11th Women Ministers and Parliamentarians Conference

Ensuring Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment from a Life-Cycle Approach
Leaving No Girls and No Women Behind

4-5 November 2016
Bangkok, Thailand

Statement of Commitment

We, Speakers, Ministers, and Parliamentarians from 25 countries of the Asia-Pacific region, gathered at the 11th Regional Women Parliamentarians and Ministers Conference on Ensuring Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment from a Life-Cycle Approach: Leaving No Girls and No Women Behind in Bangkok, Thailand on 4-5 November 2016, hereby adopt this Statement of Commitment.

Preamble:

1. **Reaffirming** our commitment to leave no one behind and to the full and effective realization of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, and especially concerned with the fulfilment of goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10, relating to the eradication of poverty and hunger, gender equality, good health and well-being, quality education, and the overall reduction of inequalities;

2. **Acknowledging** the conclusions drawn in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) General Report of 2015, confirming the substantial progress made since the 2000 Millennium Declaration and the great value and effectiveness of setting clear and ambitious goals with a worldwide reach;

3. **Recognizing** the previous ten regional Women Ministers and Parliamentarians Conferences as significant platforms of capacity building and strengthening of collaboration among women Parliamentarians and Ministers in the region, as well as the critical involvement and support of male parliamentarians and Ministers in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment;

4. **Reiterating** the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, upholding the principle of equal rights of men and women, while urging the three countries in Asia and the Pacific that have not ratified this Convention to do so at the earliest opportunity, and for all countries to give full effect to all its provisions;

5. **Recalling** the Declaration of the UN General Assembly on 20 December 1993
on the Elimination of Violence Against Women which acknowledges that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, and that women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, migrant women, women living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, girls, women with disabilities, elderly women, women in situations of armed conflict, and women in humanitarian situations, are especially vulnerable to violence;

6. **Further Recalling** the commitments made at the World Conferences on Women, held in Mexico in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995, to advance women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality, and noting the strong commitment to monitor and further progress our shared aims to advance women’s empowerment and gender equality made by our Governments in the Beijing+20 Platform;

7. **Reaffirming** the commitments made at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action adopted in Cairo in 1994, and in the ICPD Beyond 2014, to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and men, boys and girls;

8. **Celebrating** the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (APPC) Ministerial Declaration adopted in Bangkok in September 2013, and the leading role of the advocacy of Parliamentarians in achieving a most significant rights-based document, noting the need to further assert sexual and reproductive health and rights as basic human rights without discrimination;

9. **Reaffirming** the importance of the declarations (the Stockholm Statement of Commitment and the Declaration on Human Rights) adopted by Parliamentarians from all regions of the world in April 2014 at the Sixth International Parliamentarians Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (IPCI), where we committed to address the rights and inequities of migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, child brides, adolescents and other marginalised communities;

10. **Deeply conscious** of the world’s rapidly ageing population, and the commitments made in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) of April 2002, in particular to support elderly women in their political, economic and social participation;

11. **Reiterating** the principles enshrined in the Bali Declaration by Parliamentarians and Civil Society on MDG Acceleration and the Post-2015 Development Agenda adopted in March 2013, emphasizing human rights for all, democracy and good governance, equality and non-discrimination, sustainable development, and a system-wide approach through quality public service delivery;
12. **Recognizing** Resolution 2016/1 adopted at the 49th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in April 2016, and endorsing the commitment to encourage the collection of reliable data and indicators in the fields of sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and education, and monitoring our progress in using that data to develop and implement effective national policies;

13. **Recalling** the Kathmandu Declaration of the South Asian Parliamentarians’ Meeting on Child Marriage of 23 March 2016, that prompted us to accelerate collective efforts to end early, child, and forced marriage as a form of entrenched gender inequality, violence against women and girls, and violence against children;

14. **Further recalling** the declaration and recommendations made by the Global Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development toward the 2016 G7 Ise-Shima Summit to reaffirm the commitment to human security for all, to achieve freedom from fear and want, and to realize sustainable development and dignity and equality for all;

15. **Asserting** the importance of South-South cooperation, and specifically the importance of our sub-regional inter-governmental bodies: the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and Parliaments in Central Asia, and other smaller and emerging regional communities have a critical role in reinforcing the accountability of member States to mainstream gender equality and SRHR priorities in national policies and in enabling parliamentarians to play a strong advocacy and monitoring role on policy and legal reform and implementation;

16. **Acknowledging** gender inequality itself as a form of violence against women, and that violence against women persists and includes harassment, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, elder abuse and neglect, and unequal access to healthcare and health services;

17. **Acknowledging** that the issue of gender and women’s empowerment for the whole life cycle of a woman is of critical importance for all countries and communities across our region, and indeed across the globe for achieving equality, peace and security, and sustainable development.

