







Defending and Strengthening Democracy

By Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have profound impact on our economies and health systems, exacerbating the decline in democracy as some opportunistic political leaders exploit the global crisis. Alongside death and disease is the spike in "infodemic" (misinformation, disinformation, and fake news), poisoning the wellspring of democracy: truth.

In this context, we at the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats got together in July 2021 to figure out how to defend our freedoms and how to keep our political parties afloat. In one session, lively discussion ensued on a proposal for new legislation to fight the infodemic; some raised the flag that authoritarian and authorianesque governments are already weaponizing it against dissenters and critics. We agree with our secretary general that "legislation should be based on good governance principles and on liberal and democratic values as we do not want the cure to be worse than the disease."

Apart from these conferences and workshops, we jointly launched with Asia Centre the report "Defending Freedom of Expression: Fake News Laws in East and Southeast Asia." An updated regional scan of laws and policies on disinformation, it seeks to empower legislators, political

party leaders, academics, civil-society activists, and journalists in the protection of freedom of expression. At the Philippine Senate, this representation is currently conducting an inquiry to review the country's existing criminal laws on the spread of fake news and disinformation on social media.

In April, CALD spearheaded a four-day virtual training course of women leaders, the Asian Women Education (AWE) for Transformative Leadership. In her remarks, Philippine Vice President Leni Robredo paid tribute to women frontliners and community mobilizers and their "extraordinary strength" in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. The 2021 Global Gender Gap Report noted that women make up 80 percent of nurses and 67 percent of healthcare workforce globally.

On August 24, 2021 CALD, in cooperation with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle and the Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan, organized the CALD Smart City Meeting with their local governments to share the hot issues confronting their communities, as well as the significant gains they have achieved in implementing innovative solutions. Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who was once a governor of

Jakarta, succinctly said that "innovation should not just become knowledge, innovations should become culture."

In the last quarter of 2021, we all sat down in a webinar to dissect the earlier-than-expected holding of the Lower House elections in Japan in October and discuss its impact in the regional landscape. We highlighted the importance of Japan's participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or QUAD, its crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in the region, and in protecting our common interest of a free and open sea routes. The discussion stressed the importance of Japan not just globally, politically, economically, but also geopolitically.

As freedom and democracy advocates, we have collectively expressed our dismay over the recent actions and statements of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen in his engagement and recognition of Myanmar's military junta. Cambodia assumes the Association of Southeast Asian Nations chairmanship for 2022. As explicitly expressed in our December 24, 2021 statement, the Cambodian leader's actions and statements severely undermine the credibility and legitimacy of ASEAN in the eyes of the Southeast Asian peoples and the international community. The

capacity of ASEAN to play a constructive role in the resolution of the Myanmar crisis would be negatively affected.

COVID-19 or no, we persist to battle on for truth, justice, and the freedoms we have won in our individual and collective struggles.



Recovering from the Pandemic and Authoritarian Populism

By Francis Gerald 'Blue' Abaya

2021 was supposed to be a year of recovery.

To a certain extent, it was. Widescale vaccination drives took place in most parts of the world. Economic activities started to pick up. People were on the move again.

But it also became clear that recovery would be a long process. Vaccine access remains to be a problem for the poorest countries. The emergence of COVID-19 variants derailed the momentum for economic recovery. Up to now, a number of people are still hesitant to travel due to fear of infection or strict quarantine restrictions.

Recovery from the pandemic, it appears, resembles how democracy is recovering from the onslaught of authoritarian populism. The process is going to be protracted – with no clear end in sight. In the same way that new variants can make "living with COVID" the new normal, authoritarians and populists can also come, go, and make a comeback in a highly divided society.

It was in this light that the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats chose "Recovering Democracy" as the theme of its 2021 Annual Report. The theme hopes to capture the progress that has been made in terms of addressing the pandemic and advancing democracy, while recognizing that the threats of a health crisis and democratic reversal remain. The challenge in the coming years, therefore, is not to let our guards down so that the recent gains can be sustained.

This was the trajectory that CALD followed in 2021. We started the year with the launch of our joint publication with Asia Centre – "Defending Freedom of Expression: Fake News Laws in East and Southeast Asia" in February. A few months after – – in the last week of September, and first week of October – – a two-day workshop was held on the legal and non-legal (fact-checking, media literacy) mechanisms to address disinformation. Prior to the workshop, an online concert was organized in September to encourage young people to register for the elections and combat disinformation.

Disinformation remains to be a huge threat to democracy. But so are the authoritarian populist leaders using the pandemic as an excuse to crush political dissent. In the CALD-RELIAL Conference in April, it was suggested that the health crisis was politicized to divert public attention from the incompetence of authoritarian populists in handling the pandemic. One key

takeaway from the event was that democracy responds better to the pandemic.

For democracy to work, however, it needs to be supported. It was for this reason that CALD held innovative and transformative workshops for its women and youth wings in April and June/July, respectively, so that they can become better defenders of democracy. Moreover, CALD Youth launched its podcast series "The Youth Perspective," which urges young people to reimagine what they can do to advance democracy and freedom. Relatedly, CALD also aired "The Great Asian Pushback" podcast series, which features stories of defiance and hope in Asia's quest for a more democratic society.

Democracy can also be supported by smart-city solutions that make life easier amid the pandemic. In a webinar in August, CALD brought together top city officials from Indonesia and Taiwan to share smart-city tools and innovations that help deliver effective and democratic governance and public service during the health crisis. In another webinar in September, political leaders from Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand discussed how high-income democratic countries could come together under a multilateral arrangement to contain COVID-19 globally.

CALD ended the year with a decentralized online series of events under the theme "Challenges to Asian Political Parties during the Pandemic." Held from October to December, and co-organized with member-parties in Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, the series hoped to highlight the key issues and challenges that Asian liberal and democratic political parties faced during the pandemic.

The process of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and authoritarian populism may take longer than expected, but the world has certainly made significant strides in that direction last year.

This 2022, may our bodies, and our body politic, fully recover from these twin crises.



Women Go from Strength

By Jayanthi Devi Balaguru

According to UN Women, from the early days of the COVID lockdowns, there has been a significant increase in reported cases of violence against women. The numbers vary across countries, but in general, this pandemic has increased women's experiences of violence and removed their feelings of safety. These have had impacts on their mental health, as have involuntary job losses and the shouldering of more of the caregiving burden.

COVID-19 has brought about numerous challenges to women. It has to be said, however, that the health crisis also opened opportunities for women political leaders to shine.

Studies show that countries led by women seem to have had fewer COVID-related deaths, a smaller number of days with confirmed deaths, and a lower peak in daily deaths. In the United States, for example, researchers say that states with female governors have had fewer COVID-related deaths than states with male governors. Compared to those headed by men, it seems that the approaches of female-led governments to the crisis have been more effective in containing the spread of COVID-19. These approaches include not underestimating risks, focusing on preventative measures, prioritizing long-term

social wellbeing over short-term economic considerations, and showing compassion and empathy to citizens.

The effectiveness of female-led governments can be seen across the world – from Taiwan and New Zealand in Asia to Denmark in Europe. COVID-19, therefore, is also an opportunity for all of us to push the limits of women participation and leadership. Which is why CALD Women's Caucus focused on strengthening women's leadership in 2021.

On March 17, as CALD Women's Caucus and International Network of Liberal Women Chair, I was invited to talk in the UN Commission on the Status of Women Meeting. There, I was able to discuss women's participation and leadership in COVID-19 recovery and how our organizations can move forward in the post-pandemic era.

In April, we launched the Inaugural Asian Women Education (AWE) for Transformative Leadership: A Virtual Course for Asian Women Leaders. Conceptualized in 2019, AWE was envisioned to become an innovative and transformative training program for promising women leaders in Southeast and East Asia who aspire to enter politics. Since there were still travel restrictions,

AWE was held virtually instead. This four-day virtual training course brought together political and movement leaders to revive and strengthen women's leadership at different levels within a feminist framework of analysis. AWE was also able to ensure that women's needs and voices in the region are kept strong in defining spaces for democratic engagement.

Staying connected despite being physically distant from one another is also important. For the 11th installment of CALD's Communication Workshop, the series adopted the theme "reAWEkening: Reaching Across the Network" to check in on the past participants during this unprecedented time and reinforce networking strategies among the CALD member parties. This two-day workshop in October was facilitated by the Speech Republic, a globally renowned training bureau based in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Much has happened since the pandemic. But I believe that even in all the hardships we have endured, there have been silver linings. I hope that in 2022, we can have women at the center of policy change, decisions, solutions, and recovery. I look forward to a more inclusive, empowered, and stronger year for women. Until we see each other again, stay safe and healthy.



Hear Us Roar

By Siripa Intavichein

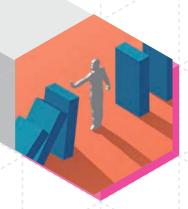
Another year has gone by and we are still enduring the perils of the COVID-19 pandemic. But today things are much better than they were two years ago. We have adapted our lives to our new normal and created innovations to ease into a more sustainable lifestyle. We have created new jobs and adopted new technologies that unlocked borderless communications. It's easier than ever to exchange ideas, trade experiences, and confer on ways to continue strengthening democracy. Borderless communication has allowed us to help each other in times of need. Yet we can't deny that if these technologies are abused, they will be divisive tools of societal misinformation. It is important that we remain aware and relentless in our dedication to liberal democracy.

For 2021, CALD Youth organized the 4th installment of the **CALD Youth Political Academy** with the theme "Breaking Boundaries and Levelling Up." We still had the opportunity to innovate, create, and restore a more sustainable world, which is why we helped train youth leaders from all around the region on the basics of liberalism, civil and political engagement, progressive leadership, and strategic communications. We were also able to explore the world of podcasting. CALD Youth was able to produce 10 episodes in the two seasons of **The Youth Perspective**. The podcast offers

a fresh perspective on the role of the youth in addressing current political and social issues. It is available on Spotify, Soundcloud, Facebook, and YouTube. Amidst the challenges, I can confidently say that CALD Youth was still able to push boundaries and level up.

Despite the borderless reach of modern communications, however, I hope that we all will get to meet and converse in person somewhere soon. I pray that for 2022, the Year of the Tiger, will be a roaring year for liberal democracy.

CALD PROJECTS



Defending Freedom of Expression: Fake News Laws in East and Southeast Asia Report Launch

February 21 | 14:00 - 15:30 (Bangkok) / 15:00 - 16:30 (Manila/Taipei)

The online report launch presented the key findings and recommendations of the CALD-Asia Centre joint baseline study on how governments across Asia have been using laws and policies to control freedom of expression. The report's aim was to provide a policy toolbox of ideas to empower legislators, political party leaders, academics, civil-society activists, and journalists to protect such freedom.



Asian Women Education (AWE) for Transformative Leadership

April 9-10 and April 16-17 | 09:00-12:00 (Manila/Taipei)

The four-day virtual training course, organized by the CALD Women's Caucus, in cooperation with the Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) and the Southeast Asian Women's Watch (SEAWWatch), brought together political and movement leaders to revive and strengthen women's leadership at different levels within a feminist framework of analysis.



CALD Youth Political Academy 2021

Tier 1: June 18, 19, 20 | 09:00-12:00 (Bangkok) Tier 2: June 24, 25 | 10:00 - 13:30 (Taipei) Tier 3: July 02, 03, 04 | 14:00-17:00 (Manila)

Tier 4 and Graduation: July 08, 09, 10 | 14:00-17:00 (Manila)

This innovative training program aimed to create meaningful and lasting connections among the youth participants by providing a platform where different people with different ideas can converge. Organized by CALD Youth in collaboration with the Liberal Youth (LY) of the Philippines and Taiwan NextGen Foundation, and with the support of FNF Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia, CYPA 2021 used games throughout its sessions as its main learning tools.



CALD Smart City Meeting with Local Governments

August 24 | 10:00-11:30 (Taipei) / 09:00-10:30 (Jakarta)

In partnership with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of Taiwan, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and the Nation Awakening Party (PKB), and with FNF support, CALD organized this project to provide technical support and recommendations to select cities in Taiwan and Indonesia to increase their pandemic-response mechanisms and achieve people-centered efforts.

CALD PROJECTS



CALD-Asia Centre Disinformation Workshop

September 25 and October 2 | 9:00-12:00 (Bangkok)

CALD, in collaboration with Asia Centre and FNF, convened a two-day workshop as a followup to Asia Centre and CALD's baseline study, "Defending Freedom of Expression: Fake News Laws in East and Southeast Asia," launched in February 2021.



Japan's 2021 Elections: Issues, Challenges and Prospects

October 26 | 15:00 - 16:30 (Tokyo) 14:00 - 15:30 (Manila) / 13:00 - 14:30 (Bangkok)

This webinar discussed the key issues, challenges, and prospects of Japan's October 31 Lower House elections, as well as their international and regional implications. The webinar was organized with the support of FNF Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia.



11th CALD Communications Workshop for CALD Women's Caucus

October 30-31 | 15:00 - 17:00 (Manila)

The 11th in CALD's annual communication workshops for its member-parties, "reAWEkening: Reaching Across the Network" was meant to check how past participants had been doing during the pandemic and to reinforce networking strategies among CALD member-parties. This workshop was focused particularly on supporting and extending the CALD Women's Caucus network, and strengthening the communication skills of the Caucus's members.



High-Level Panel of CALD Annual Conference 2021

December 1 | 16:00-18:00 (Manila) / 15:00-17:00 (Bangkok) / 9:00-11:00 (Stockholm)

The highlight of the CALD Annual Conference 2021, the December 1 webinar had a High-Level Panel tackling as its main question: "How can political parties survive, even thrive, in the 'new normal' brought about by the pandemic?" PROIFCTS

Defending Freedom of Expression: Fake News Laws in East and Southeast Asia Report Launch

February 25 | 14:00 - 15:30 (Bangkok) | 15:00 - 16:30 (Manila/Taipei)

They said they were merely after protecting their populations from COVID-19, but as the pandemic wore on, it soon became obvious that many governments around the world were using the health crisis as an excuse to clamp down on their critics and gain more power for themselves. Freedom of expression was among the rights taking a beating, so CALD partnered with the Asia Centre to work on a project examining existing policies and laws and those enacted during the pandemic that affect this right across Asia. The result was the report "Defending Freedom of Expression: Fake News Laws in East and Southeast Asia," which was launched online using the platform Webex on

February 25.







FRANCIS ABAYA



JAMES GOMEZ



PEIFEN HSIEH



JOHN NERY



SIRIPA NAN INTAVICHEIN



MORITZ KLEINE-BROCKHOFF

Moderator



ROBIN RAMCHARAN

The report and its launch, which was moderated by Dr. Robin Ramcharan, Executive Director of Asia Centre, were actually part of an ongoing collaboration between CALD and the Centre to work on issues related to freedom of expression. The launch was livestreamed on the Facebook pages of both organizations and, like the report, aimed to provide legislators, political-party leaders, journalists, and civil-society activists with ideas on how to protect freedom of expression.

Philippine MP and CALD Secretary General Francis Gerald 'Blue' Abaya gave the opening remarks. Asia Centre Regional Director Dr. James Gomez then presented the report, which confirmed that many countries in the region are using existing and new laws to constrain freedom of expression. With COVID-19 temporary and emergency laws, freedom of expression has deteriorated further, Gomez said. Indeed, the report's researchers found that in countries with one dominant political force and an absence of independent national institutions, state authority is placed at the center of disinformation laws that are vaguely worded.

Three reactors gave examples of relevant experiences of their respective countries. Peifen Hsieh, Department of International Affairs Deputy Director of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), said that to guard against COVID-19 disinformation, the Taiwanese government used legislation as a tool to criminalize fake news. Taiwan's Digital Minister Audrey Tang also launched the government's "Three Fs" — Fast, Fair, and Fun — approach toward fake news, a move that proved effective in helping citizens discern which information was fake and which was not.

Philippine Daily Inquirer columnist John
Nery meanwhile highlighted Philippine
laws that are being used to attack freedom
of expression. He said that the current
administration was misusing the country's
cyber laws by wielding these like weapons
against those critical of its policies. As a
result, many journalists have been arrested.
Ironically, Nery said, in the Philippines, it is
the government that is the
primary source of fake news.
The situation was improving,
he said, but social media
continued to be the platform
of disinformation.



Asian Women Education (AWE) for Transformative Leadership

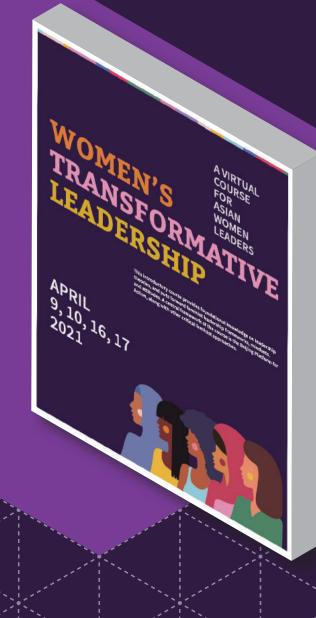
April 9-10 & April 16-17 | 09:00-12:00 (Manila/Taipei)

"Here's to women of the world! May we lead with courage, compassion, and conviction."

These were the jubilant words of Singaporean politician Min Cheong after she completed the four-day virtual training course on women's leadership spearheaded by CALD and co-organized with Miriam College's Women and Gender Institute (WAGI), Southeast Asia Women's Watch (SEAWWatch), and FNF.

Split into two two-day sessions in April, the workshop was dubbed "Asian Women Education (AWE) for Transformative Leadership," and aimed to have participants gain foundational knowledge, transformative attitudes, and critical skills deemed strategic for strengthening women's leadership among the members of the CALD network.

For sure, many of the participants came already inspired by the exemplary showing of women leaders across the world during the first year of the pandemic. Philippine Vice President Leni Robredo herself observed during her solidarity message on Day One of the workshop: "In the past year, we have all stood witness to the extraordinary strength of women in



facing





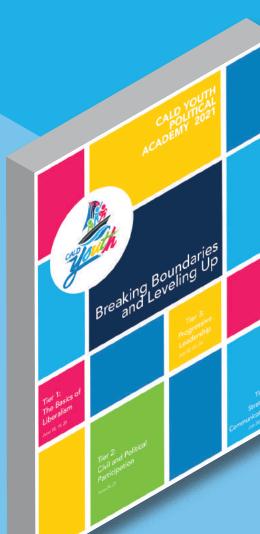
PROJECTS

CALD Youth Political Academy 2021

Tier 1 | June 18, 19, 20 | 09:00-12:00 (Bangkok) Tier 2 | June 24, 25 | 10:00 - 1:30 (Taipei) Tier 3 | July 2, 3, 4 | 14:00-17:00 (Manila) Tier 4 & Graduation | July 8, 9, 10 | 14:00-17:00 (Manila)

It was literally game on for the participants of the 2021 edition of CALD Youth Political Academy (CYPA). Held for four weekends in June and July, the political training tailored especially for youths used games to keep the participants engaged and on their toes throughout the intense sessions. Dr. Theerapat Ungsuchaval, lecturer at Mahidol University in Thailand, would later explain in one of the sessions, "Gamification enhances civic engagement. Using these kinds of games develops a player's civic skills and improves their decision-making skills."

The 11-day CYPA 2021 was organized in collaboration with the Liberal Youth of the Philippines, Taiwan NextGen Foundation, and with support from FNF Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia. Held via Zoom, it had the title "Breaking Boundaries and Leveling Up" and attracted 30 youth leaders from 11 Asian countries.



