

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR TAN CHUAN-JIN
SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT
AT THE OPENING OF THE
VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE 12TH AIPA CAUCUS
ON WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2021**

Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning.

Let me extend a very warm welcome to all delegates and officials attending the virtual meeting of the 12th AIPA Caucus. Despite the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am glad that we can still meet and engage one another, albeit virtually, to continue strengthening regional cooperation among AIPA parliamentarians.

2 AIPA has always taken an active and keen interest in issues within the ASEAN region. The AIPA Caucus assists AIPA by exploring some of these issues and proposing areas of cooperation of mutual benefit to all the countries in the region. Even amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this regional platform plays a pivotal role to raise awareness among lawmakers on important and pressing issues. As representatives of our citizens, we are in a unique position to give voice to the issues that affect them. With this aim in mind, the 12th AIPA Caucus will study the topic of “Strengthening Supply Chain Resilience and Enhancing Trade Connectivity”.

3 The pandemic and Suez Canal blockage earlier this year, caused severe disruptions in supply chains and trade connectivity, with extensive and wide-reaching ramifications. Beyond transnational trade and domestic economic effects, an obvious consequence was the disruption of medical supplies, at a time the world needed it most. As a result of such unexpected events, we need to be prepared for the next disruption to our trade connectivity and build up our supply chain resilience.

4 ASEAN has risen to the occasion and recognised the importance of supply chain resilience and trade connectivity in the region early. Our Economic Ministers adopted the ‘Hanoi Plan of Action on Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic’ at the Special ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting in June 2020. Additionally, ASEAN worked with our Dialogue Partners to collectively affirm the importance of keeping supply chains open and connected. All these have helped to support the unimpeded cross-border flow of essential products, including food, medicines and medical supplies, for our people.

5 In this regard, AIPA Member Parliaments can support ASEAN's regional efforts by discussing the topic "Strengthening Supply Chain Resilience and Enhancing Trade Connectivity". Our discussions today will undoubtedly help advance regional collaboration. It will form part of our efforts in creating a more resilient, more innovative ASEAN that can best serve its people even in the worst of times, whether borne out of a pandemic, or some other crisis.

6 On this note, it is now my pleasure to declare the 12th AIPA Caucus open. Pursuant to the Terms of Reference of the AIPA Caucus, I appoint Mr Lim Biow Chuan as the Chairperson of the 12th AIPA Caucus.

7 I wish you all a fruitful and productive round of deliberations. Thank you.
