



[DELIVERED]

REMARKS

CLOSING 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**

Madam Chair, Honourable Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It has been my sincere honour to join you throughout this 5th Coordinating Committee Meeting of WAIPA, and I would like thereby also to acknowledge and pay my respects to my predecessor, esteemed Madam Siti Rozaimeriyanty Dato Haji Abdul Rahman, whose contributions this afternoon has enriched our discussions. As we now conclude our deliberations, allow me to express my highest appreciation for the active engagement and contributions shared by all Member Parliaments and partners.
2. Throughout today's deliberations, we were reminded through the reflections shared at the opening that even amid global uncertainty and shifting circumstances, our purpose remains constant, namely to advance gender-transformative parliaments that place people and gender at the centre of governance. Leadership does not pause in times of crisis. It is tested and strengthened by them. We reaffirmed that representation alone is not enough but requires transformation of systems that are equitable and accountable, laws that respond to lived realities, and institutions that ensure women's voices shape decisions on peace, security, economic participation, climate resilience, and digital advancement, among a few.
3. Today's theme of "**Advancing Gender-Transformative Parliaments Towards a Future-Ready and Inclusive ASEAN Community**," sets an ambitious yet necessary direction, and I wish to particularly commend the House of Representatives of the Philippines for their initiative to strengthening and institutionalising monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is therefore particularly significant. Meaningful progress must be accompanied by clear measures of achievement, consistent follow-up, and reinforced accountability.

Honourable Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Building on these reflections, allow me to acknowledge the concrete actions shared by AIPA Member Parliaments throughout our discussions. Delegations highlighted a range of initiatives already underway, including the establishment of cross-party women's parliamentary caucuses to strengthen gender perspectives in legislation, the institutionalisation of gender-responsive budgeting, and efforts to ensure safer and more inclusive parliamentary environments.
5. Member Parliaments also shared initiatives to strengthen leadership development pathways through youth engagement, mentorship, and targeted capacity-building, alongside reforms to enhance data systems, budgeting and oversight functions, and evidence-based policymaking. These experiences demonstrate that the commitment to advancing gender-transformative parliaments is increasingly being translated into tangible practices across the region.
6. I am also encouraged by the meaningful progress made by AIPA Member Parliaments in implementing the WAIPA Frameworks on Women's Political Participation and Leadership. This is reflected in ongoing institutional and legislative efforts, strengthened engagement with stakeholders, and the growing integration of gender perspectives into parliamentary functions.
7. At the regional level, implementation has moved into a more sustained phase, with increased completed activities between 2024 and 2026 and a modest rise in women's representation. However, gaps remain, including uneven institutionalisation of consultation mechanisms, and constraints in data, resources, and technical capacity. Several deliverables from the 2024–2025 cycle

are still pending, and continued parliamentary ownership and political will are essential to ensure meaningful progress towards 2030.

Honourable Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. The discussion of the first dialogue sessions delivered a fundamental message. The entry of women into political institutions does not, in itself, dismantle structural and cultural barriers that continue to silence those from marginalised sectors, whose voices remain furthest from the centre of power. If we are to realise truly gender-transformative parliaments, this responsibility must be shared by all parliamentarians, regardless of gender. The engagement of men as allies and active participants of this agenda is therefore not optional; it is essential to the transformation we seek.
9. Affirmatively, the second dialogue session affirmed that women's economic leadership cannot be fully realised without addressing the practical barriers that constrain it as evidenced by limited access to finance, disproportionate care responsibilities, and the uneven access to digital transformation. Parliaments were called upon to place gender-responsive MSME policies at the centre of inclusive governance, recognising women not merely as participants in the economy, but as central pillars of our respective societies who shape and sustain it across generations.
10. But at the same time, in my humble view, we have also to bear in mind that money does not have colour, it does not taste, and it does not smell. Therefore, money also does not know gender. I think that women's entrepreneurship has to be a top in mind while enhancing women's economic leadership.

Honourable Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Although we have convened virtually, the depth and quality of engagement have been evident. Today's meeting demonstrates that parliamentary collaboration and cooperation remain crucial, firmly anchored in dialogue, mutual respect and shared aspiration.

12. May the spirit of ASEAN, reflected here continue to guide WAIPA's work, and may our collective efforts contribute meaningfully to a more inclusive, resilient, and people-centred ASEAN Community. Thank you. *Maraming salamat.*

