



Concluding Statement
18th Annual Conference of the South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum
(SEANF)

1 – 2 December 2021
9.45 am – 4.30pm (Kuala Lumpur/Manila Time)
Zoom Online Platform / Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF), comprising of the National Human Rights Commission of Indonesia (Komnas HAM), Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP), National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) and Provedor for Human Rights and Justice of Timor-Leste (PDHJ), held the 18th SEANF Annual Conference on 1 – 2 December 2021 via Zoom Online Platform. The Annual Conference was hosted by SUHAKAM in its capacity as the SEANF Chair for 2021.

The main outcomes of the 18th SEANF Annual Conference are as follows:

1. Opening Remarks by SEANF Chair (SUHAKAM)

- 1.1. Chairperson Mr. Othman Hashim welcomed all SEANF members to the 18th SEANF Annual Conference 2021 and expressed condolences on behalf of SEANF to the CHRP on the loss of their Chairperson, Mr. Jose Luis Martin “Chito” Gascon.
- 1.2. The strength of SEANF stems from the collective dedication, capacity, expertise and support from SEANF members and SEANF has continued to mobilize itself as a regional mechanism for the effective promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights in the region.
- 1.3. Among SEANF’s achievements for the year include the co-organization of a Regional Conference on Prison Reform by SUHAKAM in collaboration with SEANF members and with support by the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur as a side event to

the 18th SEANF Annual Conference, formal recognition by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) as a regional partner and the development of the SEANF Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026 through a transparent and inclusive process.

2. Adoption of Agenda

2.1. The Agenda of the 18th SEANF Annual Conference 2021 was adopted with amendments made to remove the 'SEANF Rules of Procedure' from the agenda item on the 'Updates and Discussions on the Establishment of the SEANF Permanent Secretariat and Host Country Agreement' by SUHAKAM and to include an agenda item entitled, 'Influence Operations and human rights' by CHRP under the agenda item on Other Matters.

3. Updates on Activities of SEANF since the 17th Annual Conference 2020

3.1. SUHAKAM presented the updates on activities of SEANF throughout the year. In addition to annual meetings of SEANF, numerous activities were undertaken either in response to developing issues, taking on additional activities in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic or undertaking efforts to strengthen the collaboration between the SEANF members in various ways.

3.2. The activities conducted by SEANF throughout the year include the Working Group to Discuss the NHRCT's New Proposal Relating to Torture Prevention (WGTP), SEANF Technical Working Group (TWG) Meetings, High-Level Closed-Door Meeting of SEANF alongside the SEANF TWG Meeting 1/2021, endorsement of recommendation letters on the Rights of Older Persons, Workshop on Mainstreaming Land Rights in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights with the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), SEANF Strategic Communications Working Group Meetings, Dialogue with SEANF and the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) / Asian NGO Network on NHRIs (ANNI), Regional Dialogue: Self-Assessment of AICHR Progress After 10 Years, Technical Working Group to Develop the SEANF Strategic Plan for 2022 - 2026 (TWGSP), Meeting of AICHR with SEANF and Regional Conference on Prison Reform.

3.3. SUHAKAM recorded its appreciation to SEANF members in particular, the Chairpersons of SEANF for their leadership and guidance for the work carried out throughout the year, contribution by members of the Technical Working Group (TWG) Meetings, the TWG established to look into the drafting of the SEANF Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026 along with the excellent effort, commitment, perseverance and spirit of cooperation demonstrated by the members towards the year.

4. Adoption and Launching Ceremony of SEANF Logo

- 4.1. SUHAKAM presented an update on the genesis of the SEANF logo. Since 2020, Komnas HAM led the development of the SEANF logo and the final revisions on the logo, its symbolic meanings and corporate colours of SEANF was agreed by consensus during the SEANF Strategic Communications Meeting held in October 2021.
- 4.2. SEANF members and Head of Delegations recorded their agreement and support of the adoption of the SEANF logo and appreciation to Komnas HAM for leading the development.
- 4.3. As unanimously agreed by SEANF members at the 18th SEANF Annual Conference, the SEANF logo, its symbolic meanings and blue, white and gold as the corporate colours of SEANF was adopted and launched. Members were encouraged to utilize the SEANF logo in official communication and promotional materials for SEANF.

5. Launching Ceremony of SEANF's Guidelines on Torture Prevention

- 5.1. SUHAKAM presented a brief genesis on the SEANF's Guidelines on Torture Prevention.
- 5.2. The Association for Prevention of Torture (APT) Representative, Ms. Shazeera Zawawi was invited to deliver a brief remark on the development of the Guidelines. APT congratulated SEANF for launching the SEANF's Guidelines on Torture Prevention and highlighted the role of NHRIs in torture prevention. The Guidelines combine six NHRIs' experiences and expertise in six key areas namely mobilizing for change, strengthening law and justice, increasing transparency in places of detention, protecting persons in situations of vulnerabilities and engaging international community.
- 5.3. APT shared its hope that the guidelines will provide practical guidance for SEANF members to strengthen existing cooperation, build new partnerships and embark on innovative efforts to combat torture and that the Guidelines will be a living document that could be adapted and enhanced in accordance to time and change.
- 5.4. APT extended its readiness to work with SEANF in the future to implement the Guidelines. SEANF recorded its appreciation to the APT for their support and guidance in drafting the Guidelines.
- 5.5. SEANF members and Head of Delegations signed the 'Foreword' of the Guidelines, signifying the launch of the SEANF's Guidelines on Torture Prevention. Members were encouraged to take into consideration the Guidelines as a point of reference in the

advocacy, promotion and policy development within their respective mandate and statutory functions as NHRIs.