Aimed at reinforcing youth participation in politics and maximizing their involvement in democratic processes, CYPA 2021 took place at a time when a health crisis was being used by leaders across the region to reduce democratic space and amass more clout. In her welcome remarks to the participants, however, CALD Youth Chairperson Siripa Nan Intavichein pointed out, "Even though there are setbacks after setbacks and we are still hoping for improvements to the COVID-19 situation, there is light in this darkness."

"We have an opportunity to innovate, create and restore a more sustainable world," she said. "In this year's CYPA, we continue to contribute to the course of liberalism and democracy and continue to create meaningful and lasting connections among the participants."

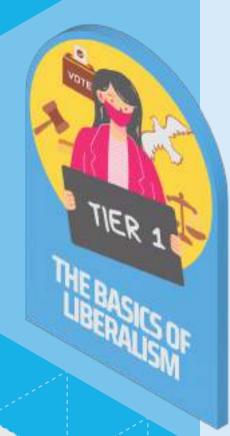


CYPA 2021 was divided into four

tiers, each with a specific focus. Pimrapaat Dusadeeisariyakul, Project Manager at FNF and Wasin Punthong, Lecturer at Thammasat University, were the course designers of Tier 1, **Basics of Liberalism.** FNF Regional Program Manager Miklos Romandy started the ball rolling with a brief introduction to liberalism. Participants then played **Sim Democracy** to help enhance their understanding of, and perspectives on, liberal democracy. In the game, players are expected to be active citizens who plan, coordinate, and execute proposed policies. They are also supposed to engage and negotiate with each

other throughout. Discussing how the game was made, Dr. Rainer Adam, FNF Regional Director for East and Southeast Europe said, "Teaching democracy, institutions, public policy, and the role of the state, are highly abstract topics and it's difficult to make it interesting and simpler to understand. But we were able to make it an element of Sim Democracy."

Tier 1 ended with Thai politician Parit Wacharasind-hu's reflective talk on "Why So Democracy." He discussed how young leaders could contribute to revitalizing liberalism even in the digital era and despite the rise of illiberal democracy. "Online space is not bound by national borders, so there is more exchange of ideas between pro-democracy groups in each country now," said Parit. "COVID-19 can't stop us from exercising our rights and civil liberties because the online space is always a place where the government can't control."





Tier 2, which was on Civil and Political
Engagement, had the participants
playing PolitiCraft, a narrative-based
action card game that showcases the
different levels of civic engagement. The players
choose an issue they would like to address and
apply civic virtues and democratic principles
when working to solve it.

Theater and arts were also integrated into the program via theatre performer Liam Fanning. Marcin Jerzewski, one of the course designers from Taiwan NextGen Foundation, explained, "I believe that the arts and humanities are important in fostering people-to-people connection, which is the very core of any political initiative."

Along with his Taiwan NextGen colleague Maxwell Wappel, Jerzewski had wanted to use Tier 2 to encourage discussion, organization, and action to promote and invigorate new voices. This was because of a growing sense of passive consumption of information across the region. NextGen CEO Kuan-Ting Chen, FNF Taiwan Head Anna Marti, and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Lienchiang County Chapter Director Lii Wen – all of whom were invited as speakers – thus discussed the importance of civic participation and linking technology to civic and political participation.

Stressed Marti: "Democracy relies on civil engagement for its legitimacy and its efficiency... People are at the center of democracy and it is also the people who must protect it."

For Tier 3, **Progressive Leadership**, the game was **Nexus of Civilization**. Developed by course designers Jobelle Domingo, Jiggy Calucag, and Audrie Frias, the game is supposed to enable players to gain progressive leadership skills and then practice these.

Tier 3 aimed to discuss the different aspects of leadership and elevate it to progressive leadership. This tier also stressed the importance of networking and how to create progressive leader thinkers. "Your principles and values should be of primordial concern and you should not lose sight of these," said CALD Executive Director Celito Arlegue. "Expanding your network is essential for you as a progressive young leader because politics follow one very simple principle: politics is an addition, not subtraction."

Anew Founder Marike Groenewald, who facilitated a session in Tier 3, meanwhile discussed the importance of organizational culture in progressive leadership. She advised participants to "determine what behaviors and beliefs you value as an organization and have everyone live true to them. These behaviors and beliefs should be essential to your core."

Liberal Party of the
Philippines Director General
Jason Gonzales echoed
Groenewald's sentiments
in his session. He also said
that shared values become a
shared vision, and a shared
vision can become a shared
purpose. These can change the
trajectory of nations, he said.





The final Tier focused on **Strategic Communications** and had the participants role-playing. They were assigned to organizations where they addressed challenges by presenting communications plans, as well as employing communications tools and techniques. Spearheaded by course designer Raul Cordenillo, Tier 4 was meant to show how communications can be used as an effective instrument for politics and advocacy.

Far from watering down the serious purposes of CYPA 2021, the games were considered useful and fun by participants. Said Ashley Liao from DPP: "This was a great practice for us to brainstorm and to think out of the box. Everyone was able to contribute their given skills and specializations which is important when dealing with a crisis."

Linda Ou from the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) America meanwhile expressed her gratitude for being able to participate in CYPA 2021. "You have given each of us plenty of opportunities to share our personal experiences," she said. "I enjoyed meeting other youths worldwide and was intrigued by the wealth of experiences they have shared. I am grateful to all the speakers; they have shared and provided us insights to prepare us to be better political participants, communicators, and leaders."

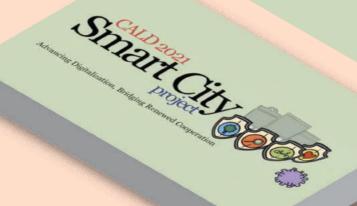
In his remarks closing CYPA 2021, CALD Youth Secretary General Jeremiah Tomas hoped that everyone would stay connected "because the individuals that you've connected in the training will be your allies tomorrow."

"Seeing all of you guys today has given me much hope, knowing that moving into the future, I am not alone," he said. "All of you are not alone. There are multitudes of us – – young leaders in different corners of Asia, in the world, doing their part in the constant fight for liberalism and democracy. And with that realization, you can draw strength, inspiration, and action from one another."

CALD Smart City Meeting with Local Governments

August 24 | 10:00-11:30 (Taipei) | 09:00-10:30 (Jakarta)

CALD believes that cities need to continue to get smarter and more responsive. Even – or especially – in the midst of a pandemic, the goals remain the same: to achieve a better quality of life, enhance resilience, and improve critical infrastructure and basic services.



For its latest Smart City Project, CALD partnered with Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), as well as the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and the Nation Awakening Party (PKB) and organized "Smart Cities: Advancing Digitalization, Bridging Renewed Cooperation." With FNF support, the project aimed to provide technical cities in Taiwan and Indonesia to increase their pandemic-response mechanisms and achieve people-centered efforts.

Three local governments – Taoyuan,
Taiwan; and Lumajang and Banyuwangi,
Indonesia – worked closely with one
another to address their immediate and
prioritized needs. Months later, they were
ready to present the results of their
efforts for evaluation.

And so on August 24, CALD held its Smart City Meeting with Local Governments online, providing top city officials of Banyuwangi, Lumajang, and Taoyuan the opportunity to share which smart-city tools and innovations they employed to deliver effective public service during the pandemic. Said Philippine MP and CALD Secretary General Francis 'Blue' Abaya in his welcome message: "Smart City solutions have been sorely needed to better organize our developing societies. Now with the pandemic still very much a part of our global existence, this need is felt even more acutely... advancing digitalization as an essential component of the Smart City project is becoming a key to an effective and lasting solution."

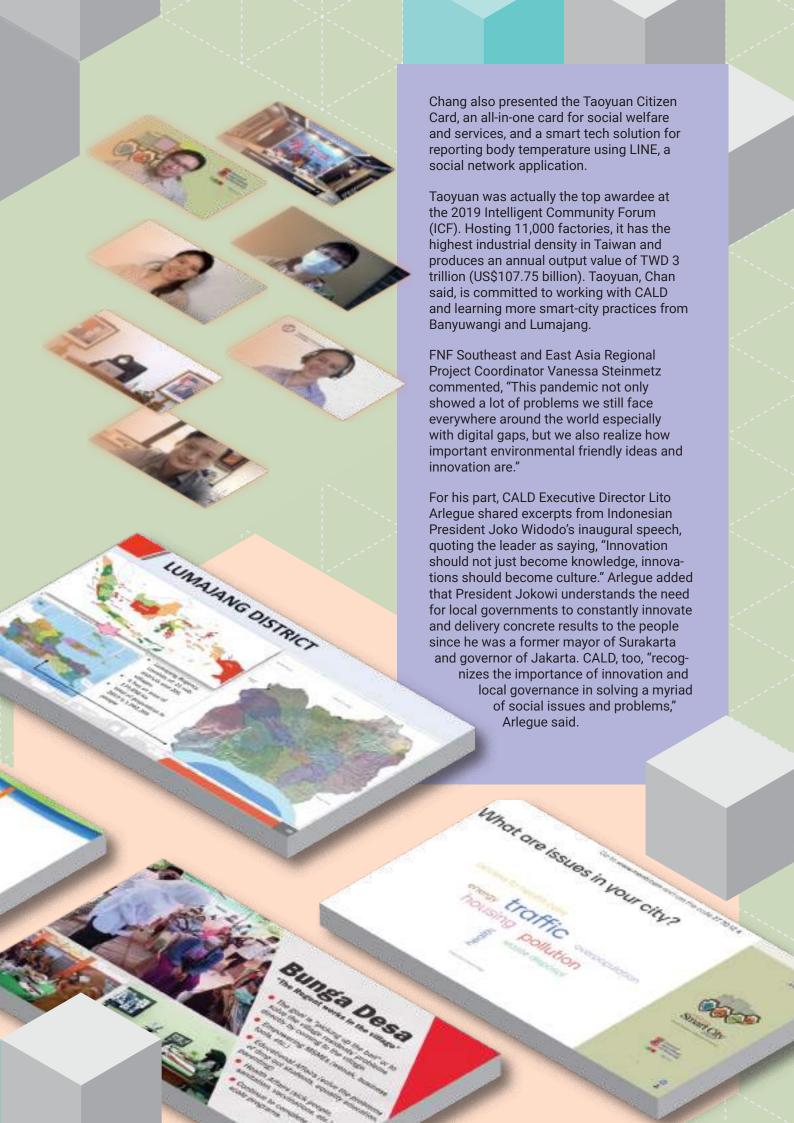
Banyuwangi, a large port area in the eastern part of Java, Indonesia, had been experiencing an increase in unemployment and poverty rate, as well as in COVID-19 cases. To address these concerns, the local government came up with Smart Kampung, as an effort to increase village competitiveness and help its community. Banyuwangi Regent lpuk Fiestiandani said that Smart Kampung, which focuses on information technology-based public service, provides efficiency in village budgeting, health care, economic empowerment, and access to information.

The Smart City model of Lumajang, also in east Java, meanwhile has six components focusing on smart people and living, environment, mobility, economy, and governance. Regent Thoriqul Haq also said that it features an intelligent command service center, which serves as a decision-making support system for the region's leader. The command center helps gather data, monitor community service, and evaluate district government operations.

Next up was Evan Chang, senior executive officer of the Secretariat of Taoyuan City Government, who presented the synergy of smart governance, smart living, and smart industries as Taoyuan's strategy to address the needs of the citizens and to create a smart livable city.







CALD-Asia Centre Disinformation Workshop

September 25 and October 2 | 9:00-12:00 (Bangkok)

After publishing a report aimed at empowering legislators, political party leaders, academics, civil society activists, journalists across with ideas on how to protect freedom of expression, CALD and Asia Centre next came up with a two-day online workshop exploring ways to address disinformation. The first session took place on September 25 and focused on legal ways to address disinformation, as well as how to mitigate the threats such legislation poses to freedom of expression. Hence, the participants considered these questions: "What legal measures can be mobilized to counter disinformation? How can

threats that such laws pose to freedom
of expression be
addressed?"





CALD Chairperson and Philippine Senator Francis 'Kiko' N. Pangilinan opened the first workshop session. In his welcome remarks, Pangilinan noted that for some time now disinformation has been rampant and has been threatening democracy. He called on every participant to be a good "influencer," and reminded them that the best countermeasure to disinformation remains to be the truth.



Asia Centre Regional Director Dr. James Gomez next outlined the evolution of legal measures used against disinformation. He pointed to an emerging approach known as "gateway," which allows for total surveillance and for shutting down the whole domestic Internet system. With its very intrusive reach, this approach has instilled fear of surveillance and prompted self-censorship among netizens, in particular journalists, human-rights defenders, and activists. Gomez recommended the introduction of privacy and data protection legislation to lessen fear of surveillance, and for governments to share information under a right to information act.

Reacting to Gomez's presentation, legal expert Dr. Lasse Schuldt of Thailand's Thammasat University Faculty of Law examined how fake-news laws infringe on freedom of expression, and whether a distinction between facts and opinions should be made clearer. Schuldt observed that fake-news legislation tends to be vaguely worded, opening it up to a wide interpretation by local authorities and allowing it to be used against the ruling power's opponents and critics. He suggested procedural safeguards to counter such risks.

Members from the CALD network were then invited to give their input by drawing on their country's experience with fake news. Thai MP (Democrat Party) and Liberal International Vice President Kiat Sittheeamorn recommended a regional or global approach rather than domestic legislation to tackle fake news and disinformation, as, he said, the issue transcends borders. Helmy Hidayat of the Foreign Affairs Directorate of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) meanwhile gave an extensive presentation of his country's background and the various ethnic and religious communities. He also said that in Indonesia, fake news are often disseminated as part of hate speech and intended to stir up religious tensions, as well as xenophobia. During the COVID-19 crisis, hoaxes were used as well to question the competency of the Indonesian government and led to endangering public health.

Philippine MP and CALD Secretary General Francis Gerald 'Blue' Abaya closed the workshop's first day by acknowledging that laws originally aimed at fighting malicious disinformation are now being used to censor critical content and protect government leaders from criticisms. The tightening grip on freedom of expression should be addressed by an urgent revision of laws to preserve fundamental freedoms and human rights, he said.

The workshop's Day Two was held on October 2, with the focus shifting to non-legal ways to counter disinformation and the helpfulness of transparent information-sharing and fact-checking. The main question discussed by the participants was: "How can non-legal measures be used to address disinformation?"

Asia Centre's Gomez highlighted key non-legal measures used to combat disinformation, such as government transparency, fact-checking, technology companies filtering, quality journalism, and media and information literacy. He remarked that non-legal measures should be prioritized over legal measures as the latter often result in violations of freedom of expression. The non-legal approach, he continued, also allows for more involvement of stakeholders, creating a holistic learning curve for both audiences and the organizations that implement the aforementioned measures.

Women Working Group founder and Executive Director Nukila Evanty, for her part, raised the question of mobilizing non-legal measures against disinformation in Indonesia. She said that her country is particularly vulnerable to disinformation as 89 percent of its citizens use the Internet. Over 1,600 hoaxes related to COVID-19 had been listed from January 2020 to June 2021, with prominent politicians, ministers, and influential figures sometimes unknowingly spreading disinformation themselves, she said. Religious figures and influencers are being lassoed by the government into fact-checking information, she added.



Peifen Hsieh of Taiwan's DPP then presented the Taiwan Model for combating disinformation. She said that in Taiwan, efficient government reactions that relay transparent, readable, fast responses, with regular disinformation correction broadcasts were key. The Malaysian government initiatives were presented by Hng Chee Way of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, and centered around the creation of anti-fake news websites. People respond well to trusted sources for combating misinformation, Hng said. In the Malaysian case, he continued, the COVID-19 pandemic experience has shown that trusted sources of information can alleviate the impact of disinformation.

FNF Southeast and East Asia Regional Office head Moritz Kleine-Brockhoff summed up the major takeaways from the workshop as:

> No fake news is good: Misinformation undermines trust systematically;

WEBINAR

We are not powerless: There are several measures we can take; and

Fake news is ideologically and politically driven.

Asia Centre Executive Director Dr. Robin Ramcharan concluded the workshop by reiterating that misinformation is a pressing issue that needs to be dealt with. The significance of countermeasures cannot be understated, he remarked, adding that he welcomed the continued collaboration with CALD and FNF on workshop and training initiatives.



W_{orkshop} Speakers

Japan's 2021 Elections: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects

October 26 | 15:00 - 16:30 (Tokyo) 14:00 - 15:30 (Manila) | 13:00 - 14:30 (Bangkok)

"The more things change, the more they stay the same."

This was how polit

This was how political analyst Richard Heydarian described Japan politics, using a popular phrase by French writer Jean-Baptiste Aphonse Karr, at CALD's webinar on "Japan's 2021 Elections: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects." Held on October 26 using Zoom, the webinar was livestreamed on CALD's Facebook page just five days before Japan was to have its Lower House elections.

Japan has been dominated by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) for most of its post-World War II history, and Heydarian's observation about the country's politics could not have been more correct. The Pew Research Centre, in a poll in 2018, reported that 62 percent of Japanese believe elections do not change things. Even Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said, "Our democracy is facing a crisis, as people's trust in politics is broken." Heydarian, however, noted at the CALD webinar that even "the part that stays the same has its own internal dynamics."

CALDI

Because Japan is a major player in the world stage, those internal dynamics could have repercussions beyond the country's borders. This was why CALD thought of holding a webinar discussing the key issues and concerns regarding Japan's October 31 polls, as well as their international and regional implications. As CALD Chairperson Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan pointed out in his welcome remarks read by CALD Secretary General Francis 'Blue' Abaya, "Japan's participation in the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)... is crucial to bolster confidence of Asian liberals and democrats that democracies can withstand and counter the rise and influence of non-democratic countries."

Apart from Heydarian, Japanese professors Harukata Takenaka and Saul Takahashi, and Asia Centre's Robin Ramcharan joined the panel discussion that was moderated by Filipino journalist Marites Vitug.

In his presentation, Professor Takenaka identified the key issues animating the elections, as well as the similarities and differences of major political parties' positions on these. The election issues he tackled include: measures to deal with the COVID-19 crisis; growth policy; distribution policy; and foreign and security policy. Asked what to expect from the Kishida administration, Takenaka said that the new prime minister would most likely adopt a pacifist stance, having been one of the more liberal-oriented

members of the Abe cabinet.

Takahashi, in his intervention, drew attention to the human-rights implications of successive conservative nationalist governments under the LDP, as well as these governments' reliance on the military as a tool of foreign policy. Commenting on one-party dominance in Japan, he said, "LDP is so strong precisely because they have been in power for so long... I don't think it's healthy for Japanese politics. I don't think it's healthy for the country in general." Ramcharan agreed with Takahashi on the role of conservative nationalist elites in Japanese politics, which, he observed, has been evident as early as the 19th century. This also explains the highly personalistic (and patriarchal) nature of politics in the country, Ramcharan said, "to the extent that should there have been changes. It really depended on the person, usually the men."

On foreign policy, Heydarian highlighted the position of Japan as a "super middle power" in Asia, being the third largest economy in the world, having one of the most advanced naval forces, and being the most preferred external power and partner in infrastructure development in the region.

