

## UNDP Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN (“JIN ASEAN”)

### Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference

5-6 October 2023 Bangkok

#### SESSION OUTLINE

### Session 2: Advancing Gender Equality in Courts: Key Outcomes and Recommendations from the Gender Working Group

11:00-12.00 Bangkok time, 5 October 2023

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#### Background

Goal 16 of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development focuses on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and includes targets to ensure effective, accountable and transparent institutions along with access to justice for all. Further, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) binds States to take measures to strengthen integrity and prevent corruption among members of the judiciary<sup>1</sup>.

The judiciaries in ASEAN have a great responsibility in driving progress towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals in the region. Judicial integrity and court excellence are a means to ensure that all citizens have equal access to transparent and effective justice. A strong and independent judiciary catalyses sustainable growth and lifts people out of poverty, contributing to fairer, just and peaceful societies.

Aligned with these global goals, and with the support of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), U.S. Department of State, the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub convened the inception meeting of the [Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN](#), *a Network for Judges by Judges*, in 2018. The initiative was designed to support countries in pursuing judicial reforms, focusing particularly on transparency, accountability, integrity, accessibility and court excellence. This group aims to strengthen a forum for networking, peer-to-peer exchange, and collaboration among ASEAN judges interested in exchanging knowledge and seeking solutions related to court excellence.

In 2019, the Supreme Court of Indonesia and UNDP hosted the Second Network Meeting, “[The Path towards judicial excellence](#)”, where the [Judicial Integrity Self-assessment Checklist](#) developed by UNDP in consultation with the International Consortium for Court Excellence (ICCE), was presented as a tool for courts to readily identify measures for improving judicial integrity.

In 2021-2023, JIN ASEAN supported the implementation of country-specific initiatives in [Indonesia](#), [Thailand](#), [Lao PDR](#) and [Vietnam](#), gathered judiciaries for online and in-person [events](#), and published three research projects: [Gender and Judicial Excellence](#), [Emerging Technologies and Judicial Integrity](#) and [Empowering Judiciaries to Bring ROLHR Leadership to Decisions about Court Technology](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Article 11 of the UNCAC: Bearing in mind the independence of the judiciary and its crucial role in combating corruption, each State Party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system and without prejudice to judicial independence, take measures to strengthen integrity and to prevent opportunities for corruption among members of the judiciary. Such measures may include rules with respect to the conduct of members of the judiciary.

## Objectives of the event

The event aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and lessons learned among judges and legal professionals to enhance judicial excellence and integrity.
- Share the results of the regional and country-led efforts to improve court performance, enhance transparency, integrity and accountability and achieve internationally accepted standards of judicial excellence.
- Discuss the benefits of the International Framework for Court Excellence and particularly the e-version of the Integrity Checklist as a tool for guiding judicial reform
- Reflect on how innovation and technologies can be instrumental in improving court performance, including access to justice, transparency and accountability of the courts.
- Present the results of the regional survey on judicial integrity and independence.
- Discuss future priorities for the Network and ways to ensure its impact and sustainability.
- Strengthen regional cooperation and collaboration among judiciaries and legal institutions for a more cohesive and effective response to regional and global challenges.

## Session Description

The values set out in the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct - independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality and competence and diligence - all have gender implications.

To advance gender equality and judicial excellence, and in response to research and surveying of judges in Asia on gendered threats to judicial excellence (available here), the Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN established the Gender Working Group. The Working Group is a small group of judges who are knowledgeable about gender issues or judicial experiences related to gender in the Asia Pacific region and who are interested in advocating for improved education and practices within judiciaries.

Over the course of 2023, judges from nine countries have come together to share experiences and identify priorities for addressing gender equality both in the courtroom and within judiciaries. The Gender Working Group has focused on tools for judiciaries to support judges and build capacity, including a Gender Audit, a Self-Study Reading list and a set of model policies for adaptation and adoption by judicial leaders with the goal to develop peer-to-peer leadership and support for judiciaries and judges to take action on gender issues in the ASEAN judiciaries.

The Gender Working Group focuses on activities that can be implemented or promoted by JIN ASEAN, specifically:

- Identifying common barriers to gender equality
- Identifying strategies of best practices for peer-to-peer support of judges
- Strategies for supporting judges facing gendered threats or barriers to professional advancement
- Ideas for educational events on gender equality
- Strategies for formal support of gender equality within judiciaries and national contexts

## Session Objectives

The key objectives of this session are to:

- Discuss common gender equality issues from the perspective of ASEAN judges
- Introduce key gender equality issues
- Share two new tools for judicial leadership and peer support:
  - Gender Audit
  - Self-Study Reading List

