



31st ANNUAL MEETING
THE ASIA-PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM (APPF 31)
23 - 26 NOVEMBER 2023
Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City, Philippines

"Resilient Partnerships for Peace, Prosperity and Sustainability"

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

Upon the invitation of the Senate of the Philippines and House of Representatives of the Philippines, the 31st Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) was held in Pasay City, Philippines from 23 to 26 November 2023. A total of 267 delegates from Member Countries of the APPF, and one guest of the host attended the Meeting (Annex A).

Executive Committee

1. The Executive Committee, chaired by Senator Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, President of the Senate of the Philippines, and co-chaired by Representative Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Speaker of the House of Representatives, approved the Agenda and Program of Activities in a meeting held on 23 November 2023.
2. The Meeting approved the designation of the Chairs, Co-Chairs, and Alternate Chairs of the Drafting Committee, Plenary Sessions, Working Groups on Political and Security Matters, Economic and Trade Matters, Regional Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region, Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, and the Roundtable Discussion of Young Parliamentarians (Annex B).
3. The Executive Committee approved the agenda, which includes the Philippine delegation's proposal to amend the Rules of Procedure to institutionalize the "Meeting of Young Parliamentarians" in the Annual Meeting of the APPF.
4. The Chair informed the Executive Committee that the host invited guests from the United Nations and UNITE Parliamentarians Network for Global Health.
5. The Executive Committee was apprised that 37 draft resolutions were submitted by 10 Member Parliaments. In accordance with the practice of APPF Annual Meetings, the host secretariat proposed draft joint resolutions to consolidate submissions with similar content and facilitate their consideration by the Working Groups. The Executive Committee Meeting approved the referral of 36 draft resolutions to the appropriate Working Groups and the deferred resolution from the 30th APPF to the Drafting Committee.
6. The Executive Committee resolved to defer the "Resolution on Combating Glorification of Nazism, Neo-nazism, and Other Discrimination Practices" to the Annual Meeting next year.

7. The Executive Committee approved the referral of Indonesia’s draft “Resolution on Enhancing Maritime Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific” to the Working Group on Political and Security Matters.

8. The draft “Resolution on Achieving Denuclearization and Peace on the Korean Peninsula” proposed by Japan, and the draft “Resolution on the “Korean Peninsula” proposed by the Republic of Korea, were likewise referred to the Working Group on Political and Security Matters for consideration.

Inaugural Ceremony

9. The Inaugural Ceremony was held on 23 November 2023. Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez delivered the welcome remarks. In his remarks, he emphasized that solidarity and cooperation are vital components in building a resilient and sustainable Asia-Pacific region. He emphasized that peace remains a paramount objective and expressed support for a rules-based international order, governed by the principles of international law and informed by the principles of equity and justice. Speaker Romualdez sought the support of APPF Member Countries for the Philippines’ candidature to the United Nations Security Council for the term 2027-2028.

10. The Honorable Pornpetch Wichitcholchai, Senate President of the Parliament of Thailand, delivered a message as last year’s host. In his opening address, he said that the promotion of economic development, peace, and prosperity is a prerequisite for the achievement of the sustainable development goals. He added that addressing great challenges requires the spirit of cooperation and goodwill in international relations, as well as the harmony and concord of APPF.

11. Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri delivered the Keynote Address. He recognized that the gathering of Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians in Manila affirmed the spirit of Asia-Pacific parliamentary solidarity remains active. He underscored the importance of building resilient partnerships for peace, prosperity, and sustainability—a theme which resonates in our collective post-pandemic experience and continuing aspirations to make the 21st Century, a truly Asia-Pacific Century. He encouraged Parliamentarians to remain determined to recover and overcome any of the remaining traces of the pandemic and soar above the current challenges of the region.

Proposal to Amend the Rules of Procedure

12. APPF31 agreed and is committed to consider the Philippines’ proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure (Annex C), to conduct a Meeting of Young Parliamentarians in subsequent APPF meetings and to further consider the same at the 32nd Annual Meeting of the APPF.

Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

13. The Meeting of Women Parliamentarians was conducted on 23 November 2023. Senator Pia S. Cayetano chaired and Representative Camille Villar co-chaired the meeting. The Meeting covered two topics: (a) Gender and Sustainable Development Goals and (b) Women’s Participation and Leadership.

