

## Second Press Release of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)

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### ACWC to Seek Philanthropists' Funding Support in Its Endeavour to Help Victims of Violence through an ASEAN Network of Social Service Centres

Solo, Indonesia, 6-8 September 2011



The Third Meeting of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) was convened from 6-8 September 2011 in Solo, Indonesia. With its Rules of Procedures (ROP) finalized and its Work Plan near completion, the Commission is now running at full speed.

There have been noteworthy developments, as the Meeting agreed on the top priority themes for the first five years of the Work Plan and identified the corresponding concrete actions. The Meeting also welcomed the new children's rights Representatives from Lao PDR and Myanmar, Mdm. Baykham Khattiya and Ms. Rupar Mya, respectively.

Under-scoring the Work Plan to improve the lives of women and children in ASEAN is a proposal by Singapore to convene an event involving philanthropists, foundations and corporations with CSR commitment to pledge funding support for ACWC's work in helping victims of violence who are predominantly women and children. According to Singapore's Representative for children's rights, Mr. Koh Choon Hui, "There are many big-hearted corporate and individual philanthropists who want to make a difference. We want to seek their financial help to get women and children who are victims of violence the assistance they deserve and rebuild their lives. The event that the ACWC is planning to organise hopes to make this happen".

The funds raised would be used to kick-start the setting up of an ASEAN network of national agencies and volunteer welfare organizations involved in providing social services for women and children who suffered violence and abuse. Singapore's Representative for women's rights, Dr. Aline Wong said, "Such a network will provide a platform for the sharing of information, intelligence, experiences and best practices in helping victims of violence. It would allow for the exchange of experts and social work professionals among ASEAN Member States, as well as, provide internships, training opportunities and the exchange of technical assistance. International transfer of victims who were trafficked could also be facilitated more effectively and with the care that they needed". Dr. Wong added, "There are many social workers in national agencies and in voluntary welfare organisations in ASEAN who are doing great work in helping victims. They are unsung heroes whom ACWC will recognize with awards for both individuals and the organisations with best practices".

To kick-off the network, Malaysia's Representative for women's rights, Dato' Dr. Noorul Ainur Mohd. Nur said, "ACWC will visit national agencies and voluntary welfare organisations as part of its regular meeting programmes held in various ASEAN cities. The visits will allow the ACWC Representatives to better appreciate the issues and difficulties faced by women and children who are victims of violence and the ways in which the ACWC can help meet their needs."

The top priority themes for the Commission's first 5-year Work Plan are: elimination of violence against women and children; trafficking in women and children; women and children living with and affected by HIV and AIDS; social impact of climate change on women and children; promotion and protection of the rights of women and children with disabilities; ASEAN and other instruments related to the rights of women and children; child protection system: integrative/comprehensive approach for children in need for social protection; the right to quality education, including Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE); the right of children to participate in all affairs that affect them; women participation in politics and decision making, governance and democracy; strengthening economic rights of women with regards to feminization of poverty, women's right to land and property; promoting implementation of international, gender equality in education (textbook, curriculum, and equal access); strengthening institutional capacities of ACWC; and promotion of consultation and dialogue with stakeholders at national and regional levels.

The Commission has planned to further strengthen its engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms in the spirit of cooperation in areas of common interests and convergence among CRC, CEDAW and the ACWC. The Commission will organise a consultative meeting with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and the Special Assistant to the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children in 2012.

On the sidelines of the Meeting, the Commission met with regional and national CSOs from six ASEAN Member States representing women and children. The Commission shared information, as well as, exchanged views with the CSOs on issues of common interests concerning the rights of women and children.

With the support of the ASEAN Secretariat, a webpage for the ACWC is being developed to enhance its visibility and public accessibility. The webpage, adjacent to the ASEAN website, will be a conduit for updating the public on the ACWC's work.

The Fourth ACWC Meeting will be held on 16-18 February 2012 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.