

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Annual Report 2021

JULY 2020 – JULY 2021

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1. Executive Summary

This Annual Report covers the period between July 2020 and July 2021.

It is without a doubt that the year 2021 has been an unprecedented year with the effect of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic still being felt globally with ASEAN not being an exception. However, towards of this AICHR has continued to ensure that it is able to discharge its mandate of the promotion and protection on human rights in ASEAN by effectively adapting to the new normal. 2021 has also seen the start of the implementation of the Five Year Work Plan of the AICHR 2021-2025 which was approved and adopted in 2020.

Throughout the period of July 2020 to July 2021, AICHR has convened 2 regular meetings and 3 special meetings. A series of activities were also organized in line with the AICHR's annual Priority Programmes/Activities in 2020/2021 comprising of a total of 9 activities, 3 meetings/dialogues with ASEAN entities, 6 meetings with CSOs and external partners/parties.

AICHR's programmes and activities covered a wide range of rights, including responses to emerging challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many among them were follow-up programs that aimed to create enduring impacts and mainstream human rights across the ASEAN Community, such as in the areas of right to health, business and human rights, prevention and countering torture, human rights in humanitarian action, environment and climate change, prevention and countering the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism, and rights of migrant workers.

With respect to the AICHR contribution towards the recovery against the COVID-19 pandemic, AICHR has identified a total of 8 initiatives and programmes under the Implementation Plan of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework for which would be under the scope of implementation of AICHR. In this relation, AICHR has also begun discussing on how AICHR can contribute towards the realisation of the ASEAN SHIELD.

AICHR has continued to maintain its constructive engagement with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM), the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and the Secretary-General of ASEAN. AICHR has also continued its efforts to deepen its constructive engagement with CSOs, in line with the Guidelines on the AICHR's Engagement with CSOs, whereby AICHR this year held its first meeting with FORUM-ASIA.

AICHR has also continued efforts to strengthen its governance with the adoption of the Guidelines on AICHR's External Relations. AICHR is also developing the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for the Five-Year Work Plan of the AICHR 2021-2025.

2. Work of the AICHR

2.1. Five-Year Work Plan of the AICHR 2021-2025

The Five-year Work Plan of the AICHR 2021-2025 (FYWP 2021-2025) is among the guiding documents for AICHR's cooperation in the next five years. AICHR initiated the development of the Work Plan in early 2019 and has finalized the draft in June 2020, which was then approved by the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM) in August 2020.

To better mainstream human rights across ASEAN, the new Work Plan is aligned with guiding ASEAN documents, including the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, the Terms of Reference (TOR) of AICHR, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together, and other ASEAN human rights-related instruments and work plans of ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.

The adopted and approved matrix of the Work Plan is based on the mandates as stipulated in the AICHR TOR. The Work Plan is divided into six (6) Focus Areas with concrete Priorities and Indicative Activities. The framework aims to increase synergies among AICHR activities as well as between the AICHR and other ASEAN bodies, allow for forward planning with more long-term penetrating impact, and facilitate effective monitoring and evaluation.

The six (6) focus areas are (1) promote the full implementation of ASEAN instruments related to human rights; (2) strategies for cooperation to promote and protect human rights; (3) policy support for ASEAN Member States (AMS)/ASEAN Sectoral Bodies (ASBs); (4) engagement with stakeholders and partners; (5) capacity building and public awareness; and (6) other tasks. A total of 27 priorities and 74 indicative activities have been identified. The topics of rights are very diverse, including many areas that AICHR has pursued in many years as well as emerging human rights issues.

The Priority Programmes and Activities of the AICHR (PP) 2021 has been approved and adopted by 53rd AMM and has a total of 11 activities covering imminent issues such as the right to health, climate change, utilization of

information communication technology (ICTs), sustainable cities, as well as AICHR's long-pursued areas like the rights of the child, environmental impact assessment (EIA), freedom of expression, freedom of religion, youth debate, and human rights training. With the on-going pandemic affecting many programmes and activities, AICHR too is still adapting to the 'new normal'. In spite of the difficulties and challenges experienced, AICHR remains committed to the implementation of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025, PP 2021 and beyond.

