



**Opening Remarks by Mr. P O Ram, AIPA Secretary General, at the
Official Opening Session of the 7th AIPA Caucus,
Siem Reap, Cambodia, 26–30 July 2015**

H.E. Dr NGUON Nhel, Second-Vice President of the National Assembly of the
Kingdom of Cambodia

H.E. Post Dr. Cheam Yeap, Chairperson of Cambodian AIPA National Group
and Chairperson of the Organizing Committee

His Excellency Mr. Tith Chantha, Secretary of State of Ministry of Tourism of
Cambodia

Honourable AIPA Delegation and Members of the National Assembly of
Cambodia

Hon. Tran Dong Phuong, Representative of ASEAN Secretary General

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to all of you.

Allow me to start my remarks by conveying our appreciation to the
National Assembly of Cambodia for organizing the AIPA Caucus in this rich,
mystical, cultural and historical city of Siem Reap.

The venue of the Caucus could not have been more fitting as the theme chosen is: “ASEAN Tourism; Promoting Nature Conservation and Developing Sustainable Tourism”. This topic should talk about how ASEAN member states and AIPA, as its legislative arm, can help develop, regulate and manage the tourism industry in a sustainable environment.

Tourism, and its environmental and cultural impact, have come to the attention of critics and become a pet topic for debate amongst our societies and at national and international fora. But the rationale of the theme at this meeting is to showcase to the world that ASEAN has a rich diversity of attractions, which contributes to economic growth among states in this region, yet we are also aware of the potential of negative impact of an unmanaged and uncontrolled tourism industry.

Tourism may have an adverse effect on the environment and local cultures. Therefore, a call for a concerted effort requiring governmental intervention to establish proper rules and regulations to protect the habitat is paramount. However, tourism can also become a useful medium to promote educational programs on the cultures and history of the countries in this region, as it provides an opportunity to encourage a green environment

Now, I would like to focus my remarks on the AIPA Caucus. The AIPA Caucus, as a special mechanism for a core group of parliamentarians to meet

and discuss burning and important issues in the region, was the main purpose for its establishment. It is also mandated to explore possibilities for harmonization of laws on common issues encountered by all AIPA member parliaments. Res. 28 GA/2007/Pol/03 on the *Establishment of an AIPA Caucus* tabled at the 28th AIPA General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2007 emphasized the central role parliaments play in AIPA, working in unison to achieve an eventual harmonized body of laws in the region.

Excellencies, Honourables and Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

AIPA Caucus is also mandated to monitor the status of implementation of the adopted AIPA resolutions and ensuring that the recommendations generated at the meeting will be conveyed to the respective governments of ASEAN Member States for their consideration.

Just mentioning some of the important tasks entrusted to AIPA Caucus immediately reminds us of the significance of the AIPA Caucus function, which is to realize its primary goal as the mechanism for harmonization of laws. This task may remain challenging for AIPA, yet I believe that AIPA will commit itself fully to putting in place tangible measures in developing a common legal framework as AIPA's lasting contribution to the building of the ASEAN Community.

It is good to remind ourselves that the main thrusts of the tasks of the Caucus, as contained in its Terms of Reference, are to:

1. assist the Executive Committee in monitoring the status of implementation of the recommendations of AIPA Resolutions and, for this purpose, requesting country reports on the status of the implementation of AIPA Resolutions from the member countries;
2. formulate the Terms of Reference for common legislative initiatives by assessing existing legal and constitutional frameworks through common tools and identifying areas which can be harmonised to facilitate regional cooperation in their enforcement;
3. select, compile, disseminate and harmonise a list of laws within ASEAN to facilitate regional cooperation in their enforcement.

The question that arises at this juncture is the intention of the Terms of Reference of the Caucus. Sieving through the three tasks, it was clear that the ultimate intention was to focus on Resolutions which are transnational and can be applied uniformly either in total or partially in all Member States. This view is strengthened by the RESOLUTION ON THE FIRST AIPA CAUCUS which states:

“Further acknowledging that the first AIPA Caucus meeting discussed the Terms of Reference for developing common legislative initiatives with the objective of the harmonization of AIPA legislations;

Noting that laws on transnational crime, namely laws on combating drug menace and human trafficking, have been selected for the purpose of identifying areas of possible harmonisation;

Recognising the need for further discussion on developing common legislative initiatives and harmonisation of the laws of AIPA member countries;”

It is, therefore, urged that a mechanism be instituted to track all resolutions which are transnational in character and hence can be harmonised.

I would like now to share with you developments surrounding the AIPA Secretariat. As we are more exposed to international relations and cooperation, we have received interest and invitation from regional and international organizations to engage with AIPA. To give some examples here, the Freeland-ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network, a network that strives to save the bio-diversity in our region from extinction, has been engaged with AIPA members and AIPA Secretariat for quite some time now. We have also received attention from organizations like UN Women and others hoping to establish relations and cooperation with AIPA.

Hence, I would like all of us to consider whether the AIPA Caucus' mandate could be expanded to accommodate other specific fields or areas of interests that are likely to enhance AIPA Caucus' functions into a productive

entity with constructive outcomes, for the benefit of all states in this region and beyond AIPA.

Excellencies, Honorables, and Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I conclude by thanking the host parliament, the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the President of the National Assembly, **Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin**, his officers and staff, for organising this meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The AIPA Secretariat is also here to give its fullest support during the meeting.

Thank you.