

For Immediate Release

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## **Civil Society Prepare for Open and Inclusive ASEAN Civil Society Conference**

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[Yangon, Myanmar] – Civil society organizations called for open and inclusive ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) / ASEAN Peoples’ Forum (APF) to be held next year ahead of the Summit, and presented their action plan for organizing the conference.

“Myanmar has now taken up its responsibility as the chair of ASEAN. We hope that this will include providing the space for civil society from Myanmar to come together with civil society groups and networks from the region to discuss issues that matter to us and make recommendations to the ASEAN governments,” said U Aung Myo Min, Executive Director of Equality Myanmar and one of 5 members of the Steering Committee that represents the ACSC/APF.

National and regional civil society organizations concluded the second regional consultation and planning meeting for the ACSC/APF today. The meeting was attended by 68 representatives from Myanmar and 34 representatives from the region.

“The National Organizing Committee is so far comprised of 73 member organizations from Myanmar civil society. We are working together with our regional friends to organize an inclusive ACSC/APF that will cover a wide range of themes including peace, development, justice and democratizations,” said Daw May May Pyone, Executive Director of NGO Gender Group and a member of the Steering Committee.

“Every year, the ACSC/APF is the most important forum for civil society in our region,” said Corinna Lopa, Coordinator of the South East Asian Committee for Advocacy (SEACA) and a member of the Steering Committee. “It is crucial that the conference be organized by civil society for civil society, upholding principles of cooperation, transparency and democracy.”

The National Organizing Committee composed with Myanmar CSOs and representatives from regional and national organizations throughout ASEAN come together in 8 committees to organize the conference, including the Coordinating, Steering, Program, Information and Media, Logistics, Finance and Drafting Committees. The Secretariat carries out the daily coordination for the ACSC/APF organizing process.

“We must strive to work together for a successful ACSC/APF,” said Premrudee Daoroung from the Foundation for Ecological Recovery and a Thai member of the Steering Committee. “Our strength comes from our ability to come together to share experiences, show solidarity with each others’ struggles and raise our collective regional voice on important issues. This is our ultimate goal.”

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