2.2. AICHR Meetings

During the reporting period, AICHR has held 5 meetings via videoconference:

2.2.1 Special Meeting 1/2020 of the AICHR

AICHR convened its Special Meeting 1/2020 on 25-27 August 2020 via videoconference. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Amb. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Thai Yen Huong, Representative of Viet Nam to AICHR and was attended by the Representatives/Alternate Representatives of AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

The Meeting discussed modalities and measures to ensure the continuity of AICHR's work in the promotion and protection of human rights amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The thematic areas for implementation in 2020 were adjusted to focus on business and human rights, right to health, children's rights, right of migrant workers, and right to life. AICHR also deliberated its working modalities to conduct programmes/activities using either hybrid or virtual platform as well as measures to ensure its outreach and visibility.

2.2.2 Special Meeting 2/2020 of the AICHR

AICHR convened its Special Meeting 2/2020 on 24-25 November 2020 via videoconference. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Amb. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Thai Yen Huong, Representative of Viet Nam to AICHR and was attended by the Representatives/Alternate Representatives of AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

AICHR discussed progress on the implementation of the Priority Programmes and Activities of AICHR in the areas of business and human rights, right to health, right to education, right to remedy, human rights and countering extreme violence, children's rights, and youth debate on human

rights. AICHR also deliberated its draft Guidelines on AICHR's External Relations as well as a plan to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025.

The Meeting concluded with a handover ceremony of the AICHR Chairmanship from AICHR Viet Nam to AICHR Brunei Darussalam.

2.2.3 32nd Meeting of the AICHR

AICHR convened its 32nd Meeting on 4-5 February 2021 via videoconference. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Hjh Nor Hashimah Hj Mohammed Taib, Representative of Brunei Darussalam to AICHR and was attended by the Representatives/Alternate Representatives of AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

At this Meeting, AICHR deliberated the strategies to implement the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), as well as the development of M&E framework of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025. The Meeting discussed progress on the implementation of the Priority Programmes and Activities of the AICHR in the areas of right to health, human rights and environment, children's rights, youth debate, freedom of opinion and expression, right to development, human rights and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and human rights based approach to humanitarian action.

AICHR discussed institutional matters pertaining to AICHR's relation and cooperation with ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, external partners and other stakeholders including civil society organisations. To promote and enhance interactions between AICHR and external partners, the Meeting adopted the Guidelines on AICHR's External Relations.

2.2.4 33rd Meeting of the AICHR

AICHR convened its 33rd Meeting on 6-8 April 2021 via videoconference. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Hajah Nor Hashimah Haji Mohammed Taib, Representative of Brunei Darussalam to AICHR, and was attended by Representatives/Alternate Representatives of AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

AICHR deliberated its strategies to contribute to the implementation of the ACRF and the Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD). The Meeting discussed progress of the implementation of the Priority Programmes and Activities of AICHR 2021 in the areas of right to health, freedom of opinion and expression, right to development, right to nationality, rights of the child as well as human rights and the SDGs. AICHR also deliberated measures to strengthening governance and efficiency of the AICHR programmes and activities as well as the development of the M&E framework of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025.

During this meeting, AICHR also discussed the current developments on human rights in ASEAN. The Meeting took note of the update on the Philippines-UN Joint Programme on Human Rights. The Meeting also discussed recent developments in Myanmar while calling on all parties concerned to maintain stability and return to normalcy in the country.

2.2.5 Special Meeting 1/2021 of the AICHR

AICHR convened its Special Meeting 1/2021 on 12-14 July and 26 July 2021 via videoconference. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Hajah Nor Hashimah Haji Mohammed Taib, Representative of Brunei Darussalam to AICHR, and was attended by Representatives/Alternate Representatives of AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat.

The Meeting discussed progress of the implementation of the AICHR Priority Programmes/Activities of 2021 in the areas of human rights and environment, right to health, children's rights, freedom of religion and belief, humanitarian action and human rights, and institutional developments of AICHR through a regional dialogue: self-assessment of AICHR progress after 10 years. AICHR also discussed on the M&E framework of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 for implementation in 2021.

