(Res.45GA/2024/Soc/03)

RESOLUTION ON

PROMOTING THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN DIGITAL HEALTHCARE INNOVATION

Sponsored by the Lao PDR
Co-sponsored by Viet Nam

The Forty-fifth AIPA General Assembly:

Recalling the importance of quality healthcare services accessible to all populations at an affordable cost to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC), as stated in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025; the 2nd ASEAN Digital Public Health Conference in 2022; and the Joint Statement of 1st ASEAN – Republic of Korea (ROK) Health Ministers Meeting in 2022;

Recalling AIPA Resolutions No. RES.43GA/2022/Soc/03 on Strengthening Social Health Protection to Address the Challenges In ASEAN, No. RES.43GA/2022/Soc/02 on Enhancing Digital Transformation for Inclusive Social Protection; No. RES.38GA/2017/WAIPA/01 on Promoting the Health of Women Migrant Workers*;* and No. RES.34GA/2013/WAIPA/01 on Fostering Maternal and Child Health in ASEAN*;*

Recalling Port Vila Communique on Strengthening Regional and National Health Workforce, at the 8th Asia-Pacific Parliamentarian Forum on Global Health (APPFGH), supported by World Health Organization Western Pacific Region, 4-6 September 2024, Port Vila, Vanuatu, attended by 13 countries including Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam;

Acknowledging that COVID-19 has accelerated digital transformation in the context of the 4th Industrial Revolution where digital transformation can be maximised, and the importance of digital literacy and skills and their impact on quality healthcare services and realisation of safe and healthy communities;

Recognising digital transformation and technological innovation contribute to improve the quality of life, promote equality, and expand opportunities for access to information, improve professional and personal capacity, including career development prospects, and that the promotion of digital transformation will help improve healthcare service and

achieve UHC, which will play an important part in the socio-economic development of all nations;

Noting that there are existing gaps in the roll-out of digital transformation, and even broader gaps in disadvantaged areas, which hinder local communities' ability to contribute to healthcare services and national socio-economic development as well, the extensive and inclusive development of science and technology, especially the digital transformation, creates opportunities for vulnerable populations;

Further noting that people living in rural and remote areas are underrepresented in digital and technical fields of work, thus resulting in increasing regional gaps in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computing culture;

Emphasising that digital transformation for vulnerable populations and their engagement can contribute to building a proactive, innovative, flexible, inclusive, and resilient ASEAN Community.

Hereby resolves to:

Call upon AIPA Member Parliaments to work with ASEAN Member States to ensure that digital healthcare system utilising digital technologies is developed within a regulatory framework that prioritises, protects, and promotes health as a human right, by ensuring strong data privacy and security, and develops ethical frameworks for digital transformation technology to protect human rights;

Call upon AIPA Member Parliaments to encourage ASEAN Member States to provide substantive and concrete solutions to improve people's health, create opportunities for career development, increase the share of health workers and experts working in digital technology, and develop strategies to promote the engagement of local community human resources in primary healthcare services;

Call upon AIPA Member Parliaments to support ASEAN Member States to develop Strategies/Action Plans to improve digital knowledge and skills for healthcare workers' effective, safe, and digital engagement in the digital society which includes the use of digital public services;

Encourage AIPA Member Parliaments to support ASEAN Member States to promote healthcare workers' participation in digital transformation and the information technology (IT) sector in general; equip healthcare workers with essential skills and support in transitioning to digital employment models;

Recommend AIPA Member Parliaments to improve digital health and education system to ensure better health, education, and well-being with special emphasis on those who live in rural and remote areas where access to health, education and welfare services is limited, and ensure that no one is left behind, particularly the target beneficiary groups;

Encourage AIPA Member Parliaments to support ASEAN Member States to promote public-private partnership initiatives, and strengthen experience sharing and

cooperation at national, subregional, and international levels to increase access to digital health innovation to improve health outcomes in each country;

Encourage AIPA Member Parliaments to collaborate with ASEAN Member States in strengthening international linkages and partnerships via the ASEAN Secretariat to share best practices in accelerating digital innovation and transformation led by healthcare sector towards a healthy and prosperous ASEAN;

Urge AIPA Member Parliaments to coordinate with AIPA Secretariat, development partners and relevant stakeholders in the materialisation of the annual consultative working group network to promote data collection and share knowledge regarding health emergency preparedness and responses, established by the Resolution 43GA/2022/Org/11;

Urge AIPA Member Parliaments to review national legislation and create an enabling legal environment to promote the role of Parliaments in digital healthcare innovation development to ensure all people, especially the vulnerable population can access to essential healthcare services without a financial barrier;

Urge AIPA Member Parliaments to promote UHC in ASEAN through the establishment of mechanisms that will allow the interoperability of digital healthcare systems and portability of social health insurance in the region;

Encourage AIPA Member Parliaments to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy and foster partnerships with all stakeholders to promote engagement and empower parliamentarians to support digital healthcare innovation including data collection, shared digital health infrastructures, capacity building, and public awareness campaigns, to ensure the benefits reach all citizens, particularly vulnerable group, and to achieve healthy lives for healthy ASEAN.

