor, Bean, Calwell, North Sydney and Menzies, as well as Senators Askew, Bilyk, Ciccone, Fawcett, Hughes, Rennick, Dean Smith, Stoker and Van.

The delegation was led by the member for Menzies, the Father of the House, the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP. The delegation and the forum more broadly benefited from the member for Menzies’s extensive experience as a parliamentarian, and he fulfilled an incredibly important role chairing the drafting committee of the conference. The President of the Senate was represented by the Deputy President, Senator Sue Lines. I am particularly grateful to her for her work, and I'm grateful to all my parliamentary colleagues for giving up their time during mid-January to come and participate at the important conference.

Under the theme ‘Parliamentary partnerships for 2020 and beyond’, delegates discussed gender equality, political and security matters, economic and trade matters and enhancing regional cooperation. For the information of the House, I'm going to table the meeting outcomes, which are the joint communique, the report of the meeting of women parliamentarians and the 19 resolutions agreed by the meeting. Members of the Australian delegation filled key positions chairing the plenary sessions, the working groups and the drafting committee that finalised the forum resolutions and communique. Delegation members played a critical role in promoting Australia's position in the final resolutions.

The meeting also expressed its condolences to Japan over the recent death of APPF Honorary President, the Hon. Yasuhiro Nakasone. I'm honoured to have been appointed as President of the APPF until the next meeting, to be held in South Korea in January next year and, in this role, I've been tasked with reviewing certain aspects of the APPF rules and organisation. Many visiting delegations expressed their sympathy over the awful bushfire situation but felt that the conference had been a great success despite Canberra and Parliament House being surrounded by smoke on many of the days.

I want to again thank the members and senators for their contributions. Without their help, the conference would not has been the great success it was. I table the required documents.