## Format

### Question 1

**How can judiciaries and judicial leaders advance gender equality?**

### Question 2

**How does the commitment to judicial integrity require action on gender equality?**

### Question 3

**What can individual judges do in the courtroom and with their colleagues to advance gender equality?**

### Question 4

**Discuss common gender equality issues from the perspective of ASEAN judges**

### Question 5

**Introduce key gender equality issues**

### Question 6

**Share two new tools for judicial leadership and peer support: Gender Audit and Self-Study Reading List**

## Speakers and Panellists

- Justice Maria Filomena D. Singh, Supreme Court of the Philippines
- Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla, Supreme Court of Nepal
- Judge Nicola Mathers, District Court, New Zealand; IAWJ (virtually)
- Ms. Sarah McCoubrey, JIN ASEAN Judicial Integrity Consultant (virtually)

Moderator: Ms. Tshering Choden, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub

## Detail Agenda

11:00 – 12:00	<b>Session 2: Advancing Gender Equality in Courts: Key Outcomes and Recommendations from the Gender Working Group</b>
	11:00 – 11:05 Introduction to the JIN ASEAN Gender Working Group Sarah McCoubrey (virtually)
	11:05 – 11:20 Judicial Integrity and Gender Equality – the case for judicial leadership Nicola Mathers
	11:20 – 11:30 Judges supporting judges through peer leadership, self-study and professional encouragement – Sapana Malla
	11:30 – 11:55 Moderated Discussion on Key Questions
	11:55 – 12:00 Gender Working group Tools – Sarah McCoubrey (virtually)

## Speakers Profiles



**Justice Maria Filomena D. Singh** is the Associate Justice at the Supreme Court of the Philippines. She holds a Juris Doctor degree from the Ateneo de Manila University (Second Honors distinction) and a master's degree from the American University in the USA. She practiced law for 10 years before joining the Judiciary in 2002 as the Presiding Judge of the Metropolitan Trial Court of Quezon City. Justice Singh is a highly accomplished jurist who served in all levels of the judicial hierarchy during her last two decades' career. Currently, Justice Singh is the Co-Chairperson of the Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary, and the Planning Committee of Chapter 13.2 of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. She also authored a number of books and articles.



**Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla**, formerly a human rights lawyer, now serves as Judge on Nepal's Supreme Court. She championed women's and marginalized groups' rights, instrumental in legislation for gender property equality, criminalizing marital rape and domestic violence, and ensuring access to confidential justice. As a Public Interest Lawyer, she litigated numerous landmark cases, from environmental issues to gender justice, before Nepal's Supreme Court. Recognized with the Senior Advocate title in 2012, she also served as an independent expert on the UN Committee Against Torture in 2014. Appointed a Supreme Court Judge in 2016, she currently presides as President of the SAARC Law Nepal Chapter. She holds a bachelor's in law from Nepal Law Campus Tribhuvan University, a Master in Comparative Law from Delhi

University, India, and in Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School of Government, USA.



**Judge Nicola Mathers**, graduated from Canterbury University, practised in Wellington and later established the first-ever all-women law firm there in 1989. She held the position of the President of the Wellington District Law Society and Vice-President of the New Zealand Law Society. In 2000, Judge Mathers was appointed to the esteemed position of District Court Judge, a role in which she has presided over numerous criminal jury trials. Her dedication to the legal profession has earned her recognition on an international scale. Notably, in 2020, she was appointed as one of the two Regional Directors for the Asia-Pacific region within the International Association of Women Judges—a role she continues to hold after being reappointed in 2023.



**Ms. Sarah McCoubrey**, founder of CALIBRATE, specialises in e-justice, rule of law, gender equality, and justice transformation, collaborating with UN agencies, governments, courts, and civil society to address access to justice challenges globally. With a background in Women's Studies, Law, and Education, she brings a wealth of expertise. She practiced law in Toronto, followed by 10 years as the Executive Director of the Ontario Justice Education Network. Her development work, focused on judicial excellence and gender equality, involves partnerships with UNWOMEN, UNDO, IDLO, and UNCIEF, leading projects worldwide to strengthen justice systems. Notably, in 2021-22, Sarah authored the UNDP's paper on *Digital Transformation: E-Justice to close the Justice Gap* and Toolkit for Country Offices for the UNDP's Justice Futures CoLab.



**Ms. Tshering Choden** is the Regional Gender Specialist of UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, playing a pivotal role in advancing gender equality initiatives in the region. She collaborates extensively with UNDP's regional programming and projects, focusing on strategic design and implementation of regional gender equality intervention. Ms. Tshering has significant experience in the public, private sector, CSOs and across various agencies in the United Nations system. Her expertise in gender equality and women's empowerment is complemented by adeptness in mainstreaming across diverse areas such as youth empowerment, environmental sustainability, governance, and peace and security. She holds a master's degree in Sustainable International Development from Brandeis University in Boston, USA and post graduate masters in Sustainability, Development and Peace from United National University in Tokyo, Japan.