



**JOINT STATEMENT
ASEAN CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE – ASEAN PEOPLES’ FORUM 2023**

**RECLAIMING SAFE SPACE, RESTORING DEMOCRACY, AND EQUITY
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Amidst the current crises caused by social, economic, political, and climate crisis in the region and at global levels, more than 800 from a diverse civil society, ethnic minorities and groups, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQIA+, Women, Persons with Disabilities, elderly, faith-based groups, migrant workers, informal workers, trade unions, farmers and fisherfolks, youths, human rights defenders, victims of land conflicts, victims of human right violations and people’s organizations of South East Asia gathered together in in-person and online participants gathered at Atma Jaya University, Jakarta, Indonesia from 1-3 September for the 2023 ACSC/APF, with the theme of **‘Reclaiming safe space, restoring democracy in Southeast Asia.**

The forum was kicked off with a powerful performance by DIALITA (abbreviation from Di Atas Lima Puluh Tahun, “above fifty years old”) is a choir that uses the power of music to narrate a part of Indonesia’s history muted for more than 50 years. As the country is opening up to understand its past, Dialita recalls songs written in prison and those reciting the country’s past prior up to the 1965 tragedy. These brave women sing to heal past traumas, as a path to reconcile their souls and the soul of a country once torn apart by political ideology.

The forum aimed to achieve these objectives:

1. To strengthen solidarity among the people in Southeast Asia through building shared understanding and awareness, on the existential threats to democracy, peace, human rights, environment in respective countries
2. To celebrate successes of initiatives by CSOs and grassroots movements with a view coordinating advocacy and social movements towards ASEAN and beyond
3. To further advocate and strengthen constructive engagement between CSOs and relevant stakeholders in order to contribute to the policy making process of ASEAN by providing the Leaders with suggestions and recommendations, especially in their effort to develop ASEAN Master Plan Post-2025, and elicit responses to our proposals, calls, and demands
4. To build on and use the outcomes, calls and demands of some convergence spaces so that we can identify and agree on common campaigns that ACSC/APF will implement after the conference.

Over the three intensive days, the participants raised their collective voices through a total of four plenary sessions, 29 workshops through six convergence spaces: Peace and Human Security, Alternative Regionalism, Human Rights and Safe Space for Marginalized Groups, Climate and Environmental Justice, Integrated Approaches to Socio-economic Justice, as well as Democracy and Anti-authoritarianism, and 25 side-events to highlight acts of impunity and pressing concerns affecting the ASEAN Member States, Timor-Leste, and the region as a whole, especially in relation to political violence, identified as one of the leading human rights issues in ASEAN. Such impunity, underscored by the lack of respect for human rights, can be eradicated when, as mentioned during a plenary session, “Peoples [should be the ones who] move the minds of their Leaders”.

The ACSC/APF participants urge the ASEAN Leaders to take notice of our following concerns and demands:

Convergence Space 1: Peace and Human Security

The world, in general, is currently going through complicated changes at an alarming rate never seen in recent decades. Southeast Asia faces existential threats arising from the Great Powers' strategic competition, especially between the US and China, and the associated impacts from the never-ending conflicts and disputes in hot spots, including the Ukraine crisis, the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, and the Taiwan Strait. The region also contends with extremist politicized religious fundamentalisms and the multi-faceted impact of terrorism, which, compounded with the ignorance of international law, undermines peace and security.

Within the region, gross human rights violations have disappointingly increased, including enforced disappearances, and efforts to achieve justice and accountability for those violations continue to be challenged. Ongoing impunity and denial of past mass atrocities have created a complex and entrenched reality. The situation facing displaced peoples around the region is also highly complex and politicized. Too often, they are used as scapegoats for economic mismanagement and political feuds that have nothing to do with their situation. Their basic needs and fundamental human rights are usually not considered, and even when they are, the regional political community faces too many self-inflicted hurdles to agree on the support displaced people require.

The R2P (Responsibility to Protect), adopted unanimously at the 2005 UN World Summit, provides ASEAN Member States and other regional countries including Timor-Leste, a framework with a range of policy and other options which can be implemented to protect populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Here, Myanmar met all indicators of crimes against humanity through systematic killings and attacks on civilians taking place since the 2021 coup. R2P clarifies that ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste have the responsibility to take positive measures to protect vulnerable populations in a manner consistent with international law. In addition, ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste need to address non-traditional security issues, including environmental pollution, climate change emergencies, and digital security problems.

