



FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

FEATURE ARTICLE

Unified Aspirations: Transforming Women's Political Landscape in ASEAN

by Nurul Amirah, Project Coordinator of WAIPA



As we celebrate International Women's Day every year, we reflect on the progress made towards achieving greater gender equality. Over the past twenty-three years, the number of women in parliaments has almost doubled, increasing from 12 percent in 2000 to 22 percent in 2022. However, the regional average still lags slightly behind the global average of 26 percent. Unfortunately, the pace of progress is slowing down, and women continue to face challenges in increasing their participation in shaping policies and decision-making. Nevertheless, we can address these challenges collectively. It is the shared efforts and commitment to advancing gender equality in ASEAN that truly matter to all of us.

In 2023, during the 44th ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) General Assembly, the Women Parliamentarians of AIPA (WAIPA) Standing Committee adopted a resolution titled 'Enhancing ASEAN Resilience Through Women Leadership and Gender-Responsive Parliaments.' In accordance with this mandate, the AIPA Secretariat initiated a project to develop the first-ever ASEAN Plan of Action on Promoting Women's Political Participation and Leadership 2024-2030, along with its Implementation Framework. The plan outlines concrete actions structured around three pillars:

creating an enabling environment and safe space for women to participate and lead in politics; empowering women in politics; and fostering a gender-responsive parliament and decision-making process. The adoption of the Plan of Action at the forthcoming 45th AIPA General Assembly will mark a crucial milestone in creating a world where women's political participation and leadership leads to impactful and lasting change. This resonates with a unified commitment and aspiration to realize an inclusive ASEAN Community, leaving no one behind.

WAIPA EVENTS 2024

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From 5th to the 6th of February 2024, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) and the National Assembly of Lao PDR successfully hosted the WAIPA Events 2024, in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The events were made possible with the support from the Government of Canada under 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. Under the theme 'Fostering Gender-Responsive Parliaments for a Resilient,

Connected, and Inclusive ASEAN Community', the two-day event comprises the Women Political Leaders Forum, WAIPA Workshop 2.0, and the 3rd WAIPA Coordinating Committee Meeting.

Women Political Leaders Forum

Recognizing the significance of women's political participation as a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality, the Women Political Leaders Forum brought together over 50 participants, including AIPA Member Parliaments, ambassadors, prominent figures, and experts. The forum, held in the National Assembly of Lao PDR on 5 February 2024, served as a crucial platform to address challenges in strengthening women's political participation and leadership for sustaining peace, promoting resilience, fostering intergenerational collaboration among female leaders, and recognizing the care economy.



WAIPA Workshop 2.0

Continuing the momentum from its inaugural event in October 2023, held in Jakarta, Indonesia, the WAIPA workshop 2.0 took center stage in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 6 February 2024. The workshop aimed to provide an opportunity for AIPA Member Parliaments to deliberate on the Implementation Framework developed to operationalize the (draft) Plan of Action on Promoting Women's Political Participation and Leadership 2024-2030.

3RD WAIPA Coordinating Committee Meeting

The 3rd WAIPA Coordinating Committee Meeting, chaired by Hon. Thoummaly Vongphachanh on 6 February 2024, marked the conclusion of WAIPA Events 2024. Distinguished AIPA Member Parliaments shared insights, experiences and strategies to propel women into key political roles, fostering a more inclusive and resilient ASEAN community, leaving no one behind. The meeting prepared for the upcoming 45th General Assembly and echoed

collective support for the draft Plan of Action (PoA) and Implementation Framework on promoting Women's Political Participation and Leadership (WPPL) 2024-2030.



Courtesy Meeting with ASEAN BAC Chair 2024

On February 6, 2024, the AIPA Secretary General convened in a fruitful meeting with Mr. Oudet Souvannavong, Chair of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC), in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The meeting involved an exchange of ideas and insights on potential collaboration opportunities, aiming to foster engagement between AIPA and the business sector.



Election Visit Program 2024 Hosted by the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

On the 14th of February, the AIPA Secretary General participated in the 2024 Election Visit Program in Bali, Indonesia, organized by the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia. The visit showcased the commendable aspects of a well-coordinated election process,



emphasizing initiatives aimed at enhancing voter participation and fostering a peaceful voting environment. The observation underscored the absence of instances of intimidation or coercion, reaffirming Indonesia's dedication to maintaining a transparent electoral system.



Direct Interface with the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI)



Led by Hon. Khammouane Xomsihapanya from the National Assembly of Lao PDR, the AIPA Member Parliaments and AIPA Secretary General took part in the Direct Interface between Parliamentarians and the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI). Organized in hybrid format in Vang Vieng, Lao PDR, the direct interface aimed to facilitate the exchange of views with parliamentarians on the development of the economic component of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045.

AIPACAST: Amplifying Voices of AIPA

The AIPA Secretariat proudly presents the first episode of AIPACAST: "Connecting ASEAN for Inclusive Regional Growth," featuring Hon. Sanya Praseuth, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of Lao PDR. Hosted by the AIPA Secretary General, the first episode explored the Lao National Assembly's strategies for boosting regional connectivity and fostering inclusive economic growth. Click on the button below and dive into the full episode!



[Click to watch the full episode!](#)

AIPA Secretariat's Engagement with Externals



At the outset of February, the AIPA Secretariat kicked off with proactive and dynamic engagements with AIPA's external stakeholders. These included significant meetings with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), strategizing upcoming joint activity to achieve shared objectives and enhance partnerships.

Calendar Highlights: March 2024

AIPA Roadshow
Bandung

Bandung, Indonesia

148th Inter-
Parliamentary Union
(IPU) Assembly

Geneva, Switzerland

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