"Japan, obviously, is a very, very important country globally, politically, economically," FNF Southeast and East Asia Regional Director Moritz Kleine-Brockhoff said in his closing remarks. "And as this discussion also showed, geopolitically."



11th CALD Communications Workshop for CALD Women's Caucus

October 30-31 | 15:00 - 17:00 (Manila)

Since 2003, CALD has been regularly conducting communications workshops for its member-parties. These workshops were a response to the perceived need of political-party leaders to constantly update their knowledge and skills. In the time of COVID-19, this need has become even more urgent as people struggle to adjust to the "new normal."



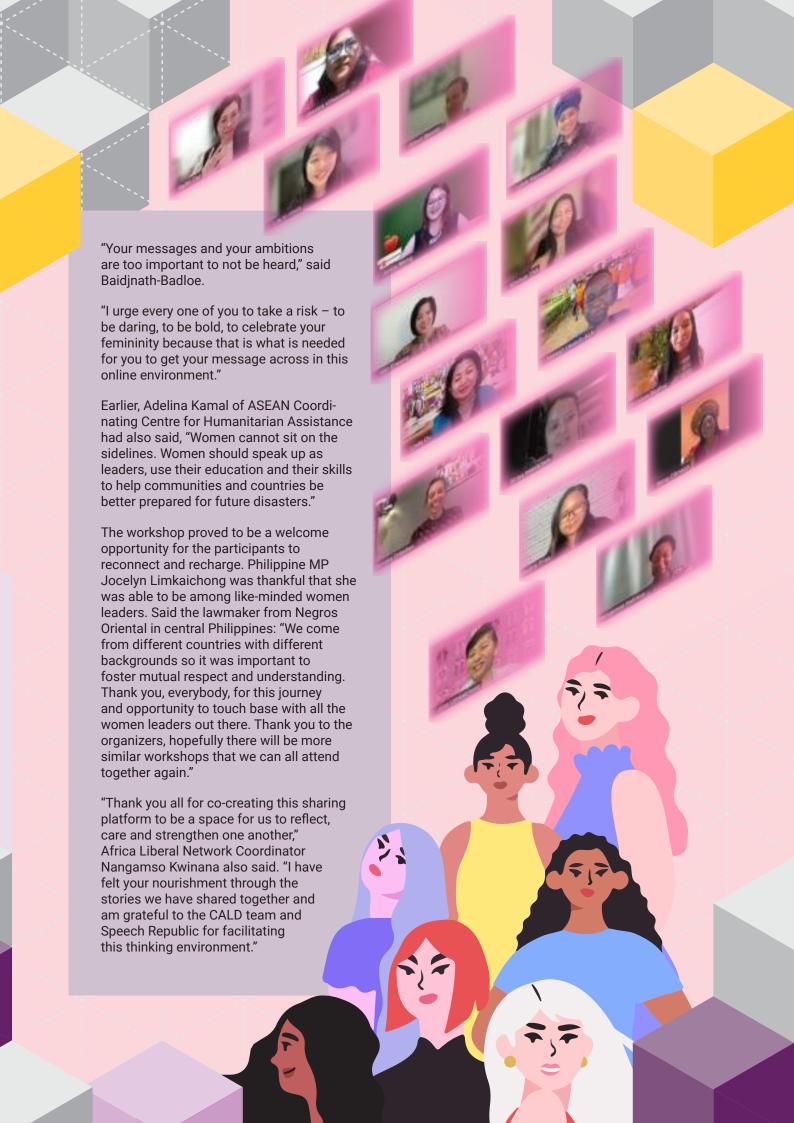
For its 11th edition, the CALD Communications Workshop focused on helping the CALD Women's Caucus and adopted as its theme "reAWEkening: Reaching Across the Network." Twenty-six women leaders from Asia and other parts of the world – all of them former participants in two CALD workshops – attended the two-day event held online. Facilitating the workshop were training coaches Monique Baidjnath-Badloe and Renske Driesten, both from Speech Republic, a globally renowned training bureau based in Amsterdam.

October 30 included a check-in session that enabled the participants who had met one another in previous workshops to touch base and catch up. Some had not been in touch with each other since 2019, when the 10th CALD

Communications Workshop for CALD Women's Caucus was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During the session, challenges and lessons learned as the pandemic wore on were shared by the participants.

"The lows are what make you appreciate the highs," commented CALD Women's Caucus Chairperson Jayanthi Balaguru. "The pandemic showed us how fragile life is and it makes you appreciate it more. It also makes you appreciate and cherish the little things – staying at home, spending time with family, and like now checking in with your friends, even if they are miles away."

The next day was devoted fully to a networking session. Guided by the Speech Republic training coaches, the participants learned how to convey the right message, be a bolder version of themselves, and learn to speak out even in the midst of a conflict.



High-Level Panel of CALD Annual Conference 2021

December 1 | 16:00-18:00 (Manila) | 15:00-17:00 (Bangkok) | 9:00-11:00 (Stockholm)

In these most unusual of times, CALD has not been one to shy away from unorthodox ways of holding its events. For its annual conference, edition 2021, CALD co-organized with its member-parties a "decentralized" online series of events under the overall theme "Challenges to Asian Political

Parties During the

The primary aim of the event series was to put the spotlight on key issues and challenges that Asian liberal and democratic political parties have been facing during the global health crisis. As Philippine Senator and CALD Chairperson Francis 'Kiko' N. Pangilinan would later say, "(The) task of making political parties relevant in democratic decision-making is difficult as it is, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made things more challenging. The restrictions on mobility, social distancing protocols, overreliance on social media, and consequently, the proliferation of fake news, would mean that we need to work harder and be more innovative in getting our message across to our constituents and in connecting with them."

The highlight of the series was the High-Level Panel webinar on December 1, which used the platform Zoom and was livestreamed on CALD's Facebook page. Organized in cooper-

ation with FNF, which was represented at the event by its Southeast and East Asia Regional Director Moritz Kleine-Brockhoff, the webinar had Rappler editorial consultant John Nery as moderator.

Among the questions tackled by the panelists were: What are the most significant challenges confronting political parties today and how do they cope with them? How do political





JULIO TEEHANKEE



ALBERTO FERNANDEZ GIBAJA



HAKIMA EL HAITE



FRANCIS PANGILINAN



ABHISIT VEJJAJIVA



MORITZ KLEINE-BROCKHOFF



JOHN NERY

parties adjust their programs, strategies, and tactics to address the possibility of "living with the pandemic"? What would be the impact of these challenges on democratic prospects at the national, regional, and global levels?

While the queries were tough, the panelists were more than ready to answer them and make astute observations. For instance, in his keynote address, former Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva pointed out that political parties and liberal democracy had been on decline even before COVID-19 struck. He explained that this decline had been emanating from the "process of disruption" caused by globalization and its attendant technology, resulting in the loss of trust in the political establishment.

"If we want political parties not just to survive but to thrive in this new environment," Khun Abhisit said, "we must recognize the causes as well as (get) back to the basics of what political parties are supposed to do."

Birgitta Ohlsson, director of political parties at the National Democratic Institute, meanwhile proposed a few ways by which political parties can navigate this difficult environment. Among her recommendations was winning with democratic allies, with delivery, with integrity and accountability, and with inclusivity. She also argued that when it comes to political parties' internal structure and processes, "culture beats strategy" – if a political party's culture is toxic and authoritarian, strategies do not matter at all.

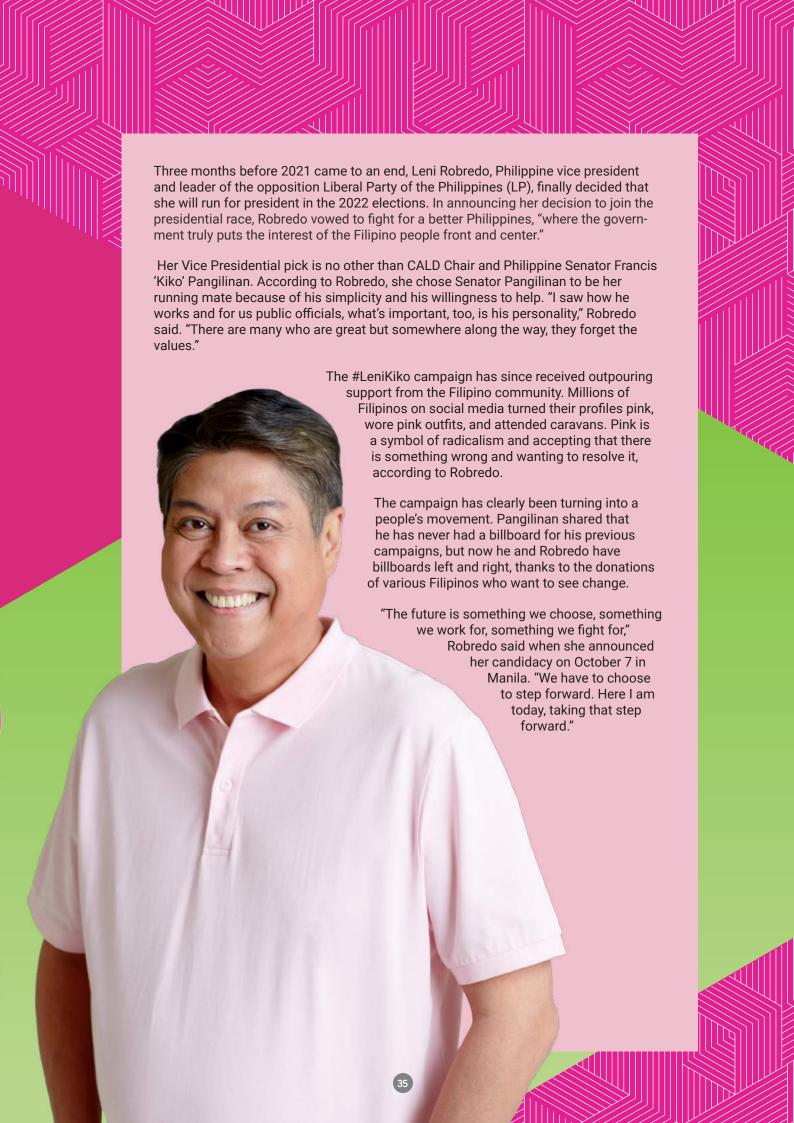
Ohlsson summed up how political parties should behave in three short sentences: "Win with integrity. Lead with dignity. Lose with grace."

International IDEA's Alberto Fernandez Gibaja also came up with some recommendations for political parties to thrive in the new normal and increase public trust in them. These include: developing firm and continuous policy positions; embedding democratic principles as party principles; practicing transparency; innovating by looking into new forms of membership, collaterals, internal election, internal participation, etc.; pushing for legislative reforms that foster fair competition (political finance, campaign rules, etc.); and supporting the (real) media.

For sure, these recommendations could be useful for Philippine political parties, which have been described as weak, incoherent, and nothing more but convenient vehicles of patronage. In his presentation, political analyst and De La Salle University (Manila) professor Julio C. Teehankee hinted that this nature of political parties in his country make them prone to "authoritarian contamination," which he defined as "personality or personalities closely identified with a fallen authoritarian regime infecting or contaminating democratic parties - parties that struggled against authoritarianism or were founded in the aftermath of the dictatorship to consolidate democratic gains."

"During this health crisis... in over 80 countries, governments have responded by engaging in abuses of power, silencing of critics, and weakening and shutting down of important institutions," said Liberal International President Hakima el Haite in her closing address. "To give the right, democratic and sustainable solutions (to global problems, including the pandemic), we need stronger, democratic, transparent parties."





Defending Truth in the Age of Disinformation

Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan

Philippine Senator and CALD Chairperson

Welcome remarks given on September 25 at the CALD-Asia Centre Disinformation Workshop conducted online

ALLOW me to first thank and commend the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats, the Asia Centre, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for spearheading this online workshop on combating disinformation. This is a very relevant discussion, especially given how all forms of manipulation of information have become threats to the democratic values we all hold dear. A good case study is, of course, the Philippines. For the past several years we have faced disinformation that is so rampant it has become weaponized. This disinformation has become a tool to sow discord, to polarize opinions — even to the point of historical revisionism in shutting down the biggest media network in the country. Just before, during the (Congress) debates, and right after the ABS-CBN shutdown, the trolls were going on overdrive on social media in the Philippines justifying the shutting down of the network, justifying the loss of jobs of 10,000 or 11,000 employees of ABS-CBN in the middle of the pandemic.

Disinformation breeds mistrust against traditional democratic institutions. In our country today, one of the independent media outfits, Rappler, has been revealed to be considered a major source of disinformation — at least in focus-group discussions, and according to the man on the street. Disinformation trivializes the importance of facts during critical periods in our history, such as the current global pandemic, contributing, for example, to vaccine hesitancy. I'm sure most of you have also experienced these in your own countries. In various forums, our friends in Taiwan have called it an

"infodemic."

Disinformation kills democracy. Disinformation kills. But, you're not helpless against it. For as long as disinformation exists, so do the defenders who have been working tirelessly to uphold the truth. This involves students, the academe, journalists, lawmakers, and we hope strategically even the social-media giants themselves. It involves all of us we can be our own fact checker. My daughter Frankie, who is very vocal in social media, likes to say that each of us is an influencer in our own right. While the word "influencer" has come to mean having thousands of followers on various platforms online, that is not only the way that influence can be exercised. We can influence



others to the truth. We have close circles of family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and acquaintances we can always "influence." In fact, research has shown that the exponential growth of Facebook in the middle of the previous decade was precisely because it started in circles of friendships or friends, in communities, in campuses in the United States. They focused first on people who knew one another, who were influential, very influential to one another, or at least could enjoy knowing one another, and that kind of influencing one another ballooned exponentially.

In other words, never underestimate our ability as individuals to influence others. Because the best counter for disinformation will always be the truth. If a lie repeated 1,000 times becomes the truth, which is a saying by (Nazi) propaganda master (Joseph) Goebbels, then I'd like to think that truth repeated over and over again enables us to stand strong. We just have to make sure that there are enough avenues to disseminate truth, both traditionally and non – traditionally. We need measures, such as laws, to protect it. We need our own communities to have their own self-regulating mechanisms, as well as vigilance to amplify the truth through our families, our friends, our offices, in organizations, and we need knowledge and understanding to live it in our daily lives, to breathe it, and to smell it.

While disinformation is one serious challenge, misinformation is another, in terms of combating this infodemic. Misinformation is the unintentional sharing of disinformation, and anyone in this forum can be tools or unwitting tools of disinformation. Instead of fact-checking, instead of being vigilant about the information we pass along, we become careless or we become less than vigilant. And we become tools of misinformation by sharing, without

meaning to, information that is

inaccurate.

For my part, on the legal front, we have taken this battle to the Philippine Senate and to the courts.

Last July, we filed Senate Resolution 768, seeking a Senate investigation on the so – called "troll farms" in the Philippines. We believe that the existence of an organized network of disinformation is detrimental to democracy. We need to know if words, you muthese troll movements might be state-run and state-funded.

A number of you know that my advocacy in the Philippine Senate is championing agriculture, the plight of our farmers and fisherfolk in the Philippines, and how to modernize agriculture. So I jokingly said that instead of funding troll farms, they should be funding vegetable farms, rice farms, pig farms, and the like. It would be utterly deplorable if taxpayers' money is being used to spread lies that put their lives and their future in danger. We are concerned not just of the state-funded trolling, but even the larger private-sector role in funding trolling - - all these corporate entities, all these corporations that pump digital advertising, unwittingly, because of algorithms, in YouTube channels that do this. Regardless of the content of these channels and other social-media platforms, for as long as the algorithm works, these corporations place ads and fund these social-media troll sites and channels. That's why even the corporate world must be held to account.

There is a research paper done in 2018 at the University of Amherst in Massachusetts identifying the advertising industry as being directly involved in producing material that disinforms, that spreads fake news or dirty tricks or black propaganda of their clients who happen to be either in politics or in government. I've also filed court cases against two YouTube channel owners, as well as Google, for ascribing crimes to me. I know that as a liberal and a democrat, we must respect and uphold free speech. But I have jokingly said, this cannot be "free." They are in fact paid - - paid trolls, organized to disinform. And interesting enough, before I filed these cases against YouTube and the Google representative in the Philippines, we had repeatedly complained about these disinformation sites. And yet repeatedly, the response was pro forma: "We disagree. This is not in violation of our community standards." And so our appeals to take down these materials on social media were disregarded. Yet four days after we filed the case against Google, lo and behold, the channels complained about were taken down.

Therefore, we must likewise challenge the social-media giants – Google, Facebook, Twitter – to act. They cannot sit and watch and allow all these lies being disseminated on their platforms, while they earn from all these. We must as communities address this squarely and also pressure the companies that fund disinformation through their ads. Do they really wish to be associated with this garbage? Are they earning from all these lies? A concerted effort to confront and challenge can put the pressure on these companies, al-

though of course legislation is also important. These are a number of measures we are actively working on as the Philippines combats disinformation. There are also many schools, communities and media-driven initiatives that actively contribute to defending facts, as distinguished from "alternative facts."

1."

I remember, finally, the strategy of the Taiwan government in addressing disinformation. They call it the "Three F's." The first F is Fast: Within two hours from disinformation being uploaded on social media, you must be fast, and you must respond. In other words, you must quickly rebut.

From Fast, we go to Fair: Of course, you do not fight fire with fire, you cannot fight fake news with more fake news. It's just a vicious cycle that will bring everybody down. So the response has to be fair, it has to be accurate, and it has to be true.

And finally Fun: It's interesting that the way to be able to address disinformation in an effective way is to use humor. The Taiwanese call it "humor versus rumor." So, if it is fun rather than confrontational, people are more inclined to listen; the message will be able to connect more effectively when we use humor.

So again, three F's: Fast, Fair, and Fun. I look forward again to the discussions and I know we will be able to come up again with meaningful ways to champion the truth.

"Disinformation

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Parties as Defenders of Democracy

Birgitta Ohlsson

Director of Political Parties, National Democratic Institute Former Swedish Minister for European Union Affairs

Presentation given on December 1 at the High-Level Panel of the 2021 CALD Annual Conference held online



right now, and in the

coming years.

Supporting democratic political parties is what we do at NDI every single day. I'm going to focus on how to build democratic resilience from within political parties, which is also relevant for how to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. What parties do and how they act are reflected in everything in our lives. Parties, however, are not always very good at representing the citizens. In 2020, the global proportion of women in parliament reached a record high of 25.5 percent. Yet, at the current rate of progress, it will take another 50 years before we will reach gender parity in parliaments worldwide. For instance, only 10 countries have a female head of state right now. And just 13 countries have a woman as head of government. We got to actually have our first female Prime Minister in Sweden yesterday, after 100 years of democracy - and that's still in one of the most gender-equal countries in the world. It will actually take another 140 years for women to be equal to men in the highest positions in government. Political parties need to speed up this pace.

The global situation regarding young people in politics is also important. Half or 50 percent of the world's population are under 30, but only 2.6 percent of the total number of MPs globally are younger than 30. Twenty-five percent of the world's parliaments have no members under the age of 30 at all, even though young people make up majority of the local population.

Remember that I said that we need to make parties more relevant to the voters? It all ends up with the political parties, which are not working in the best interest of citizens who will vote for them. And people are not voting — we've seen voter turnout decline in the last decade in many countries.

One of the three major party trends
we are studying and working on at NDI is
the decline in political-party memberships. In
Europe it's an even broader trend. Declining membership rates have also been observed in historically important social bases of political parties: labor unions and churches, other movements that were so important to build democracy in Western European countries especially.

