



SUMMARY REPORT

REGIONAL DIALOGUE: SHARING GOOD PRACTICES ON ENHANCING HUMAN RIGHTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 28-29 October, 2024

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Covid-19 pandemic imposed unprecedented challenges and vulnerabilities in existing systems to human rights, including the rights to health, education, work, and social security. These vulnerable exposures revealed the need for innovative and inclusive approaches in furtherance of human rights protection. In line with these needs, the *Regional Dialogue: Sharing Good Practices on Enhancing Human Rights during the Covid-19 Pandemic* ("Dialogue"), chaired by **H.E. Keo Remy**, Representative of Cambodia to AICHR with support from ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund (ACCF), aimed to share knowledge and experience among ASEAN Member States on strategies and policies implemented to protect human rights during the pandemic. The Dialogue identifies common challenges and explores potential solutions to strengthen regional cooperation and develop a shared vision for a human rights-based recovery. Further, the Dialogue aims to contribute to the development of more effective and equitable human rights policies and practices in the ASEAN region. The Agenda of the Dialogue appears as **ANNEX 1**.
2. The Dialogue brought together representatives from ASEAN Member States, including government officials, members from civil society organizations, relevant bodies such as the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) along with regional and international experts from China and Japan. The list of Participants appears as **ANNEX 2**.

OPENING SESSION

3. In his welcoming remarks, **H.E. Keo Remy**, *the Representative of Cambodia to the AICHR*, welcomed the participants to the Dialogue. He highlighted the significant impacts of the pandemic on global health and economies, emphasizing the importance of effective responses that prioritize human rights. He underscored the government successful non-discriminatory vaccination policy through the provision of free vaccines to all citizens, tourists, foreign residents that enabled the country to protect public health and minimize economic disruption. H.E. Keo Remy also acknowledged the significant contribution of

China in supporting Cambodia during the crisis, particularly through the provision of medical supplies and vaccines by focusing on the solidarity between these two nations to exemplify the importance of international cooperation in addressing global health emergencies. Lastly, he focused on the objectives of the Dialogue in sharing experiences, lessons learned, and best practices to address human rights challenges during the pandemic for ASEAN Member States to strengthen their capacity in their human rights-based responses to future crises.

4. **H.E. Amb. Yong Chanthalangsy**, *Chair and Representative of Lao PDR to the AICHR*, acknowledged the perilous impacts the pandemic had on global health and economies and advocated for continued vigilance against future health crises. With emphasis on the importance of health resilience and the One Health Initiative, he recognized the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health through the ASEAN COVID-19 Recovery Framework (ACRF). This initiative provided a crucial framework for responding to the pandemic's socioeconomic impact. H.E. Amb. also mentioned AICHR's roles in promoting and protecting human rights in ASEAN including standard-setting, stakeholder engagement, and addressing emerging issues like online exploitation and abuse. The Lao PDR Chairmanship reaffirms the commitment to human rights promotion and protection in the region.
5. The Dialogue continued with the remarks from **Mr. Chang Jian**, *Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Cambodia*, with a focus on the importance of a human-centered approach to pandemic response and prioritized the rights to life and health. He commended the efforts of various countries, including Cambodia, in implementing effective public health measures and safeguarding the well-being of their citizens. Further, he encouraged continued international cooperation as it is essential to address future health crises and underlined that this Dialogue strengthened healthcare systems, and fostered solidarity for countries to work together to protect public health and promote human well-beings.

SESSION 1: OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ASEAN AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

H.E. Amb. Yong Chanthalangsy, *Chair and the Representative of Lao PDR to the AICHR*, moderated the first session.

6. **H.E. Prof. Dr. Amara Pongsapich**, *Representative of Thailand to the AICHR*, provided a comprehensive overview of ASEAN's human rights framework. She focused on the establishment of the AICHR in 2009 as a significant milestone, alongside the ACWC and the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. Professor acknowledged the challenges faced by ASEAN Member States as each State encounters different development, political and economic stages hindering them to

consistently align with international human rights standards or maintain uniform compliance. Despite these challenges, progress has been made, especially in the rights women, children, and migrant workers. Various ASEAN bodies and civil society organizations are actively working to develop a comprehensive approach to address emerging human rights issues, including business and human rights, environmental impact, and the rights of persons with disabilities. These works revealed the need to move beyond mere treaty ratification by focusing on effective implementations of human rights standards at the national level in furtherance of a more just and equitable future for ASEAN and its citizens.

