

ASEAN Civil Society Conference / ASEAN Peoples' Forum 2016



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Press Statement

“EXPANDING PEOPLES’ SOLIDARITY FOR A JUST AND INCLUSIVE ASEAN COMMUNITY”

1. Moving forward the regional solidarity agenda, more than 800 representatives¹ from ASEAN and non-ASEAN civil society and partner organisations are gathered in Timor Leste at the 11th ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples’ forum (ACSC/APF) 2016, titled “Expanding Peoples’ Solidarity for a Just and Inclusive ASEAN Community”, from 2 – 5 August 2016.
2. The call for Timor Leste’s accession to ASEAN is the pivotal focus. In addition, our demands for 2016 call on ASEAN member states to commit to reviewing and implementing the recommendations from the past ACSC/APF processes. This process is to be carried out through a multi-stakeholder engagement that is constructive, participatory and inclusive of the voices of the peoples’ of ASEAN. Such a process is also to be institutionalised and civil society engagement is to be facilitated in all policy and structural discussions on issues related to and impacting the peoples of ASEAN.
3. This ACSC/APF continues the established norm of seeing a gathering of common voices to illustrate that “peoples” matter. Our advocacy agenda clearly focuses on multiple issues and thematic areas. The plenary discussions and workshops focused on re-examining and rethinking predominant development paradigm and resource development in ASEAN and considered alternative perspective. As ASEAN envisions one single market, the APF calls on all member states to ensure the economic integration does not in any way undermine the rights and welfare of its peoples. States are to act with due diligence in holding the business sector, enterprises and other private actors who are key agents of development accountable towards the realisation of development justice, in accordance to the UN Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights. On the issue of erosion of human rights and labour rights of workers, including migrant workers the APF calls on the immediate adoption of the ASEAN Framework on the Protection of Rights and Welfare of Migrant Workers and other regulatory frameworks.
4. APF also raised criticism about the shrinking civil society spaces and use of draconian, amended and new legislations to increase regulation of civic spaces and the internet aimed at curtailing freedom of expression and information as well as freedom of assembly and association. The call is for the member states to stop the harassment and attack of human rights defenders. Further, we call for the abolishment of the use of death penalty, arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as extra-judicial killing. It emphasised the need to develop an intersectional and multiple discrimination analytical framework including on the issues related to persons with disability, persons living with HIV/AIDS, drug users, amongst others. Elements on violations and non-discrimination on the basis of race, religion and beliefs, gender, nationality, occupation, sexual orientation and gender identity, migrant and other statuses were interspersed through the various

¹ The ASEAN civil society is represented by various civil society organisations, community-based organisations, NGOs, social movements of women, children and youths, migrant workers, formal and informal workers from both urban and rural sectors, persons with disabilities, trade unions, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, peasants, farmers, small-scale fisher folks, refugees and stateless persons, domestic workers, lesbian gay transgender/transsexual intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people, human rights defenders and other groups.

workshops and discussions. Lastly, it focused on commitment to ratification and implementation of international human rights treaties to promote access to justice and ensure justiciability, specifically the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

5. A cluster of workshops underlined the situations of ASEAN countries either in conflict or undergoing post-conflict transition and rebuilding, and prioritised a need for transitional justice initiatives to address impunity for past and present human rights violations. The discussions also focused on the impact of conflict on women and for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in increasing participation of women in conflict prevention, peace process and governance. This requires removal and reform of structural barriers. The dialogues also called for movement building around the struggles of the Patani and West Papua people. The deliberations /on cross-border violations impacting asylum seekers and refugees, emphasised the need for a multifaceted regional response to ensure protection of Rohingya refugees and others affected by conflict in the course of internal and external movement.
6. The emphasis on maritime security included analysis of ASEAN member states position in terms of issues related to national security and territorial sovereignty, and of strategic importance over natural resources, trade routes and/or national defence/military dominance. The discussion engaged the participants into exploring the impact on regional security, including around environmental sustainability, food security, fisherfolk concerns, human security, peoples' participation. The strategic discussions focused on need for regional solidarity and cooperation in combating the influence of dominant players across the maritime borders.
7. The civil society from the respective ASEAN countries had also raised priority issues of concerns. Amongst them, Thailand stated that the referendum planned for the coming Sunday, 7 August 2016 would be a critical juncture for human rights and democracy in Thailand since it relates to future political architecture that affects everyday life of all Thai citizens. Nonetheless, regardless of the result on Sunday, the most pressing issue in Thailand is the restoration of democracy and fundamental freedoms. Priority for Cambodia is the increasing serious human rights violations committed against human rights defenders and activists, that led to the killing of independent social and political analysis as well as the arrest of five (5) human rights defenders. The Cambodian civil society calls on the state to immediately free the 5 Cambodian human rights defenders and fully investigate the assassination of Dr. Kem Ley. Malaysia, similarly highlighted that prevailing lack of accountability and good governance, as well as systematic failures has enabled corruption to dictate systems that impinge human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people.
8. The APF endorses the following campaigns:
 - a. The first is the launch of the Timor Sea Campaign, a show of solidarity to reclaim the seas, which is currently occupied by Australia;
 - b. The call for enhancing access to justice on economic, social and cultural rights include a campaign initiated to support ratification of the Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and its Optional Protocol (OP-ICESCR);
 - c. APF also supports the Campaign on the One ASEAN Agreement and the Agenda for a Social ASEAN to promote a regional labour standard in accordance international law;
 - d. The launch of the Campaign on Abolishment of Death Penalty calls for prohibition of the practice and repeal of said laws.
9. The ACSC/APF 2016 draws to a close with handing over of the responsibility of chairing the next ACSC/APF to the Philippine civil society that would carry the torch in evaluating the promise and evolution of ASEAN since its formation 50 years ago.