

Oral Intervention
The Bangkok Regional Consultation on Contribution
to the Review of the AICHR's Term of Reference
Bangkok, 28 June 2014

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On behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Session 3. Discussion on Assessment of the AICHR's work and the AICHR's Relations with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Thank you Madam Chair, Ambassador Chan Heng Chee,

Please allow us to convey our sincere appreciation for allowing broader participation of CSOs towards the review process of the AICHR TOR Review. Thank you to the host, Representative of Thailand to AICHR – Dr. Seree Nonthasoot, for organizing this consultation.

FORUM-ASIA has been involved in the development of AICHR since the discussion of the AICHR TOR with the High Level Panel in 2008 in Kuala Lumpur. Presentation made by Dr. Sriprapha has covered all the development and current situation of the issue surrounding AICHR's engagement with CSOs and other stakeholders. However I would like to elaborate more on certain dimensions:

1. The issue of engagement of AICHR with CSOs is **strongly linked with the issue of mandates of AICHR**, whether it is on promotion or protection.

With regard to the work of CSOs, in most context, human rights organizations deal with human rights situation on the ground, i.e: children, women, person with disability, labour, environment, education, civil and political rights and also economic, social and cultural rights. Therefore, in engaging the AICHR, CSOs usually aim that AICHR will respond and address their concern on the human rights situation.

As said in the presentation earlier, human rights issues are still sensitive, not only to ASEAN, but also to most member states in all over the world - in other human rights mechanism. The tension between the issue of engagement and the hope for stronger protection mandate is probably the reason why the issue of engagement of CSOs with AICHR has been slow and unclear. One requires other. Issues on engagement will require an effective mandate in addressing human rights promotion and/or protection.

But, we certainly hope the review of the AICHR's TOR will be resulted in a better defined mandates of promotion and protection, which is equipped with a clearer prescription on its relationship with CSOs and other stakeholders.

2. The issue of AICHR's engagement with CSOs, and the implementation of AICHR's mandates can also be strengthened with a review that could provide basis for a stronger **Secretariat support** for the AICHR.

A dedicated Secretariat Support can assist AICHR with necessary information for public, managing communication strategy with CSOs, and also to support AICHR with expertise on the field of human rights (also knowledge and skill on thematic issues on human rights), bearing in mind that AICHR Representatives work part time.

Thank you Madam Chair.

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