Recommendations:

1. Promote the settlement of all disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Charter, UNCLOS 1982 and refrain from the use of force or threat of using force in international relations, and develop regulations and protocols that prioritize the protection of people working in the South China Sea and other similar places in the region.
2. Deal with traditional and non-traditional threats to human security and livelihood in a sustainable manner, including climate change adaptation, ensuring food security and development of non-hydropower renewable energy and protection of water resources in the region, especially transboundary areas such as the Mekong River Sub-region.
3. Prevent all human rights violations, atrocities, child abductions, enforced disappearances and all other forms of oppression by the governments with R2P, feminist intersectionality approach, support and protect the rights of displaced and marginalized people including the Rohingya community; reimagining trans-local solidarity and promote freedom of expression, and ratify of the convention of enforced disappearances and other international conventions on human rights.
4. Keep the situation in Myanmar as one of the highest regional concerns and work actively to foster cooperation to prevent grave human rights violations. By this, ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should adhere to the ten-point recommendations from the Myanmar revolution as a call for transformation, a demand for a system, and the establishment of a true federal democracy that genuinely represents the aspirations of the people. The ten-point recommendations addressed to ASEAN are as follows: 1) Move beyond the 5PC and adopt the Five Counter Points proposed by civil society; 2) Establish a dedicated unit within ASEAN to address the crisis in Myanmar directly and formally engage with all key stakeholders; 3) Collaborate closely with the United Nations to formulate effective solutions; 4) Collaborate with Spring Revolution forces and local humanitarian actors for direct humanitarian assistance; 5) Foster formal and official relationships with legitimate stakeholders, including the NUG (National Unity Government), National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), EROs (Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations) and civil society; 6) Designate the junta as a terrorist organization and exclude them from ASEAN mechanisms; 7) Implement necessary measures, including targeted sanctions, to prevent the financial flow and supply of arms and aviation fuel to the junta; 8) Encourage member states to cease engagement and cooperation with the military junta; 9) Prevent the junta from conducting illegal general elections; 10) Uphold ASEAN's authority and independence when addressing the crisis.
5. The ASEAN States and Timor-Leste to find regional solutions displacement issues such as the establishment of regional mechanisms for protection, support, and conflict resolution, and to have comprehensive and human-centered policies and laws for internally displaced people and refugees such as the Rohingya Community

Convergence Space 2: Alternative Regionalism

ASEAN regionalism is a self-serving, elites-driven regionalism, and ruling class orienting the defence of sovereignty, non-intervention and corrupted elites' consensus at the expense of human rights, justice and egalitarian progress. These guiding principles are not compatible with the human rights situation of the people at the grassroots of Southeast Asia. The developmental paradigm in this region is oriented to extractive, destructive and unequal, causing more social and ecological crises. A neoliberal, financialized economy has affected the well-being of the people, disempowering the popular sector in the region. Growth does not go with the people's development and is greatly marginalizing, particularly the women migrant workers, informal economy workers, LGBTQIA+, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities/peoples/groups, stateless refugees, and internally displaced peoples, workers, peasants, and the urban poor.

The elders-dominated ASEAN regionalism has silenced and marginalized much of the Southeast Asian region that comprises young people. The intergenerational tension is further worsened by the neoliberal logic of hyper-individualism and the commodification of culture that serves the commercial interests of capital, ruling elites and monopoly. This depoliticized, and neo-liberalized tendency clearly undermines popular initiative, and several civil society organizations and movements are losing direction, initiative and independence due to neoliberalism while geared toward donor-dependency and detached from real struggle and popular demands.

Alternative regionalism is a people's regional integration alternative to the existing purely government-to-government regionalism. It is people-led, people-to-people and community-based. Through the Southeast Asia civil society's continuous efforts to unite and collectively engage ASEAN, it has gained ample wisdom to move beyond merely engaging the state-led regional body and to develop a vision of alternative regionalism that is firmly linked with grassroots intersectional initiatives between race, gender, class and marginal community based on the principles of solidarity, cooperation, mutual benefits, the commons, and joint development of mechanisms to enable cross border, intergenerational dialogues between people in South East Asia and South Asia, and other parts of Asia and beyond, including ASEAN and SAARC and similar bodies in Asia.

