

**** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ****

PGA Executive Committee Member, Hon. Thilanga Sumathipala, Member of Parliament of Sri Lanka, will serve as new Convenor of the Gender Equality and Population Programme

New York, NY 15 May 2013. – Hon. Thilanga Sumathipala, Member of Parliament of Sri Lanka and recently elected to the PGA's Executive Committee, has been appointed as the new Convenor of the Gender Equality and Population Programme for 2013-2015.

Hon. Sumathipala started his political career in 2009 when he was elected to the Western Provincial Council from the Colombo District representing the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). He then contested the Parliamentary Election in 2010, entering parliament upon successfully securing the required majority votes. He received his education at Nalanda College, Colombo and the London College of Communication in the United Kingdom, and went on to complete his Executive Education at the Harvard Business School and the John F. Kennedy School of Government in the United States, concluding his Post-graduate Education at the University of Colombo.

He joined the PGA in 2010 and has been a member of the PGA's Sri Lankan chapter since then, functioning as its Secretary for the past two years. Hon. Sumathipala has also represented Sri Lanka in many international gatherings of the PGA.

Commenting on his appointment, Hon. Sumathipala said "It is indeed an honour to be appointed as the Convenor of the Gender Equality and Population Programme. In my capacity as the Convenor and a member of the Executive Committee of the PGA, I pledge to do my best to educate and call to action Parliaments around the world on the burning issues pertaining to the population and equal rights for all. With the support of the extensive PGA network worldwide and the cooperation of governments, I have no doubt that we will be able to achieve our goals."

Under the leadership of Hon. Sumathipala, the Gender Equality and Population Programme will continue to inform and engage Members of Parliament on the full and effective implementation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to protect and empower women in their countries' private and public spheres (access to reproductive health and rights, increase political participation, end violence against women and girls, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early and forced marriage), advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, and launch a new Parliamentary Advocacy Program to Promote and Protect Human Rights on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

GEP Programme Staff would like to express their sincere gratitude to Dr. Donya Aziz, past Convenor of the GEP Programme, for all her support and advice in developing parliamentary advocacy initiatives to move forward the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and her strong commitment to pursuing women's rights. We wish Dr. Aziz success in her future endeavours.

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