The Meeting was updated on recent developments and initiatives on human rights as presented by Representatives Indonesia and Philippines. Cross-sectoral and cross-pillar initiatives were also discussed, including its alignment with the ACRF and its Implementation Plan, and the ASEAN SHIELD.

Pursuant to the implementation of AICHR mandate 4.10 of its TOR to obtain information from ASEAN Member States on the promotion and protection of human rights, AICHR has included an agenda item related to the Recent Developments in ASEAN, where AICHR Representatives can update on the promotion and protection of human rights on a voluntary basis.

2.3. AICHR Activities

From the period of July 2020 to July 2021, AICHR has held a total of 9 activities from the current and previous approved Priority Programmes and Activities of AICHR as follows:

2.3.1 The Essentials of Human Rights Due Diligence in Business: A Training for ASEAN Institutions, Bangkok, Thailand and via videoconference, 1 - 2 December 2020

This activity was built on AICHR's previous programmes on business and human rights. The training deepened participants' understanding on the promotion of Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) for business sector in order to implement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the Implementation Plan of the ACRF. It unpacked the roles of states in setting expectations on HRDD, and thus equipped participants with essential knowledge on HRDD process and its linkage to remediation as well as lessons learnt in addressing adverse human rights impacts in different contexts. The training marked the first AICHR activity attributing to the implementation of the ACRF.

2.3.2 AICHR Consultation on the Implementation of Article 14 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD): Preventing and Countering Torture in Jakarta, Indonesia and via videoconference, 3 - 4 December 2020

The Consultation was a continuation of AICHR's previous programmes on the implementation of Article 14 of the AHRD. It provided an avenue to share experiences and practices among AMS to counter and prevent torture as well as gather inputs to develop recommendations on the implementation of Article 14 of the AHRD. Participants discussed the practices of State Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) in ASEAN, and shared some key principles in implementing Article 14 of the AHRD as well as possible international and regional cooperation on the

prevention of torture. Furthermore, the Consultation underscored the importance of raising public awareness activities, and collaboration with stakeholders such as government institutions, civil society, national human rights institutions, and scholars to develop possible elements of a skeleton roadmap toward the realisation of preventing and countering torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in ASEAN.

2.3.3 AICHR Consultation to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism in ASEAN from the Perspectives of Human Rights, Gender-Sensitive and Child Rights-Friendly, 3 June 2021, via videoconference

This activity showcased the AICHR's contribution to strengthening cross-pillar and cross-sectoral cooperation in countering violent extremism in ASEAN, and the implementation of the Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2019-2025) (i.e. the Bali Work Plan) in particular. It provided a platform for sharing best practices on preventing and countering violent extremism from the perspectives of human rights, gender-sensitive, and child rights-friendly.

2.3.4 AICHR Consultation on Mainstreaming Human Rights in Humanitarian Actions, 4 June 2021, via videoconference

The Consultation was the first AICHR activity focusing on the need and importance of integrating human rights to humanitarian action. Participants from ASEAN bodies and entities, stakeholders and external partners shared experiences and practices to overcome challenges in promoting rights-protection in humanitarian action, including: programmes on gender mainstreaming, disability inclusivity and child protection. Participants also discussed four categories of human rights commonly at stake in disaster, pandemic and conflict contexts, which relate to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

2.3.5 AICHR Workshop on Human Rights, Environment, and Climate Change, 8-10 June 2021, via videoconference

In continuation of AICHR's programmes on environment and human rights, this Workshop explored the interlinked elements of human rights and the environment, i.e. environmental decision making, climate change, and impacts on vulnerable groups including women, children and youth.

Discussions were focused on matters in relation to advancement of a rights-based approach to environmental decision-making (including through environmental impact assessment (EIA) mechanisms), intersection between climate change and human rights, and children's rights to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in ASEAN. The Workshop reaffirmed the important link between environment and full enjoyment of human rights, the need to focus on accountability, and access to justice and public participation as well as multi-stakeholder platforms to mainstream a rights-based approach to environmental protection in ASEAN. It also shed light on regional efforts to protect vulnerable peoples beyond boundaries and institutionalising efforts at all level.

