



**43<sup>RD</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
20-25 NOVEMBER 2022  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

*Advancing Together for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient ASEAN*

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**EXPLANATORY NOTE ON  
PROMOTING THE ROLE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ADVANCING  
THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA**

*Sponsored by Cambodia*

**OVERVIEW**

Parliamentarians across the Southeast Asia region play a vital role in advancing the role of women involved in politics and economics, education equality, and making improvements across the spectrum of gender issues, as well as achieving peace and security. The emerging case of the global pandemic led to diverse economic crises and has made this region more complicated, such as threats to peace and security requiring joint efforts and strong commitment from the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) to solve them together. Therefore, it requires enhanced international cooperation to ensure peace and security, which are the essential foundations for development. Consequently, it needs discussion and collaboration with joint commitments among AIPA member parliaments to ensure a successful resolution of these challenges to contribute to good governance and gender equality, as well as peace and security.

In this regard, the AIPA General Assembly is a key body in addressing these challenges. The assembly, founded in 1977, provides a unique opportunity for regional dialogue in Southeast Asia with member and observer countries of ASEAN. As such, parliamentarians, who are representatives of the people, are among the main actors in dealing with these challenges as they could promoting women's voices and leadership for sustaining peace, stability and development in the region[1].

The issues mentioned above shall be discussed at the 43<sup>rd</sup> AIPA General Assembly that the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia will physically host from 20 to 25 November 2022 in Phnom Penh, the Kingdom of Cambodia, under the guiding theme “**Advancing Together for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient ASEAN**”.

For ASEAN, an intergovernmental organization promoting peace, stability, and economic prosperity in a region with a complex history involving colonial struggles, Cold-War conflicts, and international border disputes, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is highly relevant to addressing today's pressing challenges. Widening the scope of security to encompass economic security, health pandemics, and disaster and climate change management, the WPS agenda offers an important pathway to ASEAN's transformative recovery and journey towards sustainable development, shared prosperity, and a secure future.

Indeed, on one side, the global pandemic acts as a conflict multiplier [2]. On the other side, emergency measures (state of emergency or lockdown) and public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have gender impacts. They have worsened the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations, including women [3]. In this context and taking into consideration that women and girls suffer disproportionately

from the impacts of conflicts, it is essential to support the role of women in conflict resolution and health crisis response.

In line with the Joint Statement on Promoting WPS adopted by the ASEAN in 2017, and while a number of ASEAN Member States are post-conflict societies undergoing rebuilding, far more needs to be done to engage women's participation in sustaining peace and to track the achievements of women in contributing to peacebuilding and conflict resolution[4]. More specifically, because most ASEAN countries do not have a National Action Plan on WPS, and more specifically on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 which recognizes that the "full participation of women in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security", the development of a feasible Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on WPS would support all Member States in establishing national policies, with the RPA itself providing a legal basis for each member's national plan. And given that Southeast Asian countries are expected to be more intensely and pronouncedly affected by the effects of climate change in the coming years, this plan will need to recognize natural disasters as another form of 'conflict'[5].

In this area, AIPA could work towards establishing an RPA that recognizes the role of women in areas of conflict prevention, both in governance and in relief and recovery.

At the regional level, AIPA can play an important role in strengthening the cohesion between regional and national policies. More specifically, WAIPA is in a key position to play a crucial role in harnessing the power of women MPs and pushing forward the WPS agenda by promoting gender-responsive laws and policies. Additionally, WAIPA can have an instrumental role in developing of the RPA, which could lead to substantive participation of women in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution, and socio-economic recovery[4]. WAIPA could collaborate with the AIPA Caucus (formed in 2007 in order to accelerate effective legislative cooperation and harmonization in member countries) to support an RPA that could mark a new era of dedicated attention and increased resources.

At the national level, ASEAN Member Parliaments have many ongoing initiatives and efforts to enhance women's role in peace and security to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the ASEAN region. Parliaments have an instrumental role in ensuring that laws concerning issues related to WPS are discussed and adopted. By regularly holding public hearings, requesting clarifications directly from the government, and requesting reports for plenary sessions, parliaments can bring the WPS agenda to the attention of the public and the media, encouraging accountability at all levels. Furthermore, AIPA Member Parliaments can play a crucial role in taking steps to transform deeply rooted and culturally accepted social norms and challenge gender stereotypes that hinder the opportunity for women's participation in peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and fulfill their roles as negotiators, mediators, and peacekeepers. To implement such activities, AIPA member parliaments will need to strengthen their commitment to promoting regional peace and stability, sustainable development, and prosperity for citizens as enshrined in the ASEAN.

## REFERENCES

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