Classical parties have been kidnapped by charlatan reformers in century-old democracies. Established parties have also gone from movements to elite clubs that are far from the voters. Yet we've also seen during the past decade an increase in movement-based parties and new political actors. So no matter if political parties are 100 years old, no matter if its political party roots are from revolution, based on ideology, ethnicity, or socio-economic class, no matter if rising social movements are gathering millions of activists for crucial issues like climate — — if they aspire to represent the citizens, parties and political actors get elected in free and fair elections, no matter the structure or history. In doing so, it is only right that they all respect and contribute to democracy.

There has also been a kind of a wake-up call for traditional political parties because young people are engaged in these centralized political and social movements like Fridays for

Future, Black Lives Matters, and many others. Yet they are not joining political parties because the trust in public institutions is declining. We know that, and that does reflect on some political parties. Being in the midst of this pandemic and epidemic of misinformation and disinformation, it's important that democratic parties do their homework not only to protect themselves, but also to compete with authoritarians in the arena of technology and information. Indeed, the newest and most complex challenge is to win the battle over technology and information, which is becoming a critical arena of conversation between democracy and authoritarianism. For example, we have seen the propaganda during the COVID-19 crisis that came from the anti-vaxxers and that was closely linked to populism and authoritarianism. While authoritarian regimes are trying to use the Internet to subvert and defeat democracy, it's important to have emerging forms of independent online media that provide potential resources for democrats, enabling them to investigate abuses, counter misleading narratives, and informally organize citizens.

So why are political parties key in dealing with a pandemic? Well, political parties can be the engines for the democracy in the country, but they could also be fueling authoritarian leadership. And political parties in a multi-party system with free and fair elections are still the backbone of democracy. We should never forget that.

"Democracy needs to prevent the rise of authoritarianism and democratic backsliding." The best way then for citizens to partake in democracy, promoting inclusion, plurality, and competition of ideas, is still to be active in political parties. There is room for improvement and great possibilities for values-based political parties to defend democracy in our time. This is even as the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the negative trend for democracy and parties, and authoritarian leaders have seen the op-

portunity to gain even more power. Freedom
House, in its report "Democracy Under Lockdown,"
says that democracy has been eroded in some 80
countries during the pandemic, Vladimir Putin in Russia
tampered with the system and extended his presidency by
two terms. In Asian countries like the Philippines, China,
Vietnam, and India, the pandemic has been used by leaders
as a pretext for everything, from concentrating power even
more to themselves, to undermining freedom of expression.
Authoritarian populist parties have attempted to use the
pandemic to consolidate power and erode democratic
institutions. Democrats need to try to push back, and they
need all our support.

Parties have completely changed how they campaign and organize throughout the pandemic. It's actually quite impressive to see the activities of many democratic parties around the world. Traditionally, the campaign playbook calls for face-to-face interaction. But COVID-19 required a pivot toward virtual meetings, telephone meetings, radio outreach, and so on. At the same time, ruling parties have experienced that they kind of live or die depending on the success of their public-health responses. This has been a challenge as well for our parties, to find a way to be constructive instead of being obstructive in this area.

Political parties have struggled to adapt to this new normal. They have been forced to invest in their virtual outreach. Since March 2020, we have needed to conduct our operations remotely. Some politicians have also learned to communicate more with empathy, which is extremely important. In fact, I think we should be doing that every single day, and more so now than ever before.

crisis, the needed quick policy solution has been a struggle for many political parties. But I can share two examples from Asia and our work at NDI. In Taiwan, NDI is helping parties in Parliament to adapt to the new COVID-19 situation. There has been a lot of focus on openness and transparency in Parliament, how that can be improved, and provide more effective COVID-19 responses, as well as building on the general public trust. Transparent governments have citizens' trust and cooperation on public-health measures – from vaccines to mask mandates. NDI is even partnering up with the Taiwanese parliament to co-host the 2021 Open Parliament Forum, which can be attended virtually.

This pandemic has highlighted a rapid-response test for parties as well. The public tested the policy development skills of parties. We've seen that in the new pub-

lic-health

In Nepal, we've been helping parties with virtual training. But we see that in Nepal, parties still struggle with the new tech solutions. We've been trying to help the parties to address these issues and also improve the government's health responses at every level. I think we've been producing so far something like 56 radio shows and reports. We study activities to help Nepali parties articulate their policy solutions to citizens. We helped two municipalities to develop city magazines to explain the local COVID responses to citizens. We've also been helping local mayors develop policy solutions – pandemic-related, of course – – and worked with the coalition of Nepali mayors to develop a series of health-policy recommendations.

To defend democracy and countering millions of authoritarian influence in the world, it's very important to strengthen the unity among democrats, to win with democratic allies. Democratic allies might have different opinions on everything, from economy to welfare, but we need to build alliances among different political parties worldwide to defend democracy. There really isn't much space today to work in this cross-ideological, transnational manner. At NDI we work

messages.

together with international groups and alliances like Liberal International and IFLRY to defend democracy, to deal with climate change and current and future pandemics. Together with

other democratic political parties worldwide, to make multilateralism stronger together again. Democracy must deliver. We know that the core functions of the welfare state must function everywhere in the society. And we know that if rule of law is maintained in society, authoritarian forces have less opportunity to ride on simplified

"Whenever I
meet political parties,
I say: Win with
integrity. Lead with
dignity. Lose with
grace."

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Parties need to win with accountability, with integrity. If parties are not acting ethically themselves, why would you trust them to run your country or your city? Parties should also win with inclusion. If women are not seeing other women in leadership positions to identify with, why would they trust that the political party is truly committed to gender equality or democracy? Or, for that matter, to minorities and marginalized groups? If you're always left on the side, would you feel comfortable? But inclusion needs to be very meaningful and sincere. And it all boils down to the culture of the party. Parties that tend to have authoritarian political views tend to have authoritarian standards in running the party. Culture beats strategy. If the culture is toxic and undemocratic, and unimportant, it doesn't matter how many fancy strategies you have.

In the coming weeks—actually next week—and maybe in the coming year, defending democracy will be at the forefront of global leadership. We have U.S. President (Joe) Biden's upcoming Democracy Summit, and all the work that we do in the NDI, that you do in your organizations, institutions, and parties here today. Democracy might be down, but it is definitely not out.

The way is quite simple for political parties, and I recommend three methods. Whenever I meet political parties, I say: Win with integrity. Lead with dignity. Lose with grace. If you follow these three sentences, you can be a very successful democratic party almost anywhere in the world.

We have to remember that we cannot only work nine to five to save democracy. The long democratic recession is deepening and it's moving. It's a 24-hour job for all of us, and it needs to be done by every decent democrat in the world. Dolly Parton, one of my favorite singers, has a song that says, "Storms make trees take deep roots." That's very much an idealogy that some of the speakers also mentioned, because we're in the midst of this perfect storm, this toxic cocktail of populism, extremism, and authoritarianism. We can take this opportunity to strengthen our convictions, to define our roots, who we are, and what is important.

Let us all make the year 2022 our historic turning point for democracy. I sometimes say to the younger staff at NDI that 2022 will be our starting point, where individual battles for democracy start a chain for saving democracy in the world. Some 30 countries worldwide will have general elections next year. In some of them, it's already close to midnight. Let's support the democrats in these countries to turn that into a hopeful dawn instead.

We know that pro-democracy movements are very active even in places where rights are violated regularly. We can actually have a renaissance for democracy. Democrats have been resilient through the pandemic, and the populists have actually not been that successful in many countries. We know that democracies around the world are rapidly activated especially when voting arrangements allow citizens to continue to hold elections in difficult conditions.



Time for Integration Based on Common Values

Abhisit Vejjajiva

Former Prime Minister of Thailand and former CALD Chairperson



move specifically to the experience we had in Thailand related to this issue and then suggesting what would need to be done to allow democratic renewal to continue to take place.

The first point that I would like to make is that we have to recognize that even before the pandemic, liberal democracy had already been in recession in most countries, and also in this region. It's a global phenomenon and the recession of liberal democracy is being driven by a number of factors, such as people's disillusionment with the free-market system and the neo-liberal thinking on economics. That is very much why the issue of inequalities has dominated much of the political dialogue everywhere; these had already set the scene for a number of leaders who are authoritarian, extremists, populist, nationalist, and so on.

So it's important to recognize that this was already a trend even before the pandemic. A related point to this is that along with this recession of liberal democracy in various countries, we have also witnessed the decline in multilateralism. For me, development, particularly if you look at the global picture, needs to go hand in hand with a strengthened multilateral system. But what the pandemic has done, clearly, is that it has emphasized the failure of multilateral institutions and arrangements to make an appropriate response at the global or international level.

"The problem This obviously poses an importof the failure of ant problem for many countries multilateralism has in the region. Before the pandemic, we were all concerned about been highlighted by the the trade war between China pandemic, and it has and the United States that had obviously raised tension almost created a lot of strain everywhere and also affected a lot of economies and countries and tension." in the region. But again, with the COVID pandemic, what we've seen right from the start is the inability of an international coordinated response team. Even today, the issue of the origin of the pandemic is being politicized, with China and the United States again being in conflict about the possible theories of how the pandemic originated.

But worse than that was when the world was hit by this pandemic, and the WHO had declared this a global pandemic, there was hardly any kind of global response. We never had a coordinated attempt on issues such as travel restrictions, lockdowns, or whatever. Just imagine if these were all coordinated in an ideal world, at the global level. I'm sure that the death tolls, the damages that we have seen over the last year and a half could have been substantially reduced. Rather, what we saw were individual countries taking their own separate measures, never coordinated. You will notice that the epicenter of the pandemic moves from one region to another – it started in Asia, moved to Europe, and then to the States, and then it comes back. Unless we have a more coordinated strategy, this will continue to happen especially

with the mutations and the new variants that keep on emerging.

This goes with vaccines as well. While everybody seems to recognize the fact that no country is safe

unless everybody is made safe, again, there was never any attempt to distribute the vaccines in a way that would have the strongest and the most efficient impact on reducing the pandemic around the world. What we saw, of course, was a number of countries hoarding vaccines for their national population. So now in countries around the region, we are caught up in what the topic of this panel calls "vaccine diplomacy."

China obviously had a head start. She had obviously experienced the virus first, but also seems to have been able to bring things under control fairly swiftly and then moved on to use the old technologies such as inactivated vaccines, and therefore had that ready quite quickly. It was also at the position to distribute it around the world. By comparison, the West, while countries were involved in the research and the process, had to wait. And because it was not like in China where everywhere could be centralized, distribution was pretty much left to the market until, of course, the COVAX initiative came about — which for many has been, safe to say, really too little and too late.

The problem of the failure of multilateralism has been highlighted by the pandemic, and it has created a lot of strain and tension. Various countries around the world are now caught up in what you call "vaccine diplomacy." Some people

say, well, you know when there's a tension between superpowers, maybe we can benefit from the fact that they would have to compete to please us. But then the relationship or the tension has gotten so bad, it's now more of a case of countries being forced to choose sides, which makes the situation even more difficult to handle

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a case of countries being forced to choose sides, which makes the situation even more difficult to handle.

In the case of Thailand, the issue of the vaccine has become a big political issue. You can clearly see how the competition between the superpowers

also affects the dialogue in the country and how

we deal with the problem. That's the first main point. The second one is, when we talk about the competition between the two superpowers, we are not really comparing likes and likes. What I mean is this: China, in her diplomacy or in her foreign policy, has always emphasized the issue of mutual benefits — the ends to justify the relations. Therefore, she was not interested in interfering with internal politics in the current situation. That is the official stance. So, for me, the vaccine issue is quite an easy game, if you like to play, from the Chinese side. All she needs to do is to deliver to countries and hope that those countries that benefit from her actions will then strengthen relations with China. It's very simple.

The West meanwhile has always tried to base its relations with other countries supposedly on some kind of shared values. Unfortunately, I think four years of Trump in particular, but also poor leadership around many Western countries, have meant that the West lost much of the legitimacy in trying to claim that values are the basis of much of the relations with many countries, including those in the region. So, for instance, when the EU takes protectionist measures, supposedly because of human-rights abuse

or environmental degradation, there's a feeling around the world that this is more about getting a trade advantage rather than seriously believing in values. That was very much undermined when you had leaders like Trump often openly rejecting the values that the U.S. supposedly stands for and saying to its allies that this is what we should stand for. And so with the West already in a difficult spot, and with the countries there all concerned with their own populations, and COVAX too little, too late, China — and Russia also a certain extent — got a head start in vaccine diplomacy.

That's very much the situation in Thailand, where we - - like many places in the region - - were quite successful last year in dealing with the pandemic. Unfortunately, that led to a false sense of security, which is why I think there was no sense of urgency in acquiring vaccines for a number of governments in the region. And then the second wave or the third wave hit us. Thailand was caught unprepared. Thailand had put its hopes on its ability to produce AstraZeneca vaccines. The production was started in June; the plan was these would be the main vaccines we would use in our strategic fight against the pandemic. But when we were hit with the second and third wave in February and April, we still did not have these vaccines. That's where China stepped in and provided us with the emergency vaccines; indeed, almost majority of vaccines that Thai people had had is Chinese. Now though, I think AstraZeneca is about to overtake or has just overtaken the Chinese vaccines in number, after two or three months of domestic production.

The situation in Thailand was also curious in a sense that the government made a very peculiar decision not to join COVAX, and so we were very much reliant on China's donations and sales of vaccines. It was only later that we had donations from Western countries. The U.S. and U.K. donated some vaccines, but again, rather late, compared to the role the Chinese vaccines had played here. Now that would almost be game over, except that the Delta variant

came along and what that variant did was raise questions about the efficacy of the Chinese vaccines. The conventional wisdom here is while the Chinese could give you immunity, it would give you full immunity for only a few months, and it was not so good in dealing with the Delta variant as against other variants. And so people begin to call for mRNA vaccines to help fill the gaps that have been left by the Chinese vaccines and also by AstraZeneca. That still leaves room for the West to make their move as far as vaccine diplomacy is concerned.

Looking ahead, what I see is the next part of this war would be what I would call "booster war." Because everybody will be looking for their third or fourth shots. So far, people have been expecting that they will use mRNA vaccines here in Thailand. I believe that China will be distributing her own mRNA vaccines very soon because she is already using that domestically.

But the vaccine diplomacy or competition again clearly continues the problems that we have seen even before the pandemic, where what I called "weakness or failure of multilateralism" gave so much role to the superpowers and then placed many of the countries in the region in a situation where they have been forced either to choose or have to balance the relations between the superpowers. Yet while I have criticized the global lack of cooperation and coordination, I have also been disappointed by the lack of coordination in the ASEAN response or ASEAN management of issues, including that of vaccine management. Indeed, we could have even reached out to the dialogue partners and other key allies of ASEAN in East Asia, and also in other regions of the world.

For me, for us to get out of this situation, and to also promote what we hope to see which is democracy renewal, ASEAN countries can no longer sidestep this issue of integration based on common values anymore. Part of the reason why ASEAN could not get together was because we have not really come up with a sense of common values and destination. I'm not saying that the values that we adopt need to be the same with other regions in other parts of the world. But we need something - - some commonality - that would bind the ASEAN countries together. That would enable us to uphold some simple principles, especially those particularly related to democracy within the region. It would help us to increase our bargaining power against the superpowers, and that would then allow us to avoid being caught in this situation of competition or diplomacy. The pandemic is just hammering home all the trends and all the problems that we were facing before as far as democratic development is concerned.





Changing the World Means Working Together

Hakima el Haite

President of Liberal International

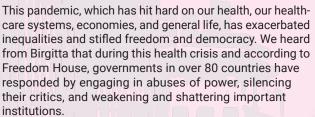


Every day, humans push back the limits of science and technology, conquer space even, and very recently sent rockets to divert asteroids that would threaten the Earth in 100 years. Yet, back on Earth, the reality every day is that we have run out of masks, test kits, respirators, intensive-care beds, and so on.

I'm thinking of the most vulnerable countries, especially in the sub-Saharan region in Africa. It's been almost a year since the first vaccines were finalized and started to be distributed. We have failed to distribute them equally and adequately across countries, which has left the whole world vulnerable. Just this week, the invisible enemy is mutating — and we have what we call Omicron — and it is keeping humanity, the world economy, and our social organizations on edge. Borders are closed but COVID-19 keeps being present in our everyday lives everywhere in the world.

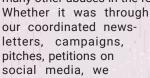
have been raising issues and trying to provide solutions. Concerning the COVID pandemic, we provide daily COVID-around apps and share these on a regular basis. We share best practices through webinars and meetings. Our periodic newsletter provides incredible information from a global overview of what our members have been managing the pandemic and what others could learn.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we all were confronted by fake news, including fake news concerning the good practices to fight COVID-19. But at the beginning of March 2020, together with ALDE Party — and I refer you to our first newsletter — we were also already calling for the creation of a pandemic global governments mechanism, backed by a dedicated financial fund, and with a dedicated committee of experts to provide the world with science-based and



This type of attacks on democratic principles and liberal values is now a regular occurrence from Belarus to Venezuela, from Philippines to South Africa, passing by Europe — the conditions of democracy and human rights have degraded, as Alberto (Fernandez Gibaja of International IDEA) was saying. The general observation is that amid the health crisis there has been is a rise in power of nationalism and authoritarian regimes. The crisis has become an opportunity to gain power and to justify more and more authority. That has meant the decline of democratic liberal parties, and regrettably, Asia is not different.

Liberal International works together with CALD to be loud and vocal in denouncing to the international community, to the UN institutions, to the EU, to the world the violations against human rights, the restrictions of freedoms, the repetitive and increasingly violent repressions of peaceful practices and peaceful protests and many other abuses in the region.





credible information to tackle fake news and to support the most vulnerable countries in handling the pandemic. We called for more inclusion within the World Health Organization, one transcending political calculations. Together with ALDE Party, and with CALD, I want to pay tribute here to Hans Van Baalen, our president of honor, with whom together with CALD we have strongly advocated for Taiwan to be admitted into WHO in the middle of 2020.

Since the very start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been also calling for nations to be fair, democratic, and respectful of human rights in combating the consequences of the pandemic. And long before the COVID-19 vaccines were discovered, liberals were raising the alarm, demanding a fair and equitable distribution once the time comes in order to protect the most vulnerable even beyond our borders. We called for greater international cooperation, more solidarity, and investments in initiatives such as COVAX, which was

created long after we have made the call to create this mechanism of governance within the WHO. We did that because we firmly believe that no one of us will be safe until all of us are safe, and that the health security in the wealthiest of nations depends on the health security of the most vulnerable ones. And it's why you will recall that in February 2021, liberals were again ahead of the curve, when together with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, we called for fairer and faster vaccine routes glo

fairer and faster vaccine routes globally and the liberalization of vaccine production to accelerate the speed, and consequently the rate, of vaccinations worldwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic, like climate change, terrorism, and the other challenges humanity is facing, confirms the limits of the nation state in responding to crossborder threats. The nation state can no longer stand on its own. In the face of global challenges, we need global answers. But to give the right democratic and sustainable solutions, we need stronger, democratic, and transparent parties. And for this, we are called upon to enhance the capacities of our parties and redefine our priorities to build stronger political parties.

"In the face of global challenges, we need global answers. But to give the right democratic and sustainable solutions, we need stronger, democratic, and transparent

parties."