2.3.6. AICHR Workshop on Realizing the Right to Health through Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), 29 June 2021, videoconference

This activity was part of the AICHR Forum on the Right to Health which focused on realising the right to health through achieving UHC in various context of Southeast Asian nations and discussing practical recommendations and ways forward for ASEAN Sectoral Bodies with mandate to achieving UHC. The Forum discussed the challenges and gaps to implement UHC in ASEAN during and post-pandemic, progresses and lesson learnt and identifying common elements for an effective UHC system, and measures in realisation of the right to health for migrant workers, e.g. portable social security. Participants also discussed integrating human rights-based approach in the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, the inclusion of mental health issues into the UHC package and the improvement of living and working conditions of the health workforce.

2.3.7. Follow up on the Implementation of Article 28(d) and 29(1), (2) of AHRD (Right to health), 29 June 2021, videoconference

This activity was also part of the AICHR Forum on the Right to Health, which focused on realising UHC for the protection and fulfilment of the right to health of the people of ASEAN, including migrant workers and other marginalised groups. The Forum discussed the lessons learnt, gaps, challenges and ways in realising the right to health through portable social security for migrant workers, as well as practical recommendations and ways forward to realising UHC for groups at risk or infected by COVID-19, particularly for migrant workers in ASEAN.

2.3.8. Harmonising the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, 30 June 2021, videoconference

This activity was conducted under the name “AICHR Forum on the Rights of Migrant Workers: Implementation of Article 4 of ASEAN Human Rights Declaration related to the Human Rights of Migrant Workers”, and contributed to the implementation of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers as well as the AHRD. The Forum focused on emerging challenges and gaps in policy framework related to the protection of the rights of migrant workers in ASEAN throughout the migration cycle of: pre-departure, transit, settlement in the host country, return and reintegration, and aimed to develop recommendations on the implementation of Article 4 of the AHRD in relation to the rights of migrant workers. The Forum also reviewed the progress and challenges in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration in the region, including the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3.9. Regional Dialogue: Self-Assessment of AICHR Progress After 10 Years, 23 July 2021, videoconference

The Regional Dialogue created an opportunity for exchange of views among former and current AICHR Representatives on AICHR’s mandates and functions need to be strengthened in order to enhance effectiveness in the promotion and protection of human rights in the region. It aimed to document the discussion and recommendations for further deliberation in support to the work of a Panel of Experts to be established by the ASEAN Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM), which was tasked by the AMM in 2019. The Dialogue commended AICHR for its achievements and progress made in the first decade of AICHR’s establishment. It also discussed a number of structural and operational challenges under the four sessions, namely: 1) the overview of regional human rights mechanism and the evolution of AICHR; 2) challenges in implementing AICHR’s mandates to provide policy support for AMS and ASBs to mainstream human rights and to develop human rights strategies in ASEAN; 3) ways forward for AICHR to advance stakeholders engagement; and 4) ways forward to strengthen AICHR’s protection mandates.

2.4. Engagement with ASEAN Organs, Bodies and Entities

During the 33rd Meeting of the AICHR held on 6-8 April 2021, the AICHR Representatives held their annual interface with the Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, with a focus of discussion on cross-sectoral and cross-pillar areas that AICHR could consider contributing to the implementation of the ASEAN strategic frameworks and initiatives in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing the regional recovery.

At the same meeting AICHR also held its annual interface with the CPR, with discussions focused on necessary support to the implementation of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 and possible AICHR-CPR collaboration.

AICHR also met via videoconference with the Working Group on the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (WG-AHRM), an entity associated with ASEAN under Annex II of the ASEAN Charter, during the Special Meeting 1/2020 of AICHR. At this Meeting, AICHR and WG-AHRM exchanged views on matters pertaining to AICHR's efforts to enhance the implementation of its mandates and the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025.

2.5. Consultative Relationship with CSOs

During the 33rd Meeting of the AICHR, a meeting was held with Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), which is one of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) having consultative relationship with AICHR. The meeting discussed potential areas for further engagement between AICHR and FORUM-ASIA in the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN. For the duration August 2020 to July 2021, AICHR has received one application for consultation relationship with AICHR.

2.6. External Relations

During the reporting period, AICHR met with Australia, the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), Switzerland, and the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) via videoconference to discuss potential areas for future cooperation of mutual interests under the framework of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 and the PP 2021.

