

Speech on “How does Parliament empower women in Singapore?” by Ms Joan PEREIRA, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Singapore (Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituency) at the General Debate of the 148th IPU Assembly on “Parliamentary Diplomacy: Building Bridges for Peace and Understanding” in Geneva, Switzerland 23 – 27 March 2024

Distinguished Guests Ladies & Gentlemen

1. My name is Joan Pereira. I am a Member of the Parliament of Singapore.
2. In our current Parliament, 30% of our Parliamentarians are women, across the different political parties and nominated MPs.
3. As female parliamentarians, we play an important role in understanding and continuing to articulate the needs and aspirations of women in Singapore, and ensuring that our laws and policies evolve to support and empower them.
4. The United Nations Human Development Reports ranked Singapore 8th out of 166 countries for having one of the lowest Gender Inequality Index (GII) values in 2022.
5. We are proud of this ranking as a testament to our women’s progress and achievements in areas such as educational attainment, employment, empowerment, and health.
6. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. Our Parliament regularly and frequently reviews and debates on areas for improvement.
7. For example, in early 2022, our Parliament debated on and endorsed the White Paper on Singapore Women’s Development.
8. This was a significant, whole-of-nation plan of action to collectively advance Singapore women's development to build a fairer and more inclusive society, where women and men partnering each other as equals can pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest.
9. The White Paper included 25 action plans in five key areas: equal opportunities in the workplace, recognition and support for caregivers, protection against violence and harm, other support measures for women and mindset shifts.
10. Another example would be the Workplace Fairness Legislation slated for passage in Parliament in the second half of this year. This legislation will strengthen fair practices at workplaces, including the prohibition of specified forms of discrimination based on sex, marital and pregnancy status. Fellow parliamentarians around the world have led the way in fighting for similar legislation in their countries, and we have studied these models carefully to consider aspects that would work for Singapore.
11. The Parliament of Singapore is committed to the advancement of women as integral and equal members of our society on the principle of meritocracy. We also look forward to learning from and sharing with fellow parliamentarians globally as the world moves forward in achieving our commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals to create a fairer world for all.
12. Thank you.