This is what we are working on within our diverse programs, especially the political startup incubator. We need stronger parties to work for a new world order, to put people and humanity at the heart of international relations, and cooperation to tackle the pandemic, as well as other challenges such as climate change. This requires, as Alberto mentioned, innovative party structures. This requires prospective visions. This requires trust. Maybe it's easy to win votes, but it's difficult to win the trust and the hearts of the citizens we are serving. This requires more proximity to the people we want to serve. And I loved what Julio said: We need to avoid and to prevent the actual authoritarian contaminations. This is what is happening according to the news I'm hearing, in Europe, for example. When you are hearing such things, you are thinking that there is not only COVID-19, but there is a real contamination of our

liberal values and our democratic values. This is something we need to avoid, by being louder, more vocal, and more present than

populists. I also loved another thing that Alberto said — — that populism is not an ideology, it's a style, and we need to change this style. We need to be louder, we need to talk, to be more vocal if we want to reach the ears, and then the minds and the hearts of the citizens. Together, I think we can succeed in regaining the trust, because this is a question of trust. We need to be more transparent, more present. We need to be this "built channel" that

Alberto also talked about.

We need to work together to build strong political institutions, yet not to be only politicians. I think we have enough experiences together, we have enough intelligence put together. We have enough success stories even though we have had failures as well. We can share all these. We have the right platforms. CALD is a right platform. Liberal International is a right platform. Together we can do it, with a mutual and a sincere willingness to cooperate, while respecting our differences and diversities. We can defeat the populists and we can build strong parties.

One African saying goes, "Even if we don't have the same past, we can have the same future." We all are aware that it takes a commitment to change the world. Business as usual will not work in this changing digital and challenging world. We must challenge and review our conventional party structures and operations to be able to change the world. This is exactly what we are discussing today. This is exactly why we liberals, we should not give up. We should not quit because quitters never win. And we want to win. We want to be on the right side of the history.

In Liberal International, you all have allies, including myself and our deputy president Karl Hanz Paque. Through FNF, through your excellent ambassador, Khun Kiat, who is a member of the Bureau of LI, and each member of CALD — together, we are here to continue and to support each other, and to work with each other. Let's all carry on, let's all stand together for what we believe in: our democratic and liberal values. And yes, let's all never quit. We can then defeat populist and authoritarian regimes.



Setting AWEsome Goals

Ma. Leonor 'Leni' Robredo Vice President of the Philippines

Solidarity message delivered on April 9 at the Asian Women Education (AWE) for Transformative Leadership online training course

IN the past year, we have all stood witness to the extraordinary strength of women in facing a crisis that is testing the resolve of even the most advanced countries. We have seen women emerge as leaders and decision-makers, as frontliners and as community mobilizers. And clearly, without women leaders setting up a decision-making table, our COVID-19 responses will be less effective at meeting the needs of women and girls. Their presence as leaders takes into account the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on our sisters, and provides a pathway so that policies to support them will be implemented.

The call for us is clear: To intensify our efforts, and to find more of us to do the work. More of us will join the chorus to assert our rights as women as leaders. Being a part of this program is the first step to fulfilling this call. We want to equip you to become the leaders that we need in these times, deepening your knowledge, strengthening your resolve, giving you the tools to push forward a more people-oriented, rights-based, gender-responsive, empowering, equitable, and sustainable development agenda.

In the coming days, learn all that you can, ask questions that will challenge the way things are, or the way things have always been done. Do our laws keep women from being safe? Do they leap into the spiral of fear, and end up with the feeling of being trapped? Can all of our gender-equality campaigns truly achieve their goals? What can we do to make them better? How quickly are we working toward the outcomes we have envisioned? What can we do to truly push the boundaries toward relevant sustainability and meaningfulness for women?

The road ahead remains long. We still have so much to do. Today, however, is proof of what is possible because we are not alone. There are many of us working to build a truly better normal, one that is truly inclusive, that is truly equitable, and that truly empowers women.

I and the rest of the Office of the Vice President, along with so many others, are with you in your pursuit of a fairer, more humane, truly equitable society.

"The call for us is clear: To intensify our efforts, and to find more of us to do the work."

The Pandemic as an Opportunity

Florencio 'Butch' Abad

Former Philippine Budget Secretary and former CALD Chairperson

Presentation given on September 10 at the 2021 Asia
Centre Conference conducted online

WHEN I saw that phrase "democratic renewal" in the title of our session, I was a bit concerned because discussing renewal in a period of crisis can either be a problem or an opportunity. But being aware of the current state of democracy in the world, I am a bit more concerned as the painful truth is that today autocracy is ascendant and democracy is in a state of decline.

I say that because the number of free countries has reached its lowest level since the beginning of a 50-year period of global democratic decline. In the same year, the number of not-free countries reached its highest level. Democracy watchdog Larry Diamond himself has observed that there really has been a significant and in fact accelerating rate of democratic breakdown today. He also says that the quality or stability of democracy is declining in a number of large and strategically important emerging-market economies. Third, he says autocratization has been deepening, including in big or strategically important countries. Finally, he says that the established democracies, including the United States, have increasingly seemed to be performing poorly and lack the will and self-confidence to promote democracy effectively abroad.

It's important to highlight that context because the arrival of the COVID-19 virus and the pandemic's dire economic consequences have put further concern on the present state of democracy in the world. Because of the pandemic, countries across the globe adapted very strict mobility measures and restricted economic, cultural, and social activities. In fact, many institutions have observed that the COVID-19 recession is emerging as the most unequal in modern history; the pandemic not only made worse the deprivation and vulnerabilities of those left behind because of the problem of inequality, but its fallout is also pushing or making inequality even worse. If nothing is done, given the present state of democratic recession, the situation can still further disintegrate to what many democracies watchers call "democratic depression." That's the bigger risk if especially the democratic countries of the world do not come together and do something to address the





There is a new form of multilateralism that has emerged, and I agree with Abhisit Vejjajiva when he said that it came a little late. Nonetheless, I feel that it's important it has come to fore, because it served as a prototype of this new form of multilateralism that we need to establish if we are to be able to contain this problem of the pandemic as soon as possible. And I refer to the UN-backed COVAX. This is an initiative that is supported by WHO, CEPI (Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations), and Gavi, a global vaccine alliance. COVAX is principally directed at ensuring a quality in the distribution of vaccines across the globe, but especially paying attention to vulnerable to low-income and medium-income coun-"We do need a new tries. This is very important model of multilateralism especially for high-income

democracies because this

is a way of addressing this

problem.

security, using a global While it has started slowly, public-health strategy with and its coverage yet has not reached a level by which the vaccine as the decisive significant impact has been made, the fact that it's alweapon." ready there, and the fact that it can be an effective vehicle to address the possible impact of this crisis in the further erosion of democracy across the globe - - it's important for us then to provide all the support that it needs. Because as of now, there is no other vehicle that is available performing the function of COVAX. A number of countries, especially the high-income democratic ones and those groups of people who already have satisfied their vaccine requirements, have come forward to help. This shows the ability of high-income countries to develop their own reserve of vaccines and even produce more than they actually need. The situation gives the rationale for why a COVAX is important to be organized to be able to address the needs of other countries that are not ascending as high-income countries in so far is providing their own vaccines.

In terms of that strategy, of being able to deal with the global crisis, I think we are set. All it needs really is to rally the world to support such an initiative. There has been a study on this using the COVAX experience, and it proposes to end the COVID-19 pandemic by next year. This is the work of Ruchim Agarwal and Gita Gopinath of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). What they're proposing is that it is possible to vaccinate at least 40 percent of all countries by the end of 2021 and at least 60 percent by the end of 2022, and at the same time enabling widespread testing and tracing. But what it will require is for high-income countries or democracies to pull together US\$50 billion to fund the cost of the exercise. They say that if you look at this number, it seems that it's very high. But they argue that you have to look at the cumulative economic benefit to be derived from proceeding with this project, which I think will come from economies not having to be affected too many closures or lockdowns; mobility not having to be sacrificed because of people wanting to be safe, which therefore affects trade and tourism; and economic, social, and cultural activities

not having to be either stopped or very limited because of the fear of spreading the virus. If these many economic, social, and cultural activities are allowed to happen, they estimate that the total economic benefits to be derived will come to as much as US\$9 trillion. That's US\$9 trillion against what? US\$50 billion. They say that this translates to about 180:1, which is a very generous return in investment.

I mentioned this because of the nature of the pandemic and the necessity of coming together to develop a global public-health strategy. We have to keep in mind that the ability of one country to protect itself will

amount to nothing because unless everybody is safe and vaccinated across the globe, then no one is really safe. We need to support proposals for us to find a way in which we can come together. Because as it is turning out, while it is true that the pandemic crisis is bringing forth a lot of other crises and problems to many countries in the world, it is also an opportunity to bring people together to assist the many other countries that are

seriously affected by this problem.
It's an opportunity also to once again
rethink the importance and the necessity of
countries coming together in a multilateral setting so that working together, we can demonstrate to
the world – especially with the high-income democracies
working together with low – and middle-income democracies – that the democratic system itself, even in a period
of very difficult crisis, can be caring, can be capable, and
can be effective in addressing the problems especially of
those who need help the most.

If we can do that, the idea of democratic renewal, the hope of being able to move in that direction despite the fact that the present state of democracy is in recession – this becomes a possibility. That is why this pandemic can be an opportunity itself to make feasible this discussion on democratic renewal, even if we find ourselves in a situation where autocratic regimes are ascendant and democratic regimes are in recession. Even if we have to confront a public-health crisis that has created huge problems across the globe, the opportunity is still there.

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as an international

platform to restore global

THE POWER OF PODCASTS:

Creating Hope

Reaching out to people during a pandemic can be quite difficult. But trust CALD to find ways to start conversations, tell stories, and share perspectives.

In late 2021, it launched the podcast series **The Great Asian Pushback**, gathering voices from across Asia to tell their stories of defiance and hope. Amid the dominance of populism, authoritarianism, and illiberalism, these narratives show that there are still many people and organizations in the region that believe in liberal and democratic values, and attempt to instil these principles in their respective societies. By sharing these stories, the podcast series aims to empower and inspire listeners to continue the difficult fight for democracy and freedom in Asia and beyond.



The Power of Personal Stories

There's great value in a personal approach and experiences. By being personal, you provide the human touch needed in order to connect to other people. The Great Asian Pushback showcases real stories of activists, human-rights advocates, and democracy leaders. Dr. Sasa talks about what has been happening in Myanmar since the February 1 military coup and puts the spotlight on the plight of the country's people who are fighting with all they have for democracy. Lawyer Theary Seng shares her story as a daughter of the killing fields in Cambodia. From Hong Kong, Emily Lau speaks of how to keep standing for what you believe is right in the face of threats. Hafsar Tameesuddin, now resettled in New Zealand, tells of the challenges she experienced following the deadly violence that broke out between ethnic Arakanese Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in 2012 that forced her to flee Myanmar.

The Power of Youth

The youth have the energy, the drive, and the skills to be the changemakers of society. The podcast series includes the perspectives of various young people on social-media influence, political processes, and activism. Filipino vlogger Janina Vela discusses how the youth can change the current narrative of a country. From Thailand, StartDee Chief Executive Officer Parit Wacharasindhu and former Bad Student Group Leader Issadaorn Kulsantao talk about the Thai society that young people want, even as the government headed by a former military man continues to trample on the rights of the people. The series also takes up the viral #Milk-TeaAlliance with academic Roger Huang, who explains how the movement has united young Asian advocates for democracy and human rights.





The Power of Community

The Myanmar crisis has been a litmus test for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but the regional organization has not been faring well thus far. Progress on its five-point consensus to address what has been happening in Myanmar has been painfully slow, leading to calls for the establishment of alternative regional arrangements. One of these is the Southeast Asian Community (SEAC), which its proponents say is an "alternative multilateral organization to replace the inter-governmental ASEAN." Will SEAC work? Former Cambodian MP Mu Sochua and Malaysian MP Wong Chen tackle this question and more.

In another episode, Rafendi Djamin, former chairperson of ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), shares his thoughts on the current dynamics and future prospects of democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia. He also talks about his country, Indonesia, which is said to be in the best position to push ASEAN toward a more democratic direction since it is current most stable and consolidated democracy among the organization's members. While "democracy" and "human rights" appear regularly on ASEAN's institutional documents, its stance is less clear once it is in actual situations.



The Power of the Opposition

In the midst of a pandemic, both Malaysia and the Philippines have been in political chaos. For almost two years, Malaysia's political stalemate, coupled with economic downturn brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, had made life more difficult for ordinary Malaysians. #benderaputih took social media by storm, with low-income families waving white flags to ask for help, while a "black flag" movement was launched to show defiance toward the government. In the Philippines, a bloody war on drugs continued while the government bungled through its COVID-19 response. In both Malaysia and the Philippines, however, there are people who are still fighting for their people and want to bring about change.

From Malaysia, MP Nik Nazmi of the opposition People's Justice Party shares his party's platform of governance that is aimed at getting Malaysia out of its current predicament. From the Philippines, Senator and vice-presidential candidate in the 2022 polls Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan, talks of how unsolicited support from many sectors has been inspiring him and Vice President Leni Robredo (who will run for president) to keep fighting to reclaim democracy and dignity in leadership and governance.

All these and more make up The Great Asian Pushback – 12 episodes that provide us an opportunity to connect with others through voices and the power of technology.

If you want to be inspired and invigorated, listen to The Great Asian Pushback. Keep pushing back against autocracy. Keep fighting for democracy.



Download on Spotify!

IN FOCUS

WHAT PO THINK?

CALD TO VOLLTH

We Hear You

If the future lies with the youth, why not listen to what they have to say today? That's what CALD set out to do with its podcast series

The Youth Perspective that now has completed two seasons. And so far, the series are proving CALD right: Young people are massive sources of energy, creativity, and new ideas, and can spell the difference in today's tumultuous world.



Season 1 was launched in June 2021 and offers a fresh perspective on misinformation, youth activism, and women's empowerment in politics. In **A Seat at The Table**, self-exiled former Hong Kong Legislative Council member Ted Hui Chi Fung draws from his experiences as a youth activist who got persecuted for speaking out and shares how the youth can make tangible change,. He also encourages the youth to find the bravery to stand up, push forward, and place their demands for reform "on the table no matter what."

Influencers, Activism, and the Social Media meanwhile tackles the impacts of influencer endorsements of politicians and how these can make a difference in the upcoming Philippine 2022 national elections. Filipino influencers Macoy Dubs and Kakie Pangilinan agree with each other that people need to scrutinize candidates' respective platforms first before making their choices. "If we are to endorse a politician, we should make sure that they have the same values that we have and that they really make a better Philippines," says Macoy, whose real name is Mark Averilla.





Episode 3 illustrates how making the wrong choice for leaders can be long-lasting and debilitating, with cultural historian Leloy Claudio discussing the continuous rise of dictators and strongmen, and how the consequences of their actions can dominate the political landscape for years. Noted Claudio in **You, Me, the Presidency**: "Dictatorship is the opposite of Liberalism. Liberalism is the political philosophy that ensures checks on power. And those checks on power usually operationalize through rights... When the states start curtailing those rights in favor of a centralized authority, then you get a dictatorship and that is what is happening in the Philippines, China, Russia, among others."

The Art of Remembering and Forgetting, addresses the issue of historical revisionism, which purposely (even maliciously) advance a particular political discourse. According to the New York Times, democracy requires individual responsibility, which is impossible without critical history. So why does historical revisionism occur and how, in the digital age, do we counter it? Philippine historian Francis Kristoffer Pasion shares his perspective together with Marc Siapno from Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines.





Produced with Women and Gender Institute (WAGI), Episode 5, **The Dignified Voice**, explores the ongoing gap between men and women in politics and economic standing. The impact of positioning on structural power relations between women and men is also tackled.

Season 2 was launched in October 2021, and kicked off with an episode produced in collaboration with FNF Taiwan. Featuring Anna Marti and Ya-wei Chou from the FNF Global Innovation Hub and Marcin Jerzewski of Taiwan NextGen Foundation, **The Political Landscape** explores the importance of innovation for better governance and how it can be introduced even to institutions that have been around for hundreds of years.





When an interruption occurs, like corruption, abuse of power, and bad politics in general, how can democratic institutions be restored? In **Transformative Politics**, Ry Kea of the Cambodia National Rescue Party talks about how one can change the lives of one's constituents through democratic processes, despite all odds.

Having constituents, of course, means one has been elected to a public post. But winning at the polls is no small feat, especially in today's increasingly polarized society. Birgitta Ohlsson, Director of Political Parties at the National Democratic Institute, and CALD Youth Secretary General Jeremiah Tomas discuss the increasing gap within voters and the clash of political ideologies in today's fast-changing political environment in **Winning the Race**.





Strengthening existing networks is one thing, but creating new relationships is another. In the age of COVID-19, the new normal of endless Zoom meetings and virtual gatherings hasn't really made efforts of organizations to reach out and stay connected with the people easy at all. In Episode 9, **Reaching Outside the Bubble**, FNF International Regions Head Jules Maaten and Min Cheong of the Singapore Democratic Party discuss the challenges and significance of networking in this new digital landscape.

The pandemic has reminded people to take more care of themselves. For Episode 10, CALD Youth showcases the correlation of politics and how it affects the mental health of the citizens. **The Politics of Mental Health** with RockEd Executive Director Gang Badoy Capati also offers some advice for the youth on how to take care of themselves mentally and emotionally.



Download on Spotify!



The first two seasons of **The Youth Perspective** are now available on Spotify, YouTube, Facebook, RSS, and Soundcloud. Listen to the Youth Perspective and follow CALD's <u>social media</u> sites for more information.

CALD YOUTH ON MENTAL HEALTH

It's Okay Not to be Okay: COVID Edition

Pandemics, lockdowns, and quarantines can be difficult and can affect our mental health. COVID-19 is a big threat to everyone both physically and mentally. While some people may be enjoying this time at home with their new routines and extended family time, others may feel exhausted, fed up, lonely, depressed, or anxious especially after living in a pandemic for more than two years.

Here are some tips that can help you take care of yourself mentally during this season:





Recognize that your anxiety is completely normal

Although anxiety about the coronavirus is completely normal, make sure to get information from reliable sources or to fact check any information coming through less reliable channels. Always use reputable news and information sources only because access to good quality information about the virus can help you feel more in control. Try to find a balance between staying informed and feeling overwhelmed by the news.

Jeremiah Tomas
LIBERAL PARTY OF THE PHILIPPINES

During the pandemic, I still tried to go out and enjoy nature to keep my mind healthy – – of course while maintaining a safe distance from everybody. Reading books and exercising also helped me.



Distract, focus, and connect with yourself

Distractions can help us cope. You can do your homework, watch movies, exercise, read books, or start a new hobby. Look for ways to make your life easier and find a balance in your everyday life. Missing events and not being able to go out can be disappointing. Allow yourself to feel disappointment or dismay because in doing so you are actually helping yourself feel better soon. Try to avoid coping mechanisms that may not be helpful in the long-term.



Stay connected

Social distancing doesn't mean social isolation. Reach out to your friends and family to talk and connect. At times of stress, we work better in company and with support. With the use of technology, everybody is just a message away.

We have faced other difficult times in the past and with proper care we will get through this, too, together. Stay safe and be healthy until we meet again.

