

**SPEECH BY ACW SINGAPORE MR RICHARD K T TAN
AT THE 18th ACWO GENERAL ASSEMBLY HANDOVER DINNER
HELD IN NAY PYI TAW ON 28 NOV 2018**

Dr San San Aye, Dr June Goh, Dr Husnah and Members of ACWO

I am very honoured to be here among so many passionate women leaders of ASEAN. I am here in my capacity as ACW Singapore to support ACWO under the Presidency of Singapore.

ACWO is a wonderful network of national women organisations in ASEAN. As an ASEAN accredited entity, your network can shape and influence the public, private and people sectors in all ASEAN Member States to serve the cause of women. And there is much that ACWO can do.

Dr Husnah has been championing for women for many years with the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW). But there are many other ASEAN Bodies that ACWO can potentially work with to advance women's interests.

For example, as highlighted by Dr June Goh in her acceptance speech, millions of women and girls in ASEAN do not have access to education. ACWO could consider collaborating with the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOMED) to look into localised measures that can ensure all women, especially in rural areas, are given equal access to education.

Education is a powerful social enabler. It enables and empowers women to climb the socio-political and corporate ladders. For women in low income and rural areas, it can help them break out of poverty and protect them from exploitation and abuse.

ACWO could also consider partnering with the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

These three ASEAN Bodies, together with ACW, are working on many initiatives in areas such as women economic empowerment and in regional actions to ensure women are protected at home, at work and in the community, to ensure that their children are given the rights to legal national identities at birth, and to ensure that women in their senior years have adequate financial support, healthcare and are enabled to age with dignity.

Engaging the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD) could provide ACWO's member organisations opportunities to give input on healthcare for women and girls, especially during their development/adolescence and senior years under local circumstances.

ACWO's network of national women organisations will be of great value to these initiatives in terms of ground up input in the conceptualisation of policies and programmes and in the implementation.

Your wonderful network of national women organisations will also be useful to help the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development & Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE).

And if some members of ACWO feel strongly about issues related to human trafficking and child labour, which are problems we face in ASEAN and which involve mainly women and children, ACWO could consider helping the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM).

As the ASEAN region is very prone to disasters, women and children are particularly vulnerable when disasters strike. If ACWO network can play a part in ensuring that women and children are cared for and protected from harm in such situations, we have an ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) for ACWO member organisations to work with.

ACWO could also consider joining hands with the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY) and on Sports (SOMS) to look into how traditions in various parts of ASEAN could evolve quickly to allow girls and young women to be more engaged and involved in mainstream communities and sporting activities. It would be good for their social and personal development and for their voice to be heard on the future that they desire in ASEAN.

The ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM) would, I am sure, welcome ground up feedback from ACWO's members and their help to educate the public on government policies and public services in your respective country.

These are just a few examples of the many aspects of women and girls in ASEAN that ACWO could consider taking an interest in.

The power of ACWO is your network of national women organisations. You can mobilise intellectual and operational resources very quickly to address the issues concerned and add tremendous value to the protection and advancements of women and make the ASEAN community a more inclusive region for all.

In this way, you will also raise the profile of ACWO in ASEAN and beyond.

I wish ACWO all the best in its journey ahead under the Presidency of the Singapore Council of Women Organisations.

Thank you.

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