6. Adoption and Launching Ceremony of SEANF Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026

- 6.1. SUHAKAM presented a brief explanation on the development of the SEANF Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026.
- 6.2. The Asia Pacific Forum of NHRIs (APF) Representative, Mr. Kieren Fitzpatrick was invited to deliver a brief remark on the development of the Strategic Plan. APF congratulated SEANF and SUHAKAM for its leadership in the development of the Strategic Plan.
- 6.3. APF highlighted that there are many synergies that can be drawn in the context of COVID-19 and on the issue of torture prevention from both SEANF's and APF's Strategic Plan. APF stated that it looks forward to working with SEANF members to see the realization of a SEANF Permanent Secretariat.
- 6.4. SEANF recorded its appreciation to the APF and Consultant Dr. Jill Chrisp for their invaluable support and collaboration in developing the Strategic Plan. SEANF members also recorded their support of the adoption of the Strategic Plan.
- 6.5. As unanimously agreed by SEANF members at the 18th SEANF Annual Conference, the SEANF Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026 was adopted and launched.

7. Launching Ceremony of SEANF Website

- 7.1. SUHAKAM presented a brief genesis on the SEANF Website and extended its appreciation to Komnas HAM for their leading role in the development of the Website.
- 7.2. The SEANF Website can be assessed at <https://seanf.asia/>
- 7.3. Komnas HAM thanked SEANF members and hopes that the website will be utilized as a source of information for SEANF's stakeholders and as a tool to promote human rights in the region.

8. Sharing of Major Developments and Challenges in the Region for the year 2021

- 8.1. All SEANF members presented their activities, major developments, and challenges in 2021. The presentation covers various activities and developments for the advancement of the human rights agenda in the region based on the mandates and functions of each member.

9. Updates on the Thematic Issue of the Rights of Older Persons by CHRP

- 9.1. CHRP highlighted that an international binding treaty on the Rights of Older Persons is necessary to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of older women and men. With a new UN Convention, governments can have an explicit legal framework, guidance and support that would enable them to ensure that older persons' rights are realized and address age discrimination and rights issues on ageing.
- 9.2. Recommendations were made to SEANF members namely to sign up to the open letter, encourage respective States in the region to support the calls for a binding treaty, participate in the International Conference, 12th Session of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) in 2022 and include the agenda of the rights of older persons in the SEANF Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026.

10. Sharing session on Best Practices and Challenges on Human Rights Education and Promotion by SEANF Members

- 10.1. All SEANF members presented best practices and challenges faced by SEANF members on human rights education and promotion amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Updates and Discussions on the Establishment of the SEANF Permanent Secretariat and Host Country Agreement

- 11.1. Komnas HAM informed members that the 2nd Inter-Ministerial meeting was held on 29 November 2021 to discuss the next steps. Among the matters discussed during the meeting was the legal basis of Indonesia's membership in SEANF and the need for the SEANF Rules of Procedure (RoP) to be ratified by the Parliament of Indonesia.
- 11.2. As a follow up, Komnas HAM plans to seek clarification on the process of the RoP ratification through coordination with the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Secretary, Ministry of Law and Human Rights as well as to collect inputs from their Ministries that will discuss the zero draft of the Host Country Agreement.

12. Presentation on Advancing Child Rights in Malaysia by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), SUHAKAM

- 12.1. SUHAKAM's Children's Commissioner briefed members on the establishment of the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), its functions, portfolios and activities undertaken since its establishment.
- 12.2. The appointment of Malaysia's 1st Children's Commissioner (CC) in 2019 was to enhance the rights of children in Malaysia. The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), SUHAKAM is an independent office that is responsible for

empowering and protecting the rights of children as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

12.3. The Children's Commissioner derives her powers from the SUHAKAM Act (Act 597) and has three portfolios namely advocacy and policy, education and promotion and complaints and monitoring.

12.4. Child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and the rights of the child during the protest or public gathering are among issues related to the rights of the child raised during the session.

13. Other Matters - Influence Operations and human rights

13.1. CHRP presented the scope of Influence Operations that includes access, safety, governance and internet platform. Influence Operations can happen on an internet platform where it allows hate speech and spread of disinformation.

13.2. CHRP proposed to organize an orientation on Influence Operations to be included in the 2022 planning facilitated by CHRP and a non-governmental organization (NGO), the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue working on the subject matter.

13.3. Influence Operations can be beneficial or harmful depending on how and who operated it.

14. Handover of SEANF Chairpersonship

14.1. The SEANF Chairpersonship was handed over from SUHAKAM to CHRP at the conclusion of the 18th SEANF Annual Conference.

Prepared by SUHAKAM, SEANF Chair

Kuala Lumpur

2 December 2021