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ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS (SDG5) WITH A FOCUS ON RAISING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AS PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS

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Empowering ASEAN's Future: Investing in Skills
for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development

1. Introduction



I shall focus on gender equality, which is the 5th SDG among the 17 SDGs the United Nations announce in 2016 – segregation and discrimination. It is socially unhealthy to see low women's participation as parliamentary members.



The share of women managers in ASEAN rose only 2% points in 20 years (from 39% in 2000 to 41% in 2020), while the share in middle and senior management stands at a much lower 26%.



In political governance, women hold 22% of parliament seats in 2022, but women ministers are often relegated to leading committees on gender equality and women's affairs.



Even though women make up 67% of health-care workers, the front-line responders to the pandemic, only 11% of chief executive officers in the region's biggest hospitals are women, and ASEAN's ministers of health are all men, except for Viet Nam's.



Women led only 6% of environment and related ministries in 2020. Further opportunities to engage in environmental decision-making could enable them to promote environmental conservation, including indigenous women, who are typically holders of traditional ecological knowledge.



This presentation shall focus on the low participation of women as MPs in ASEAN

2. Trends in Women MP Shares

While women's participation as parliamentary members have tended to rise over time, the shares are still too low.

The highest shares of women MPs in parliament in 2024 were in Rwanda (63.8%), Cuba (55.7%), Nicaragua (53.9%), Mexico (50.2), Andorra (50.0%), and UAE (50.0%). In contrast to these countries, the shares among the ASEAN members are dismally low.

As shown in Figure 1, women MPs fell below 30.0% in 2022 among the ASEAN countries with Vietnam showing the highest participation followed by Singapore at 29.0%.

Malaysia and Myanmar showed the lowest shares at 15.0% in 2021.

Malaysia had a share of 13.5% in 2022, which fell from 15% in 2021 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments. Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union