14. The APPF Member Parliaments highlighted the timeline for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals and emphasized that the fulfillment of the SDGs is directly linked to gender equality. They emphasized the need to establish strategies for the development and

execution of policies aimed at enhancing the status of women, and the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination. They also stressed the importance of gender equality in the workplace, equal pay for all and digital inclusion.

15. The APPF Member Parliaments recognized that women bring unique perspectives and experiences that enrich the entire governance process. An emerging topic discussed by the delegates is on unpaid care and domestic work, urging the re-examination of traditional roles that are assigned based on gender, which can hinder women's full participation and leadership. The delegates called for equal representation in policy-making bodies, in all areas of decision-making on issues involving climate change, healthcare, and the negotiation of conflict.

Roundtable of Young Parliamentarians

16. The Roundtable of Young Parliamentarians was held on 24 November 2023. House of Representatives Deputy Majority Floor Leader Jude Acidre chaired and Senate Deputy Majority Floor Leader Mark Villar co-chaired the Roundtable.

17. The APPF Member Countries acknowledged the opportunities and benefits of digital technology, especially for the youth. They expressed optimism that digital economy development around the world will contribute to the growth of labor productivity, reduction of production costs, creation of new skilled jobs, and in overcoming poverty and inequality.

18. The APPF Member Countries likewise called for intensified efforts to reduce the "digital divide" between developed and vulnerable developing countries, as well as the socio-economic inequality within states. They likewise expressed the necessity of investing and allocating more resources to digital literacy and capacity-building.

19. Participants in the Roundtable signed a Declaration (Annex D) recognizing the potential role that young parliamentarians can play in addressing contemporary challenges while advocating for the value of having young people represented in policy discussions and in parliamentary bodies.

Drafting Committee

20. The Drafting Committee conducted meetings from 24 to 25 November 2023 to consider the resolutions referred to it by the Executive Committee and Working Groups. It was chaired by Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda and co-chaired by House of Representatives Deputy Majority Floor Leader Lorenz Defensor. Senate Minority Floor Leader Aquilino Pimentel III and Senate Deputy Majority Floor Leader Joseph Victor Ejercito served as alternate chairs.

21. The Drafting Committee, through the leadership of the Philippines and the collaborative and diligent efforts of all participating delegates, successfully navigated through several contentious issues, fostering consensus on key matters. The resolution of these issues reflects the commitment of all APPF Member Parliaments to constructive dialogue and compromise, highlighting the spirit of cooperation that underlies our collective pursuit of shared objectives. This collaborative achievement reinforces our belief in the effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy and the power of consensus-building in addressing complex challenges.

22. After extensive yet productive discussions, the Drafting Committee approved all resolutions referred to it by the Working Groups—a notable achievement in the history of APPF:

- a. Resolution on Strengthening the Capacity of Parliaments to Promote Peace and Stability;
- b. Resolution on the Korean Peninsula;

- c. Resolution on Combatting Transnational Crimes;
- d. Resolution on Gender and Sustainable Development Goals;
- e. Resolution on Women’s Participation and Leadership;
- f. Resolution on Rethinking Critical Infrastructure;
- g. Resolution on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Climate Action, Biodiversity Conservation, and Disaster Risk Reduction;
- h. Resolution on Human Capital Development and Inclusive Growth;
- i. Resolution on Regional Cooperation through Education and Culture; and
- j. Resolution on Regional Cooperation on Universal Health Care in the Asia-Pacific.

Plenary Sessions

23. The First Plenary Session on Political and Security Matters focused on two topics: (a) Strengthening the Capacity of Parliaments to Promote Peace and Stability, and (b) Combatting Transnational Crimes. The Session was chaired by Senator Ronald Dela Rosa and co-chaired by Representative Maria Rachel Arenas.

24. The APPF Member Parliaments emphasized the importance of bilateral and multilateral collaboration as well as parliamentary diplomacy to promote stronger institutions, resolve regional conflict, and overcome contemporary challenges.

25. The APPF Member Parliaments resolved to strengthen the capacity of parliaments in promoting regional peace and stability by, among others, supporting their Government’s efforts to meet Goal 16 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; enhancing cooperation in addressing terrorism, nuclear proliferation, information and communication technology (ICT) threats, transnational crimes, climate change, emerging diseases and public health emergencies; promoting confidence-building measures; and supporting continued adherence to the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes.