7. **H.E. Sreang Chenda**, *Director of International Human Rights and the United Nations Department, Cambodian Human Rights Committee*, discussed the three core obligations of states in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights. He stated the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and special procedures. These mechanisms play crucial roles in monitoring and promoting human rights. Additionally, he also mentioned treaty-based mechanisms, such as the human rights treaty bodies, can monitor state compliance with specific human rights treaties. Cambodia, among other party to several human rights treaties, is obligated to implement the provisions of these treaties at the national level. He concluded by stressing on tailoring human rights standards to each country's unique context through shared experiences and best practices to ensure maximizing international cooperation.
8. **Professor Dr. Mo Jihong**, *Director of the Institute of Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, shared China's commitment to human rights and its active participation in international human rights mechanisms. Since the 1978 reforms, China has made significant strides in promoting and protecting human rights with ratifications and accessions to numerous international human rights treaties and conventions. Professor illustrated on the active participation in the UN human rights mechanisms, including the UPR, as well as the incorporation of human rights principles into China's domestic legal framework such as its Constitution and several national human rights action plans. Professor reaffirmed China's commitment in working with other countries to promote and protect human rights globally as part of international cooperation.
9. During the interactive Q&A segment, a key challenge of balancing competing rights during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic was discussed. As countries implemented measures to contain the virus, such as vaccination mandates and restrictions on movement, questions arose about potential infringements on individual rights like privacy and freedom of assembly. Proposals addressing these challenges to effectively balance competing rights, mitigate the negative impacts of crises and protect human dignity and well-being by prioritizing community rights over individual rights in times of crisis. The panelists also cited strong governance, clear legal frameworks and necessary and proportionate measures compliant with human rights standards. The discussion also extended to the important roles

of sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices from international cooperation and solidarity and the values of government's transparency and accountability in implementing restrictions.

SESSION 2: SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES ON ENHANCING THE RIGHT TO HEALTH DURING AND POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

H.E. Long Sonita, *Alternate Representative of Cambodia to the AICHR*, moderated the second session.

10. **H.E. Dr. Shashi Jayakumar**, *Representative of Singapore to the AICHR*, presented Singapore's successful response to the pandemic by attributing strong public health infrastructure, effective communication strategies, rapid vaccination deployment, and the innovative use of technology. He pointed out mental health of adolescents and seniors and the living conditions of foreign workers to be areas of concerns. To address these concerns, the Singaporean government established mental health support and improved the living conditions of foreign workers. Dr. Jayakumar emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach to pandemic response for both the immediate health concerns and the broader social and economic implications.
11. **Professor Dr. Shen Qian**, *Editor of Chinese Review of International Law, Institute of International Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, stressed the importance of the global nature of health issues and the importance of a human rights-based approach to addressing them. She explored the evolving understanding of the right to health, which has expanded beyond individual rights to encompass intergenerational and societal dimensions. The significance of intergenerational equity and social solidarity from individuals stems from the shared the responsibility in ensuring a healthy future for all. Those shared responsibilities are providing access to quality healthcare, investing in public health infrastructure, and implementing effective health policies. Dr. Shen concluded with China, as a key player in global health, has actively contributed to the international discourse on the right to health by implementing comprehensive healthcare reforms, and participated in international health initiatives.
12. **H.E. Dr. Yok Sambath**, *Secretary of State, Ministry of Health, Cambodia*, shared insights into Cambodia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the country's strong leadership, effective coordination, and community engagement. Dr. Yok shared Cambodia's comprehensive response strategy implemented on vulnerable groups, including early detection, rapid vaccination deployment, and strict public health measures. Key lessons learned from Cambodia's experience were strong political leadership, effective inter-ministerial coordination, and community engagement. By leveraging existing health systems, human rights-based approach and international cooperation, Cambodia was able

to successfully contain the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact regardless of their social or economic status, has access to essential health services.