Sources: Unicef, Mental Health Foundation, and Brain & Behavior Research Foundation



Siripa Intavichein DEMOCRAT PARTY OF THAILAND

While it was still COVID era, I tried to live normally, doing the same routine. I've been spending my time working and helping out those who are in need during the pandemic.



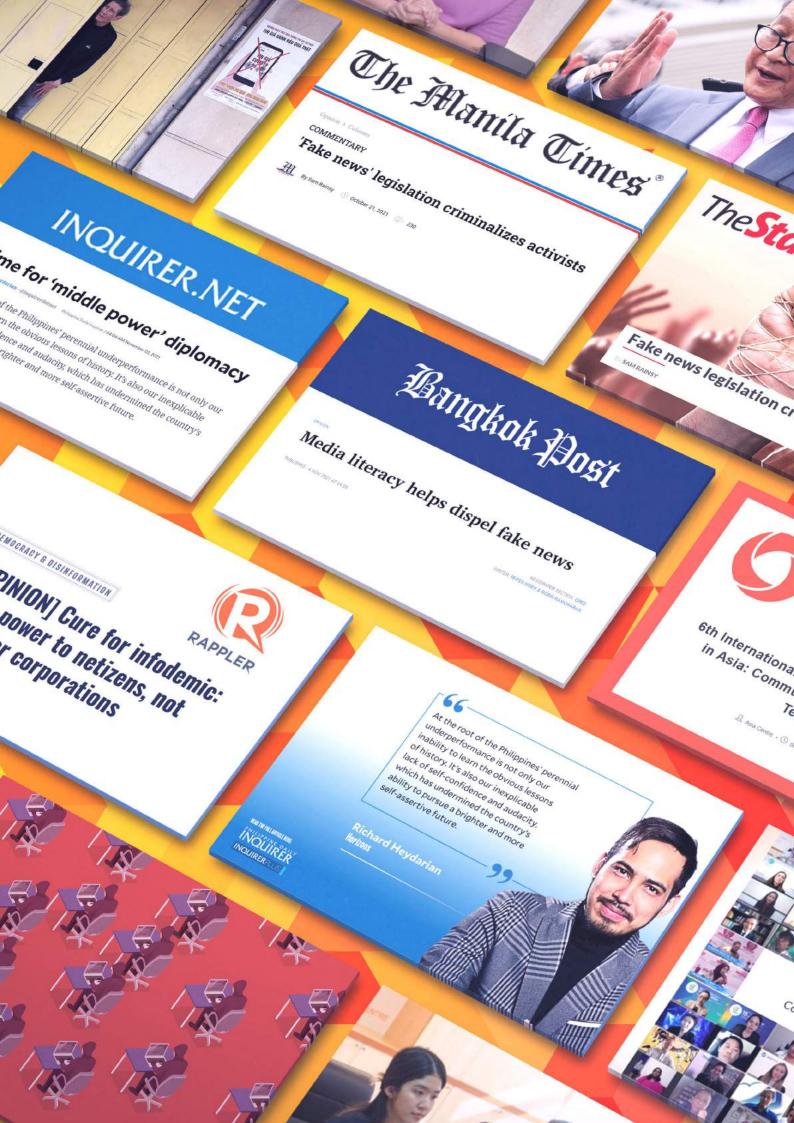
I spent my time on social media advocating for the youth and my fellow Cambodians. Because of COVID, I can help my party only through online efforts. But by being in social media and contributing, I still feel like I am doing something and making a change.













Trouble Came in Threes

JAN 7

The first year of the pandemic had already made it clear that some governments across Asia were taking advantage of the health crisis to tighten their grip on their people. But even CALD was surprised that just a week into 2021, it was compelled to issue a statement condemning the arrest of 50 democrats in Hong Kong. In its statement dated January 7, CALD said that it considered "these arrests as an indication that the national security law can have negative repercussions for democracy and political rights in the territory" and that these "can just further exacerbate the already volatile political situation" in Hong Kong.

"CALD once again implores the Hong Kong administration to immediately release and drop the charges against those arrested," the Council also said in its first statement for 2021, "and to cease from committing further actions that threaten or harass the political opposition and activists."

14

Just a week later, however, CALD was moved to issue another statement, this time addressing the refusal of the Hun Sen government to allow opposition politicians to return to Cambodia so that they could attend their court trial. The Council said in its statement dated January 14: "Aligned with the principles of democracy, we in CALD firmly believe that everyone has a right to fair trial with respect to justice and human rights. The continuous persecution of the political opposition in Cambodia is an alarming trend that has no place in a democracy that Cambodia claims to uphold."

Added CALD: "We urge the government of Cambodia, under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen, to allow the opposition leaders and activists a safe return to Cambodia by granting valid travel documents, committing to a fair trial, and ensuring that they are not detained as they await judicial procedures as is their right."

1 1

But the worse was yet to come. On February 1, Myanmar's military forcibly took over the country's democratically elected government. CALD wasted no time in issuing a statement on the very same day. Condemning the military takeover "in the strongest terms," CALD in its third statement for 2021 called "on the international community, particularly the United Nations (UN) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to speak up and make a principled stand against the coup d'etat in Myanmar." It also appealed to China "to use its significant clout over Myanmar to ensure that country returns to the democratic path." In addition, it urged the international community "to demand for the immediate and unconditional release" of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior officials of the National League for Democracy (NLD).



Myanmar, Hong Kong, and Cambodia would prove to be the foremost political hot spots in the region for the rest of the year. Indeed, CALD would issue two more statements on Hong Kong in 2021. Its statement dated March 2 called for the immediate release of 47 pro-democracy leaders and activists who had been arrested in Hong Kong, and for the charges against them dropped. "CALD vigorously opposes the use of the National Security Law to further sow instability and division in Hong Kong," the statement said as well. "This alarming development is one of Beijing's continued efforts to dismantle the democracy movement and silence the opposition once and for all."



Exactly a month later, it would issue a joint statement with Liberal International in reaction to the April 1 conviction by a Hong Kong court of LI individual member and Prize for Freedom laureate Martin Lee and other pro-democracy leaders. In the April 2 joint statement, the LI bureau and CALD said that they recognized "this act of judicial brutality as a ruthless and calculated tipping point in China's barefaced annexation of the Special Administrative Region."

The 82-year-old Lee had been arrested for his supposed participation in what the court

described as "unauthorized assembly" in the peaceful pro-democracy protests of 2019. The conviction meant five years in jail. Said the CALD-LI statement: "Beijing needs to understand. They have crossed a line and we will not let this go."

MAR 2

Hong Kong, however, was not the only place in the region where democrats were getting convicted. In Cambodia, a Phnom Penh court on March 1 had convicted the top nine leaders of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) of "attempt to organize a coup d' état to overthrow the government." All defendants faced 20 to 25 years in prison. In its fifth statement for 2021, CALD called the verdict "clearly politically motivated" and "a wanton violation of human rights and the rule of law." The March 2 statement also had the Council calling on the Hun Sen government "to cease any forms of state-capture and unconditionally release all political detainees.... (and) to drop all politically-motivated charges against the opposition and freely allow those in exile to return to Cambodia to be part of the national reconciliation efforts."

MAR 19

In the meantime, Myanmar had descended into total chaos. On *March 19*, CALD stalwarts from five countries – Sam Rainsy of Cambodia, Fadli Zon of Indonesia, Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia, Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan of the Philippines, Charles Chong of Singapore, and Kasit Piromya of Thailand – released a joint statement calling for ASEAN to "adopt a new vision" to stop the escalating violence in Myanmar.

"We, the undersigned, demand our respective ASEAN governments to abandon the old doctrine of non-interference and pursue a new approach of constructive and critical engagement, with the option of imposing trade and economic sanctions on the Myanmar military junta," they wrote.

"All other ASEAN governments must unite and send an unequivocal message to the Myanmar military junta to immediately free all political prisoners, to restore the political situation in Myanmar to that prior to the 1st February 2021 coup and to respect the people's votes in the November 2020 general election," they said as well. "All those responsible for the killing of innocent people must also be prosecuted and brought to justice. Failing which, all other ASEAN governments must unite and suspend Myanmar's membership of ASEAN and thereafter impose targeted trade and economic sanctions against the military junta and their associates."

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This was followed up by another LI-CALD joint statement, issued on *May 13*. Noting the increasing reports of detention, torture, and killings of Myanmar citizens by the junta, LI and CALD said in the statement,

"The major world powers must now act in concert toward their shared interest for stability in Myanmar and to put an end to the grotesque violence. We call upon the ASEAN, with the support from the European Union and the United States. to immediately appoint and despatch a special envoy as set out in its statement of 24 April; engage with the parties to the conflict; work to release political prisoners; and recognize the National Unity Government. We further urge the EU and UN to back up ASEAN in realizing its 5-point consensus."

AUG 18

CALD's sole resolution for the year was on Myanmar as well. Dated August 18, the resolution implored the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) to recognize the delegates designated by the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) as "the sole and legitimate representatives of the Myanmar Parliament in AIPA's 42nd General Assembly. CALD pointed out that the CRPH "was formed by democratically elected members of parliament ousted by the coup d'etat."

DEC **24**

CALD knew, however, that the forthcoming turn of Cambodia as ASEAN chair in 2022 did not bode well for the people of Myanmar. In its last statement for the year, CALD noted that Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's actions and statements regarding Myanmar "severely undermine the credibility and legitimacy of ASEAN in the eyes of the Southeast Asian peoples and the international community."

"This would, without a doubt, affect negatively on the capacity of ASEAN to play a constructive role in the resolution of the Myanmar crisis," CALD said in the December 24 statement.

The Council then called on other ASEAN members and the rest of the international community to take action. For ASEAN, among its suggested steps were for the body to examine "how Hun Sen is dealing with the Myanmar crisis and see whether his actions and statements are in line with ASEAN's previous agreements on the matter," as well as for it to take "into consideration the fulfillment of the Five-Point Consensus as a prerequisite for any meaningful engagement with the Myanmar military junta."

For the rest of the international community, CALD suggested, among others, looking "at the possibility of holding parallel talks with ASEAN diasporas such as with the representatives of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) and Cambodian opposition in the United States," and examining "the possibility of having coordinated and targeted actions against the leadership of both Cambodia and Myanmar should they continue setting aside the Five-Point Consensus."

24

Such setbacks for democracy, however, were not the only sources of heartbreak for CALD in 2021. On June 24, former Philippine President and Liberal Party head Benigno 'Noynoy' C. Aquino III passed away. In the letter of condolence signed by CALD Women's Caucus Chairperson Jayanthi Balaguru, the CALD Executive Committee described Aquino as "a staunch supporter of the liberal and democratic values that CALD espouses" and that his administration had "promoted social justice" and helped lift millions of Filipinos out of poverty. It was also Aquino, the letter dated June 24 noted, who had paved the way to peace in the Philippine south, and his government that had brought China to court over the South China Sea disputes, "a decision widely credited for upholding international law amidst China's extensive maritime claims."

In separate letters of acknowledgment for their letters of condolence, CALD Chairperson and Liberal Party President Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan told Balaguru, former Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy, Singapore Democratic Party Chairperson Paul Tambyah, and LI President Hakima el Haite that it was comforting to know "that you are thinking of us as we grieve...."

Pangilinan said that the LP had been "regaled by stories" of how President Aquino had "stayed true" to his promise of promoting honest and effective governance and had "demanded the same from those he worked with."

"These stories," wrote Pangilinan, "give us hope and inspiration as we strive to defend democracy and our people's freedoms."

NOV 28

Months later, on November 28, Prince Norodom Ranariddh also passed away. In its letter dated November 30, CALD extended its deepest condolences to Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy and the people of Cambodia. The Council also acknowledged Ranarridh's role "in modern-day Cambodia when he won as Prime Minister in the U.N.-organized elections in 1993."

"Although unfortunate events took over Prince Ranarridh's government, his election was an important step in Cambodia's democratic revival," CALD said."We are saddened, however, that despite the efforts of human rights advocates and democracy fighters locally and internationally, Cambodia remains to be far from the country envisioned by the Paris Peace Agreement."



Democracy responds better to the pandemic

More than one year into the pandemic, much of the world were still searching for ways to deal with the health crisis efficiently and effectively. And so for about a couple of hours one day in April, CALD sat down with its friends across the seas to share experiences and compare what they had learned so far in dealing with COVID-19.

The online conference, which took place on April 28 in Latin America and April 29 in Asia, had the theme "Lessons Learned and Ways Forward: Latin America and Asia." Moderated by Mexican journalist Sergio Sarmiento, the event was spearheaded by Red Liberal de America Latina (RELIAL) and supported by CALD and FNF.

Through the discussions, a contrast between democratic and populist governments in terms of COVID-19 response was noted.

"The worst outcomes are seen in countries which have populist regimes," said former Mexican Health Secretary Julio Frenk. He said that this was because populist governments undervalue expertise, undermine science, and politicize behavior to sow division in society.

The other speakers in the online event echoed this observation.
According to Ching-Yi Lin, Taiwan's Ambassador at Large, her country's success in addressing the pandemic could be explained partly by the government's

emphasis on the transparency of information, which in turn resulted in effective communication and public cooperation in the government's pandemic response.

South Korea was another democratic country that had performed quite well in terms of containing the spread of the coronavirus. Dr. Taewook Huh of Gyeongsang National University, however, said that the country must do more in terms of addressing the economic dislocation caused by the pandemic. South Korea's self-employed, for one, were hit hardest by the crisis, and they constitute a quarter of the country's working population - one of the highest percentages among OECD nations.

STILL IN SEARCH FOR A GLOBAL STRATEGY

The evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has made most countries realize that no one is safe until everyone is safe. But as countries across the world continued to slog through the second year of the health crisis and its many consequences, there was still no global strategy in sight to address it.

"What the pandemic has done, clearly, is that it has emphasized the failure of multilateral institutions and arrangements to make an appropriate response at the global or international level," said Abhisit Vejjajiva, former Thai premier and former CALD Chairperson. "While everybody seems to recognize the fact that no country is safe unless everybody is made safe...,

there was never any attempt to distribute the vaccines in a way that would have the strongest and the most efficient impact on reducing the pandemic around the world."

This seeming failure of multilateralism was also emphasized by Florencio 'Butch' Abad, former Philippine Budget Secretary and also former CALD Chairperson. "We do need a new model of multilateralism as an international platform to restore global security using a global public health strategy with the vaccine as the decisive weapon," he argued.







From Uruguay, Vice Minister of Health José Luis Satdjian discussed the government's highly successful vaccination program, and how they would soon vaccinate at least 70 percent of the population, the minimum required to achieve herd immunity, according to experts. A "climate of tolerance and respect" accounts for this success, according to Satdjian, coupled with the refusal to use the pandemic for partisan political purposes.

"A healthy community of people and nations require democracy," said Philippine Senator and CALD Chairperson Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan, summarizing in a nutshell one of conference's key takeaways. "A living and life-giving democracy that is relevant to our people every day, a democracy that brings hope, a democracy that

empowers people to chart their own destinies and to tell their own stories."

"This relevant, hopeful and empowering democracy," he added, "is what our people need, and that is what we can all endeavor to provide in this unprecedented crisis."

In his closing remarks, meanwhile, Philippine MP and CALD Secretary General Francis 'Blue' Abaya emphasized the importance of "top-level political commitment to use science to tackle the pandemic decisively." Similarly, FNF Latin America's Regional Director Siggi Herzog pointed out that a smart response to the pandemic requires a trifecta of scientific

evidence,
expertise,
and transparent communication
— which, unsurprisingly enough,
are not among the strong points of
autocrats and populists.

The UN-backed COVAX, said Abad, can be a prototype of this new form of multilateralism that needs to be established to contain the pandemic as soon as possible.

Abhisit and Abad, together with Peifin Hsieh, International Affairs Deputy Director of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party, were the main speakers at the CALD Panel during the 2021 Asia Centre Conference held online on September 10. The panel, which had the theme "The Geopolitics of Vaccines: Implications for Democratic Renewal in Asia," was moderated by Rappler Philippines Editor at Large Marites Vitug.

Abad cited an International Monetary Fund (IMF) study's recommendations on how to end the COVID-19 crisis by 2022. The study suggests that this can be done if high-income countries or democracies can pull together US\$50

billion to: 1) vaccinate 60 percent of the population of all countries by the end of 2022; and 2) capacitate all countries in conducting widespread contact tracing and testing.

The problem, however, is that access to COVID-19 vaccines has been politicized to serve certain

geopolitical interests. This can be clearly seen in the case of Taiwan, which, according Hsieh, was blocked from sealing a vaccine deal due to China's last-minute intervention. Hsieh said that the vaccine donations from the United States and Japan saved Taiwan from the fallout of this halted deal. Commenting on the vaccine donations

of Washington and Tokyo, she noted: "These vaccines are not just the biological vaccines that fight the coronavirus. They are also political vaccines to stabilize a vibrant democracy from external and very hostile interference."

A melodious call to action

Filipinos like to say that music is in their DNA. And so with the 2022 national elections coming up, CALD, the Center for Liberalism & Democracy, and Mamayang Liberal, partnered with 13 youth and socio-civic organizations - - iMPACT Leadership; Tatsulok-Alyansa ng mga Mag-aaral sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino; Phoenix (LPU-Batangas student publication); DLSL CSO; Association of College of Arts and Sciences Students (ACASS); LPU Batangas; LAVOXA Group of Publications; BSU Main CAS SC; Rev UP; Political Science Society-PUP; UP Halcyon; CMLI Junior Council-Alumni Association; and Kilos Ko Youth - and organized "A Notes for Votes Online Concert: Call for Democracy." The event, livestreamed on Facebook, was held on September 17.

Medical doctor and poet Ralph Fonte opened the concert with a spoken-word performance from his base in Palawan, in southwestern Philippines. His poem, "Protokol sa Tyraniya (*Protocol for Tyranny*)," was a moving call to address disinformation.

Performing in Filipino, Fonte asked, "Paano pa makapagpapangap na bingi pagkatapos marinig ang panaghoy sa gabi (How can we pretend to be deaf after hearing the laments at night)?" – emphasizing the need for action against so-called "fake news." Main performer Johnoy
Danao meanwhile dedicated
his songs to the nation, and
echoed the call for democracy especially during a global
pandemic. Danao reminded
the youth to register to vote before
the deadline, September 30, 2021. He
stressed that the youth can be the guardians
of the nation. "We can be the guardians of our
country to combat fake news," he said in Filipino.
"The hope of the country rests on our shoulders.
Our future begins now, so let's start building it
together."

Danao later discussed the importance of the youth vote some more with popular local radio hosts DJ Rammy and DJ Shai Tisai. He also said that he wished the pandemic was over because he missed performing live. Sometimes, said Danao, he would realize in the middle of his online performances that he was home alone – and that this was difficult.

DJ Rammy then commented that the pandemic was an eye-opener to the importance of electing the right leaders, "Voting would make a difference because it would give the right leaders a platform to lead," he said.

DJ Shai shared that she registered to vote because she believed it was her civic duty. "I registered before I turned 18 because I wanted to make sure I get to vote when I am already allowed to," she said.



The concert ended with a solidarity message from the organizers urging the youth to take a stand and to answer the call of democracy by signing the Support the Responsible Voters Pledge campaign through this link: change.org/p/filipino-voters-responsible-voters-pledge

Spotlight on Myanmar and Cambodia

U.S. President Joe Biden would call the global crisis of democracy "the defining challenge of our time" at the Summit for Democracy, but a day before that meeting began, CALD and the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) already had experts and analysts looking at how to solve examples of severe democratic backsliding in Myanmar and Cambodia.