2.6.1 AICHR had a meeting with Australia during Special Meeting 1/2020 of AICHR on 27 August 2020. Australia underlined its commitment to the

promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN in line with the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-Australia Strategic Partnership (POA) for 2020-2024. The Meeting deliberated on areas of cooperation with emphasis on rights of persons with disabilities, business and human rights, countering human trafficking and illegal labour migration.

- 2.6.2 AICHR had a meeting with the EU during Special Meeting 2/2020 of AICHR on 24 November 2020. AICHR and the EU exchanged views on mutual areas of interests for potential cooperation in line with the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 and the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018-2022, including freedom of expression, freedom of religion and belief, human rights and environment, and AICHR's initiatives under the ACRF. At this Meeting, AICHR and the EU also discussed the preparation for the 4th ASEAN-EU Policy Dialogue on Human Rights.
- 2.6.3 AICHR had an interface meeting with the UN during Special Meeting 2/2020 of AICHR on 25 November 2020. The UN and AICHR explored areas for further cooperation with regards to the promotion and protection of human rights, including on issues of business and human rights, right to development, children and women's rights, rights of migrant workers, SDGs, freedom of expression, freedom of religious and belief, rights of persons with disabilities, and human rights and digitalisation.
- 2.6.4 AICHR had a meeting with Switzerland during Special Meeting 2/2020 of AICHR on 25 November 2020. Switzerland informed the four thematic priorities in its Human Rights Strategy for the period of 2020-2023, including freedom of expression, abolishment of death penalty, prevention of torture, and minorities and vulnerable groups. The Chair of AICHR reiterated AICHR's commitment to work with Switzerland and other partners in the promotion and protection of human rights for sustaining peace and security, livelihood and well-being of the people of ASEAN.
- 2.6.5 AICHR had its first interface meeting with the ICRC during Special Meeting 2/2020 of AICHR on 24 November 2020. The ICRC briefed AICHR on the new development in its engagement with ASEAN and suggested potential areas of cooperation with AICHR, including the issues of mainstreaming human rights and humanitarian action, and good practices in promoting indigenous and traditional knowledge in responding and adapting to the impact of climate change in line with the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 and the PP 2021.

3. AICHR and the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the primary body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN, AICHR underlines the importance to ensure that AICHR activities will continue to be implemented despite the difficulties initially faced in adapting to the new normal. In addition to this, AICHR has also ensured that activities under the current work plan and priority programmes have been adapted accordingly to address issues of human rights which have arisen or caused to be more prevalent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1. Advocacy amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

On 1 May 2020, AICHR published a press release on the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), whereby AICHR expressed its serious concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and its negative effects on the lives and well-being of the people of ASEAN whilst also acknowledging the efforts of ASEAN and its individual Member States in responding to the spread of the disease which highlights the importance of taking a coherent, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and whole-of-ASEAN Community approach in ensuring ASEAN's timely and effective response to the pandemic. In line with the above, AICHR expected all ASEAN sectoral bodies and entities, as well as Member States, to integrate human rights values and the principles of non-discrimination, participation and inclusion in their responses to the crisis.

In addition, AICHR also highlighted the importance of promoting and protecting human rights while combatting COVID-19 pandemic, including economic, social, civil and political rights and rights of vulnerable groups and underscored the right of people and community to access to information as part of the efforts to fight the dissemination of fake news and misinformation.

In ending the press release, AICHR impressed upon the fact that this is a time for ASEAN solidarity and cooperation and resolve to collectively mitigate the impact of COVID-19 to ensure the continued enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people of ASEAN.

3.2. Implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework

AICHR has currently identified a total of 8 initiatives and programmes under Key Priority 2f. (Mainstreaming human rights in the process of post- pandemic

recovery toward resilient region) and 5d. (Promoting sustainable and responsible investment) under the Implementation Plan of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework for which would be under the scope of implementation of AICHR.