13. **Mr. Taskin Rahman**, *Head of Advocacy and Campaigns for Asia, Save the Children*, stated the importance of the Alma-Ata Declaration, which emphasizes the role of primary healthcare in achieving health equity. Mr. Rahman also discussed the impacts of the pandemic on women and marginalized groups as women healthcare workers faced increased burdens, and women and children experienced heightened risks of gender-based violence. To strengthen health systems and increase resilience for future crises, Mr. Rahman emphasized on the importance of legal reforms, expansion of universal health coverage, international cooperation, and support for global health efforts.
14. The panelists discussed the importance of promoting health and digital literacy, particularly among vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities during the interactive Q&A segment. They highlighted the challenges posed by misinformation and disinformation and raised effective communication, community engagement, digital literacy promotion, and government leadership as crucial strategies to counter these challenges.

SESSION 3: SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES ON ENHANCING THE RIGHT TO QUALITY AND ACCESS EDUCATION DURING AND POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

H.E. Van Dana, Member of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee, moderated the third session.

15. **Ms. Duriya Amatavivat**, *Special Adviser to the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education of Thailand, ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED)*, said in her pre-recorded video that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted education systems worldwide. In Thailand, the transition to online learning presented numerous challenges, especially for less-privileged students. Thailand's Ministry of Education implement several initiatives in bridging the digital divide through providing access to digital devices and internet connectivity for students, and developing innovative teaching methods and learning materials. These programs supported the students' mental health and provide counseling services. Ms. Amatavivat placed a strong emphasis on providing and expanding vocational training programs for marginalized groups, students with disabilities, and those from low-income families.
16. **Mr. Chin Sam Ath**, *Deputy Director, Department of Policy, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Cambodia*, noted that Cambodia's education sector faced significant challenges during the pandemic, including school closures and disruptions to learning. To mitigate these challenges, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) implemented a comprehensive response strategy by prioritizing the continuity of education

through transitioning to distance learning. This involved developing online learning materials, providing technical support to teachers and students, and collaborating with partners to ensure equitable access to education. Mr. Chin stated that MoEYS focused on addressing the socio-emotional needs of students, providing mental health support and counseling services. To ensure a safe and effective return to in-person learning, MoEYS imposed stringent health and safety protocols in addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities and marginalized communities.

17. **H.E. Yanti Kusumawardhani**, *Indonesia's Representative for the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)*, stated that the pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities and posed significant challenges to children's rights, particularly in terms of education, health, and protection. School closures, economic hardships, and disruptions to essential services disproportionately affected vulnerable children, including those from marginalized communities. She highlighted the governments and international organizations' response and strategies through remote learning by focusing on digital infrastructure, quality trainings for teachers, and expansion of mental health services to address the psychological needs for children and adolescents. Strengthening of social safety nets and measures for child protection can prevent child abuse, neglect, and exploitation, particularly in the context of increased stress and economic hardship. Additionally, regional organizations have played a crucial role in promoting children's rights such as the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of the Child that has strengthened child protection mechanisms and promote child-friendly policies.
18. **Associate Professor Eugene Tan**, *Alternate Representative of Singapore to the AICHR*, presented Singapore's multi-faceted approach to the pandemic in ensuring the continuity of education by focusing on the government's stringent health and safety measures in schools, including temperature checks, social distancing, and contact tracing. Online learning transition used digital platforms and tools were further facilitated with comprehensive support for students and teachers, including the distribution of digital devices, training on online teaching and learning, and mental health counseling. Professor Tan attributed the success to community engagement between schools, parents, and the community. He also shared the view that the pandemic might have accelerated the digital transformation of education, and mentioned Singapore to be well-positioned to leverage technology to enhance learning experiences in the future.
19. During the interactive Q&A segment, a pressing concern was raised regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early childhood education, particularly for children who reached enrollment age during the pandemic. Many children experienced delays in enrollment, leading to learning loss and potential long-term consequences. To address this issue, countries have implemented various strategies, including online enrollment, community outreach, flexible enrollment policies, and targeted support for vulnerable children.

SESSION 4: SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES ON ENHANCING LABOUR RIGHTS DURING AND POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

H.E. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, the Representative of Malaysia to the AICHR, moderated the fourth session.