26. The APPF Member Parliaments further committed to increase their efforts in promoting and maintaining peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of the high seas, consistent with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The APPF Member Parliaments also resolved to protect the marine environment and biodiversity and promote a safe and sustainable blue economy that will benefit all nations.

27. The APPF Member Parliaments resolved to combat transnational crimes by, among others, passing pieces of legislation that consider existing international legal conventions on terrorism and transnational organized crimes; adopting efficient and effective mechanisms for seizure and confiscation of income from criminal activity within the framework of their national legislation systems.

28. The Second Plenary Session on Economic and Trade Matters focused on two topics: (a) Rethinking Critical Infrastructure, and (b) Human Capital Development and Inclusive Growth. The Session was chaired by Representative Stella Luz Quimbo.

29. The APPF Member Countries espoused a shared commitment towards building community resilience in the face of disasters and climate change and achieving low carbon and sustainable growth in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

30. The APPF Member Parliaments raised the need to facilitate the development of policies, programs, and other measures designed to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure, to adopt the ‘build

right at first sight' approach in preventing disaster loss, and to invest in emergency preparedness relating to critical infrastructure.

31. The APPF Member Parliaments resolved to empower all APPF Member Countries to advance blue and green economies, promote natural capital accounting, and integrate circular economy and nature-based solutions, including ecosystem-based adaptation into national and local climate adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction policies and plans, and further promote sharing of best practices—nationally, regionally and internationally.

32. The APPF Member Parliaments reaffirmed commitment to ambitious climate action and resilience through mutual cooperation and partnerships, and continued provision of finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building, anchored on climate justice and equity, best available science, national circumstances, consistent with relevant international instruments.

33. The APPF Member Parliaments also resolved to further strengthen international cooperation to achieve global climate ambitions and targets, including averting, minimizing, and addressing loss and damage associated with climate change, in view of the specific vulnerabilities of Asia-Pacific region.

34. The APPF Member Parliaments agreed to implement measures that address free and compulsory education, learning of basic skills, increase in the number of teachers, improvement of basic school infrastructure, digital transformation, and improvement of levels of competence in ICTs that require universal and meaningful connectivity. They also agreed to formulate actions focused on adapted training, labor intermediation, entrepreneurship programs, and other initiatives.

35. The Third Plenary Session on Regional Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region covered two topics: (a) Regional Cooperation through Education and Culture, and (b) Universal Health Care in the Asia-Pacific. The Session was chaired by Senator Francis Tolentino and co-chaired by Deputy Speaker Raymond Democrito Mendoza.

36. The APPF Member Parliaments resolved to empower parliamentarians to protect, preserve, and promote cultural heritage, pursue inclusive educational systems and address disparities in education in the Asia-Pacific region, prioritizing the education of illiterate children and adolescents.

37. The APPF Member Parliaments were called upon to establish a legal framework for Universal Health Care (UHC) to guarantee the right to public health and medical care, without discrimination, and to establish parliamentary mechanisms to promote UHC, including the provision of adequate funding, research and development, expanded services, and reduced out-of-pocket costs.

Final Plenary

38. In the Final Plenary Session, Senator Pia S. Cayetano, Chair of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, presented the Report of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and Senate President Pro Tempore Loren B. Legarda, Chair of the Drafting Committee, reported on the accomplishments of the Drafting Committee.

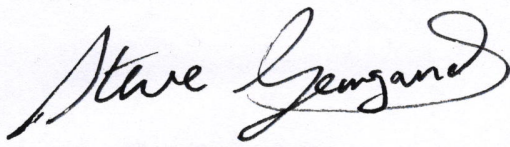
39. Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri, APPF31 Chair, delivered his statement on the work that was achieved in the APPF, congratulating the delegations for productively approaching all discussions with respect, diplomacy, and friendship. He also stressed the need to work towards an Asia-Pacific region that is connected by bridges of peace, shared seas, free and open trade, vibrant cultural exchange, and by an unwavering belief in the power of cooperation.

40. A total of ten (10) resolutions and a Joint Communiqué were adopted during this Annual Meeting.

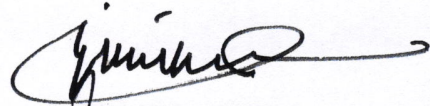
41. Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, APPF31 Co-chair, concluded the Forum by underscoring the indispensable value of regional partnership as a cornerstone for peace and sustainable development in the Asia Pacific region. As echoed in the discussions, “Only through collaborative efforts and shared vision can we address the complex challenges of our times and pave the way towards a future marked by prosperity and stability for all.”