The initiatives are as follows:

- I. Consultation on human rights and public health emergencies
- II. ASEAN forum on SDG 11: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable in the context of public health crises
- III. Consultation on human rights and the impact of Industry 4.0 in the context of pandemics and health emergencies
- IV. Consultation on enduring the adaptable and inclusive education for vulnerable and marginalised groups
- V. Consultation on the nexus of public health crisis and mixed migration: from the perspective on human rights
- VI. Initiatives to share best practices in the context of public health emergencies in addressing human rights issues on women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, older persons, indigenous people, and vulnerable groups
- VII. Enable sustainable economic growth through promoting responsible business practices to help businesses consider and manage the human rights risks and impacts of their operations and common to many industries
- VIII. Training programmes to mainstreaming human rights in the implementation of SDGs in ASEAN in the context of post pandemic recovery.

3.3. Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN responses to Emergencies and Disasters

AICHR notes that challenges today are becoming more complex and interrelated, such as the COVID-19 pandemic which had unprecedented and detrimental impacts on the ASEAN Community and peoples, and therefore it is important to ensuring ASEAN remains capable and effective in addressing such challenges, which require greater cross-pillar and cross-sectoral coordination.

AICHR hopes that greater coordination on these issues, would ensure ASEAN's swift and timely response to regional emergencies and disasters, but more

importantly, it will help mitigate further impacts to the lives and livelihoods of the people of ASEAN.

As such AICHR welcomes the introduction of ASEAN SHIELD, that aims to ensure the swift and coordinated activation of ASEAN mechanisms and initiatives needed to deal with emergencies and disasters affecting the ASEAN region. In this relation, AICHR has provided input to the Mapping of the ASEAN SHIELD with Existing ASEAN Regional Initiatives on Disasters and Emergencies for submission to the ASEAN Joint Consultative Meeting (JCM).

4. Observations and Future Directions

4.1. Despite the difficulties faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, AICHR has underlined the importance of ensuring the work of AICHR continues and that activities under the current Priority Programmes and Activities of the AICHR and any previous outstanding Priority Programmes and relevant workplans are implemented by having activities to be held virtually and ensuring that concept note of activities have been tweaked to cover the issues which have arisen or become prevalent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are included. It is also noted that the budget for virtual activities are significantly less than that of activities held physically.

4.2. AICHR's works have been focusing on four approaches:

- A. Mainstreaming human rights in the three Community pillars of ASEAN and in development programmes of the AMS.
- B. Integrating programme-based approach to its planning of activities and implementation.
- C. Cross-pillars cross-sectoral cooperation by involving other ASEAN Sectoral Bodies' relevant work plans into AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 and the ACRF.
- D. Promoting the implementation of ASEAN instruments related to human rights.

4.3. AICHR has taken steps in strengthening of the governance of AICHR, during the 32nd Meeting of AICHR, the Guidelines on AICHR's External Relations was adopted with a view to promote and enhance interactions between AICHR and external partners.

- 4.4. To ensure the proper implementation and effectiveness of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025, AICHR is developing an M&E framework for the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025, which includes a mid-term review of the Five-Year Work Plan to be conducted in 2023, and a final review of the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025 to be conducted in 2025. In the course of the review and evaluation, the AICHR is given the flexibility to update the Priority Areas and Indicative Activities of the Five-Year Work Plan as well as to adjust its implementation strategy to be reflected in the annual Work Plans of the AICHR. In line with the framework, AICHR shall also continue to document its assessment on the implementation of its TOR for better improvement of its works. An annual progress report of the Work Plan implementation and the annual Priority Programmes and Activities of AICHR will be reported to the AMM.
- 4.5. Moving forward in order to ensure the timely, proper and effective discharge of the mandate of AICHR, a continuous examination of the current guidelines, rules and procedures of AICHR needs to be conducted to ensure that AICHR adheres to those existing rules and procedures which have been previously agreed on consensus.
- 4.6. AICHR has identified 8 initiatives under the ACRF Implementation Plan which are in line with the AICHR FYWP 2021-2025. AICHR will continue to review the ACRF Implementation plan from time to time to consider how AICHR can further contribute to the ACRF.
- 4.7. AICHR is currently considering and coming to an understanding regarding the ASEAN SHIELD approach and will continue to discuss and strive to integrate the principles and concepts set out under the ASEAN SHIELD in the upcoming works of the AICHR.