20. **Mr. Thiphasone Soukhathammavong**, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao PDR, ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW) said the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted migrant workers in the ASEAN region, leading to job losses, reduced income, and increased vulnerability. To address these challenges, governments and international organizations implemented various measures, including 1) the expansion of social protection programs to provide financial assistance, healthcare, and other essential services to migrant workers; 2) the development of vocational training and skills to enhance the employability of migrant workers; 3) the provision of support services to returning migrant workers, such as counseling, job placement, and financial assistance; and 4) the concentrated collaboration with international organizations to coordinate efforts and share best practices in protecting migrant workers' rights.
21. **Mr. Finn Koh**, Programme Manager, from ILO Cambodia, remarked that the pandemic presented significant challenges to labor rights and social protection in the ASEAN region. However, many countries responded effectively by implementing various measures to protect workers' livelihoods through cash transfers, unemployment benefits, and other social safety nets to support workers during the crisis. These measures also helped preserve jobs and create new employment opportunities by ensuring good working conditions, securing occupational health and safety along with minimum wages guaranteed. Extending and ensuring equitable access to social protection, and labor rights to informal economy was also addressed in his intervention.
22. **Mr. Lay Yan**, Executive Director of Child Rights Coalition Cambodia, noted that the pandemic significantly impacted children's rights, particularly in terms of education, health, and protection. School closures and shifts to online learning exacerbated existing inequalities, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds facing greater challenges. Organizations like Child Rights Coalition Asia mitigated the negative impacts of the pandemic on children and implemented various initiatives to ensure their rights are protected through digital literacy, online safety and mental health support, applicable to both children and their families. He stressed on the importance of community engagement is to raise awareness about child rights, provide support to vulnerable children, enforce advocating policy that prioritize the rights and well-being of children during crises.

23. **H.E. Som Chamnan**, *Secretary of State, Ministry of Labor, and Vocational Training, Cambodia*, shared that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the labor market in Cambodia. To mitigate the negative consequences, the Cambodian government implemented a series of measures aimed to protect workers' livelihoods, stimulate economic recovery, and build a more resilient labor market, including 1) wage subsidies by providing financial support to workers during periods of reduced work hours or unemployment; 2) social security benefits by ensuring continued access to social security benefits, such as healthcare and retirement benefits; 3) job retention by implementing measures to encourage businesses to retain workers and avoid layoffs; 4) skills training and re-skilling by offering training programs to help workers acquire new skills and improve their employability and 5) collaboration with other countries by working with neighboring countries to protect the rights of Cambodian migrant workers.
24. During the Q&A session, delegates raised several important questions regarding labor law enforcement and migrant worker protection. Panelists discussed various strategies to combat these challenges, including strengthening monitoring systems, enforcing penalties, capacity building, and promoting social dialogue. Particularly, countries like Cambodia and Laos have implemented measures such as amnesty programs, border control, and promoting legal migration channels to effectively address the challenges of labor law enforcement and protect the rights of all workers.

SESSION 5: SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND RIGHTS OF PRIVACY DURING AND POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

H.E. Pa Ponnarada, *Member of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee*, moderated the fifth session.

On the right to information:

25. **H.E. Phos Sovann**, *Director General of General Department of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Information, Cambodia*, expressed that Cambodia's response to the pandemic was characterized by strong leadership, effective coordination, and a focus on public health and safety. Cambodia's resilience and commitment to protecting the health and well-being of its citizens included prompt and timely measures by the government such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing guidelines, to contain the spread of the virus. The public health initiatives prioritized vaccination campaigns, contact tracing, and testing to protect public health. Concerning information dissemination, he continued that the government actively disseminated accurate information through traditional and digital media channels to combat misinformation and promote public awareness.
26. **Professor Dr. Ma Jinxing**, *Institute of International Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*, discussed the challenges and opportunities related to access to information during and after the pandemic in China. During the pandemic, the Chinese government

implemented measures such as testing, tracing, isolation, and border quarantine to contain the virus. To ensure transparency and public trust, the Chinese government also released information on the pandemic, including case numbers, vaccination rates, and public health guidelines. While China's legal framework does not explicitly mention the right to information, the Constitution and administrative regulations provide for the disclosure of government information, particularly in matters of public interest while simultaneously protecting personal data and privacy in the digital age.