**We Speakers, Ministers, and Parliamentarians,**

18. **Commit** to eliminating violence against women and girls in all forms;

19. **Commit** to engaging men and boys in the fight to end gender-based violence and promote gender equality;

20. **Commit** to providing women and girls equal access to health services,
including SRHR and modern contraception and safe abortion services where legal, throughout their life cycles and regardless of their social, economic, or marital status, as well as education, skills training, and social services;

21. **Recognize** the importance of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in promoting women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality, and commit to increasing the reach of CSE in each of our countries;

22. **Commit** to partnering with faith-based organizations to enhance the rights of women and girls, and address gender-based violence, promoting SRHR within acceptable but progressive religious frameworks;

23. **Commit** to eradicating the practices of early, child and forced marriage, bride kidnapping, and honour killing;

24. **Commit** to ending human trafficking in all forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, and all other forms of exploitation;

25. **Recognize** that the media and the Internet can be a force for good in terms of raising awareness and sharing information on gender issues but media also plays a significant role in perpetuating negative stereotypes of women, portraying women as sexual prey and facilitating trafficking and the exploitation of women and girls;

26. **Commit** to protecting and expanding the space for Civil Society and engaging with Civil Society Organizations in policy formulation, implementation, and service delivery;

27. **Recognize** the undeniable value of increasing women’s political participation, promoting national policies and priorities to advance gender equality in all spheres of the society;

28. **Commit** to employing gender-responsive budgeting, and allocating appropriate budgetary resources to gender equality and gender issues, including toward collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data to inform policy and monitor policy and program implementation;

29. **Commit** to enabling and paving the way for women of all ages and backgrounds to actively engage and participate in political activity, by encouraging women to exercise their right to vote, considering the enhancement of the number of women in local legislative assemblies and Parliaments or the introduction of targets or quotas for women candidates or women parliamentarians, maintaining and supporting existing networks for women in politics, creating new networks for young women interested in political leadership and offering them training and mentoring opportunities;

30. **Recognize** that women have been historically excluded from fully participating
in the economy and commit to taking affirmative steps to make new space for women across all age groups in the rural, national and global economy, improve equal employment opportunity and women’s access to higher-paying jobs, and eliminate the gender wage gap;

31. **Recognize** that jobs that currently employ a majority of women are likely to be hardest hit proportionately by impending technological disruption, increasing the urgency for more women to enter high-growth fields that demand Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) skills and commit to review the provision and promotion of STEM education and to ensure girls and young women are encouraged to pursue STEM subjects and career pathways;

32. **Commit** to supporting female entrepreneurs in accessing capital, technology and other key resources, and business and management training, wherever possible, through an enabling legal and regulatory environment, and encouraging private sector lenders and other resource partners to do more to help women start and grow their businesses;

33. **Commit** to encouraging all employers across the private and public sector to review and update workplace policies and practices to tackle unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion processes, to extend to female (and male) employees with caring responsibilities parental and elderly care leave and other appropriate support, to offer part-time and flexible working options, child-care facilities at work, and to offer mentoring and sponsorship initiatives for women;

34. **Commit** to extending greater protections to women working in the unregulated informal sector and formal sector;

35. **Affirm** that women are often more vulnerable than men to the effects of climate change, and that it is an obligation of government to provide protection and income-generating solutions for those likely to lose their livelihoods to the effects of climate change, especially women and other vulnerable populations, through enacting progressive policies to mitigate the effects of climate change;

36. **Commit** to protecting women and children who are migrating due to climate change, armed conflict, humanitarian disasters, and lack of economic opportunity, and to protecting others, including children and the elderly, who are left behind by migrating family members.

37. We, Speakers, Ministers, and Parliamentarians, pledge to carry out these actions and systematically and actively monitor the progress we make in doing so.

38. We further pledge to report to and engage with all stakeholders and urge our colleagues, counterparts and Parliaments in Asia and the Pacific to take note of and act on this Statement of Commitment and its recommendations.
39. We hereby reaffirm our commitment and undertake all that is in our means and resources to produce the concrete policy actions and comprehensive approach in order to promote the empowerment of women and girls and advance gender equality, and pledge to voice these issues throughout our respective political mandates.

40. We also pledge to share these commitments made with our fellow Parliamentarians and to advocate for greater understanding of the SDGs within our Parliaments and in our national policies.

41. We finally commit to work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and call upon our current and future governments in particular to take up the commitment to leave no women and no girls behind.

Adopted in Bangkok, Thailand on 5 November 2016 by 54 Parliamentarians and Ministers.