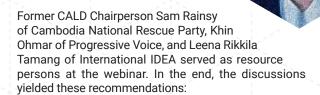
On December 8, the webinar "Myanmar and Cambodia's Democratic Recession: Global and Regional Implications" took place as part of a series of virtual forums organized by the Global Democracy Coalition. Moderated by Filipino broadcast journalist Veronica Pedrosa, the webinar was conceptualized by CALD and APHR based on the belief that strengthening democracy in Southeast Asia strengthens the case for democracy around the world. After all, the subregion could be considered as being in the frontlines of the democracy vs. autocracy debate.

Global Democracy Coalition is a multi-stakeholder coalition for democracy convened by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). It

> decided to hold its forum series on the sidelines of the

U.S.-initiated Summit for Democracy, which took place on December 9 and 10, to contribute to the global conversations on democracy and provide inputs to the bigger event. Indeed, the CALD-APHR webinar had the goal of proposing specific and concrete recommendations on what the

global democratic community can do to support the democratic movements in Myanmar and Cambodia.



We need coordinated solidarity with opposition movements in repressive contexts - including information and technology sharing, emergency funding, support in mobilizing recognition and media support.

To the international community: Do not be fooled by sham elections, or acknowledge authoritarian coups - - be they constitutional coups like in Cambodia, or military coups like in Myanmar - as fait accompli.

To full-fledged democracies: They need to practice what they preach and ensure that the benefits of democracy can be appreciated and felt by everyone.

Instead, recognize and support the democratic forces as legitimate actors, listen to the people affected by the authoritarian regimes. They do not deserve any less democracy than other parts of the world.





DEMOCRAT PARTY OF THAILAND

75 and Still Working Hard



The Democrat Party of Thailand just celebrated its 75th anniversary. It is the longest-standing political party in Thailand and one of the longest-enduring parties in Asia. Since its founding and up till now, the Democrat Party works in the best interests of the people of Thailand.

It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic is posing a serious threat to global food security and reminding us once again the importance of the agricultural sector. One of party's most outstanding achievements since it assumed office as part of the coalition government is the income-guarantee initiative for the country's farming population. In an effort to address the challenges that our farmers have to face and help improve their financial well-being, the Democrat Party pledged to guarantee a minimum income for farmers, targeting five key crops: rice, rubber, tapioca, oil palm, and maize.

Last year, H.E. Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Commerce, and Leader of Democrat Party, together with H.E. Mr. Chalermchai Srion, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, and DP Secretary General, announced that more than 3.6 million agricultural households received the income support during the first year of the initiative. The two ministers also said that they planned to continue to build on this success in the years to come.

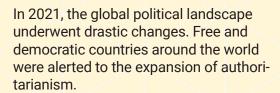
They also recently launched a new scheme called "(Ministry of) Agriculture produces, (Ministry of) Commerce markets." This scheme aims to strengthen the
country's agricultural sector, and
lead Thailand to become
the world's center of quality
food and agricultural products through
market-driven strategy and data consolidation.

With regard to the administration of vaccines, H.E. Dr. Satit Pitutecha, Deputy Minister of Public Health and DP Deputy Leader, has been overseeing the process and working his best to ensure that the targeted priority groups have been inoculated with the vaccine as soon as possible.

Then and now, the Democrat Party works to improve the well-being of our people and help the nation overcome the challenges all of us are facing.

DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSIVE PARTY

Resilient Taiwan, One with the World



Democracies worked to strengthen broadbased cooperation to respond to regional and global developments. The G7, NATO, EU, and QUAD have highlighted the importance of peace and security in the Taiwan Strait while expressing concern over whether China may unilaterally undermine the status quo of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Taiwan stands on democracy's first line of defense. On top of that, the more Taiwan achieves, the greater the pressure we face from China. Taiwanese people do not have the privilege of letting down their guard.

Amid the evolving, complex political landscape, Taiwan never gave up its effort to uphold its peoples' freedom, democracy, and consensus to connect with the world. We respond to regional and global developments by strengthening global engagements and multilateral partnerships. It is believed that we could work with like-minded allies to contribute to the international community. By doing our part to contribute to the peaceful development of the region, Taiwan successfully demonstrated itself as the Island of Resilience to the world.

In the future,
Taiwan will do
its utmost to gain the
support of the members
of the Comprehensive and
Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific
Partnership (CPTPP) for Taiwan's inclusion
in the trade bloc. We will also soon put
forward a plan to strengthen our ties with
Europe and promote deeper exchanges
between Taiwan and European countries.

Taiwan will continue to prioritize stable governance. We will uphold our sovereignty and values of freedom and democracy, defend our territorial sovereignty and national security, and work to ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. As Taiwan meets unprecedented challenges with courage amid the complex political landscape, we can live up to the ideal, a resilient Taiwan that stands with the world.



Liberal @ 75: Tuloy Lang!



In 2021, the Liberal Party of the Philippines celebrated its 75th Founding Anniversary amid a great and unprecedented global pandemic. The LP counts itself lucky to reach its diamond anniversary as a political party, having survived a history rife with challenges that still seem insurmountable even in hindsight. Seventy-five years after founding, LP still stands: Dealing with fearsome adversity, braving attacks from all fronts as it strives to hold the line, and every bit as grateful and resilient as the people it is honored to serve.

First chapter general assembly; more than 150 chapters newly formed and chartered

In August, at the party's first-ever Chapter General Assembly, members of the LP set their eyes on the coming 2022 National Elections. The assembly – held virtually due to strict lockdown measures and the threat of case surges – was dedicated to the presentation of regional reports, where chapters shared their own national and party situationers, as well as the LP's initial endorsement of its Senate slate. Among its Senatoriables are Party Leaders Sen. Leila de Lima — still wrongfully detained on trumped-up charges — and former Congressman Teddy Baguilat.

Pandemic response

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Philippines and its people have been subjected to the Duterte regime's outright neglect and incompetence in dealing with COVID-19 and its repercussions. The LP remains one of the loudest voices of dissent, and has consistently called out the administration's lack of leadership and accountability in the face of the nation's biggest health and economic crisis

in recent history. Party Chapters also mobilized in their localities, holding relief and donation drives as large portions of the population suffered from strict lockdown measures that hampered jobs and livelihood.

Party Chairperson Vice President Leni Robredo became the de facto leader of the nation's pandemic response, mobilizing volunteers for the Office of the Vice President in initiating several programs to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 especially among the country's poorest and most disadvantaged communities.

People's Campaign: A Crusade in Pink

The LP has found itself at the heart of an unconventional People's Campaign, as key Party leaders run for office in the pivotal May 2022 elections. In October, the country witnessed its first-ever "pinksplosion" as Filipinos rallied around Party Chairperson Leni Robredo and Party President Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan's candidacy for President and Vice President, respectively.

SINGAPORE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The Tightening Screws in Singapore

The ruling party in Singapore, the People's Action Party, which has been in power for more than five decades, passed the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act (FICA) in 2021. As the name suggests, FICA is aimed at preventing foreign interference in Singapore's internal politics. In and of itself, few disagree with the law's objective. After all, how a country is governed is ultimately the domain of its citizens and its citizens only.

What is worrisome is that given the autocratic nature of the PAP, the propensity for the government to abuse the law is apparent — especially when the statutes are crafted in broad terms that enable the government almost unlimited power to stymie its opponents, both in the political party and civil society spheres. The upshot is that democracy and its development is further arrested, leaving the ruling party perpetuating its own power.

For example, the law stipulates that the government can employ FICA on any entity and/or individual whose conduct, activities, and communications are "directed toward a political end in Singapore." Such language can be used against all and sundry in the country.

This results in the further curtailment of fundamental freedoms of Singaporeans, a development that will continue to erode the country's ability to strike out its social and economic potential – an element that is crucial to a place like Singapore, where competitiveness in the global arena remains paramount.



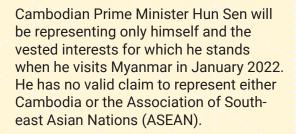
FICA allows
the Minister
for Home Affairs to
remove online content, ban
apps, or order the disclosure
of private communications that he/she
deems are being conducted in aid of or
on behalf of a "foreign principal," which
affects public confidence in the government. Worse, under this the Act, judicial
review is severely proscribed.

Such broad and sweeping discretion tempts political abuse. Of course, the PAP tries to reassure the public that there are safeguards to prevent executive overreach and the abuse of power. But past experience has taught Singaporeans that such pronouncements are ultimately meaningless. Case in point: In another recently enacted legislation, the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act or POFMA, the official line was that it would be used to counter deliberate propagation of online falsehoods and only on a "false statement of fact." Just before the 2020 general elections, however, the government imposed the legislation on the Singapore Democratic Party for a statement based on interpretation of employment statistics.

For decades, the SDP has been warning about the PAP's anti-democratic maneuvers. Singaporeans are just about to witness an even deeper descent into a new era of authoritarian rule.

CAMBODIA NATIONAL RESCUE PARTY

Hun Sen's Party of One



Hun Sen will become the first foreign leader to visit Myanmar since the coup. He has already welcomed Myanmar's military-appointed foreign minister in Cambodia, and has said it is possible for him to work with the junta, which seized power from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, 2021.

Cambodia holds the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2022, but Hun Sen has not been given authority by the association to speak with Myanmar on its behalf. He cannot claim to represent Cambodia because the single-party parliament he has engineered through banning the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) violates both an international treaty, the Paris Peace Agreements of 1991, and Cambodia's own constitution.

The existence of two Southeast Asian dictatorships that put their own survival at any cost before the well-being of their people risks destabilizing the whole region. Their shared contempt for the concept of a democratic mandate means that both regimes are effectively at war with their own people. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has highlighted that the military junta in Myanmar is blocking humanitarian aid from reaching millions

of people. HRW
has denounced
the junta 's actions
as amounting to a crime
against humanity. In Cambodia, supporters of the banned CNRP, as
well as other critics of the regime, have
been intimidated, imprisoned, killed, or
exiled.

Under the chairmanship of Brunei, Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing was excluded from the ASEAN summit in October. But Hun Sen says that the junta should have the right to attend. The planned visit is useful to Hun Sen because he hopes it will distract attention from his own terrible human-rights record in Cambodia. The international community must see his intervention for what it is: A dictator of nearly four decades in one country trying to legitimize and normalize a brutal military coup in another. Hun Sen will hope and expect the Myanmar military to repay the favor if needed to help suppress dissent in Cambodia.

Both police state regimes are too scared to ditch the machinery of elections altogether. Both plan to hold future elections with no real opposition to try to gain legitimacy. The international community should use coordinated sanctions targeted against the leaderships of both countries to isolate these illegitimate regimes until they return to the path of genuine elections.

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The Democrat Party

The Democrat Party, founded in 1946, is the longest standing party in Thailand, and is one of the longest standing in Southeast Asia as well. Since its inception over 70 years ago, the Democrat Party has held ideologies that oppose all forms of dictatorship, and is committed to the promotion of democracy for the people, and most importantly, by the people. The survival and existence of the DP has not come easily. The party had to go through political struggles throughout its history that has five periods:

1st Period (1946-1967) Party Building, Pro-Democracy and Anti-Dictatorship

2nd Period (1968-1979)Party Rehabilitation and Democracy Promotion

3rd Period (1979-1990)Policy Improvement and Participation in National Administration

4th Period (1991-2000) Leading Party of Opposition and Coalition Government

5th Period (2001-Present)

Combating Parliamentary Dictatorship and opposing the abuse of power and conflicts of interest in public sector

Introducing the People's Agenda

Throughout its history, the DP has always stood firm on the principles of democracy, freedom, transparency, accountability, and public participation. These principles, stipulated in the Party Guidelines, which guided the party in the last seven decades, and will continue to guide it for many years and generations to come.

Under the leadership and guidelines of the Executive Committee, DP aims to provide the Thai public with a viable responsible political alternative to the populist political environment that has been permeating the Thai atmosphere since 2001. Through various schemes and measures implemented since 2008, especially the People's Agenda, the Party has been able to steer national development toward a new direction. It uses the idea of "policy for the people and by the people", which highlights the point that "People must come first". The Party has assured the inclusiveness of its socio-economic

policy and measures. Programs such as 15 years of free education, income-guarantee initiative for farming population, debt relief and access to micro-credits, and social and health security scheme had been launched when they were in the government.

Leaders

Jurin LaksanawisitParty Leader

Chalermchai Sri-on Secretary General

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Democratic Progressive Party

The Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan was founded on 28 September 1986 by political, social, and humanrights activists, along with defence lawyers of political prisoners. It was then Martial Law, and Taiwan was under the authoritarian regime of Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), which had lost the Chinese Civil War.

Through social and political movements, and participation in elections, the founders of DPP risked their freedom and their lives to champion a democratic Taiwan. Indeed, DPP played an important role in the consolidation of Taiwan's democracy.

In 2000, DPP captured the presidency. From 2000 to 2008, DPP continued to push for freedom of expression, gender equality, social and transitional justice, judicial impartiality, and democracy. DPP also gained valuable experience and lessons as a young party during its eight years of governance.

In 2014, DPP won Taiwan's ninein – one elections – the largest local polls in Taiwan's democratic political history – by a landslide. DPP took 13 out of the 22 cities and counties, including four out of six special municipalities. The election was DPP's best poll showing yet since its founding. At that time, more than 70 percent of Taiwan's population resided in a DPP-governing city or county.

The year 2016 actually marked the 30th anniversary of the party's founding. Coincidentally, in January 2016, under the leadership of its Chairperson Dr. Tsai Ing-wen, the party won a majority in the Legislative Yuan, clinching 68 of the 113 seats. This was the first time in Taiwan's political history that the legislature experienced a political transition. Dr. Tsai, DPP's standard bearer in the elections, and her running mate Dr. Chen Chien-jen meanwhile garnered 6.89 million votes or 56.1 percent of the total. This meant Dr. Tsai would become Taiwan's first female president.

In 2017 DPP pushed through many reforms and progressive laws, including pension reform, a forward-looking infrastructure plan, transitional justice acts, and other important policies geared towards a better Taiwan.

In 2019 DPP helped pass the same-sex marriage bill.

In 2020 President Tsai Ing-wen resumed her position as the chairperson of the DPP. She has envisioned three goals for the Party to strive for: calling for actively recruiting members from all sectors of society, demanding

young engagement participating in the Party, and continuing DPP's momentum. The three innovative methods aim to maintain the Party's progressiveness and competitiveness.

During the 2020 Presidential Elections, President Tsai Ing-wen won by a landslide for her second term. It was marked as the most number of votes garnered by a presidential candidate in the history of Taiwan.

DPP plans to further deepen Taiwan's democracy and safeguard for the Taiwanese people. Internationally, DPP continues to promote and strengthen the principles of democracy, and advocate for human rights and good governance through close alliances with democratic countries around the world.

DPP is a founding member of CALD and member of Liberal International.

Leaders

Tsai Ing-wen Chairperson

Lin Hsi-yao Secretary General



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♠ LiberalPartyPhilippines

Liberal Party

The Liberal Party of the Philippines is a founding member of CALD. It is a full member of Liberal International. The LP has championed freedom, justice, and the dignity and rights of the individual for 75 years. At great cost to its stalwarts and members, it stood among the few voices of dissent during the dark days of the Marcos dictatorship, and at every turn in the country's recent history when democracy came under threat.

To this day, the LP upholds its legacy as the only major political party standing its ground against an increasingly authoritarian, populist regime. Its leaders and members have consistently adhered to the Party's thrusts:

- Protecting human rights, as it did in challenging the return of the death penalty and lowering the minimum age of criminal responsibility, and in calling for an end to murder, violence, and lawfare as the primary instrument of the government's anti-drug and anti-terrorism campaigns;
- Advocating for the welfare of workers and consumers; pushing back against anti-consumer,

anti-poor economic policies, and burdensome tax laws; and demanding a more strategic, more transparent, and more humane whole-of-nation approach to the COVID-19 pandemic;

 Defending democracy, press freedom, and the rule of law against attempts to undermine democratic institutions to consolidate power.

The LP forges onward by harnessing the energy of a massive volunteer base that was at the heart of its unconventional election campaign in the midterm elections of 2019. It builds on the promise of becoming a true people's party through opening memberships to the general, liberal democratic public and key sectors of society; organizing and mobilizing citizens in the grassroots; and declaring a policy direction geared towards inclusiveness, dignity, and empowerment.

Leaders

Benigno Aquino III + Chairman Emeritus

Leni Robredo Chairperson

Franklin Drilon Vice Chairperson

Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan President

Teddy Baguilat Vice President for Internal Affairs

Lorenzo Tanada III Vice President for External Affairs

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Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (PGRM) was founded on 24 March 1968 as an independent party. It won the general election the following year and ruled the Penang State for the next 40 years (1969 – 2008).

After successfully forming a state government in 1969 general elections, Gerakan was invited by Tun Abdul Razak, the second prime minister of Malaysia, to join the national ruling coalition, the Alliance Party, which formed the federal government.

In 1972, Gerakan joined the Alliance and inspired the formation of Barisan Nasional. On 23 June 2018, Gerakan left the coalition and became an independent political party.

In its 50 years of being in the Barisan Nasional, Gerakan was known as the conscience, or rather the opposition within the coalition. When Gerakan, led by Datuk Seri Mah Sew Keong, Gerakan, left the coalition in 2018, it did so because it could no longer the hegemony and arrogance of some members of the coalition who made unilateral decisions and disregarded the spirit of consensus and the need to abide by the constitution of Barisan Nasional.

Gerakan with its new generation of leadership led by Datuk Dr. Dominic Hoe Chai proceeded to carve a new identity and path to be the third political choice for the Malaysians — thus initiating a new third force in Malaysia's political landscape.

Leaders

Dominic Lau National President

Oh Tong Keong Deputy President

Mah Kah Keong Secretary General



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Singapore Democratic Party

The Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) was constituted in 1980. It believes in and is working towards restoring human, civil, and political rights in Singapore; cultivating a transparent and accountable political system based on free competition and equal opportunity for all; removing all policies and practices that discriminate against the less fortunate, women, and minorities, and cooperating with democratic parties and organizations in Asia to achieve peace and sustainable development in the region.

The SDP is widely recognized as the party in Singapore that is most adept in using the Internet to bypass the state-controlled media in the city state. It uses blogging, political videos, and social media to reach out to the people. It is the first opposition in Singapore to have a youth wing (Young Democrats).

The party is in the process of crafting a policy pertaining to the protection of the environment, its

latest in a series of policy papers it has drew up in the last several years.

The Central Executive Committee (CEC) governs the party with Prof. Paul Tambyah as Chairman and Dr. Chee Soon Juan as its secretary general.

Party leaders and members have had to endure a series of court cases, and even imprisonment, for exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and assembly in the recent past.

In the past two general elections, the party was seen to be the most "improved" opposition party, in terms of making the largest gain in the share of votes among opposition parties.

Leaders

Paul Tambyah Chairman

Chee Soon Juan Secretary General



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CNRParty

Cambodia National Rescue Party

Cambodian National Rescue Party is an electoral alliance between the two main democratic opposition parties, the Sam Rainsy Party and the Human Rights Party. It was founded in mid-2012 for the purpose of running together in the 2013 elections.

