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U.S. Ambassador Nina Hachigian Engages With Women Leaders

On January 26, 2016, U.S. Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Nina Hachigian, participated in a special event organized by the U.S. Embassy in Brunei entitled "A Conversation with Women Who Lead." Ambassador Hachigian, who was visiting Brunei for the first time, met with over fifteen Brunei women who are leaders in their field to discuss ways to promote opportunity for women in ASEAN.

The event, which took place at the residence of U.S. Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam, Craig Allen, gave Ambassador Hachigian the opportunity to engage with women from Brunei who work in the public and private sectors, non-government organizations (NGOs), the academic community, and in the media. During the event, the participants discussed a number of issues such as equality, the need for more female role models, and challenges of advancing opportunities for women.

During her meeting with leading Bruneian women, Ambassador Hachigian emphasized the benefits that accrue to societies when they invest in girls and women. She said, "Inequalities are major issues. But they are issues worth tackling, because volumes of research show that the more women are educated and join the work force, the more societies improve."

Ambassador Hachigian continued, "We have good programs including the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) working to try to harmonize laws across ASEAN against domestic violence so there is a victim centered approach. We're working to eliminate trafficking in persons, especially among girls and women. ASEAN just passed a high level convention against trafficking in persons that exceeds international standards. The question is - what more can we do?"

Ambassador Craig Allen also participated in the discussion. He stated, "As U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, said - The world's most pressing economic, social and political problems simply cannot be solved without the full participation of women. I firmly agree with his statement and believe that it is important to involve more women in decision-making roles to ensure their voice is represented."

During her two-day visit to Brunei Darussalam, Ambassador Nina Hachigian had an audience with His Majesty Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam at Istana Nurul Iman. Ambassador Hachigian also met with Her Royal Highness Princess Hajah Masna, Pehin Orang Kaya Pekerma Dewa Dato Seri Setia Lim Jock Seng, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II; and other relevant government officials.

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