

CHAIRMAN GREGORY W. MEEKS
AIPA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPEECH
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
November 21, 2022

REMARKS

I want to begin by thanking our Cambodian hosts for their hospitality and congratulate the Government of Cambodia and the National Assembly of Cambodia for its good work during their chairmanship of ASEAN [*Ah-zee-ahn*] and AIPA [*Aa-ipa*], respectively, in what I know has been a challenging year. I'm so pleased to be with you today representing the United States Congress on behalf of Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The United States has a long history in Asia and continues to see the centrality of ASEAN to peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. In 2008, the United States became the first non-ASEAN country to name an Ambassador to ASEAN, and in 2010, it became the first non-ASEAN country to dedicate a Mission to ASEAN.

As the Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, I want to thank AIPA for considering the United States for observer status in this important body.

There is strong bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for ASEAN and for our participation in AIPA. This is because we understand how essential ASEAN is to the regional architecture of the Indo-Pacific and because we are committed to ASEAN's centrality.

The United States wholeheartedly supports the aims of AIPA to promote cooperation, help realize ASEAN's regional goals to seek solutions to common problems, and promote the principles of human rights, democracy, peace, security, and prosperity. In 2022 alone, the United States was proud to provide over \$860 million in assistance to our friends in ASEAN to advance our shared objectives of a more prosperous and peaceful Southeast Asian region.

As a Pacific Power, the United States will remain a committed partner in these efforts and to our friends in ASEAN.

Earlier this year, in recognition of this commitment, the Biden Administration held a Special U.S.-ASEAN Summit commemorating 45 years of ASEAN dialogue partner relations. And earlier this month, right here in Cambodia, President Biden and ASEAN leaders elevated the U.S.-ASEAN relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, demonstrating the importance of ASEAN to the United States. By participating as a guest of the host at this AIPA General Assembly, I want to continue the deepening of our longstanding relationship.

The swift actions taken to fight the global pandemic and promote health security is just one example of how our nations can work together for the greater good. Because of funds appropriated by the US Congress, the United States government was able to provide over 115 million doses of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines to ASEAN members, and has committed millions of dollars to COVID-19 relief efforts and health programming.

As we look towards the future, we hope to continue this kind of cooperation to tackle other shared challenges.

The crisis in Myanmar rises to the top of that list. It has been over a year and a half since the junta carried out an illegal and illegitimate coup. Since then, the political, military, and humanitarian crisis has only worsened, and the junta has completely refused to implement the Five-Point Consensus. We must work together to hold the military accountable and chart a path back to peace and civilian rule.

Similarly, we cannot—and must not—ignore the war crimes and atrocities that Russia is committing in Ukraine. I thank many of you for your principled stance at the United Nations to condemn Russia's illegal, unprovoked, and completely unjustified invasion of Ukraine and to uphold the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. I hope we can stand together in defending the principles of the UN Charter, condemning violence as a means to achieve political ends, and

upholding respect for the rules-based order, whether that is in Europe or closer to home in places like the South China Sea.

From the existential threat of climate change to the global food security crisis and the ongoing pandemic, we can successfully tackle our challenges if we face them together.

The United States hopes to remain a partner of choice to ASEAN, to work together to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific, and a peaceful and prosperous Southeast Asia. I look forward to advancing dialogue and cooperation between our legislative bodies this week and wish you all a successful and meaningful AIPA General Assembly.