

ASEAN CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2007
CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

On 27-28 October 2007, the Singapore Institute of International Affairs organized the ASEAN Civil Society Conference 2007. The Conference, held in Singapore, is an effort to present civil society views to the ASEAN Summit 2007, as part of the increasing engagement between ASEAN and civil society.

The Conference brought together some 50 representatives from all ASEAN Member Countries. The participants were drawn from regional non-government organizations (NGOs), think-tanks, and civil society organizations (CSOs) who have participated in larger meetings and networks among their counterparts in preparation for the ASEAN Summit. Some observers from ASEAN governments and international organizations also attended. The representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat included the Secretary-General of ASEAN, HE Ong Keng Yong, who delivered a keynote address and agreed to bring this statement to the attention of the ASEAN Summit. A full list of the participants is attached.

Whereas

- The ASEAN Summit 2007 to be held in November will mark the 40th anniversary of the regional grouping and will be presented with an ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint.
- The ASEAN Charter makes reference to democracy, good governance and human rights and calls for the creation of a human rights body.
- The AEC Blueprint lists steps and measures to be taken, together with time lines for action.
- ASEAN leaders have since 2003 called for an ASEAN Community with three pillars in the political and security, economic and socio-cultural areas.
- The ASEAN Summits of 2005 and 2006 organized sessions to garner feedback and views for the ASEAN leaders.
- Previous ASEAN Declarations and Action Plans have recognized CSO and NGO meetings and networks such as the ASEAN People's Assembly (organized by the ASEAN-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies) and the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism
- ASEAN think tanks, CSOs and NGOs, including those present at the Conference, have increasingly been active in forming and participating in regional networks such as the ASEAN People's Assembly; the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism; the Solidarity for Asian Peoples' Advocacy; and SE Asian Civil Society Environment Alliance amongst others.
- The Conference discussed the ASEAN Charter, economic competitiveness and integration, human rights, the environment, other priorities, and mechanisms for ASEAN to structure consultation with stakeholders.

The Chair of the conference drew the following observations and noted areas for review and action:

1. **Aspirations and Development:** ASEAN has made considerable progress and is important to its peoples. It must be relevant to the needs and aspirations of the ASEAN peoples, as much as to governments. The ASEAN that currently exists will need to develop in

order to meet these needs and aspirations through increased commitment, closer coordination and effective implementation.

2. **Importance of Charter:** While the draft has not been released, the CSOs and NGOs welcome the ASEAN Charter as an important step forward for ASEAN. The vast majority of them urged that all Member Countries should adopt and sign the Charter at the ASEAN Summit 2007 in Singapore, and ratify the Charter without delay. In tandem with this, they should inform their citizens about ASEAN and its Charter. As ASEAN develops further, and where required, the ASEAN Charter should be open for review, amendment and further improvement, with input from CSOs and NGOs.

3. **Interdependence, Integration and Obligations:** A more open, integrated and interdependent ASEAN is necessary to both compete and cooperate with others in the region. A more integrated ASEAN will require increased cooperation and coordination among ASEAN Member Countries and a more effective Secretariat. ASEAN must move towards a rules-based system whereby rules, once agreed, will oblige Member Countries to meet the agreed objectives.

4. **Implementation and Monitoring:** Effective implementation of commitments in treaties, plans, and declarations is essential for ASEAN's credibility and success. Greater information, transparency and monitoring are critical for compliance and implementation. Indicators of progress are important and where possible, ASEAN should align indicators with those used by international organization and internationally agreed goals like the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Think tanks, CSOs, NGOs and other networks with special knowledge and interest can and should be facilitated to assist the process by helping monitor and report on implementation.

5. **Economic Integration and Poverty:** Economic integration is critical for ASEAN's competitiveness and economic growth. The AEC Blueprint to be presented at the ASEAN Summit in 2007 should be put into action with the aim of effectively creating a single ASEAN market. With economic integration and growth, ASEAN Member Countries should work to end poverty in their societies and across ASEAN, towards sustainable development.

6. **Economic Integration and Ill Consequences:** Yet while economic integration and market opening are critical, negative consequences should be avoided. Trade and investment must be well regulated with good standards and laws to avoid harm to the environment and society. Economic development must be sustainable and equitable among diverse sectors. Market integration must be twinned with other policies for society, labour rights, trade unions, consumer rights, farmers' rights and other issues that affect the poor and marginalized.

7. **Two-Tier ASEAN:** While some newer ASEAN Member Countries have shown rapid economic growth, the dangers of a "two-tier" ASEAN still remain. Policies of economic integration and market opening must be supplemented by efforts to improve education and training, infrastructure and other 'behind the border' policies. ASEAN should examine the feasibility of creating a substantial development transition fund to assist newer Member Countries and poorer areas in all Member Countries. All, especially the more developed ASEAN Member Countries, should contribute to such a fund on a voluntary basis, together with key dialogue partners.

