



[DELIVERED]

REMARKS

OPENING CEREMONY

**5TH MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF
WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF AIPA (WAIPA)**

*“Advancing Gender-Transformative Parliaments Towards a
Future-Ready and Inclusive ASEAN Community”*

**H.E. Dr. CHEM WIDHYA
Secretary-General of AIPA**

**Monday, 27 April 2026
9.30 - 17.00 (GMT+8)
Quezon City, Philippines
Via Video Conferencing**

His Excellency Faustino "Bojie" G. Dy III, President of AIPA and Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines;

Honourable Maria Rachel J. Arenas, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senior Vice Chair, Special Committee on ASEAN Affairs and Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs;

Honourable Ann Matibag, Chairperson of Women Parliamentarians of AIPA (WAIPA);

Honourable Members of Parliament,

My predecessor, Madam Siti Rozaimeriyanthy Dato Haji Abdul Rahman, Sixth Secretary General of AIPA;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have always been very impressed and I deeply admire the active participation, the active role and the meaningful participation of Filipino women and girls at all levels of the society and it is deeply inspirational. It is therefore my distinct privilege to virtually join the 5th Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of WAIPA today. I am deeply honoured to be in the company of our distinguished women parliamentarians from across our region, as well as our valued partners and experts, who continue to demonstrate deep commitment to advancing women's leadership and political participation.
2. The virtual format of our meeting amidst the most challenging global context as reflected by the Honourable Deputy Speaker Arenas, reflects AIPA's continued commitment to inclusivity and adaptability, while also embodying the very spirit of a future-oriented and people-centred ASEAN.

Excellencies, Honourable Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Since its establishment in 1998, WAIPA has remained steadfast in its mission to promote women's participation in politics, at both national and regional levels. It is a conviction that this 5th

Coordinating Committee Meeting of WAIPA is called upon to carry forward with renewed purpose and creative energy.

4. The theme of this 5th Coordinating Committee Meeting of WAIPA; ***“Advancing Gender-Transformative Parliaments Towards a Future-Ready and Inclusive ASEAN Community”***, reflects the evolving realities of our region and underscores the relevance of women parliamentarians. Gender-transformative parliaments are not defined solely by representation, but by systems and legislative outcomes that are equitable, responsive and accountable. Inclusion must be embedded as a duty put into practice, bearing in mind the indispensable role of women in peace and security as well as in shaping our societies day by day. Such transformation requires vision, holistic strategies, institutional reforms, and sustained political will in implementation.

Your Excellency, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. Across ASEAN, progress has been made in increasing women’s political participation. Women continue to be underrepresented in many of our legislatures. This underrepresentation affects more than statistics. It leaves deep impact on legislative priorities, oversight approaches, and the extent to which governance frameworks fully reflect the lived realities of our societies. Disparities have to be addressed to ensure quantitative and qualitative representation of women.
6. In this regard, WAIPA is not only a platform for exchange, but more meaningfully a mechanism for action. Through its Plan of Action and Implementation Framework on Women’s Political Participation and Leadership, WAIPA has established clear pathways to translate commitment into implementation, measurable progress and institutional accountability.
7. This meeting therefore comes at an important moment, as ASEAN advances toward Vision 2045 and as the Philippines holds the AIPA

Presidency with its commitment to a peaceful, prosperous, and people-centred ASEAN.

8. As we gather today, I am reminded that our collective strength lies in our diversity. Each of our Member Parliaments operates within its own national context, its own parliamentary system, and its own pace of progress. This diversity is not a barrier, but a foundation upon which meaningful regional cooperation is built. With Timor-Leste joining our deliberations today, that foundation has grown stronger. If one parliament can drive change, the collective effort of eleven becomes even more impactful.
9. In this period, allow me to express my deepest gratitude to **His Excellency President Faustino “Bodjie” Dy III** for his leadership, and my most sincere appreciation to **Honourable Deputy Speaker Maria Rachel Arenas** for her steadfast guidance, as well as to the entire AIPA 2026 Organizing Team for their hard work and dedication in convening this Meeting, including my esteemed colleagues and staffs at the AIPA Secretariat, in particular all the women here represented by the Deputy Secretary-General Putri.
10. I would also like to deeply acknowledge the valued and continued partnership of UN Women, represented here today by **Madam Ulziisuren Jamsran**. Collaboration between AIPA and UN Women has enriched WAIPA’s initiatives and strengthened the technical foundations of its programmes. Such partnerships enhance not only our capacity, but also the credibility and sustainability of our efforts. Our aim is to further enhance active women's participation and leadership in decision-making worldwide.

Your Excellency the Speaker, Honourable Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. At a time when many parts of the world continue to face conflict, uncertainty, deepening fragility and regression in gender equality,

forums such as our present Coordinating Committee gain significant value. They serve not only as platforms for reporting progress, but as spaces for the renewal of commitment, dialogue, solidarity and shared responsibility to leave no one behind.

12. May today's deliberations be constructive, forward-looking, and guided by our shared responsibility to the peoples we represent for a peaceful, prosperous, and people-centred ASEAN.

Thank you, *Maraming Salamat*.

