

## **ASEAN DAY 2013 CELEBRATION**

### ***"Contributing to the ASEAN Community Building through the Implementation of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD)"*** **ASEAN Hall, ASEAN Secretariat, 23 August 2013**

#### **Remarks by H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN**

Excellency, Mr. I Gede Agung Wesaka Puja, Director General for ASEAN Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,

Excellency, Pehin Dato Dr. Awang Hj. Ahmad bin Hj. Jumat, Chair of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights

Excellency, Ambassador Emaleen Abdul Rahman Teo, Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives,

Excellencies, Ambassadors, members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights,

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me welcome all of you to the special event for this year's celebration of ASEAN Day. As you are aware, last year the ASEAN Leaders adopted the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and signed the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights

Declaration. This landmark document is now being disseminated and implemented.

In this regard, I would like to commend the AICHR and the CPR for organizing this joint event "*Contributing to the ASEAN Community Building through the Implementation of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.*" This initiative is timely and is an indication of ASEAN's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights as we are moving closer to the goal of an ASEAN Community in 2015. The ASEAN Secretariat strongly supports this endeavor and looks forward to further coordinating collaboration between the AICHR and the CPR in this connection.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human Rights has been on ASEAN's agenda since the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 held in Vienna. That year the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in the Joint Communique of the 26<sup>th</sup> AMM affirmed ASEAN's commitment to and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as set out in the Vienna Declaration. They stressed that human rights are interrelated and indivisible comprising civil, political, economic and social and cultural rights and that human rights should be addressed in a balanced and integrated manner and promoted and protected with due regard for specific social, cultural and political circumstances.

Since 1993, human rights as been taking root in ASEAN's landscape. ASEAN has overcome many challenges in its development of a coherent basic policy on human rights. In a region diversified but united for our peoples' shared aspirations for peace, development and

dignity, ASEAN's approach to human rights has been one to ensure unity in diversity. It has been one evolving in its own pace and in its own ASEAN context, one that has contributed greatly to the growth of ASEAN from a loose grouping into a most dynamic and fast growing rules-based regional organization, one that has allowed it to take solid steps culminating in the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights in 2009 and the adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration in 2012.

The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration is the first regional human rights instrument in the Asia Pacific region. The Declaration is the embodiment of the commitment of the Governments of ASEAN to safeguard the human rights and fundamental freedoms of their peoples. The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration emulates the essence of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and several international human rights instruments, yet it is also uniquely ASEAN. The ability of ASEAN through the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights to produce the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration demonstrates not only its strong commitment to human rights but also its power to unite countries and peoples of rich diversity characterizing the nature of the ASEAN Charter. The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration is considered as a standard setting instrument for future ASEAN instruments on human rights as well as future cooperation on human rights between ASEAN and its partners.

Having produced such a comprehensive Declaration that contains added values such as its recognition of the right to peace and the right to development, ASEAN is to ensure its commitment contained therein translated into genuine and concrete actions. An important first step is to

bring it to the ASEAN public. Today, we are carrying out one of the several activities to disseminate the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration to the ASEAN Community. First is the launch of the book containing the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration which has been translated into the national languages of ASEAN Member States to reach out to the over 600 million citizens of ASEAN. This is complemented with a panel discussion on the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and its contribution to ASEAN Community building. We look forward to benefiting from the expertise of the two important institutions created by the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

I thank you all for your participation and wish you success in your deliberations.