8. **Democracy, Good Governance and Human Rights:** Democracy, good governance and human rights are critical to development, stability and national resilience, and must be advanced in all ASEAN Member Countries. The rule of law and anti-corruption measures, and participation of people at the national level, should also be strengthened. In ASEAN,

human rights should be “mainstreamed” to complement economic integration and the increased movement of peoples to work across borders.

9. **Human Rights Body:** The promise in the ASEAN Charter to form a Human Rights body is welcome and timely. Negotiations should begin as soon as possible on the terms of reference for the ASEAN human rights body, in consultation with CSOs and NGOs. The ASEAN human rights body must follow international standards in human rights and humanitarian law and improve on international mechanisms for human rights promotion and protection. ASEAN should establish specific mechanisms as outlined in the Vientiane Action Plan.

10. **Priority Areas, Women and Children:** ASEAN should give priority to the rights of children, the human rights situation of women and the challenges being faced by migrants as well as public education on economic, civil, cultural, political and social rights. In addressing the rights of children, ASEAN should implement schemes to prevent child sex and trafficking and Members Countries should cooperate in the prosecution of those who perpetuate such violations. Women’s rights must be understood as cross cutting issues in many areas for ASEAN; in particular, in efforts to end illegal trafficking, protect migrant workers and fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

11. **Myanmar:** The recent statement by ASEAN governments on Myanmar was necessary to respond to the tragic and gross violations of human rights in that country. Working with the United Nations and relevant Asian countries, ASEAN must consistently do all it can to cajole Myanmar to improve its human rights record with transparency and accountability and be seen as a good member in the ASEAN community. ASEAN should support a national dialogue in Myanmar and assist exchange between CSOs and NGOs in Myanmar with counter parts in other ASEAN Member Countries.

12. **Priority for the Environment and Climate Change:** The ASEAN Summit decision to give greater attention to environment issues, especially climate change, is welcome. The region is highly interdependent and has many areas and people who would be vulnerable to environmental harms and climate change impacts. Environmental concerns in the region should be tackled as cross cutting issues in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community, especially economic integration and security. Issues like the haze pollution, deforestation and biodiversity are regional issues that have global impact and should be priorities in addressing both environmental protection and climate change. Sharing knowledge, know how and technologies are critical for solutions for the region.

13. **Climate Change and Energy:** ASEAN Member Countries should move to address climate change, with a clear and shared understanding of regional vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies to protect the most vulnerable. ASEAN should influence international fora to recognize the contributions that can be gained from arrested deforestation, reforestation and clean development projects in the region. The connections between environment and energy must be better understood in ASEAN. Projects to help supply secure and affordable energy to all while minimizing carbon and climate change gases are very important. Energy efficiency and regional cooperation are essential approaches to deal with both energy security and climate change. However, there are legitimate and grave concerns over nuclear energy in ASEAN Member Countries. Nuclear energy can create environmental and human disasters for the region and ASEAN Member Countries are urged in the strongest terms to reconsider these plans for reasons of economic viability, long-term environmental concerns, security, and safety in design, operation and maintenance.

14. Social and Cultural Community and ASEAN Public Education: ASEAN should give more attention and emphasis to develop the social and cultural pillar for ASEAN Community. An action plan that includes relevant measures and deadlines should be negotiated. A key aim should be to stimulate knowledge of ASEAN among the public and peoples in Member Countries, with the support of relevant ASEAN organs, such as the ASEAN Foundation, and the participation of the media, CSOs and think tanks.

15. A People-Orientated ASEAN: To become more people oriented, the ASEAN Secretariat should consider how best to accredit, facilitate and support the engagement with CSOs and NGOs, with a better understanding and appreciation of their diversity. ASEAN's engagement should be on par with business and other groups, aligned with the best practices among international organizations, and made known to all relevant groups. Amongst other measures, ASEAN should consider appointing a senior office holder specifically to liaise with CSOs and NGOs, as a focal point for the ASEAN Secretariat and Member Countries. At the national level, ASEAN Member Countries should also be encouraged to integrate civil society views into their policy-making processes. CSOs and NGOs can take up a range of different roles such advocacy and also monitoring. This is especially in areas and on topics where they have special expertise.

Simon SC Tay

Chairman, Singapore Institute of International Affairs
Chair for the ASEAN Civil Society Conference 2007

Note on Chairman's Statement: This Statement is not a negotiated text that is agreed or voted upon by the participants. The Statement is drafted by the Chairman of the Conference on a good faith basis to distill the main points raised by The Conference participants. A draft was circulated to all participants immediately after the meeting with a deadline set for feedback and comments. The incorporation of these comments and amendments was however left to the discretion of the Chairman. Notes of the discussions at the Conference are on file with the Conference convenor, the Singapore Institute of International affairs.

Annex 1: ASEAN Civil Society Conference – List of Participants

Note on Participants at ASEAN Civil Society Conference 2007

The Conference brought together some 50 representatives from all ASEAN Member Countries. The participants were drawn from regional non-government organizations (NGOs), think-tanks, and CSOs who have participated in larger meetings and networks among their counterparts in preparation for the ASEAN Summit.

