

EXPLANATORY NOTE

CREATION OF ANNUAL CONSULTATIVE WORKING GROUP COFACILITATED BY AIPA AND PCASIA TO PROMOTE TRANSPARENT DATA AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSES

The draft resolution reaffirms the importance of the roles of ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) Member Parliaments in increasing access to trustworthy information and credible data and in countering mis- and disinformation related to health emergency responses, while pursuant to the objectives of the AIPA Statutes and the theme of the forty-third General Assembly of AIPA, “Advancing Together for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient ASEAN”.

The importance of cooperation in this regard was further reaffirmed at the consultative workshop involving AIPA Member Parliamentarians and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) organized at the initiative of the Commission on Public Health, Social Works, Veterans, Youth Rehabilitation, Labour, Vocational Training and Women Affairs of the National Assembly of Cambodia in August 2022. At the conclusion of this workshop on “The Role of Parliaments in Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Responses to Health Emergencies”, the majority of the Members of Parliaments present recommended to submit a draft resolution to form a consolidated health response network to exchange data and information between AIPA Member Parliaments and CSOs related to health emergencies. This was followed by closing remarks, where it was recommended that PCAsia cooperate with the AIPA Secretariat to offer a proposed framework for consideration in the 2022 AIPA General Assembly.

In ASEAN Member States, the COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted real suffering across the health, economic, education, and other socio-cultural sectors, with a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable. Overall success in facing the pandemic across the region has highlighted the significant benefits that are provided by access to reliable and timely information for policy-makers and constituents as part of a whole-of-society approach that leaves no one behind.

The effectiveness of this approach has also shown that the trust and cooperation of citizens, a necessary component of a whole-of-society approach to facing pandemics, is better achieved through good governance, transparency and accountability mechanisms and corruption prevention measures. Such methods also recall the importance of the principles of participation of the peoples of ASEAN Member States, the rules-based approach, non-discrimination and equality enshrined in the AIPA Statute. It is also consistent with the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint development goals, including the prevention, monitoring and timely response to pandemic diseases, while also reaffirming the commitment to the implementation of the ASEAN Vision 2025 for building a people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN Community.

In this area, AIPA Member Parliaments have a key role to play promoting ongoing accountability for how to move forward post-COVID-19, and consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Article 29 of the ASEAN Declaration of Human Rights which states that everyone has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

By facilitating the exchange of reliable information amongst various stakeholders through improved means of exchanging data and information, AIPA Member Parliaments can help to improve crisis preparation and management policies and their implementation, which can help to improve overall socio-economic outcomes and alleviate the effects of crises to the benefit of all citizens, while also contributing to a body of knowledge that can be utilized by the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Communication Center (ARARC), the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center for Disaster Management, the ASEAN Emergency Operations Center Network, and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan.

As ASEAN continues its recovery from the pandemic, there is an opportunity for AIPA Member Parliaments to further strengthen comprehensive cooperation among stakeholders to reinforce responses to and preparation for health crises, pursuant to the aims and objectives of AIPA. This can be achieved through the establishment of a consolidated health response network, with initial technical and financial support by the PCAsia and in coordination with the AIPA Secretariat. Within a framework of annual AIPA Working Group consultative workshops, recurring meetings between parliamentarians and CSOs can provide opportunities to work together towards improved outcomes related to pandemics and other health emergencies through the promotion of data and knowledge sharing based on the principles of transparency and accountability. The workshops can also provide opportunities to discuss additional methods and means that can be utilized to further productive cooperation regarding health crises and in support of ASEAN integration and to the benefit of ASEAN Member States and their people.