Recommendations:

1. Political reforms in ASEAN and its political-making process should be undertaken with the inclusion of CSOs, community-based organizations and community people. ASEAN and all member states must
 - Provide the legal and policy frameworks on the social and solidarity economy for workers in the formal and informal economy, including migrant, domestic, informal and sex workers and other vulnerable groups, especially ratify, formulate and implement national laws and policies in line with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, ILO Resolution concerning decent work the informal economy (2002), ILO R193 on Cooperatives, ILO C190 on Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, and ILO R204 on Concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy.

- We call for a regional collaboration of trade union led social movements in ASEAN to demand the creation of ASEAN Fair Minimum Wages for cross-border formal and informal workers as tier of the value chain of production and reproduction of goods and services.
 - The ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste must recognize the rights and role of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) / ethnic people/groups/minorities as environmental defenders, their traditional knowledge and community-led initiatives into the decision-making process as the heart of climate solutions.
2. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste to respect, promote and protect marginalized youth groups, (LGBTQIA+ community, youths with disabilities, marginalized, and ethnic / minority) using intersectional feminist approach to establish gender equality education and encourage feminist movement, safe space for marginalized communities such as LGBTQIA+, Indigenous Peoples/ ethnic people/group/minorities , and specially to CSOs and youths to raise awareness and consciousness, promote self-care overrides masculinity culture. The governments should:
 - Work with CSOs and relevant stakeholders to acknowledge LGBTQIA+ youths and promote Indigenous / ethnic rights and their cultural existence and must stop the violence (harassment, criminalization, arrest, killings) towards IPs leaders and members, and, more broadly, to activists speaking against injustices and revealing truths from the ground.
 - We call the ASEAN government to promote the initiative of intergenerational exchange to tackle intergenerational tension and gaps. The ASEAN governments can strengthen equal political, social and economic opportunities for non and Indigenous / ethnic youths to incorporate the modern knowledge that they have with their self-determination, diversity and space for young activists' mental care and self-being as a form of resistance.
 3. The ASEAN states to end the political, cultural and economic criminalisation, discrimination and suffering of the marginalized groups in all their diversities, including women, elders, youth and children, Indigenous Peoples/ ethnic people/group/minorities, LGBTQIA+ people, domestic workers, people with disabilities, refugees, stateless people, sex workers and migrant workers.
 4. ASEAN should promote supply chain agreements that centre on survivors' and workers' experiences, including that of farmers and fishers, that are enforceable, have feedback and remediation mechanisms that are union-led and implemented, and to ensure the regulations and laws are in line with relevant international standards including the UN Declaration on Peasants and People Working in Rural Areas.

Convergence Space 3: Human Rights and Safe Space for Marginalized Groups

The escalating digital security threats in the Asia Pacific, particularly concerning marginalized communities such as LGBTQIA+ activists in Southeast Asia, signal an urgent need for comprehensive action. The attacks on these activists' online presence, including hacking attempts and social media account takedowns, are not only breaches of their digital security but also stark reminders of the failure of state authorities to protect human rights defenders and uphold fundamental freedoms. This situation highlights the pressing "what" and "why" components of the issue. It's essential to recognize that digital security threats have real-world implications for marginalized communities, impacting their safety and rights.

One critical insight is the call for proactive measures in understanding and addressing cyber and digital security threats effectively. This involves investing in robust cybersecurity measures, building a resilient digital infrastructure, and fostering a culture that values freedom of expression while deterring hate speech and discrimination. Regional collaboration, public education on cyber threats, and the development of a region-specific framework for data protection, akin to GDPR, are crucial steps to mitigate these security challenges. The analysis underscores the complexity of digital authoritarianism, where governments manipulate, directly or indirectly, digital tools to suppress dissent and undermine democracy. It emphasizes the importance of collective efforts to safeguard digital rights and democratize the internet.

Another key issue in the region pertains to the rights of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) / ethnic people/groups/minorities. Despite being home to a significant portion of the world's Indigenous Peoples/ ethnic people/groups/minorities, the ASEAN region faces challenges in fulfilling their rights, as outlined in the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples' Rights (UNDRIP) and the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs). While some countries have enacted laws and regulations, the slow fulfilment of these rights often stems from competing economic interests. The foundation for IPs' rights lies in their recognition of Land, Territory, and Resources (LTR), and the genuine exercise of Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC). The unique comment highlights the resilience of Indigenous Peoples / ethnic people/group/minorities in practicing traditional knowledge and sustainable natural management. To address these issues, it calls for strengthened solidarity, government cooperation, and the recognition of Indigenous / ethnic knowledge and wisdom in addressing climate change and preserving biodiversity.