On the right to privacy

27. **H.E. Keo Sothie**, *Secretary of State, Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Cambodia*, discussed Cambodia's digital transformation journey and the importance of balancing technological advancement with data privacy and security. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in Cambodia, leading to increased reliance on online services and digital infrastructure. However, this rapid digitalization also raised concerns about data privacy and cybersecurity. To safeguard personal information and ensure responsible data handling practices, the Cambodian government has taken steps to strengthen its legal and regulatory framework by developing laws on cybersecurity and data protection. While technological advancements offer numerous benefits, it is essential to mitigate potential risks, such as data breaches and misuse of personal information. Cambodia can harness the power of technology while protecting the rights and privacy of its citizens in balancing innovation and regulation.
28. During the discussion session, a delegate from UNICEF raised a concern about ensuring the effective deletion of personal data. Panelists acknowledged the challenges in tracking and verifying the complete deletion of personal data once it has been shared with multiple entities. In response, there are robust data protection frameworks, such as the General Data Protection Regulation, which emphasize principles like data minimization, purpose limitation, and accountability.

SESSION 6: SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES ON ENHANCING SOCIAL PROTECTION RESPONSES DURING AND POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

H.E. Angelito A. Nayan, *the Representative of the Philippines to the AICHR*, moderated the sixth session.

29. **Mr. Wanchai Roujanavong**, *Thailand's Representative for Children's Rights ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)*, analyzed the challenges and responses to the pandemic in Thailand. The initial phase of the pandemic was marked by uncertainty and fear, as the virus spread rapidly and overwhelmed healthcare systems. The Thai government implemented a range of measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, including lockdowns, social distancing, and mass vaccination campaigns. To ensure equitable access to healthcare and balancing

public health and economic recovery the government prioritized vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and healthcare workers, and implemented economic support measures to protect livelihoods and alleviate poverty. Despite these efforts, the pandemic posed significant challenges, including the spread of misinformation and the economic downturn.

30. **Mr. Sreng Sophornreaksmey**, *Director of Policy Department, National Social Protection Council (NSPC), Cambodia*, examined the Cambodian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic through social protection measures. To mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic, the Royal Government implemented a range of strategies, including the continuity of existing programs to ensure the continued delivery of essential social protection benefits, such as cash transfers, health insurance, and pensions. Additionally, there were programs designed to adapt to the changing circumstances, such as providing food rations instead of school meals and introduced the new emergency social assistance programs through the launching of targeted cash transfer programs to support vulnerable households and individuals. These programs' impact assessments revealed significant positive outcomes, including improved food security, reduced poverty, and enhanced social and economic well-being. These findings emphasize the crucial role of social protection in mitigating the adverse effects of crises and promoting sustainable development.
31. **Ms. Thea Sophy**, *Social Policy Officer, UNICEF*, explained the implementation of cash transfer programs in Cambodia during the pandemic. The government prioritized vulnerable populations, including children, women, and people with disabilities, by providing targeted financial assistance. To ensure effective delivery, the government has to leverage the existing infrastructure and systems, such as the IDPoor system and the social protection system for pregnant women and young children. Challenges included the rapid rollout of the program and ensuring accurate targeting of beneficiaries. However, the program demonstrated significant positive impacts, including improving food security, reducing poverty, and enhancing social and economic well-being. The discussion also touched on broader issues related to social protection, such as the importance of equity, inclusivity, and sustainability. Participants emphasized the need for evidence-based policymaking, strong governance, and effective coordination between government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners.
32. **Dr. Yuta Yokobori**, *Health Policy Advisor to the Central Ministry of Health, JICA*, explored the crucial role of social protection in promoting health service coverage, particularly for vulnerable populations. Various types of social protection, include social insurance and social assistance, and their impact on health outcomes. In combating low coverage of social protection in many countries, particularly among informal workers, there was effective targeting, equitable access, and strong governance. Case studies from Cambodia and Japan were presented to illustrate the implementation of social protection programs and their impact on public health. The pandemic underscored the need to invest in social

protection systems where countries can improve health outcomes, reduce poverty, and build more resilient societies.

