



Civil Society National Consultation on the Review of the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)

Terms of Reference

**December 6, 2013
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Background

Since it was established in 2009 the progress of the AICHR is slow and limited only to its normative institutional building. At the same time, civil society has been trying to engage and advocate for the AICHR to work independently and effectively to respond to human rights situations in the ASEAN region.

Some of CSO's concerns in the work of the AICHR are the limited space for CSOs to engage with the AICHR and AICHR's failure to respond to human rights cases on the ground.

One of the roots of this situation in the work of the AICHR stems from the limited mandate that is provided in its Terms of Reference (ToR). It provides limited mandate of protection and unclear explanation on the role of civil society in the work of the AICHR.

The AICHR ToR stated that this ToR shall be reviewed after 5 years after its entry into force. Therefore 2014 will be the year for reviewing the AICHR ToR. This year will give opportunities for civil society and human rights organizations to improve the mandates of the AICHR that in the end will strengthen this human rights body of the ASEAN.

In relation to the momentum of the review of the AICHR ToR in 2014, civil society in ASEAN region, including FORUM-ASIA and its member organizations in ASEAN region view the importance for CSO to participate and contribute in the review process. Therefore, FORUM-ASIA and its members have initiated and maintain discussion and actions to ensure that the review of the AICHR ToR will give stronger support and mandate for human rights protection to future work of the AICHR. One of the venues for CSOs to advocate this process is through consultation/ workshop among CSOs at the regional level and national level. It is hoped that through this consultation, CSOs can gather and develop an effective advocacy strategy and concrete proposal on the review of the AICHR ToR.

The national consultation on the review of the AICHR ToR in the Philippines is one among series of activities conducted by FORUM-ASIA and its member organizations. The Philippines with its vibrant civil society movement and space for democracy are particularly important to strengthen civil society role in strengthening human rights in ASEAN, particularly in the review process of the AICHR ToR which hopefully will start in 2014.

Objective(s)

1. Review the performance of AICHR
2. Review the Terms of Reference and formulate CSO recommendations
3. Formulate CSOs advocacy strategies at the national level

Participants

- Civil Society Organizations in the Philippines