Lastly, sexual and reproductive rights in the ASEAN region pose multifaceted challenges rooted in cultural norms and regulatory frameworks. One of the most concerning practices is type IV Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), which affects girls from infancy and is linked to issues like child early and forced marriage (CEFM). These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive advocacy and awareness strategies. While some countries display progressive steps regarding abortion regulations, others face regressive tendencies driven by religious beliefs, restrictive policies, stigma, and discrimination. This underscores the paradox of increasing regulations leading to more restrictions and criminalization in abortion. It highlights the multifaceted approach required to address these issues, including SOGIESC lenses, emphasizing the need for legal reform, societal attitude shifts, and improved healthcare

practices to ensure women, trans, intersex, and non-binary people, can exercise their sexual and reproductive rights safely and without judgment.

Recommendations:

1. **Establish a Regional Task Force for Digital Rights and Cybersecurity:** In response to the challenges posed by digital authoritarianism and threats to online rights, ASEAN should create a dedicated Regional Task Force. This task force would focus on monitoring and responding to digital rights violations, cybersecurity breaches, and online harassment, including technology facilitated gender-based violence. It should include representatives from member states, civil society organizations, and technology experts. The task force can conduct meaningful consultations with civil society and marginalised groups in the law and policy making process, to develop and implement strategies related to digital rights and security to protect online freedoms, investigate cyberattacks, and advocate for international norms, in line with international human rights standards, in digital rights and cybersecurity.
2. **Strengthen Indigenous Peoples' / Ethnic People/Groups/Minorities Rights Protection Mechanisms:** To address the issues faced by Indigenous Peoples (IPs) / ethnic people/groups/minorities in the region, ASEAN should prioritize the strengthening of mechanisms for the protection of IPs' rights. This can involve the creation of a regional body or committee dedicated to Indigenous Peoples' / ethnic people/groups/minorities rights, which would collaborate with governments to ensure the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It should also provide support for IPs' self-determination, land and resource rights, and protection from land grabbing and violence. Engaging in dialogues and consultations with IPs to incorporate their perspectives and needs into policy decisions is crucial.
3. **Ensure Comprehensive and Non-discriminatory Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Education and Services:** To address sexual and reproductive health and rights in ASEAN, governments should invest in comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights education programs, including the state support and recognition of such community-led services provided by civil society and the communities. These programs should be accessible to all including marginalized communities, and provide information on safe practices, and reproductive health rights implemented in schools and workplaces, including for trans, intersex, and non-binary people, marginalized communities, and provide information on safe practices, family planning, and reproductive health rights. Governments and the private sector should also ensure that healthcare facilities eliminate harmful practice and ensure compassionate, non-judgemental, confidential, humane, non-discriminatory and gender affirming services related to sexual and reproductive health, including safe and decriminalised abortion, maternity protection and preventing teenage pregnancy in the spirit of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection; access to HIV services as health related services for people using drugs, in all ASEAN Member States and Timor Leste especially for young people regardless of marital status. Governments are also

responsible to protect women's' and girls from harmful practices such as FGMC, and child marriage, and should take measures to eradicate such harmful practices. Collaborating with civil society organizations and international bodies can help in developing and implementing effective policies and programs in this regard. These recommendations address key human rights issues in the ASEAN region, including digital rights, Indigenous Peoples' / ethnic people/groups/minorities rights, and sexual reproductive health and rights. By establishing dedicated task forces, strengthening protection mechanisms, and promoting comprehensive education, ASEAN can make significant progress in safeguarding the rights of its citizens and marginalized communities. Also, promoting gender equality in leadership for both political and public affairs by formulating affirmative action such as a gender quota system will enable issues related to women, girls and gender diverse communities to be thoroughly debated in a meaningful manner.

Convergence Space 4: Climate and Environment Justice

Climate, Natural Resources, and Environmental Justice in ASEAN countries is a pressing and complex issue that involves multiple challenges and considerations. Rising sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and changing precipitation patterns threaten the livelihoods and safety of millions of people in the region. Coastal and small island communities are particularly at risk. Transboundary air and water pollution, deforestation, and illegal wildlife, illegal unregulated and unreported fishing trade are examples of issues that require regional cooperation and solutions. Indigenous Peoples / ethnic people/groups/minorities who have deep connections to the land and natural resources often face displacement, land encroachment, land eviction and land grabbing, due to deforestation, infrastructure projects, and climate-induced events, raising concerns about their rights and cultural preservation. Several ASEAN countries are investing in renewable energy sources like solar and wind power to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, the equitable distribution of the benefits of these transitions, including job opportunities and affordable energy access, remains a critical aspect of climate and environmental justice.

