

**ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

**33rd GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**STATEMENT BY MR. NHEM THAVY**

**VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

**Mr. President,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

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 I am honored to take the floor at this General Assembly and to greet you on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I would like to compliment you, Mr. President, and all our Indonesian hosts for everything you have done to provide us with such warm hospitality. We feel very privileged to be meeting on this beautiful and serene island of Lombok.

It was just five years ago that the Indonesian Parliament hosted the 116th IPU Assembly in Nusa Dua. We can only marvel at the changes that have occurred in this region in such a short space of time. Each and every country has made significant, even spectacular, strides forward in their development. The ASEAN itself has significantly strengthened and developed new institutions, such as the ASEAN Commission on Human Rights, and is moving towards a common market.

On behalf of the IPU, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the delegation from Myanmar on its transition towards democracy. As you know, the IPU was honoured to integrate Myanmar as its latest new member in April this year. We look forward to working with the Parliament in Myanmar and providing all the support that we possibly can to this new parliament in the ASEAN region.

Late last year, the members of the IPU adopted a visionary strategy that mapped out the future direction of the organization for the coming five years. The strategy is inspired by our conviction that better parliaments make for stronger democracies.

Parliaments are the cornerstone of democracy. They need to be empowered and have the requisite means to carry out their constitutional functions. They must embody core democratic values in their work. The IPU's strategy consists of strengthening parliaments to enable them to contribute to democracy and help meet the aspirations of the people.

 The IPU also aspires to become a better tool for inter-parliamentary cooperation, and this is something that we would very much like to explore with you. We would like to hear your views on how the IPU can have a more substantive interaction with the ASEAN Parliamentary Assembly.

In this context, may I draw your attention to the upcoming IPU Assembly in Quebec. The IPU has scheduled a debate specifically for regional parliamentary assemblies on the subject of multilateralism and the role of parliamentary diplomacy. I warmly encourage all of you to take part in that debate.

Those of you who were present at the IPU's last Assembly in Kampala will recall the launching of the first ever Global Parliamentary Report. Many delegations declared that its theme - the relationship between parliaments and citizens - is a fundamental issue in their country. Parliaments must do more to be closer to citizens

Our parliaments have been called on to analyze the Report's findings in the light of our national context and engage with civil society in discussions about how to strengthen the links between parliaments and citizens. The Report looks at the challenges and provides examples of good practice among parliaments and individual parliamentarians.

On 15 September, many parliaments celebrated the International Day of Democracy, taking *Dialogue and inclusiveness - central to democracy* as their central theme. I believe this Day is a wonderful opportunity to encourage citizens, especially young people, to take an interest in their parliament and their democracy.

The fundamental point underlying all of these initiatives launched by the IPU in recent years is the urgent need for change. All parliaments in the world take their inspiration from an institution that was created many centuries ago. Since then, society has changed in many fundamental ways. Parliaments need to modernize in order to keep pace with the evolution of society to remain relevant.

The IPU believes that, through its global membership, it can play a pioneering role in assisting parliaments. That is why I would like to end my intervention by inviting all of you to work more closely with the IPU in all our efforts to build modern democratic parliaments.

**Thank you**.