The party principles and values: are the rule of law and democracy, with social merit and harmonization, as well as mutual respect of interest. The party believes in the strengthening of freedom and human rights, institution of free and fair elections, and "rescue, serve, protect."

After the 2013 elections, it became the second largest party in Cambodia, accounting to 55 seats out of the 123 seats in parliament.

In the June 2017 commune elections, CNRP received 43.83 percent of the votes cast versus 50.76 percent of the ruling Cambodian People's Party. As CNRP's electoral momentum threatened the ruling party ahead of the 2018 parliamentary elections, court cases, widely perceived as politically motivated, were filed against its leaders, resulting in the continuing exile of Sam Rainsy and the imprisonment of Kem Sokha.

In November 2017, the CNRP was dissolved by Cambodia's high court with its 118 leaders banned from politics for 5 years. Despite this major setback, these former CNRP leaders are still exerting all their efforts, particularly by appealing to the international community, to bring Cambodia back to the democratic path.

Leaders

Sam Rainsy Acting President

Kem Sokha President

Mu Sochua Vice President



PDI PERJUANGAN

Contact

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Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle

The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI Perjuangan) came into existence as a result of the people's struggle against the efforts of the New Order regime to hold onto power. The year 1999 was a milestone for the party, which emerged as the winner of the general election and thus put an end to Suharto's regime. The sudden victory initiated a long and hard work of consolidation in the organization, from national level down to the community level.

The party's ideology is based on Pancasila (Five Principles) that was first articulated by Indonesian nationalist leader Sukarno in a speech he gave on 1 June 1945. It is derived from the old indigenous Indonesian philosophy and way of life. Pancasila reflects Indonesian nationalism, humanity and internationalism, democracy, social justice, and belief in one God.

Our founding father, Ir. Sukarno, once said, "Indonesian nationalism is a nationalism that grows and flourishes in the garden of internationalism." It is impossible to separate nationalism and internationalism; one needs the other. PDI Perjuangan thus understands the importance of international relations. We will continue to develop and strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation among countries.

As the vanguard force that raises Pancasila's banners high, PDI Perjuangan faces constant challenges on becoming the uniting power of Indonesia. PDI Perjuangan is always at the forefront in supporting social diversity, pluralism, and human rights in Indonesia. We believe that equality among citizens is the basic foundation of unity in diversity.

In the current Indonesian democracy, PDI Perjuangan plays its role to fulfill people and state sovereignty by strengthening democratic institutions, mechanisms, and political practices. PDI Perjuangan also aims for a self-sufficient economy in the globalized era to bring prosperity and social welfare to the people. A nationalist party, PDI Perjuangan maintains a political stance of pluralism, humanity, democracy, and social welfare.

After 10 years as an opposition party, PDI Perjuangan had its political comeback in 2014. It was during 2014 that PDI Perjuangan won around 19 percent of the votes in the parliamentary elections held that April, making it the biggest party in the legislature. Three months later, PDI Perjuangan's Joko Widodo won the presidential polls, clinching more than 53 percent of the votes; his rival Prabowo Subianto, by comparison, garnered just less than 47 percent.

In April 2015, PDI Perjuangan held its 4th Party Congress in Bali. Her Excellency Madame Megawati Soekarnoputri was re-elected as party General Chairperson. The congress also solidified the party's decision to become a major supporter and partner to the current government. In addition, the party

restructured the organization in 34 provinces, over 550 regencies/ cities, more than 6,000 subdistricts, and down to tens of thousands at the village/community level.

In April 2019, incumbent President Joko Widodo was the party's presidential candidate running for a second term, with Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate. Widodo was re-elected with 55.50% of the vote. PDI-P remains the largest party in the People's Representative Council, with 128 seats, and 418 in the Provincial People's Regional Representative Council.

PDI Perjuangan is not merely an electoral party, it is an ideological party. The biggest challenge that the party faces is to make Pancasila our living and working ideology, or something we practice in our daily life. For us victory is only a stepping stone towards our ultimate goal: a just and prosperous society, in a united yet diverse Indonesia.

Leaders

Megawati Soekarnoputri General Chairperson

Hasto Kristiyanto Secretary General



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Civil Will Green Party of Mongolia

The Civil Will Party (CWP) the precursor of the current Civil Will Green Party (CWGP) was established on March 9, 2000 when Oyun Sanjaasuren was elected as the Chairman and Z. Narmandakh as the Secretary General. The party won their first seat in the parliamentary election that same year. In 2005, the CWP strengthened its activities by establishing the Civil Will Youth Wing and soon after this the CWP also structured the party to have their own senior, women youth and student organizations. In January 2006, the special session of the Fourth National Convention announced that it would work as the opposition in the Parliament. In 2009, the party formed a coalition with the Democratic Party for the presidential election which resulted in victory. Elbegdorj Tsakhia was elected president of Mongolia.

The CWGP consists of the following organizations: the National Convention which is gathered once in every four years; the National Committee which consists of 200 members gathered annually; the Political Council with 36 members gathered on monthly; and the Monitoring Council consisting of 5 members. The main executive organization of the party is the Secretariat under the direct management of the Secretary General.

The municipal branches of the party operate at the grassroots level. There are 6 policy committees within the party that and Finance, Education, Science and Culture, Legal Activities, Foreign Relations and Security.

Leaders

Tserendorj GANKHUYAG Chairman

Lkh. GANKHUYAG Vice Chairman



Hijroatul Maghfiroh Secretary, International Relations

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Nation Awakening Party

The Nation Awakening Party or Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) was founded on 23 July 1998 in the Ciganjur, South Jakarta at the residence of KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesia's first democratically elected president. Wahid was also the head of the Council of Scholars, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, in which its members, the nahdliyyin, formed the party's base support. The five key leaders who were instrumental during the party inception were KH. Munasir Ali, KH Ilyas Ruchiyat, KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, KH. A. Musthofa Bisri and KH. Muhith Muzadi.

PKB's vision are: 1) to realize the desired ideals of independence of the Republic of Indonesia as stated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution; 2) to realize a just and prosperous society; and 3) to establish democratic, clean and honourable national politics.

The mission of party includes:

Religious Sector: To increase piety to the Almighty God by serving the society, nation and state;

Political Affairs: To maintain the Unitary of the Republic of Indonesia; To uphold the sovereignty of the people; To realize a clean, reliable, democratic government; To implement national development for the prosperity of the people; To carry out an independent and active foreign policy and develop

foreign cooperation to create a world of lasting peace that is also equitable, and prosperous;

Economic Sector: To uphold and to develop the economic life of people fairly and democratically;

Legal Affairs: To establish and develop a civilized state law that is able to protect all its citizens; To affirm human rights and social justice;

Social and Cultural Affairs:

To endeavor in building an advanced culture and modernity while maintaining the nation's identity for the sake of elevating the dignity of the nation;

Educational Sector: To strive to improve the quality of the human resources to be of noble character, independent, skilled, professional, and critical towards the surrounding social environment; To seek the establishment of a national education system that is welfare-oriented, affordable, and sustainable; and

Defense: To build awareness of the obligation of every citizen to participate in the national defense effort; To encourage the establishment of community of self-defense against treatment that creates a feeling of insecurity, from either individuals or certain institutions in society.

The PKB is part of the Coalition Indonesia Superb (KIH), a group of

political parties that supported the Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla election campaign in 2014 and the Jokowi Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin in 2019. Aside from PKB, the other members the coalition were the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI-P), Nation Democratic Party (Nasdem), while others including the United Development Party (PPP) and Party of the Fuctional Groups (Golkar).

The coalition has 388 seats in Parliament, with 128 seats from PDI P, 85 seats from Golkar, 58 seats from PKB, 39 seats from PPP, 59 seats from Nasdem and 19 seats from PPP.

Three PKB leaders have been appointed ministers in the Jokowi government. Ida Fauziyah is serving in the Ministry of Manpower, Agus Suparmanto in the Ministry of Trade, and Abdul Halim Iskandar in the Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged regions and Transmigration.

Leaders

A. Muhaimin Iskandar General Chairman

M. Hanif Dhakiri General Secretary

O B S E R V E R P A R T Y



Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan

Founded in 2017, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP) is a political party fostering democratic politics that value constitutionalism and deliberation. It is a party protecting human lives and wellbeing, and with the people as the leading actors. It aims to build a genuine grassroots democracy in the country. A politics which is rooted in the real voices of real people.

They aspire to connect with a diverse range of people living in the Japanese society and to chart a new vision for the future.

Leaders

EDANO Yukio Party Leader

HIRANO Hirofumi Executive Deputy Leader

Chairperson, Election Strategy Committee

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Abdurraham Wahid

Abdurrahman Wahid served as the fourth president of the world's most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia, from 1999-2001. He was an important figure among religious groups and political movements during the restoration of freedom and democratic rights after 32 years of the Suharto dictatorship.

More popularly known as "Gus Dur," he showed fellow Indonesians his lifetime commitment to public service and the promotion of liberal democracy and staunchly defended human rights, ethnic minorities, and Indonesia's secular tradition. Wahid headed the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation.

His position as a moral leader was transformed, however, when he and his supporters formed the National Awakening Party (PKB) following the dramatic fall of President Soeharto. He became the Chairman of its Advisory Council and its official presidential candidate in 1999. Though dominated by NU members, Wahid promoted PKB as a party that is non-sectarian and open to all members of society. Wahid passed away in 2009.

Emily Lau



Emily Wai-hing Lau was a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council from 1991 to 1997 and 1998 to 2016 and was the first woman directly elected to Legco. She was Chairperson of the Democratic Party from 2012 to 2016. Lau is a member of the Board of Directors, China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group. She received her B.A. degree in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Southern California in 1976 and her M. Sc. degree in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1982. She worked as a print and television journalist and university lecturer from 1976 to 1991. She was chairperson of the Hong Kong Journalists Association from 1989 to 1991. Throughout her political career, Lau is dedicated to fighting for democracy, human rights and the rule

of law. Her ambition is for a democratically elected government in Hong Kong and in China. Because of her pro-democracy work and her outspokenness, she has not been allowed to travel to Mainland China for over 20 years. Lau received Honorary Doctorate from the London School of Economics and Political Science on 23 July 2019, the Bruno Kreisky Human Rights Award from the Bruno Kreisky Foundation in Vienna in 1998, the Monismanien Prize on Freedom of Speech from the University of Uppsala in Sweden in 2003, and the Political Leader Award from The Hong Kong Women's Foundation in 2009.

HONORARY MEMBER



Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi is the State Counsellor of Myanmar in charge of the Foreign Ministry, Energy Ministry, and the Ministry of Education. She is currently serving as the Chairperson of the National League for Democracy (NLD). In 1991, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle against oppression and her fight to attain democracy and human rights in her country.

"The Lady" has spent most of her life committed to the people of Burma's struggle for justice, freedom, and

democracy. Much of the last two decades has seen her locked up, but in 2010, she was released from house arrest. In 2012, she contested a by-election and won a seat in parliament. In 2015, NLD won by landslide, paving the way for her appointment as Myanmar's State Counsellor. In 2021, a military coup d'etat deposed the civilian government. Suu Kyi, together with other civilian leaders, are now in detention.



Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom

Based on the principles of liberal democracy, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) offers political education in Germany and in over 60 of its offices worldwide. It is the creative innovation platform for the promotion of freedom.

Its work in Southeast & East Asia goes back to the late 1960s with its first office in Indonesia. Since then, FNF has grown in presence along with the projects that it has taken on in seven countries in the region. FNF advances individual freedom, open and digital society, and social market economy. It has

a successful network of leaders, institutes, and organizations that shares its liberal values.

Among which is CALD.

FNF has been in partnership with CALD since CALD's inception in 1993. They collaborate to produce publications, and organize conferences and meetings in the spirit of international dialogue designed to further policy dialogue and cooperation among likeminded Asian political parties.

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Liberal International

Liberal International (LI) is the world federation of over 100 liberal and progressive democratic political parties and affiliates. LI was founded in 1947 to strengthen liberal protection from totalitarianism and communism. It has since become the pre-eminent

network for promoting liberalism, individual freedom, human rights, the rule of law, tolerance, equality of opportunity, social justice, free trade and a market economy.

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National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices,

and institutions. NDI works with democrats in every region of the world to build political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and to promote citizen participation, openness, and accountability in government.

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Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party is the party for liberal democrat values in Europe. Together with its liberal member parties across the European continent the ALDE Party is translating the principle of freedom into politics, economics and all other areas of our societies. It provides an increasingly vital link between citizens and the EU institutions and is continuously growing in size and significance.

Formerly the European Liberal Democrat and Reform (ELDR) party, the ALDE Party consists of more than 70 member parties and thousands of individual members from countries across Europe. Liberal Democrats created their European political family in 1976 in view of the first European elections and in 1993 was established as a true transnational political party.

Leaders and key figures

Hans van Baalen was elected President of the European Liberal Democrats for a two-year mandate on 21 November 2015 at the Congress in Budapest, Hungary and was re-elected as President in 2017 and in 2019.

The ALDE Party brings together elected representatives, mayors, ministers, prime ministers, and members of the European Parliament from among its member parties. Together with the MEPs from the European Democratic Party and in partnership with *La Republique En Marche* form the Renew Europe group in the European Parliament, which is led by Dacian Cioloş MEP.

As of 1 February, six EU Prime Ministers belong to ALDE Party member parties:

- Andrej Babis, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic
- Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister of Luxembourg
- Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium
- Kaja Kallas, Prime Minister of Estonia
- Micheál Martin, Prime Minister of Ireland
- Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of The Netherlands

As of 1 December, six European Commissioners represent liberal democrats:

- Margarethe Vestager, Executive Vice President, Commissioner for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age
- Věra Jourová, Vice President, Commissioner for Values and Transparency
- Didier Reynders, Commissioner for Justice
- Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management
- Kadri Simson, Commissioner for Energy
- Thierry Breton, Commissioner for the Internal Market

Mission Statement

In 60 years of European integration, the European Union has served us well in achieving peace, stability and prosperity. The EU has promoted and extended to half a billion people the four freedoms: the free movement of people, services, capital and goods across borders. We want the Union to play a key leadership role in tackling today's and tomorrow's global challenges.

We strengthen the Liberal Democrat movement in the EU and throughout Europe;

We assist Liberal Democrat politicians across Europe to become better acquainted and to define a common political vision;

We draw up and adopt a common manifesto for the European Parliament elections.

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Renew Europe

Let's Renew Europe together

There has never been a larger centrist group in the European Parliament. By ending the dominance of the Conservatives and the Socialists, Europeans have given us a strong mandate to change Europe for the better.

We will invest in a sustainable continent. We do not have a Planet B, so we must make sure that we preserve the one we have for future generations. The Paris climate agreement of 2015 set out the roadmap, now it is time to deliver

on the promises made and even go beyond them.

At a time when the rule of law and democracy are under threat in parts of Europe, our Group will stand up for the people who suffer from the illiberal and nationalistic tendencies that we see returning in too many countries.

We thrive for a more prosperous Europe to the benefit of all Europeans. By investing in the talents of our citizens and unlocking the potential of Europe's internal market. We strongly believe that economic growth, environmental sustainability, fair competition and responsibility go hand in hand.

Our mission is to Renew Europe. Because Europe is our future and is well worth fighting for!

Contact

reneweuropegroup.eu

reneweurope

renew europe.

Taiwan Foundation for Democracy



Taiwan's peaceful transition to democracy is not only a historical accomplishment for its 23 million people, but a landmark in the worldwide spread of democracy. Only after years of struggle and effort could this transformation take place. We must never forget this history, for it shapes the cornerstone of our continued commitment to the principles of democracy and human rights.

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) was established with an inter-related, two-tracked mission in mind. Domestically, the TFD strives to play a positive role in consolidating Taiwan's democracy and fortifying its commitment to human rights; internationally, the Foundation hopes to become a strong link in the global democratic network, joining forces with related organizations around the world. Through the years, Taiwan has received valuable long-term assistance and stalwart support from the international community,

and it is now time to repay that community for all of its efforts.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy project in 2002. After much research and careful evaluation, the Ministry integrated the required resources from many sectors of society. In January 2003, the Ministry obtained the support of all political parties to pass the budget for the Foundation in the legislature. The TFD formally came into being on 17 June 2003, with its first meeting of the Board of Trustees and Supervisory Board. At that meeting, Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng was elected its first chairman. According to its by-laws, the TFD is governed by a total of 15 trustees and five supervisors, representing political parties, the government, academia, nongovernmental organizations, and the business sector.

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Africa Liberal Network





Developed from what was originally called the Organisation of African Liberal Parties, the network was established during an initial meeting of political parties in Mombasa, July 2001, and was later launched formally in Johannesburg, June 2003. At the Johannesburg, June 2003 meeting, one of our cornerstone commitments, the Johannesburg Declaration was adopted, pledging like-minded political parties, organisations, networks, thinktanks and individuals to the core principles of liberal democracy.

The network's mission is to support and empower political parties, organisations, networks, think-tanks and individuals, to grow their support, to increase their influence on politics and to implement policies of good governance when in government.

The current active programme of the network is the Women Empowerment Programme. It is an an annual development programme for women politicians from ALN member parties. We aim to develop their knowledge and skills to win candidate nominations, upcoming elections, and internal party leadership positions. The programme also aims to dismantle barriers to women's political participation and selection as candidates.

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Liberal Network for Latin America



RELIAL (Red Liberal de América Latina), the Liberal Network of Latin America, is a Latin America-wide network of currently 41 civil society organizations, political parties, think tanks, and research-institutes. RELIAL is forming the institutional frame for leaders and opinion makers, academics, intellectuals, business people, and personalities

from the region who share and profess the ideas of individual freedom, limited government, the market economy, the rule of law, and a free democratic system in the continent.

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The Council for Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) was inaugurated in Bangkok in 1993, with the support of then Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai and South Korea's Kim Dae-Jung. CALD, which offers a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation, is the only regional alliance of liberal and democratic political parties in Asia.

CALD was formed out of the recognition of leaders of like-minded political parties in Asia of the need for a dynamic forum promoting discussion and exchange of ideas regarding trends and challenges affecting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in the region. The chair parties of CALD since its inception to the present have been the Democrat Party of Thailand or DP (1993 – 1995, 2002 – 2004, 2016-2018), the Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan or DPP (1995-1997, 2004-2005, 2018-2020), the Liberal Party of the Philippines or LP (1997-1999, 2005-2007, 2020 to present), the Singapore Democratic Party or SDP (2007-2010), the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka or LPSL (1999-2000, 2010-2012), the Sam Rainsy Party/Cambodia National Rescue Party (2000-2002, 2012-2014), and the Civil Green Party of Mongolia (2014-2016).

The other members of CALD are the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (PGRM), the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and the Nation Awakening Party (PKB) of Indonesia, while the Hong Kong legislator Emily Lau is an individual member. In 2010, CALD bestowed honorary individual membership to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar. The Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) of Japan is an observer party.

Through CALD, political parties, groups, and individuals have a continuing discussion on the developments occurring in the various countries of the region. The aim is to assess the possibilities for liberal solutions to problems facing Asian democracies.

Accordingly, CALD organizes network meetings including those with its partners (Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Liberal International, Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Renew Europe, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs), international conferences on vital issues affecting the region, and regular workshops on communication, political management, and women in politics. It also sends missions for various advocacies, sponsors internship programs in its secretariat, as well as maintains a website, a social-network group account, and a weekly electronic newsletter.