On another end, various global agreements, regional and national policies and local regulations have been imposed to curb severe impacts of climate change but the implementation of these policies is far too slow to put a stop to the destruction. People are affected differently and disproportionately especially those whose livelihood depends on climate resiliency and adaptation. Women are the most impacted victims of climate-related issues. There have been lessons, experiences and best practices of adaptation through edible garden initiatives in Singapore and Indigenous Peoples / ethnic people/groups/minorities community through sustainable farming practices in the Philippines.

Indonesia is one of the largest producers of palm oil in the world and it has expanded its oil palm plantations significantly over the years. However, several practices in the oil palm plantations have been falsely promoted to mitigate the environmental and social impacts of palm oil production but do not effectively address the accompanying issues including deforestation, habitat degradation, and social conflicts. Women farmers have lost access to their

individual small farms since they were changed from rubber or food crops to oil palm. They no longer take part in co-productions and are losing their equal footing with men.

SEA is one of the most vulnerable regions to impacts of climate change. The delay in reducing Greenhouse Gases emissions by using Net Zero, Carbon Market or Carbon Trading, nature-based solutions, climate smart agriculture, geoengineering (carbon capture and storage, bioenergy with carbon capture and storage: BECCS, and others), and so on, will put more communities even more at climate risks. While the scale of climate finance matters, which must be needs-based, access to finance is critically important. Countries in SEA are now in the process of implementing projects under the Green Climate Fund (GCF). However, these funds are channeled through the international/regional financial institutions or IFIs which are profiting at the expense of worsening vulnerabilities of local communities.

In addition, four sectors are among the focus of the implementation of the Blue Economy Roadmap in ASEAN, namely trade and shipping, transportation, fisheries (seafood industry) and marine conservation. With various aggressive infrastructure development projects initiated in Southeast Asia to support the maritime sectors from docks to container terminals, there is considerable risk of corruption in those projects, especially in the planning phase.

Recommendations:

1. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should formulate Unified Climate Policies that develop and implement shared targets for emissions reductions, renewable energy adoption, and climate adaptation policies & strategies at the regional level; must fully recognize the core UNFCCC Principle of Commons But differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR, RC); and must set a clear timeframe for ending coal and fossil fuels in the soonest time period with a plan for rapid, just and equitable transition towards renewables, for all the supply chain and all the sectors; and for workers working in informal and formal sectors. The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) should proceed with the drafting of the Environmental Rights Framework by 2024. Ensure that it includes regulations on limiting carbon gas production (related to companies and factories), environmentally sustainable projects, and the evaluation mechanism process.
2. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste are urged to implement climate-related policies and uphold law enforcement against any practice detrimental to the environment, perpetuated by unsustainable businesses such as the extractive industry, reject false greenwashing solutions, and delay implementing carbon trading in Indonesia and elsewhere across the region. Until and unless meaningful consultations are held with civil society while upholding the principles of inclusivity, human rights-based and gender sensitivity, and respecting the Indigenous people's / ethnic people/groups/minorities rights and practices informed by traditional knowledge, local wisdom, and spiritual belief, in the formulation of climate-related policies and regulations that are backed by sufficient financial allocation. More importantly, the private sector must apply sustainable principles and fair trade in their business strategy.
3. CSOs should be allowed to amplify the voices of the most invisible, such as rural women, collectively interrogate relationship dynamics at every scale, create spaces for

collective work and diverse participation, share practice and celebrate heritage. ASEAN Governments must establish a fund that provides subsidies for farmers, including women farmers, to sustain their small production, both for endemic food crops and endemic livestock and fish so peoples could achieve food sovereignty. Financial resources should be allocated to invest in agroecology and divert from industrial agroecology that is harmful to the environment and livelihood of smallholder farmers. ASEAN and the ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should actively support the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund - in the form of a grant, not loan– immediately. They should also ensure communities, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, can access the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and grant-based climate finance to support various adaptation or mitigation climate initiatives without delay.

4. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste shall eradicate corruption in the Blue Economy-related development projects and to promote small-scale fisheries through empowering fishing communities and coastal area communities and must control the ecosystem destruction due to fish net waste in the region.
5. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste must take collective concrete action through advancing clean governance, transparency, and institutional strengthening of national anti-corruption agencies.
6. The ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste must call for full accountability of all extractive multinational and transnational corporations and big states that continuously emit huge carbon footprints and must facilitate and support (through legal and financial frameworks) the diversity and decentralisation of the renewable energy system that promotes the roles of communities and groups on the ground. A well-defined accountability mechanism should be established within ASEAN for civil societies and affected communities, respecting their rights as environmental defenders to participate, contribute and collaborate in climate and natural resources management inclusively and meaningfully.

Convergence Space 5: Integrated Approaches to Socio-Economic Justice

The prevailing economic models in the region have placed the affairs of the private sector corporations and businesses above the affairs of peoples in society. While transboundary investments are increasing in the region, ASEAN lacks effective mechanisms and the rule of law to ensure the protection of the community, environment, labour and human rights. The expansion of global and regional value chains (GVC and RVC), which also has boosted economic development in Southeast Asia, also led to social inequality. Making policies in favour of the capital owners leaves irresponsible business practices and labour rights violations unaccounted for across the region.

Most of the ASEAN workforce is in informal employment and the informality rate is increasing amidst the digitalization and casualization of the ASEAN economies. Informal economies are characterized by a high incidence of poverty and decent work deficits which are in the form of

unproductive and insecure jobs, poor working conditions, low wages, exploitation, and inadequate protection from income loss during maternity, unemployment, sickness, disability, and old age. Women and individuals from LGBTQIA+, platform workers, migrants, and agricultural and fisheries workers often fall into the most vulnerable form of employment and have lower access to social protection. The informalization trend of the workforce also affects workers from traditional formal sectors such as manufacturing. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the weakness of current public services and social protection systems and how the lack of such exacerbates poverty and inequality in the region.

Socio-economic justice cannot be achieved without the people at the centre; hence, economic systems must be shifted to the Social Solidarity Economy. ASEAN must have stronger measures to enhance inclusive economic growth, while decent work and social protection should be integrated as a core strategy for socioeconomic development. While inclusive economic growth and social protection are recognized in several ASEAN declarations, the effectiveness of each policy varies and often depends on the prevailing cultural and socio-political dynamics. The lack of a multi-sector approach also leaves non-state actors little to no space to affect these policies more substantively.

Recommendations:

1. Governments must accurately monitor the numbers, wages, working conditions and social protection of vulnerable workers, irrespective of nationality and legal status, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should adopt and ratify all relevant international human and labour rights conventions that guide the implementation of employment laws and policies promoting the formalization of work across ASEAN. This must not be used to identify and disadvantage undocumented migrants or other vulnerable groups, including platform-based workers, but as part of increasing all workers' voices in the workplace and society and not depriving them of the social protection that they are entitled to.
2. Promote equality for women and LGBTQIA+ persons and eliminate all forms of systemic and cultural stigma, discrimination, and all forms of violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should initiate campaigns, educational programs and legislative provisions to challenge and transform gender norms at all stages of life. These efforts should target both employers and society at large to address entrenched norms. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste can pave the way for greater acceptance and implementation of maternity protection measures. Of particular importance is to ensure parents\ carers are given the necessary support to conceive and to raise children free from discrimination and with protection to ensure health and safety for all.
3. Social protection relies on socio-economic policies covering inclusive business, and social protection must be reviewed through a multi-stakeholder approach. The policy and legislative agendas should be based on the "people needs" and cover the principle of

inclusiveness for all. This depends not only on government action but also on holding businesses accountable for promoting a strong civil society. Therefore, ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should recognize the Social Solidarity Economy, support the strengthening of Civil Society and workers' organizations and work with businesses to include CSOs at community as well as national tripartite levels.

4. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste must endorse a business and human rights mechanisms and transboundary jurisdiction applying for all the ASEAN countries within and beyond the territories where its people operate businesses or projects with human rights violations in other countries. Including the establishment of ASEAN human rights court to ensure that people can access to justice and protection

Convergence Space 6: Democracy and Anti-Authoritarianism

A decade after ASEAN adopted its declaration of human rights, the civic space situation in Southeast Asia is still experiencing repression. ASEAN, as a regional organization, remains unable to effectively resolve issues of human rights violations at the regional level as it is hampered by the lack of a mechanism where all the human rights defenders could work together on resolving human rights issues, and it led to what we call "authoritarianism" within the region.

