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(GOPAC)**

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GOPAC is a worldwide alliance of parliamentarians working together to combat corruption, strengthen good government, and uphold the rule of law. GOPAC has 57 national chapters on 5 regions. GOPAC supports its members' efforts through original research, global anti-corruption capacity building, and international peer support.

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Transparency and Accountability: Finding a Common Ground Fostering Inter-Agency Collaboration between Parliament and SAIs

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in Southeast Asia.”)*

It is important to begin a discourse on this particular issue by highlighting the importance of transparency and accountability as a precondition for the achievement of good governance. By being open and transparent, it ensures the delivery of public services and helps to sustain economic growth and development. As a part of ASEAN countries, we need to collaborate and promote accountability and transparency by doing active cooperation as well as providing assistance to each other.

We have to acknowledge that implementing the good governance is not as easy as it seems. The countries face continues threats and challenges in order to implement an accountable and transparent government. Democracy is coming hand-in-hand with a transparent and accountable government. However, as we may know, most of the ASEAN countries are still in the phase of pseudo-democracy. Moreover, the power to influence the countries that are less democratic to improve their transparency and accountability is limited due to the ASEAN values of non-interference.

In addition, the widespread corruption disrupt governance, destroy trust towards state institutions, and become a barrier in achieving sustainable development. Corruption purges the opportunities to build a better livelihood for the people as it steals away their rights to achieve equality, security, and prosperity.

Furthermore, as we realize that addressing corruption is hardly done alone, participation from every stakeholder is essential to ensure the success of anti-corruption measures. Through cooperation and collaboration, the problem of corruption can be approached from various perspectives and produced more comprehensive solutions.

Both the executive and the legislative bodies should be able to work together as a symbol of a balance of power. Moreover, cooperation between Parliament and Supreme Audit Institutions is essential to ensure accountable, inclusive, participatory and transparent sustainable development. Fostering strong financial management, through reliable reports and controls, could detect and prevent corruption as it promotes transparency and accountability in government programs and activities.

Since its inception in 2002, the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC) have been actively involved in the global anti-corruption network, while at the same time fostering a strong anti-corruption partnership among parliamentarians. Up until February 2019, we have 1397 members worldwide, as well as coordinated networks through 62 National Chapters and 5 Regional Chapters in Arab, Africa, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and Latin America. GOPAC is the only international network of parliamentarians dedicated to combat corruption, strengthen good government and uphold the rule of law.

GOPAC also developed several oversight handbooks such as: Financial Oversight, Improving Democratic Accountability Globally, and Guidelines to Strengthen Oversight through Parliamentary Donor Collaboration. The handbooks intended to be a guide to how parliamentarians can increase the effectiveness of their oversight role and how to work together with partners to achieve the goals.

Previously, GOPAC has also been partnering with international organizations, including encouraging and supporting the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Together with the Islamic Development Bank (ISDB), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), GOPAC developed a Parliamentary Handbook as guidance for Parliamentarians to successfully implement the SDGs, especially by monitoring the effectiveness and accountability of any development assistance. As of now, the handbook has been localized and developed into national version. We are now actively promoting and encouraging all Parliamentarians to make use of this Handbook as a valuable resource in achieving SDGs targets.

Moreover, there are several contributing factors which made those GOPAC works possible. The first one is by effectively identifying the needs of parliamentarians, so that our tools could really provide practical guidance for them. For instance, while developing the SDGs Handbook in 2016, we organized a pilot workshop for parliamentarians from ASEAN countries to hear their feedback and accommodate their demands.

Besides making sure that our tools could be easily adapted, we also ensure that they serve as opportunity to start discussions among key actors within and outside parliament. Hence, the second contributing factor is strategic partnership and coordinated efforts that we foster with related stakeholders; such as international institutions, academia, and civil society organizations. Our partners have contributed in formulating the handbooks, conducting workshops, providing consultation, as well as promoting the adoption and localization of our tools.

The third contributing factor is parliaments' commitment in promoting accountability and transparency within their own institution. Although the engagement is varied regionally, parliamentarians are undertaking efforts to enhance their role in oversight function, such as by working on cross-party committees or working groups to push for their main objectives, and ensure the effective implementation of commitments adopted.

Regardless those progress that have been made in pushing forth the transparency and accountability, we have to admit that there are still challenges ahead, especially in our region. Here are several points on what more can be done to promote and deliver the regional transparency and accountability process, as well as strengthen parliamentary roles in achieving this agenda.

The first important point is ensuring an effective democracy-building process in the region, as a prerequisite of accountable and transparent governance. This democratic consolidation is very important – because without democracy, there will be no participatory process, and even mere transparency will not translate into stronger accountability. In this regard, GOPAC is willing to intensify our support in democratizing states within the region, by encouraging ASEAN Parliaments to be more democratic. We call fellow ASEAN parliamentarians to strive for a much more representative, open, transparent, accessible, accountable, and effective legislative body in their respective countries.

Secondly, ensuring that ASEAN ways of consensus are built upon the commitment of transparency and accountability. The democracy-building as a collective regional objective which I previously mentioned, implies that all ASEAN member-states should become democracies. That would require peer pressure on non-democratic member states; while at the same time this 'pressure' would arguably contradicts the existing ASEAN's principle of strict non-interference in the domestic affairs. However, we should remember that the ASEAN Charter itself clearly obliges member-states to "*strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law.*" Especially considering the real threat of transnational corruption and the pressing needs to maximize sustainable development, we call ASEAN to prioritize the principles of transparency and accountability in its internal decision-making process. This really is the common ground that we should aim for a strong regional community.

Moreover, the third point is encouraging all ASEAN Parliaments to strengthen their public financial oversight mechanism, by establishing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) or equivalent audit working groups. This is very important, because parliament doesn't only have a role in approving budgets, but also in reviewing government spending and hold them accountable. The PAC should also establish liaison and work closely with the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI), as they have a common ground to oversight and audit government budget. The committee could review and make use of auditors' reports as the basis for their inquiries. GOPAC also calls for a productive relationship between PAC and SAI, where expert audit institutions could inform committees on the quality of financial management across the government, and identify areas for attention.

Finally, we should also push these agendas forward within the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). The issues of democratic consolidation, assuring transparency, and improving parliament's accountability should be at the center of discussion among members of ASEAN Parliaments. Through their constitutional functions, parliamentarians should position themselves as the leader on implementing these principles in the region. Hence, we should promote transparency and accountability in the ASEAN region by taking great opportunities to collaborate and work towards the same goals with the same level of ambition. GOPAC is open to collaborate, and look forward to fostering strategic partnership in improving institutional capacity and ensuring the effectiveness of legislative reform.