

**AICHR YOUTH DEBATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS 2019:
Partnership for Sustainability
18-20 September 2019, Bangkok, Thailand**

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) convened its 6th AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights on 18-20 September in Bangkok, Thailand. As one of the axis of AICHR activities, the Youth Debate aimed to enhance interest and awareness about AICHR and human rights as well as to provide a platform for young people in ASEAN to express their views on human rights and interact with experts/academics on human rights issues within ASEAN.

At the opening ceremony, Minister of Education of Thailand, Mr. Nataphol Teepsuwan emphasised that the Youth Debate provides a great platform for youth as leaders of tomorrow to practice and also to cooperate with one another. With reference to human rights, the Minister highlighted that ASEAN had gained leads on the promotion on human rights, nevertheless enhancing awareness particularly on violations of human rights are required.

As part of the Keynote address, H.E. Dr. Amara Pongsapich, Chair of AICHR and the Representative of Thailand to the AICHR provided an overview of the AICHR and international and regional framework of human rights to all students.

Reiterated in her welcoming speech, Laura Pavlovic, Director of General Development Office, USAID Regional Development Mission to Asia said that "The U.S. Government, through the United States Agency for International Development, is proud to continue our partnership with ASEAN in catalyzing this exciting youth debate. Through the program, youth will better recognize diversity as strength of ASEAN and learn firsthand the importance of close partnerships and teamwork through collaboration within their cross-national debate teams"

Themed "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability" which is synced with the theme of ASEAN Chairmanship of Thailand, the event gathered approximately 30 university students as well as representative from the Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY), AICHR Representatives, Entities Associated with ASEAN, and the ASEAN Secretariat. Selected high school students and teachers from Thailand participated in the debate as observers, widening the outreach of youth in ASEAN on issues of human rights.

Panel discussions on the theme of "development and sustainability" conducted on the first day providing an overview on how development impacts the people within the region and the importance of human rights based approach to sustainable development. Through the debate motions, students shown their understanding and voiced their aspirations on the various thematic issues on human rights such as the enforceability of

carbon tax (environmental rights), juvenile justice (children rights), government supervision to internet use (freedom of speech). Site visits to the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) and the Asia Pacific Center on Disability (APCD) were also organized for students to better understand the link of economic development and sustainability and between sustainable development and the rights of persons with disabilities, respectively.

At the Award Ceremony, Best Speaker from each debate motion was announced including: Motion 1 “ASEAN Member states should set quotas and schedules for tourists visiting national parks”, Ms. Meher Malhotra (Singapore), Motion 2 “Juveniles aged 16 and above who commit a crime should be charged as adults”, Mr. Tan Yang Long (Singapore), Motion 3 “Enact an enforceable ASEAN carbon tax”, Mr. Hans Xavier W. Wong (Philippines), Motion 4 “Medical marijuana should be legalized in ASEAN”, Ms. Sok Sonita (Cambodia), and Motion 5 “The internet now requires government supervision”, Mr. Arsyad Asyl bin Romil (Malaysia).

The AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights 2019 was organised by AICHR Thailand in collaboration with various agencies in Thailand, including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, Chulalongkorn University. The event was supported by ASEAN – USAID PROSPECT.