



Canada - China Legislative Association
Association législative Canada - Chine



Canada - Japan Inter - Parliamentary Group
Groupe Interparlementaire Canada - Japon

Report of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

**44th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary
Assembly (AIPA)**

Jakarta, Indonesia

From August 6 to 10, 2023

Report

The Honourable Senator Yuen Pau Woo and MP Terry Sheehan participated in the 44th General Assembly of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Inter-Parliamentary Assembly from August 6 to 10, 2023, in Jakarta, Indonesia. They were joined by Grant McLaughlin, Executive Secretary of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Interparliamentary Group. ASEAN member countries take turns chairing the organization, which includes organizing and hosting various meetings, such as the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)¹. Canada has participated in these annual meetings on many occasions over the past 40 years, most recently at the 43rd Assembly in Cambodia in November 2022. The objectives of Canada's involvement are to:

- maintain regular contact with member countries and discuss issues specific to the Asia-Pacific region;
- network with parliamentarians in the region;
- present the views of Canadian parliamentarians on various topics; and
- strengthen Canada's international presence, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Of the 10 ASEAN member countries, nine sent delegations to the General Assembly: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Other countries or regional governments that have observer status in the General Assembly, like Canada, were also present: Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, the European Parliament, Georgia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Morocco, Norway, Russia, Timor Leste, Ukraine, and the United States of America. Also present this year were a few groups of researchers, and members of the AIPA and ASEAN secretariats. Lastly, Armenia, Cuba and Turkey were also invited to attend. These three countries were elevated to observer status over the course of the Assembly.

BRIEFING BY THE CANADIAN EMBASSY IN INDONESIA

The delegation met with Nadia Burger, the Canadian Ambassador to Indonesia, along with Embassy staff members Richard Le Bars, Head of Political and Public Affairs, and Louis-Thomas Laurin, Trade Commissioner at the Mission of Canada to ASEAN. This briefing gave the delegates greater insight into the political and social situation in the region, the local and regional challenges facing Indonesia, and future prospects.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM

Meeting between the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia and the heads of delegations

On the morning of August 7, prior to the official opening of the General Assembly, the heads of delegations were invited to a meeting with H.E. Dr. Puan Maharani, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Indonesia. This meeting allowed Senator Woo to thank the hosts for their hospitality, briefly discuss Canada's participation in the General Assembly with Dr. Maharani and reiterate the commitment of Canadian parliamentarians

¹ The report of the 44th General Assembly is available at <https://aipasecretariat.org/elements/general-assembly-report>.

to Southeast Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region. It was also an opportunity to meet the heads of delegations from the other countries participating in the event and build relationships with those parliamentarians from other countries. Several of these conversations continued during the three days of the General Assembly.

First plenary session

Following the General Assembly's opening ceremony hosted by the President of Indonesia, H.E. Mr. Joko Widodo, the first plenary session began the afternoon of August 7. ASEAN member countries delivered statements on behalf of their delegations, as did the observer countries. On behalf of the delegation, Senator Woo, the head of delegation for Canada, addressed the participants in the General Assembly on the significance of the relationship between Southeast Asia and Canada, highlighting Canada's recent Indo-Pacific Strategy and efforts to build stronger ties in trade, investment, educational and cultural exchanges. He noted that ASEAN is now Canada's fourth largest merchandise trading partner and expressed his hopes that progress will be made on free trade negotiations and the formalization of the Canada-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. Senator Woo also spoke on the many opportunities for collaboration and mutual learning, particularly with regard to the urgency of stepping up global cooperation to address climate change and emphasizing the great importance of people-to-people ties in solidifying these connections. The speech was well received by all the other countries' delegates, who congratulated Canada on its contribution.

Second plenary session

The second plenary session took place on the afternoon of August 9, followed by the closing ceremonies. During this session, the rapporteurs of the various committees presented the plenary assembly with the reports of their respective proceedings, debates, and resolutions. Among the approved reports was a decision by AIPA Members to charge a mandatory annual contribution for AIPA Observer Parliaments. The Canadian delegation looks forward to learning further details on the matter. The rapporteurs' presentations were followed by the representatives of the various member countries signing the joint communiqué that not only details the decisions taken, but also highlights the Annual Assembly's achievements with regard to regional cooperation and solidarity.

Participation in the AIPA Annual Assembly helped Canadian delegates maintain contact with representatives from various countries, some of which will participate in the Annual General Assembly of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Manila, Philippines in November 2023. It is also an opportunity for the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group and the Canada-China Legislative Association to maintain regular contact with parliamentarians from Asian countries at times other than during co-chair visits and bilateral meetings, in a different context and with aims that vary from those usually observed during strictly bilateral meetings.