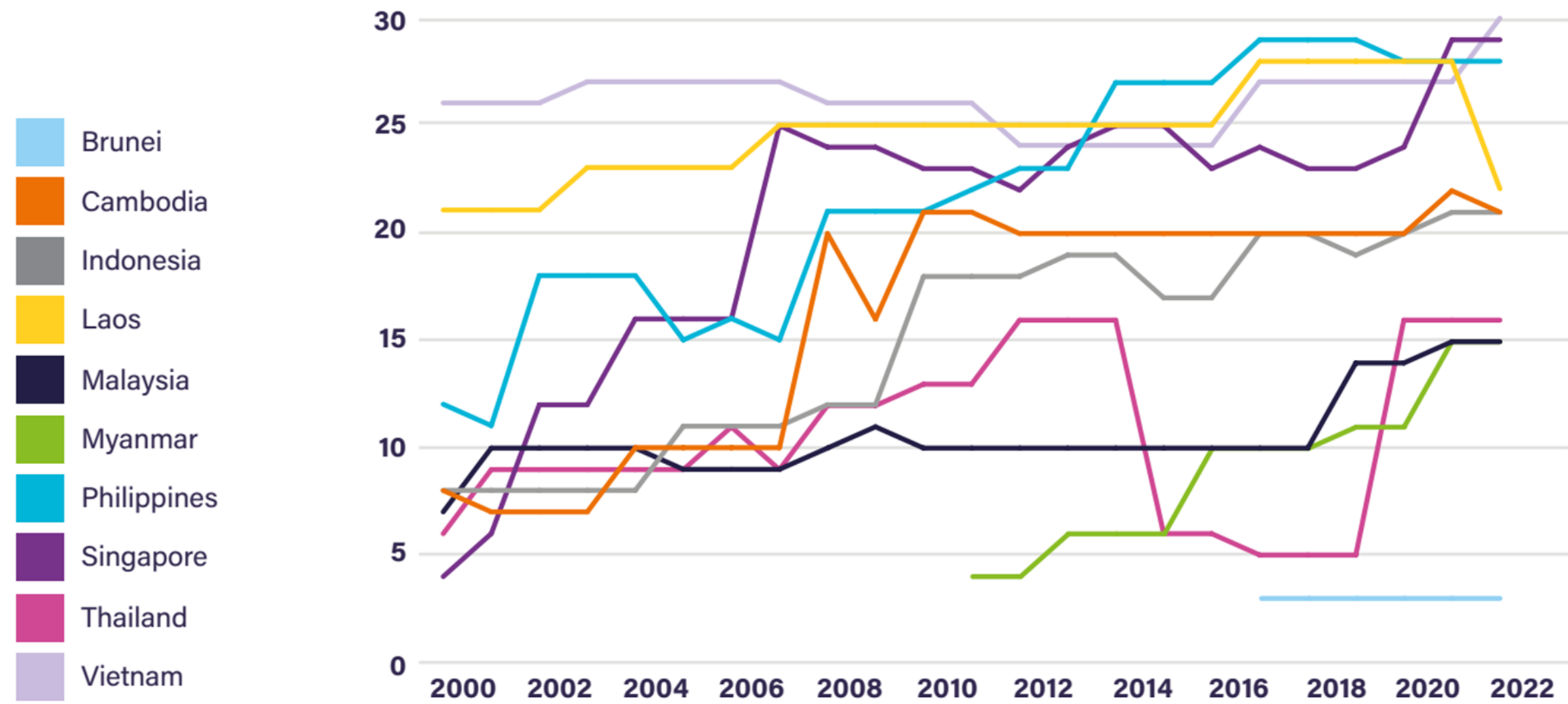
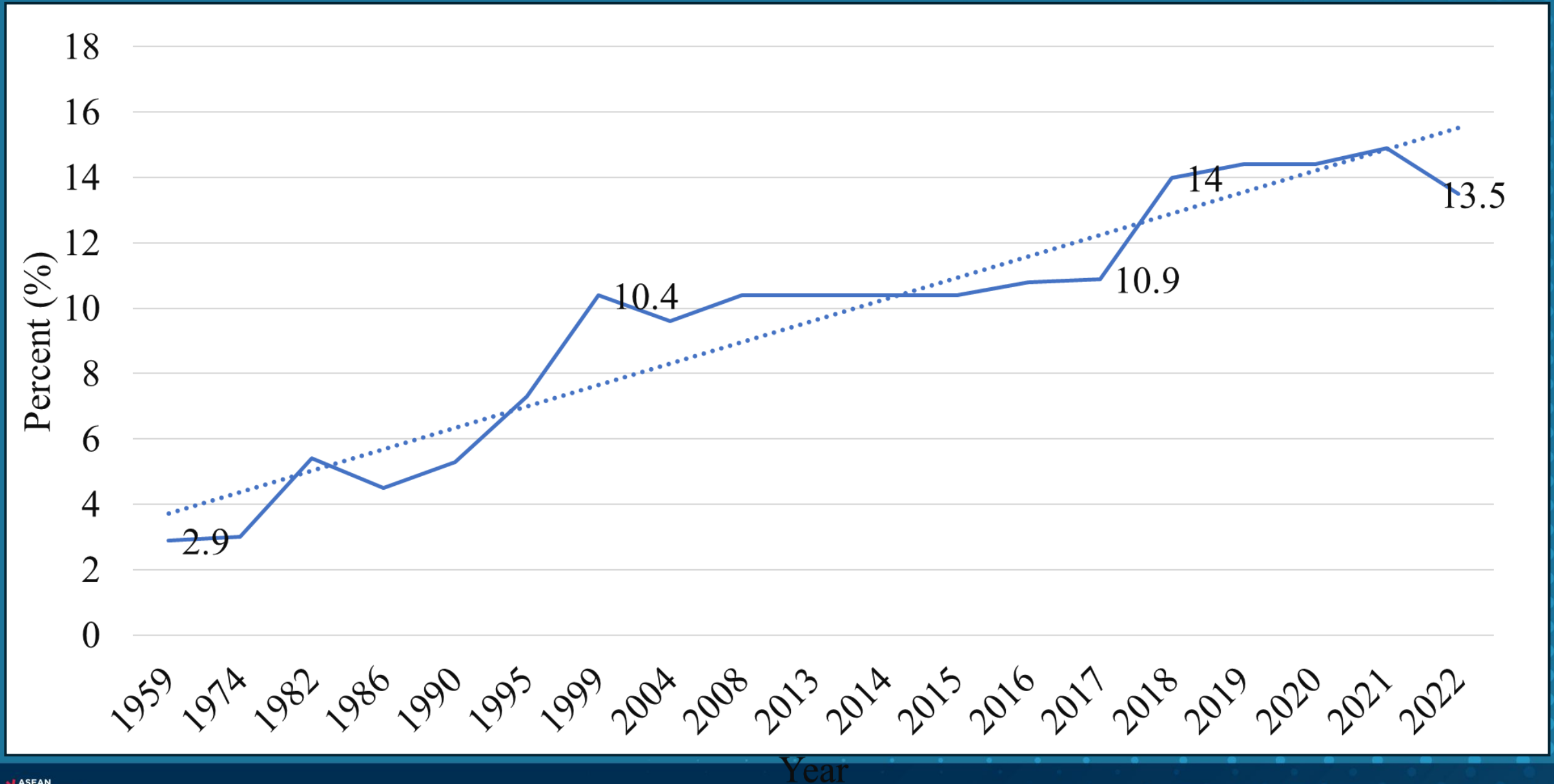


Figure 2: Share of Women MPs, Malaysia, 1959-2022



3. Possible Ways of Raising Women's Participation as MPs

- While statistical incidence should not be the basis of how women's participation in politics should be measured and assessed. There should be efforts to establish gender equality here.
- In some countries, quotas are established to raise women's participation, such as in Taiwan.
- Cultural practices should improve to recognize women as equals with men.
- There should be awareness creation and empowerment programmes right from prime school education

3. Possible Ways of Raising Women's Participation as MPs

- Female organizations, including non-governmental organizations, should play an increasing role to support gender equality pursuits, which should extend into all critical areas, including parliamentary representations.
- It is not enough to raise the share of women MPs in parliament but it also equally important to increase their voice in critical developmental roles.
- It is critical to raise the shares of women in high rung occupations and jobs, as well as in high technology coordinators roles, such as in artificial intelligence-driven roles.

Thank You