These networks and meetings include: the ASEAN People’s Assembly organized by the ASEAN-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies; the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism; the Solidarity for Asian Peoples’ Advocacy; and SE Asian Civil Society Environment Alliance.

A minority of participants from ASEAN governments, the ASEAN secretariat and international organizations also attended, including the Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Ong Keng Yong, who delivered a keynote address. These participants were separately identified from the NGOs and CSOs who attended.

	Country	Name	Designation	Organisation
1	Brunei	Datin Hajah Masni binti Haji Ali	Vice President III and President	Council of Women of Brunei Darussalam; Basmida, Brunei
2		Haji Julaini bin Haji Abd Latif	Training and Development Officer	Red Crescent Brunei Darussalam
3		Hajah Fatimah*	Special Duties Officer/ Chairman of Corporative for Youth Development Centre	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Brunei
4		Hajah Junainah binti Haji Jumahat*	Youth and Sports Affairs Officer	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Brunei
5		Hajah Noridah Hamid*	Assistant Director	Department of Community Development, Brunei
6	Cambodia	IM Sophea	Executive Assistant	Center for Social Development, Cambodia
7	Indonesia	Abrosius Ruwindrijarto	President	Telapak, Indonesia
8		Ari Muhammad	National Coordinator, The UNFCCC Implementation	WWF Indonesia
9		Fabby Tumiwa	Executive Director	Institute of Essential Services Reform (IESR)
10		Rafendi Djamin	Coordinator	Human Rights Working Group
11		Ulfa Hidayanti	Coordinator of Research and Publication	The Circle of Women's Alternative Education (KAPAL Perempuan)
12	Laos	Somsanouk Mixay	Vice President	Lao Journalist Association

	Country	Name	Designation	Organisation
13		Thongsavath Praseuth*	Former Ambassador to Sweden and the Republic of Korea	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
14		Vatchanaphone Khennavong*	Director of Administration and International Cooperation Division	Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA)
15	Malaysia	Chee Tong Yiew	Interim SEASCEA Secretariat/Manager	Global Environment Centre
16		Dato Param Cumaraswamy	Member, Regional Working Group	Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism
17		Faizal Parish	Director	Global Environment Centre
18		Umminajah Salleh	Fellow, Centre for ASEAN Studies	Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia
19	Myanmar	Daw Yin Yin Lay	Deputy Leader, Women and Entrepreneurship Group	Myanmar Women Affairs Federation
20		Wah Wah Maung	Research Member	Union Solidarity and Development Association
21		Thant Kyaw*	Deputy Director General	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Myanmar
22	Philippines	Anna Rosario Elicaño	Communications Officer	Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism
23		Ashley William Gois	Regional Coordinator	Migrant Forum in Asia
24		Christina Reyes	Executive Director	Foundation for the Philippines Environment
25		Consuelo Katrina A. Lopa	Regional Coordinator	Southeast Asian Committee for Advocacy (SEACA)
26		Ella Antonio	President	Earth Council Asia-Pacific, Philippines
27		Elpidio Peria	Associate	Third World Network
28		Esther Penunia	Secretary General	Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)
29		Jenina Joy Chavez	Senior Associate and Philippines Programme Coordinator	Focus on the Global South
30		Marlene Ramirez	Secretary General	Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA)
31	Singapore	Braema Mathiaparanam	Visiting Research Fellow	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)
32		Constance Singham	President	AWARE
33		Geh Min	President	Nature Society

	Country	Name	Designation	Organisation
34		Howard Shaw	Executive Director	Singapore Environment Council
35		Saleemah Ismail	President	UNIFEM-Singapore
36		Simon Tay	Chairman	Singapore Institute of International Affairs
37		Sinapan Samydorai	President	Think Centre, Singapore
38		Charles Chong*	Member of Parliament	Parliament of Singapore
39		Walter Woon*	Solicitor-General	Attorney General's Chambers
40	Thailand	Jiranan Hanthamrongwit	Reporter	Prachatai
41		Natapol Thongplew	Research Associate	Thailand Environment Institute
42		Pokpong Lawansiri	Southeast Asia Program Officer	Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
43		Sutthana Vichitrananda	Researcher	Centre for Philanthropy and Civil Society, National Institute of Development and Administration
44	Vietnam	Alice Pham	Director	CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre, Vietnam
45		Nguyen Thai Yen Huong	Dean	Faculty of Mid Career Training and Post Graduate Studies, Institute for International Relations

*Government officials

In addition to the above participants, the following representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat and International Organisation attended the ACSC 2007

	Organization	Name	Designation
1	ASEAN Secretariat	HE Ong Keng Yong	Secretary General of ASEAN
2		Afrina Anggiasari	External Relations Officer
3		Khiane Phansourivong	Assistant Director
4		Soeung Rathchavy	Deputy Secretary-General for Functional Cooperation
5	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights	Homayoun Alizadeh	Regional Representative for Southeast Asia