Concept Note
Workshop on Networking and Outreach
with Civil Society Organizations

November 15-18, 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand

1. Concept

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) are groups of motivated individuals with a common vision and goal to address the needs and concerns of society. This includes, but not limited to associations, academia, non-profit media organisations, trade unions, networks, coalitions, membership-based organisations, people's organisations, cooperatives, recreational groups, think tanks, and non-government or community-based organisations with various political, social or economic motivations. They come in all shapes and sizes, vary in their capacities, expertise and scopes and focus on a wide range of issues.

CSOs are perceived as major players mediating between individuals and the government. A great deal of CSOs have made valuable contributions in better representing the voice of people in policy decision processes and played a vital role in creating people' awareness about government induced policies and development projects. They have also played an increasing influential role in setting and implementing development agendas of the government and have had measurable results in governing policy development.

Over the past decade, CSOs have grown up in size and credibility in many countries. Their roles have become significantly more prominent and their activities have dramatically spread. However, many of them are unstable, fragmented and not professionally managed due to the lack of strong networks and outreach. These drawbacks prevent many CSOs from efficiently undertake their missions and fully serving their societies.

It has been seen that networking can be an effective development tool in establishing a strong connection and maintaining relationships to exchange information and advice among stakeholders. Similarly, outreach has been seen as a means to actively provide services to populations who might not otherwise have access to those services. Thereby, networking and outreach are viewed as a significant means to create linkages between government and CSOs as well as help strengthening state-society relation by bonding citizen to one another and linking them to the government.

Networking and outreach provide valuable opportunities for CSOs to reach their communication goals more efficiently and to engage with their people more deeply. They can be used as a tool to promote advancements in the field of development in

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which they allow CSOs to multiply their audience reach and connect and inform them about important issues affecting their lives and their communities.

Networking and outreach also help CSOs to achieve consensus, assemble coalitions for change, combine and amplify evidence and mobilize resources. They serve as a means to strengthen mutual accountability among CSOs, government institutions and citizens as well as to support greater citizen participation and transparent political processes.

2. Context and Rationale

One of the pressing challenges of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) is how to fulfill its role as the legislative arm and partner of ASEAN in establishing the ASEAN Community, particularly in legislating laws to implement the member states' commitment towards ASEAN integration. Being the representatives of the sovereign people's will, member parliaments of AIPA are very close to their constituents and hold a very strategic position in determining the pulses of their people, while communicating the vision, goals and benefits of ASEAN integration.

In the realm of good governance and multi-stakeholders' involvement in the development sector, there exists accounts of successful experiences of public sector entities across the region where the latter effectively harnessed the network, skills, depth and reach of civil society organizations in jointly achieving development goals by building partnerships and coalitions with them.

With these challenges and opportunities in mind, the AIPA Secretariat in partnership with the Thailand Parliament and the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) are conducting a first workshop on Networking and Outreach with Civil Society Organizations.

3. Objectives

This workshop aims to enable participants to:

1) Learn from best international practices and successful examples around the region on how the public sector engages and networks with CSOs to achieve common goals, and
2) Outline ideas/vision in engaging Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for networking and outreach in the establishment of the ASEAN Community.

4.0 Target Participants

The target participants of this workshop are senior management executives who are involved in supporting parliamentary policy formulation in general, and for CSO engagement in particular, if there is any; and CSO liaison or outreach officers of national secretariats of member parliaments of AIPA.. These participants should be very familiar with local issues relating to the establishment of ASEAN integration and preferably have had previous experiences in engaging CSOs in joint undertakings within their parliament.

5.0 Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this workshop, it shall utilize common adult learning and teaching methods using innovative and participatory approaches wherein participants will draw insights from successful models and their peers' experience on CSO networking and outreach.

Baseline information is required to determine the level of experience, understanding and motivation among member AIPA parliaments on networking and outreach activities with CSOs. A pre-workshop survey therefore will be conducted to gather this information. (*See Draft Survey Questionnaire*)

There will be two follow-up workshops that are envisioned to be implemented to draft an "AIPA Policy Framework on Parliament-CSO engagement and Outreach."

6.0 Major Topics to be covered

The theme for this workshop reads "**Networking and Outreach with Civil Society Organizations.**" The following are the topics to be covered during this workshop:

- Why to engage CSOs? The logic and dynamics in networking and outreach activities with Civil Society Organizations to achieve common development goals;
- What are the Key Success Factors? Best practices and examples of successful Parliament (Government)-CSO Networking and Outreach Programs (in ASEAN);
- Insights on AIPA Member Parliaments experience in networking and outreach with CSOs; and
- Identification of pending ASEAN Integration-Related Parliamentary actions, which might potentially be best addressed by networking with relevant CSOs.

7.0 Summary Description of Succeeding Workshops

7.1 Workshop No. 2 Theme: "Developing the Draft Policy Framework on AIPA - CSO Engagement and Outreach"

Description

The main objective of Workshop No. 2 is to enable participants to formulate a draft policy framework on AIPA-CSO Engagement and Outreach for the establishment of the ASEAN Community. The draft policy framework will be based on best practice examples and potential prospects for CSO engagement, as developed in Workshop No. 1.

7.2 Workshop No. 3 Theme: "Validating the Draft Policy Framework on AIPA - CSO Engagement and Outreach"

Description

The main objective of Workshop No. 3 is to validate the draft policy framework on AIPA–CSO Engagement and Outreach; discuss and mutually agree on the next steps (including road map) in finalizing the policy framework to be tabled as a draft resolution at the next AIPA General Assembly.