

## **Young Parliamentarians of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (YPA)**

### **Explanatory Note on the topic of 1<sup>st</sup> YPA Meeting**

#### **“Fostering Engagement with Young People for a Sustainable, Resilient and Prosperous ASEAN Community”**

##### **I. Rationale:**

1. As ASEAN entered into a new century, emerging challenges and opportunities awaited ASEAN, placing it at the centerpiece of geopolitical and geoeconomic attention and indicating the need to embark on new roles. Being at the center of the world in the Asian Century, ASEAN is known as a strategic gateway to a broader region of Asia, the Asia Pacific, and the world – geopolitically, geoeconomically, and geo-strategically.
2. With our tradition of peaceful coexistence as the guiding principle, ASEAN is thriving actively towards building regional architecture and taking on the leading role in preserving and maintaining security and stability in the region and the world. Due to the growing importance of regional and global security, ASEAN has taken on a prominent role by providing a platform to engage extra-ASEAN powers to enhance constructive dialogues and consultations, build trust and understanding, and work on issues of common interests and concerns together, as spelled out in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM), ADMM-Plus, and East Asia Summit (EAS), among others.
3. Since the establishment, ASEAN has demonstrated that our community is not without challenges. However, with the presence of ASEAN, the region is more stable and prosperous than ever before and has continued to embrace the strategic importance and relevance, reflecting the importance of the opportunity provided by ASEAN for our people and partners. Being located in the nexus of major power countries and geopolitical rivalry, ASEAN’s economic potentials and other important tasks have oftentimes been sidelined by its political dominance in the new evolving scene of geopolitical competition. Yet, it is true that ASEAN is a community of opportunities, and one should appreciate how far we have come as a community and recognise the potentials and benefits for our population, as well as the positive contribution to the wider region and beyond.
4. Economic-wise, ASEAN’s economic strength is the fundamental opportunity for all the people as the region has been recognised as a hub for international trade and foreign investment with a solid pace of growth. Since recovering from the global financial crisis, the performance of the ASEAN economy has been noticeable in the global economy, and ultimately, in 2018, ASEAN became the fifth largest economy in the world (with a 3.5% share of global GDP) and the fourth largest trader in global trade (with a 7.2% share of global trade).<sup>i</sup> The report entitled “ASEAN Development Outlook (ADO)” suggests that ASEAN would be able to upgrade to the fourth largest economy

by 2030.<sup>ii</sup> ASEAN Free Trade Agreements with Dialogue Partners and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) – which accounts for about 30% of both global GDP and global population – are also expected to accelerate regional and global economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and are the keys to achieving the ASEAN’s long-term growth and prosperity.

5. ASEAN is a unique regional grouping. ASEAN’s diverse and rich cultures and traditions harmonise and bind ASEAN Member States together for 55 years and for the future to come. Despite the differences in cultures, languages, and religions, we are bound by the spirit of unity in diversity and the principle of peaceful co-existence. ASEAN’s identity has been continuously defined and refined to ensure social cohesion, which is a vital drive for inclusive growth, shared prosperity, and sustainable development of the ASEAN Community.
6. The key to realising a cohesive ASEAN Community is by capturing the full potentials of human capital. ASEAN is home to more than 660 million people from ten member states,<sup>iii</sup> accounting for about 8.5% of the whole share of the global population,<sup>iv</sup> running behind only China and India. Among this large number, there were 213 million youths (15-34 years old) in ASEAN as of 2017, and the peak of the young population is anticipated to exceed 220 million in 2038.<sup>v</sup> This impressive number of young population in ASEAN calls for a more active, meaningful engagement with them from not only the community level but also the executive and legislative level of the government.
7. ASEAN – under the chairmanship of Cambodia – proclaimed 2022 as the Year of ASEAN Youth and emphasised the commitment to strengthening people-to-people bonds to enhance the spirit of One ASEAN Identity.<sup>vi</sup> In this sense, the Year of ASEAN Youth calls on young people across the region to embark on their leadership roles in community development throughout 2022. It focuses on institutionalising youth engagement mechanisms, fostering the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and digital skills, and prioritising the development sectors important to young people such as education, health and well-being, employment and opportunities, participation and engagement, and ASEAN awareness, values, and identity, amongst others. However, such a goal would not be possible without the young people’s participation, who are beneficiaries, in the process. Therefore, fostering engagement with young people is the key.
8. Currently, with the rampant COVID-19 pandemic, heated geo-political rivalry, and growing threats from transnational issues – both traditional and non-traditional – the role of young people has become increasingly indispensable and needed more than ever as they come from all walks of life and take part in all aspects of society. In this sense, building a future-ready ASEAN youth – who are ready to take on challenges, make progress, and harness opportunities – for ASEAN unity and enduring peace, and promoting ASEAN awareness and understanding of leadership roles are among our main agendas as ASEAN Member States.

9. ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) can benefit more from the engagement of young people to influence its related agenda over the aim of realising a sustainable, resilient and prosperous community, in line with ASEAN Community's Vision 2025. The recent establishment of the Young Parliamentarians of AIPA is the bridge. Member Parliaments of AIPA could be able to enhance their dialogues and interactions with young people more closely and directly, especially in gathering young people's demands, needs, and concerns before translating them into policies or programmes that target youth.
10. It is also imperative to engage young people of ASEAN in the whole-of-Community approach, which was outlined in the Ha Noi Declaration on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision, across the three pillars of ASEAN Community, namely the Political-Security Pillar, Economic Pillar and Socio-Cultural Pillar so that they are able to comprehend the strengths and opportunities that ASEAN offers and make use of them in accordance with their needs. Doing so does not only work for the benefits of young people but also for the benefits of the whole community, where young people serve as an important driving force, that is even more politically stable and peaceful, economically integrated and prosperous, and socially responsible and cohesive.
11. Therefore, the Meeting of YPA should reflect ASEAN's priority interests in further fostering the engagement of parliamentarians and young population and promoting the understanding of young people's roles in the building of a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous ASEAN Community, where everyone is able to thrive. By doing so, we, ASEAN, will rise to occupy a much more important position intra and inter-regionally, and its prosperity will benefit not only the people of ASEAN but the wider region and the rest of the world.

## **II. Objectives:**

12. Creates an interlinkage between young people and decision-makers for the promotion of sustainable peace and security, especially for ASEAN, which has always been at the center of powerplays between major powers;
13. Builds a future-ready ASEAN youth – cross-cutting political, economic, and socio-cultural domains – who are prepared to harness the potential and reap the benefits from a thriving ASEAN Community;
14. Develops a network among ASEAN young parliamentarians themselves as well as among the young people of ASEAN towards a more vibrant, resilient, and prosperous ASEAN Community;
15. Further strengthens ASEAN's central and strategic role in building and shaping regional architecture in Southeast Asia and beyond, in line with the spirits of ASEAN Community 2025 and Post-2025 Visions;
16. Continues to work on established frameworks while creating more new spaces for young people to engage and interact more meaningfully.

### III. Youth-Related Documents, Frameworks and Mechanisms:

17. ASEAN Community Vision 2025
18. ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY)
19. ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY)
20. ASEAN Youth Forum
21. ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2016-2020
22. ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025
23. ASEAN Youth Programme Fund
24. ASEAN Youth Development Index
25. Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration on “Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment” adopted in ASEAN 23<sup>rd</sup> Summit
26. Declaration on “ASEAN Youth Statement” adopted in ASEAN 36<sup>th</sup> Summit
27. Yangon Youth Declaration on “ASEAN Youth Statement 2014”
28. Resolution No. GA 9-83 of the 6<sup>th</sup> AIPO General Assembly in 1983 on “ASEAN Program on Youth and Young Political Leaders”
29. Resolution No. RES. 34GA/2013/SOC/01 of the 34<sup>th</sup> AIPA General Assembly in 2013 on “Nurturing and Enhancing the Role of Young People to Meet the Future Challenges of ASEAN”
30. Resolution No. Res 41GA/2020/Org/06 of the 41<sup>st</sup> AIPA General Assembly in 2020 on “The Engagement of Young Parliamentarians of AIPA in the ASEAN Community Building”

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<sup>i</sup> ASEAN Secretariat. (October, 2019). *ASEAN Integration Report 2019*. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ASEAN-integration-report-2019.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> ASEAN Secretariat. (July, 2021). *ASEAN Development Outlook: Inclusive and Sustainable Development*. [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ASEAN-Development-Outlook-ADO\\_FINAL.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ASEAN-Development-Outlook-ADO_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> ASEAN. (2021). *ASEAN Key Figures in 2021*. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASEAN-KEY-FIGURES-Chapter-1-4-Rev-28-Dec-2021.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> ASEAN. (2021). *ASEAN Statistical Leaflet 2021*. [https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASEANStats\\_Leaflet\\_2021\\_15Oct.pdf](https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASEANStats_Leaflet_2021_15Oct.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> ASEAN. (2017). *First ASEAN Youth Development Index*. <https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/First-ASEAN-Youth-Development-Index.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> ASEAN. (2022). *#ASEANYOUTH2022 – ASEAN declares 2022 as the Year of ASEAN Youth*. <https://asean.org/aseanyouth2022-asean-declares-2022-as-the-year-of-asean-youth/>