Adopted on the twenty-first day of October 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

**THE 45TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
17-23 October 2024
Vientiane, Lao PDR**

*The Role of Parliaments in Enhancing Connectivity and
Inclusive Growth of ASEAN*

EXPLANATORY NOTE

RESOLUTION ON PROMOTING THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN DIGITAL HEALTHCARE INNOVATION

In the current era of rapid technological advancement, digital healthcare innovations are transforming the delivery and management of health services globally. These innovations encompass a wide range of technologies, including telemedicine, AI-driven diagnostics, wearable health devices, and electronic health records, which collectively aim to enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and quality of healthcare. Telemedicine, for instance, allows patients to consult with healthcare providers remotely, reducing the need for physical travel and enabling access to care in remote and underserved areas. AI-driven diagnostics can analyse medical data with high accuracy, assisting healthcare professionals in making more informed decisions. Wearable health devices continuously monitor vital signs and health metrics, providing real-time data that can prevent emergencies and manage chronic conditions more effectively. Electronic health records streamline the storage and retrieval of patient information, improving coordination and continuity of care.

According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, the integration of digital health technologies is crucial for achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030, as these innovations can bridge gaps in healthcare access and improve service delivery in remote and underserved areas (WHO, 2018). The WHO highlights that digital health solutions can facilitate early diagnosis and treatment, improve health literacy, and empower patients to take charge of their health. Additionally, the Global Innovation Index 2021 emphasizes that countries investing in health innovation not only improve public health outcomes but also drive economic growth by creating new markets and employment opportunities (WIPO, 2021). The Index notes that health innovation can stimulate economic activity, foster public-private partnerships, and enhance a nation's competitiveness on the global stage.

However, the successful integration of these technologies into national healthcare systems requires comprehensive legislative support. Parliaments, with their legislative and oversight functions, are uniquely positioned to create the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks that can foster the adoption and ethical use of digital healthcare technologies. This includes developing policies that address data privacy and security, ensuring equitable access to these technologies, and providing the necessary infrastructure and funding to support their implementation. Legislation is needed to protect patient data, regulate the use of AI in diagnostics, and ensure that telemedicine services meet quality standards. Moreover, governments must invest in digital

infrastructure, such as high-speed internet and secure data storage, to support the widespread use of digital healthcare technologies.

The resolution "Promoting the Role of Parliaments in Digital Healthcare Innovation" emphasizes the essential role that legislative bodies play in advancing healthcare technology. By enacting policies that encourage innovation, ensure data privacy and security, and promote equitable access to healthcare, parliaments can significantly contribute to improving public health outcomes. Legislative action can create a conducive environment for the development and deployment of digital healthcare technologies, ensuring that they are used ethically and effectively. Parliaments can facilitate collaboration between stakeholders, including healthcare providers, technology companies, and patients, to develop solutions that meet the needs of all parties involved.

According to a report by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), countries that have supportive digital health policies in place are better equipped to respond to health emergencies and deliver continuous care during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (ITU, 2020). The ITU highlights that digital health technologies played a critical role in managing the pandemic by enabling remote consultations, monitoring patient health, and disseminating public health information. Countries with established digital health frameworks were able to adapt more quickly and maintain healthcare services despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. This demonstrates the importance of having robust policies and infrastructure in place to support the adoption and use of digital healthcare technologies.

Engaging Lao high-level leaders in this initiative highlights the importance of their support in driving policy changes that will facilitate the integration of digital healthcare solutions. This engagement is crucial for ensuring that technological advancements are not only innovative but also inclusive and sustainable. High-level leaders can advocate for the necessary investments in digital infrastructure, support capacity-building initiatives for healthcare professionals, and ensure that digital healthcare technologies are accessible to all citizens, including those in remote and rural areas. Furthermore, the WHO emphasizes that legislative support is critical in scaling up digital health innovations to ensure they reach all populations, particularly those in remote and rural areas (WHO, 2018). By promoting the role of parliaments in this domain, the resolution seeks to build a more resilient and responsive healthcare system in Lao PDR, capable of leveraging technology to meet the health needs of its population.

This resolution advocates for a proactive approach by parliaments to foster an environment conducive to digital healthcare innovation. This includes adopting and implementing international best practices and guidelines, such as those recommended by WHO and ITU, to ensure that the benefits of digital health technologies are fully realized. Parliaments can play a key role in harmonizing regulations, promoting interoperability of digital health systems, and supporting research and development in health innovation. By doing so, Lao PDR can position itself at the forefront of healthcare innovation, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes and enhanced quality of life for its citizens. The proactive involvement of parliaments in this area will ensure that digital healthcare technologies are used to their fullest potential, benefiting both current and future generations.