Dialogues with observer countries

This activity was the cornerstone of Canada's participation in the General Assembly. On August 8 and 9, observer countries had sessions to formally meet with representatives of the ASEAN member countries to discuss a specific topic. This year, the topic was "Parliamentary Cooperation: Shared Commitments for Peace, Stability, and Prosperity",

although the conversation the participants had was wide-ranging, covering this and many other topics.

It was agreed that Senator Woo would lead the conversation for the delegation, but all members were able to participate in the discussion. After the opening remarks from all sides, the conversation took a more general turn, also dealing with sustainable development, green growth, and climate solutions, the opportunities for mutual dialogue, capacity building, and learning, and emphasizing the longstanding relationships between all the countries and the importance of human connections in maintaining those connections. This engaging discussion allowed Canada's delegates to express their views and reflect the diversity of perspectives both in Canada and among ASEAN member countries.

BILATERAL MEETINGS ON THE SIDELINES OF THE OFFICIAL EVENTS

As is generally the case, the Canadian delegates met with a variety of delegates, both officially and informally, in order to maximize the impact of Canada's presence at AIPA.

Informal meeting with the heads of delegation of Australia, Norway, and the European Parliament

At the beginning of the week, Senator Woo met with the heads of delegation from Australia, Norway, and the European Parliament to share their experiences at past AIPA meetings and expectations and aspirations for the meetings ahead. This was a welcome opportunity to connect with like-minded delegations and began conversations that continued throughout the assembly.

Meeting with the delegates from Ukraine

The delegation was pleased to meet with the representatives from Ukraine once again. The two sides had a frank and open conversation about the war in Ukraine and the many challenges the country faces due to the illegal Russian invasion. The delegates reaffirmed Canada's steadfast support of Ukraine and agreed to take any actions they could to buttress Ukrainian sovereignty.

Meeting with the delegates from Singapore

The two sides had a fulsome discussion, with a strong focus on sustainability and development, particularly with regards to working towards climate change solutions. They also touched on the strengthening relationship between Canada and Singapore, Canada's seriousness in stepping up its role in the ASEAN region, and opportunities for both sides to continue to learn from each other and improve.

Meeting with the delegates from Indonesia

The Canadian delegation was keen to meet with the host parliament to congratulate them on a successful AIPA General Assembly and to thank them for the warm hospitality. The delegations both expressed strong desires to deepen relationships between Canada and Indonesia, speaking highly of the power of youth exchange programs and other people-to-people connections as foundational to developing that mutual friendship. They also discussed how to best meet and respond to current economic challenges facing the world.

Meeting with the delegates from Japan

The Canadian and Japanese delegations were pleased to resume ongoing conversations from previous international meetings and bilateral engagements. Given the number of bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest, the discussions centred on peace and security in the region, free and fair trade, Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, and opportunities to increase exchanges between the two nations.

Meeting with the delegates from the Republic of Korea

The discussions focused on shared economic priorities, the importance of the Canada-South Korea relationship – including recent high-level visits by the countries' respective Prime Minister and President – efforts to increase the number of women in the workforce, and the challenges posed by gaining populations.

Meeting with the delegates from Laos

The two sides discussed the preparations for next year's AIPA meetings in Laos and the delegation reiterated Canada and the Canadian Parliament's dedication to ASEAN and AIPA, asking for advice on how best to continue developing the Canada-ASEAN relationship. Both sides pointed to next year's 50th anniversary of bilateral relations as an opportunity to further enhance trade, investment, cultural, and people-to-people ties.

Meeting with the delegates from China

This meeting was the first between the two delegations at AIPA in many years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and China not attending last year's AIPA in Cambodia. It was an opportunity to have an open dialogue between delegations despite recent turbulence in the relationship. Both sides noted that Canada and China have a long relationship that has been productive in many respects.

In conclusion, Canada's participation in the 44th ASEAN General Assembly allowed parliamentarians to reaffirm Canada's commitment to the member countries. It also allowed the delegates to meet parliamentarians from the Asia-Pacific region, and other parts of the world, as well as engage in productive discussions that were beneficial to Canada and its diplomatic outreach internationally. The 45th General Assembly will be held in Laos, and it will be important for Canada to participate in order to build on what was accomplished at this year's meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Paul J. Massicotte,
Senator
Co-Chair
Canada–China Legislative Association

The Honourable Stan Kutcher, Senator
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Mr. Han Dong, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada–China Legislative Association

Mr. Terry Sheehan, M.P.
Co-Chair
Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canada–China Legislative Association and Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group
ACTIVITY	44 th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)
DESTINATION	Jakarta, Indonesia
DATES	From August 6 to 10, 2023
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Yuen Pau Woo
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Terry Sheehan
STAFF	Grant McLaughlin
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 30,937.82
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 4,596.61
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,634.68
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 61.56
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 154.00
TOTAL	\$ 37,384.67