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**Source: Asia-Pacific Liberal Women Association**

**International Network of Liberal Women launches Asia-Pacific Chapter in Taipei**

The International Network of Liberal Women (INLW) opened its Asia-Pacific Chapter, the Asia-Pacific Liberal Women Association (APLWA), at the Howard Plaza Hotel in Taipei on the afternoon of October 24, 2020. The launch attracted an audience of nearly 200 people



interested in human rights and women's issues. Speakers at the inaugural board meeting included association president Maysing Yang and former Vice President Annette Lu, while incumbent Vice President Lai Ching-te addressed the celebratory evening gala. In addition, heavyweight friends from overseas such as Hans van Baalen, president of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party and Liberal International president of honor, former INLW president Margaret de Vos Van Steenwijk, and INLW North Africa Chapter founder Ms Khadija Oum Bachair El Morabit sent congratulatory

video messages to join the celebration of the opening of the INLW Asia-Pacific Chapter.

The roots of the APLWA go back to July 2018, when Liberal International president Dr. Juli Minoves-Triquell and then INLW president Margaret de Vos Van Steenwijk visited Taiwan to sign a joint "Vision Statement on the Declaration to Establish an INLW Asia-Pacific Chapter" with then INLW vice-president Maysing Yang, which formerly launched preparations for the APLWA. After two years of



work, a preparatory committee was formed in May of this year 2020), and started making relevant plans. As the INLW Asia-Pacific Chapter, in addition to fulfilling the headquarters' mission and vision, APLWA will "elevate women's right to make decisions and voice their opinions on the direction of national development", "improve civic competence", "monitor international human rights issues", "encourage universal participation in promotion of gender equality", and





other goals to accelerate promotion of overall social progress. Marked out by its philosophy to “think global, act local”, the APLWA will encourage youth and men to join its ranks, and build on the foundations of homegrown gender equality and democracy to increase international advocacy connections.

In her remarks to the APLWA’s inaugural general meeting, Annette Lu, former Taiwanese Vice President and pioneer of Taiwan’s women’s movement, said, “The 21st century is the women’s century, and the Asia-Pacific century,” adding that she supported the APLWA’s promotion of gender equality and women’s participation in politics and policy-making, and looked forward to seeing the association work more closely with INLW to promote gender equality, liberal democracy and peace, and expand opportunities for cooperation between Taiwan and Asia-Pacific. At the inaugural general meeting, 15 directors, three supervising directors, five standing directors and one standing supervising director were elected to the



board of directors. Former ambassador without portfolio for democracy and human rights Maysing Yang was elected as the first chairperson.

At the celebratory gala dinner, Yang gave special thanks to people working for Taiwan’s women’s organizations for their years of hard work and persistent effort to make Taiwan a more equal society. “The APLWA has international resources. After its launch, we will encourage more partners, regardless of nationality, gender, age, or field of expertise, to work together with us, to strongly emphasize that Taiwan is ready to cooperate more substantially to together improve Asia-Pacific women’s rights to political participation.”



Vice President Lai Ching-te signed a “He for She” declaration in support of the UN campaign to involve men in the women’s rights movement. “The results of the development of gender equality in Taiwan comes from the efforts of





women's organizations and many others." Lai said, "Today nearly 40% of the Legislative Yuan members are women, and we have a comprehensive framework of gender equality legislation" Since INLW is a global organization with consultative status at the United Nations, establishing its Asia-Pacific chapter in Taiwan was an affirmation of Taiwan's democratic development, and a milestone in recognition of the nation's ability to lead democratic development in the region, Lai added.



Speaking in a video message from the Hague, Margaret Van Steenwijk said the purpose, emphasis and tasks set for the new chapter shows the *raison d'être* for the men and women members to work together to achieve the association's goals. In his video message, Hans van Baalen said he looked forward to the chapter becoming part of the liberal family, and congratulated Taiwan for controlling COVID-19 while holding to the principles of human rights and the rule of law. "You are a great nation" said Baalen.

Singers Welly Yang and Dina Morishita delighted the audience at the gala dinner with renditions of Taiwanese and Western songs. As well as being Maysing Yang's son and daughter-in-law, the couple are internationally acclaimed artists, who have performed leading roles in numerous Broadway productions.

Other guests at the inaugural meeting and celebratory gala dinner included Executive Yuan secretary general Li Meng-yen, Beans Talk founder Chen Shih-meng, former grand justice Hsu Yu-hsiu, former AIT director Bill Stanton, Formosan Republican Association chairperson Dr. Tommy Lin, Taiwan Industrial Technology Association chairperson Lin Chih-Lung, Academia-Industry Consortium For Southern Taiwan Science Park standing director Chen Li-Fen, Taiwan People News president Dr. Chen Yung-hsing, Dr. Chen



Wen-chen Memorial foundation standing director Chen Bao-Yue, and others.