33. The open discussion session pointed out the importance of social protection. It was noted that a staggering 55% of the world's population lacked access to such safeguards, underscoring the need for robust social protection systems to mitigate the adverse effects of crises and ensure the well-being of individuals and communities. One key issue was the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as persons deprived of liberty and children in conflict with the law, in social protection programs. These issues can be addressed through innovative approaches, like virtual visits and community engagement. Another important topic was the empowerment of communities and right holders to participate in social protection schemes. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness, providing information, and advocating for the rights of vulnerable groups. The challenges of achieving universal health coverage include identifying and targeting vulnerable populations, ensuring equitable access to services, and addressing the financial constraints are key considerations. Finally, the future of social protection needs to cover and/or expand sustainable financing, effective governance, and innovative approaches in addressing emerging challenges and building more resilient and equitable societies.

SESSION 7: GROUP DISCUSSION ON ENHANCING HUMAN RIGHTS DURING AND POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

34. Following the six sessions, the interactive dialogue was moderated by **H.E. Ouch Nipon**, *Vice-President of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee*, in which the participants were divided into smaller groups to focus on the issues of right to education, child protection, labor rights and right to health. The pandemic has unveiled key vulnerabilities in these connected spheres and all AMS required close cooperation with all stakeholders to tackle these issues. The respective AMS were inquired on measures to address the challenges and provided further updates as below:
35. On ensuring the right to education, digital divide continues to pose as limited access to connectivity hindered online learning. It further strained the transition of online learning and compounded the disadvantaged students, which in turn, caused further negative impacts on students' mental health. Isolation and stress associated with the pandemic can greater reduce meaningful social interactions that would harm students social and emotional development. Some of the recommendations include further investment in digital infrastructure to ensure accessibility to affordable internet and digital devices are expanded. Participants also raised quality trainings for teachers to equip them with online teaching methodologies and suggested a hybrid method of online and in-persons training modules as well as mental health support through counselling to cope with the above challenges.

36. Participants shared their views on challenges imposed on enhancing social protection. They identified increased risk of abuse and neglect for students and young children as school closures and lockdowns were imposed. They also raised concerns on limited monitoring from disruptions in social services that could hinder identification and responses to child protection issues. In combatting these, participants stressed on the continued investment in child protection systems such as the reporting mechanism, counselling services, legal aid, and social service delivery. The need to empower stronger community ties through awareness-raising campaigns and online safety for digital citizenship were also discussed as a positive approach to strengthening social protection.
37. On ensuring labor rights during pandemics, participants also highlighted job loss and income insecurity to be a main concern, especially for informal workers as they lack social protection schemes and legal safeguards. Stemming from such vulnerability, women and girls were also identified to be disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and exploitation. The Dialogue garnered responses to ensure financial assistance and health care coverage are extended to vulnerable workers through the existing social protection programs. At the same time, implementation of policies that promote fair labor practices, decent working conditions and social dialogues must be in place to ensure the rights and well-being of migrant workers are protected.
38. The last group cited inequitable access to healthcare, especially the disparities between rural areas and urban setting, along with the spread of misinformation and disinformation regarding public health and vaccinations to be key challenges in ensuring the right to health during Covid-19 pandemic. In mitigating these effects, further workforce and health care infrastructure must be strongly supported so increased public health literacy and awareness and healthy behaviors can be encouraged. Mental health services and support were crucial to decrease the rate of anxiety, depressions and other mental health disorders. Lastly, the need to strengthen international cooperation to address global health challenges were also explored.

CLOSING SESSION:

39. In her closing remarks, **H.E. Long Sonita**, *the Alternate Representative of Cambodia to the AICHR*, expressed her sincere gratitude to all participants for their valuable contributions to the Dialogue. She encouraged continued engagement and collaboration among Member States to address future challenges. The Dialogue highlighted the complex interplay between public health measures and human rights during the pandemic. Participants expressed the importance of a human rights-based approach to navigate these challenges, ensuring that the rights of all individuals, including vulnerable groups, are protected. By sharing experiences and best practices, ASEAN Member States can work collectively to build more resilient and equitable societies.