42. The Philippines will continue consulting with other APPF Member Countries regarding next year’s hosting of the APPF.

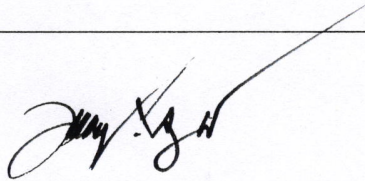
Signed in Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines
on 25 November 2023



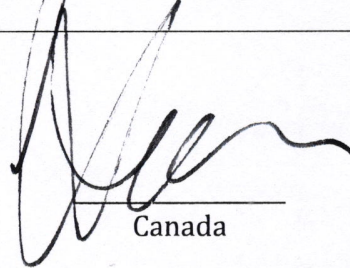
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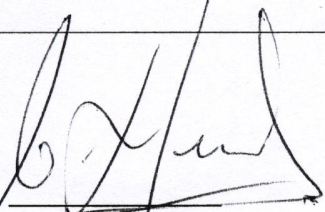
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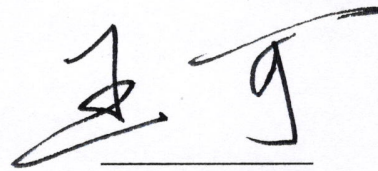
Kingdom of Cambodia



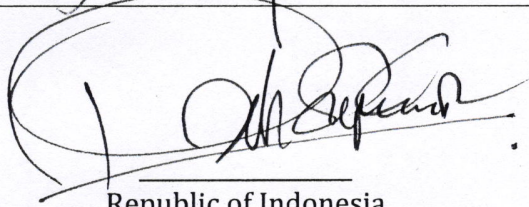
Canada



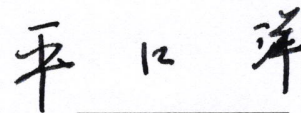
Republic of Chile



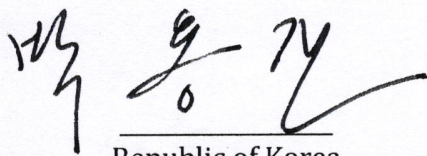
People's Republic of China



Republic of Indonesia



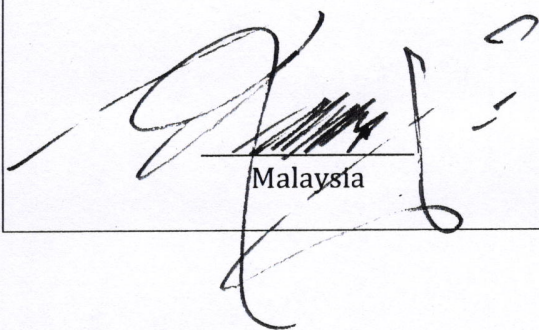
Japan



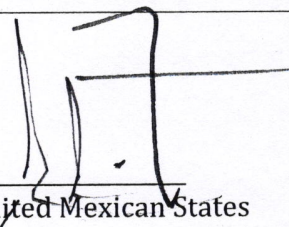
Republic of Korea



Lao People's Democratic Republic

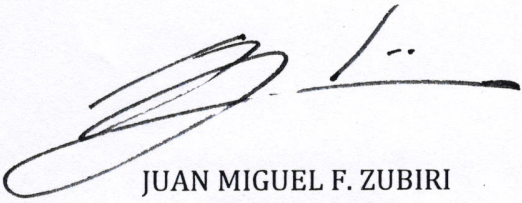


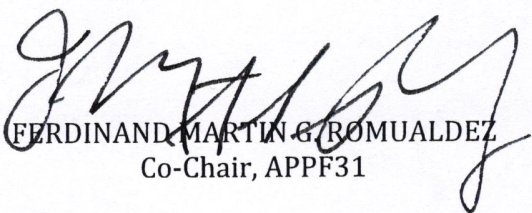
Malaysia



The United Mexican States

 <u>Federated States of Micronesia</u>	 <u>The Independent State of Papua New Guinea</u>
 <u>Republic of Peru</u>	 <u>Republic of the Philippines</u>
 <u>The Russian Federation</u>	 <u>The Kingdom of Thailand</u>
 <u>The Socialist Republic of Vietnam</u>	


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