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Joint Press Release

WAIPA Events 2024: Advancing Women's Political Participation and Leadership for a Resilient, Connected, and Inclusive ASEAN

For Immediate Release

[Vientiane, February 5, 2024] – The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) and the National Assembly of Lao PDR, holding the AIPA Presidency 2023-2024, are set to host the Women Parliamentarians of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (WAIPA) Events from 5 to 6 February 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Embracing the theme ***"Fostering Gender-Responsive Parliaments for a Resilient, Connected, and Inclusive ASEAN Community"***, the WAIPA Events 2024 serve as a significant platform for regional stakeholders to converge and deliberate on strategies to enhance the role of women in political spheres toward building a resilient, connected, and inclusive ASEAN.

The event is made possible through the support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), and the Regional Project *"Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN"* implemented by UN Women and funded by the Governments of Canada, the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom.

In October 2023, the project commenced with the 1st Workshop to develop Plan of Action to guide AIPA and its Member Parliaments in promoting women's political participation and leadership (WPPL) across ASEAN. Despite progress, ASEAN Member States are still working towards gender parity and the global target of 30% of parliamentary seats occupied by women.

The two-day events comprise a Women Leaders Conference, 2nd Workshop on the Development of Women's Political Participation and Leadership Plan of Action and Implementation Framework, and the WAIPA Coordinating Committee Meeting hosted by the National Assembly of Lao PDR. These events aim to address challenges and galvanize support for women's political participation and leadership across the region, fostering discussions and experiences on strengthening women's participation in sustaining peace, promoting resilience, fostering inter-generational collaboration, and recognizing the care economy.

"Recognizing the importance of gender equality, ASEAN member states, including Lao PDR are committed to international frameworks such as CEDAW, and ICCPR. Within ASEAN, commitments are evident through the Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace, and Security, the ASEAN Declaration on Gender Equality and Family Development, and the Declaration on Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. Despite global and regional efforts, challenges persist, particularly in women's education, healthcare access in rural areas, and limited funding for female-led MSMEs. Today's Forum provides a crucial platform for parliamentarians, experts, and stakeholders to address these challenges and promote women's political participation, leadership in peacebuilding, economic empowerment, and inclusive growth," said H.E. Dr. Sounthone Xayyachack, Vice-President of the National Assembly.



“The theme of today’s discussion, “Fostering Gender-Responsive Parliaments for a Resilient, Connected, and Inclusive ASEAN Community” is an excellent opportunity to inform AIPA’s draft Plan of Action on Promoting Women’s Political Participation. Supporting Gender-Responsive Parliaments is about having more women at the table, it’s about facilitating women’s active participation and ultimately, it’s about creating inclusive and democratic processes that will lead to better outcomes for everyone,” said H.E. Vicky Singmin, Ambassador of Canada to ASEAN.

“The adoption of the Plan of Action on Women’s Political Participation and Leadership will be a critical landmark to promote inclusive governance and diverse leadership in ASEAN. It outlines concrete actions to increase the number of women parliamentarians and their substantive representation in the region. Equally important, the Plan emphasizes the important engagement of male leaders to promote gender-responsive parliament and policy making which is indispensable to shifting the social and gender norms for a diverse and equal participation of women and men in politics,” said Jamshed M. Kazi, Representative of UN Women Indonesia and Liaison to ASEAN.

“Our commitment to gender equality demands persistent efforts. Today’s forum stands as a critical platform for sharing best practices, exchanging valuable experiences, learning from each other’s knowledge, and fostering networks and alliances. Establishing an environment where women’s voices are not only heard but also valued, with their contributions acknowledged as catalyst of transformation, is imperative, as enshrined in the Plan of Action, guiding the collaborative endeavours of AIPA Member Parliaments to advance Women’s Political Participation and Leadership across ASEAN,” said H.E. Ar. Siti Rozaimeryanty, Secretary General of AIPA.

The collaborative efforts of AIPA, CFLI, and UN Women aim to facilitate the exchange of experiences and initiatives, encouraging greater engagement in gender mainstreaming within both regional and national policy priorities. Following the events, a consolidated report covering the events will be circulated and published on the AIPA Secretariat’s website. Moreover, the final Women’s Political Participation and Leadership Plan of Action and Implementation Framework will be submitted to the WAIPA Coordinating Committee, paving the way for presentation and adoption at the 45th AIPA General Assembly in Vientiane, Lao PDR in October 2024.