Authoritarianism has been increasing within the region: restriction towards freedom of expression and assembly, arbitrary arrest of Human Rights Defender, the undermining and unjust settlement of Human Rights violations, and shrinking civic space caused by rise of violent militarisation are threatening vulnerable groups. Perpetrators of Human Rights violations keep reigning supreme in autocratic regimes across ASEAN, as seen in cases such as Indonesia undermining Papua's right to self-determination.

Enforced disappearance and unjust apprehension of Papua's Human Rights Defenders have been constantly occurring, followed by aggressive military presence in the area. Furthermore, the Philippines Duterte's dictatorial government corroded the democratic system and bred nepotism and fostered the growth of political dynasties. Moreover, oppressive policies that restrict freedom of expression are designed as political instruments to exert autocratic power within a hegemonic structure, as seen in Singapore's Online Criminal Harms Act and Indonesia's ITE Law that shrink its civil society's civic space.

Excessive use of force, such as that used by Myanmar's military junta, attacking numerous areas within the country through airstrikes, has brutally taken innocent lives. Furthermore, blatant use of torture, repression, and physical and psychological abuse were used against Burmese civil society, Human Rights Defenders and ordinary civilians struggling and striving for their freedom of expression and their right to life. The regional and international civil society stands in solidarity, demanding ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste to put in efforts to end the impunity in Myanmar.

Human rights defenders and civil society actors, including journalists and academics among many others, all over Southeast Asia, work together, making transnational advocacy networks

on many human rights thematic, despite the threats of criminalisation of human rights defenders, restriction of civil society organizations and movements, and violence against activists. As a vehicle for the enjoyment of other rights, the discourse on the operationalization of the right to freedom of association and protection of Human Rights Defenders are very relevant to the future goals of the ASEAN community and the agenda of encouraging an enabling environment for civil society in the region.

Therefore, we need to address the urgency of democracy and anti-authoritarianism movements to fight autocratic regimes across the ASEAN region. We need to hold perpetrators accountable and abolish impunity that lingers within our hegemonic structure. Guaranteeing transitional justice and demanding just settlement of severe Human Rights violations are needed to be the main discourse on a regional level to prevent future violations from happening. Reclaiming civil space and ensuring the safety of Human Rights defenders become prominent in rejecting authoritarianism and prolongs our democracy.

Recommendations:

1. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste, including the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), must commit to addressing human rights abuses, in particular gross human rights violations, and ensure the development of an effective remedy mechanism as mentioned in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD), with the meaningful participation of civil society and especially women in leadership roles, in the ASEAN Post-2025 Community Vision that is aligned with the International Human Rights Standard.
2. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste must protect, promote, and fulfil the political rights to the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association, recognise and protect the peoples' right to a civic space by creating an enabling environment for improving human rights protection for all, by reviewing and eliminating existing restrictive laws, regulations and policies used to attack HRDs, including LGBTQIA+ defenders, and to establish a roadmap toward an ASEAN Human Rights Court and ASEAN Human Rights Commission.
3. ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should take an intersectional approach when addressing cross-cutting human rights issues such as through but not limited to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) perspective, Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda; Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).
4. To address the protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) arising from the Myanmar crisis, ASEAN should encourage the establishment of a peace zone in the Thai-Myanmar border to support IDPs for their sustainable development in cooperation with both international and regional stakeholders, and the ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste should also ensure Myanmar HRDs are not discriminated for their re-entry visas/permits.

Conclusion and Ways Forward

The abovementioned pressing issues have been collectively voiced out by a broad spectrum of people-oriented groups and civil society across the ASEAN region and beyond that gathered in Jakarta. We urge ASEAN, as well as their member states, to recognise their key role in addressing these issues in cooperation with civil society through meaningful dialogues across the three pillars - ASEAN Political- Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The ASEAN Civil Society Conference-ASEAN Peoples Forum have great expectations for ASEAN to fully practice and live up to its aspiration of a people-centred ASEAN and sincerely hope that all ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste can fully recognize the issues and implement the recommendations.

The ASEAN Civil Society Conference-ASEAN Peoples Forum Committees express their sincere appreciation to all stakeholders involved, including the student volunteers, lecturers, venue staff, all panelists and speakers, convergence space and workshop organisers, and to all delegates and participants for making the 2023 ACSC/APF a success.