

## FACT SHEET

### The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)

Human rights have now become a permanent agenda in ASEAN with its inclusion in the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Political-Security Blueprint and the establishment of mechanisms dealing with human rights, such as the ASEAN intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). The AICHR was established on 23 October 2009 with its Terms of Reference (TOR) that lists out AICHR's 14 mandates and functions.

As the overarching institution with overall responsibility for the promotion and protection on human rights in ASEAN, the AICHR can engage and consult with all ASEAN bodies and entities associated with ASEAN, including civil society organizations and other stakeholders, as provided for in Chapter V of the ASEAN Charter, as well as consult other appropriate national, regional and international institutions and entities concerned with the promotion and protection of human rights.

In the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Inauguration of AICHR, the ASEAN Leaders stated that AICHR is part of the intergovernmental cooperation among ten ASEAN Member States to develop regional cooperation on human rights. The establishment of AICHR is ASEAN's commitment to pursue forward-looking strategies to strengthen regional cooperation on human rights.

#### ASEAN Human Rights Declaration

ASEAN adopted the first regional first human rights instrument – the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) – and the Phnom Penh Statement on the adoption of the AHRD on 18 November 2012. The AHRD is the first standard setting, political document to codify the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms that ASEAN Member States must respect, promote and protect. This is the first time the Asia Pacific region has its own regional human rights instrument. The Declaration is the embodiment of the commitment of the Governments of ASEAN to safeguard the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of ASEAN. The AHRD emulates the essence of the UDHR and several international human rights instruments, yet it is also uniquely ASEAN. The AHRD in fact supplements these global standards.

The AICHR is now focused on the dissemination and implementation of the AHRD and the Phnom Penh Statement on the adoption of the AHRD. The dissemination includes raising awareness on the significance of these documents, conducting activities in line with the AHRD, translating these documents into national languages of the ASEAN Member States (AMS), as well as publishing, launching and uploading these translated versions in the AICHR Website. The AICHR organised a joint event together with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, in conjunction with the 46th ASEAN Day celebrations, by launching the book on the AHRD and the Phnom Penh Statement on the adoption of the AHRD and its translations into the main languages of the ASEAN nations

With regards to the implementation of the AHRD, the AICHR has also discussed and consulted relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies on the possibility of developing ASEAN conventions.

#### AICHR's Work Plans and Activities

AICHR conducts its programmes and activities based on their Five Year Work Plan 2010-2015 and the annual Priority Programmes/Activities, which was approved by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM). The Work Plan is developed based on the 14 mandates of the AICHR as contained in the Term of Reference (TOR) of AICHR. The AICHR Representatives also carry out national activities on human rights in their respective Member States.

Some of the activities planned under the Work Plan includes thematic studies on thematic issues of human rights in ASEAN, such as on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Human Rights, Migration and Human Rights, Right to Peace, Trafficking in Persons particularly women and children, and Women and Children in conflict and disaster. The AICHR also regularly conducts trainings and workshops aimed at government officials, law enforcers, students and human rights educators.

For 2014, the AICHR will be implementing the following priority programmes and activities, among others:

- Workshop on Maternal Health (responding to the Millennium Development Goals No. 5)
- Advanced Programme on Human Rights: Training of the Trainers
- First and Second Coordination Workshop and Thematic Study on the Right to Peace
- Consultations with stakeholders on the review of the TOR of AICHR in 2014
- Workshop with ASEAN Sectoral Bodies concerned on comparative human rights law studies
- Regional workshop on the reporting obligations experience and best practices
- Workshop to share best practices on implementation of the treaties
- Workshop with ASEAN Sectoral Bodies concerned on the development of other ASEAN legal instruments on human rights
- Workshop on Human Rights, the Environment and Climate Change

To raise their profile, the AICHR has also looked at ways to increase their visibility to the ASEAN people, and in October 2012 the AICHR officially launched their regional website ([www.aichr.org](http://www.aichr.org)) and the AICHR Booklet. These two tools of public outreach will hopefully help to keep the public updated on the latest activities of the AICHR.

With regards to its engagements with External Parties, the AICHR has stressed the importance of ensuring the principles of ASEAN centrality in its engagement with external parties, and ASEAN ownership in designing and implementing cooperation activities with such external parties. The AICHR has also reiterated that cooperation activities with external parties will focus on the three areas, namely human rights promotion, education and capacity building as stipulated in the AICHR TOR. So far, AICHR has cooperated in various programmes and activities with the US, OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Centre, EU, UN Women, UNFPA, Center for Reproductive Health as well as UNHCR.

The AICHR has also visited the United States upon the invitation of President Obama in November 2010 to engage with the US Government, relevant United Nations agencies, international organisations, international civil society organisations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights about the work of AICHR. Similarly, the AICHR had a study visit to Europe in May 2011 by the invitation of the External Relations Directorate General of the European Commission. In this study trip, the AICHR visited Brussels, Strasbourg and Vienna where they met with various European institutions dealing with human rights, including those in the Council of Europe, Fundamental Rights Agency and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The AICHR visited Japan on 6 to 12 April 2014, at the invitation of the Government of Japan. The AICHR had discussions which focused on the issue of women rights and empowerment, persons with disabilities, trafficking in persons and the general human rights developments in both Japan and ASEAN.