



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION OF  
SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS**

**BY**

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**AT THE GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE 68<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
UNDER THE PRIORITY THEME "ACCELERATING THE  
ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND THE  
EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS BY  
ADDRESSING POVERTY AND STRENGTHENING  
INSTITUTIONS AND FINANCING WITH A GENDER  
PERSPECTIVE"**

**11 MARCH 2024**

*Mr Chair,*

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
2. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has always been at the center of ASEAN's collective efforts to reinforce a people-centered ASEAN Community, based on the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the ASEAN Declaration on Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals, and the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021-2025, and as we work towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ASEAN reaffirms its steadfast support for the full, effective, and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as for the Commission on the Status of Women, in advancing efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.
3. ASEAN recognises the key role of women as essential contributors to economic growth and sustainable development in the region, and continues to prioritise the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the ASEAN Community. At the same time, ASEAN recognises that constraints and barriers to gender equality persist. In this regard, this session's theme: ***“Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective”*** presents an opportunity for us to discuss ways to overcome remaining barriers, specifically socio-economic barriers, to the advancement of women and girls.

*Mr Chair,*

4. Family development and gender equality are not exclusive but are mutually complementary. Women play a critical role in our societies, and equality and partnership between men and women is key to building strong and resilient families. Families are the cornerstone of our societies, and we need strong societies to address the challenges and complexities of the post-pandemic world.
5. However, the family institution faces socio-economic stressors, and while there is much progress seen in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the ASEAN region, multiple challenges caused by gender stereotypes and uneven progress for women and girls remain to be urgently addressed across ASEAN Member States.

6. The *ASEAN Declaration on Gender Equality and Family Development*, adopted at the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Leaders' Summit in September 2023, recognizes the interdependence of family development and gender equality and emphasizes the need for strong and supportive families as the foundation for societal resilience and the achievement of women's aspirations. The Declaration advocates a partnership between men and women based on the values of respect, equality, collectivism, and social harmony, which is needed to ensure that families thrive. Families are the pivot on which the equal partnership between men and women is nurtured and promoted. Strong and supportive families will empower both men and women to achieve their aspirations.
7. The Declaration also underscores the importance of gender equality at both regional and national levels to close the gender gap and promote women empowerment. It demonstrates ASEAN's strong commitment to family development coinciding with the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024.

*Mr Chair,*

8. While the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic has passed, the pandemic has very clearly brought to light the challenges that women and girls face. The disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls are widely recognised, with women bearing the burden of unpaid domestic and care work, facing an increased risk of domestic violence, as well as the loss of employment and income.
9. In this regard, the *ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework* continues to mainstream gender equality throughout the recovery scheme and actions of ASEAN, under the broad scheme of Strengthening Human Security. We must continue to strengthen women's empowerment, particularly in the economic sphere such as through digital and financial inclusion.
10. Gender equality in rural development is also an ongoing concern in the ASEAN region as we strive to attain an "inclusive community". Through the *Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication 2021-2025*, the thrust of ASEAN actions are to: **one**, increase women's participation in rural development; **two**, enhance women's access to resources and social benefits and **three**, create and/or consolidate women's voice and agency in national platforms and policy making bodies.

11. ASEAN will spare no effort to advocate gender equality and ensure meaningful participation of women and girls at all levels as we seek to achieve inclusive recovery and sustainable development for all. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit will be held later this year to ensure that these aspirations are fulfilled.

*Mr Chair,*

12. ASEAN has consistently reaffirmed the strategic importance of advancing women's economic empowerment in the region. The gender gap has greatly affected women's ability to engage in the labour market and has aggravated poverty which is often suffered disproportionately by women. If left unaddressed, this will reverse our progress on advancing women's economic empowerment.
13. In this regard, ASEAN Leaders adopted the *Declaration on Building a More Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Future: Unlocking Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN* in 2022. The Declaration acknowledges women as economic agents and main drivers for inclusive growth, economic integration and transformation, as well as underscores the interlinkages between key areas of gender mainstreaming, innovation and technology, business and human rights, labour and decent work, as well as education.

*Mr Chair,*

14. On behalf of ASEAN, I wish to reiterate that ASEAN remains steadfast in its commitment to fulfilling our shared responsibilities towards the effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, as ASEAN strives to empower women and girls and to advance gender equality for all as part of our efforts to build back better, attain the SDGs, and realise an ASEAN community that is truly inclusive and leaves no women and girls behind.
15. Lastly, ASEAN looks forward to participating constructively at the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure successful outcomes that contribute to the advancement of women and girls around the world.

Thank you.