



Opening Remarks and Introduction

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at

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

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Magandang umaga sa ating lahat. Good morning.

We gather here today amidst the devastation and death that super typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda brought to our beloved land and people. Almost six thousand dead, more than a thousand missing, four million displaced and around 11 million affected. To date, relief efforts continue – delivery of goods, trauma counseling, rebuilding of shattered homes and lives.

And so many have banded together to give, care and love their neighbor. These are signs and concrete actions of hope, determination and courage. Our people are determined to rise again.

We gather today to once again share our insights, reflections and recommendations for the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). It was not too long ago that it was formed by ASEAN states to mirror its commitment to human rights. That was 2009.

Four years later and a year before its periodic review, we civil society organizations once again come together to assess and reflect on this human rights body of ASEAN.

Concretely we intend to:

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

The tasks we face to mould AICHR to a regional mechanism/body for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights are gargantuan and pose a very formidable challenge.

Our meaningful participation in the AICHR has not gained the attention of ASEAN states. The processes and mechanisms for our participation remain unclear. This is a challenge we must face head on.

The transformation of the AICHR into a body that can respond to human rights cases on the ground is another challenge we must face. In fact we must continue to engage our governments and the AICHR itself for this meaningful change. “Kairos” or transformation will not happen without us.

Thus this gathering seeks to strengthen our bonds by coming out with a concerted and united plan of action for lobby and advocacy.

As I am sure our people will rise from the devastation of Yolanda, I am equally determined and my heart is full of hope that we civil society organizations will stand up and face the challenges of transformation of and meaningful participation in the AICHR.

Mabuhay tayong lahat! Muli magandang umaga sa inyo! Maraming salamat!