

**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF  
THE ASEAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION ON  
HUMAN RIGHTS (AICHR) TO THE 58<sup>th</sup> ASEAN FOREIGN  
MINISTERS' MEETING**

His Excellency Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Chair of the 58<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM);

Excellencies, Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States and Foreign Minister of Timor-Leste;

His Excellency Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of AICHR, I express our gratitude for the honour to engage with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers today. I thank the AMM Chair for hosting this 15<sup>th</sup> AMM-AICHR Interface Meeting since 2012.

Human rights are not merely abstract values – they are powerful enablers for achieving our shared aspirations, including the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and its Strategic Plans adopted on 26 May 2025 through the historic Kuala Lumpur Declaration on *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future*. A resilient, innovative, dynamic, people-centred ASEAN cannot be realised without the integration of human rights at its core.

I am proud as Chair to submit the AICHR Annual Report 2025 reviewing our work from July 2024 to June 2025 alongside key observations, future direction and recommendations. Respectfully, AICHR requests AMM's consideration and approval for the publication of the Annual Report 2025 on AICHR's website.

I also submit the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan 2026-2030 and Priority Programmes/Activities for 2026 for AMM's kind consideration and approval. Over

the next five years, AICHR's approach will, consistent with the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, strive to be more responsive, innovative, agile, adaptive, decisive, timely and future-ready in promoting and protecting human rights, enhancing greater synergy and coordination on cross-pillar and cross-sectoral issues, and addressing emerging challenges such as digital rights, artificial intelligence, online scamming, forced labour, climate change, atrocity crimes, and transnational human rights concerns. AICHR also aims to strengthen the balanced discharge of its mandates, foster greater collaboration with ASEAN organs, bodies, and entities, pursue alignment of national and regional efforts, and develop common approaches based on a consensual understanding on human rights matters of interest to ASEAN, where necessary.

We look forward to receiving further guidance from the AMM on how the Commission can enhance and strengthen the implementation of its mandates and functions as the human rights body of ASEAN.

Allow me to outline some of AICHR's work highlights from the past year.

During the reporting period, AICHR convened five meetings in Lao PDR and Malaysia, as well as at the ASEAN Secretariat, and implemented 16 Priority Programmes/Activities. Our meetings, programmes and activities deliberated on a range of human rights issues.

The 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue was convened in November 2024 at the ASEAN Secretariat. This year, the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue will be organised by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to continue important thematic discussions on human rights as part of ASEAN Community-building.

2025 opened a new chapter for AICHR with the appointment of six new Representatives. As AICHR Chair, Malaysia hosted a Transition Workshop and Retreat in Langkawi, Malaysia. The fresh perspectives of the new Representatives, grounded in experience and driven by purpose, have accelerated AICHR's progress in its work as follows:

- AICHR consulted the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and finalised the proposed ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment.
- AICHR is also finalising the proposed ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development after consulting the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.
- AICHR continued to mainstream human rights across the ASEAN pillars and strengthened existing relationships while fostering new partnerships with ASEAN organs, bodies, entities and dialogue partners. An example of an important outcome document as a result of the joint project between AICHR led by Indonesia and SOMTC led by the Philippines is the ASEAN Guideline on the Implementation of the Non-Punishment Principle for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons launched in June 2025.
- AICHR continued to strengthen its institutional capacity by engaging in current and emerging human rights concerns and challenges in ASEAN through discussions and the sharing of information, developments, progress and priority areas in accordance with the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, and AICHR Terms of Reference (TOR). Pursuant to the mechanism to receive correspondence and feedback adopted by AICHR in November 2019, AICHR has, where applicable, responded to incoming communications. This practice reflects AICHR's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights while contributing to its institutional development.

This year marks an opportune moment for reflection, as it has been 15 years since the establishment of AICHR. Over the years, the Commission has undertaken self-assessments in 2014 and 2021, and submitted corresponding recommendations. AICHR continues to review its work following the Information Paper tasked by AMM for AICHR's further consideration. These reviews reflect AICHR's ongoing commitment to enhance AICHR's effectiveness, relevance and impact in the spirit

of the Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights 2009.

During this period, AICHR conducted 155 activities through a thematic and collaborative approach, covering a range of 40 thematic and sector-focused human rights issues across civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and cross-cutting themes complementing ASEAN Community-building.

AICHR notes the 52<sup>nd</sup> AMM's guidance for the convening of a panel of experts to discuss the review of AICHR TOR, including the proposed areas to be reviewed, and to submit a recommendation to the AMM for further guidance and approval. We further note the call in the *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future* for ASEAN to strengthen its institutions and refresh processes while strengthening its institutional capacity and effectiveness.

These reflections are instrumental in shaping our current and future direction. ASEAN Leaders have called for institutions to be decisive, responsive and timely in addressing challenges. AICHR aspires to ensure that its work in the region is impactful as it pursues its mandates and seeks guidance on how it can better contribute to ASEAN Community-building.

Striving to be people-centred, forward-looking, resilient, innovative, and dynamic, AICHR endeavours to adopt future-ready strategies agreed by consensus to ensure the continued relevance of its work, as guided by the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, AICHR TOR, and the principles of the ASEAN Charter. A strengthened AICHR will contribute to further enabling flourishing, inclusive and cohesive societies in the ASEAN Community that respect, promote and protect human rights for all.

Further, AICHR is committed to continuing its work through an evolutionary and consultative approach that is constructive, transformative, effective, a balanced discharge of its mandates in line with emerging challenges, and the need for a more coherent, impactful, and coordinated human rights framework. In particular, AICHR commits to investing in institutional strengthening of modalities that respects

ASEAN Centrality. This will enable AICHR to be a timely and future-ready body for safeguarding human rights in the region.

AICHR stands ready to contribute to ASEAN's commitment to regional peace, security, and the promotion of inclusive, cohesive, resilient, and sustainable societies. In this regard, AICHR is undertaking a series of workshops on conflict prevention, building inclusive and sustainable peace, and pathways to peace in ASEAN.

On behalf of the Commission, I express our sincere appreciation to the ASEAN Secretariat for its crucial role in supporting AICHR's work and providing the necessary institutional support for the Commission to function effectively.

I also extend my thanks to my esteemed colleagues, the AICHR Representatives, for their effort and dedication to promote and protect human rights in ASEAN.

We remain guided by the AMM on ways the Commission can strengthen its role as the overarching human rights body of ASEAN.

The path forward is not without its challenges. But with commitment and collective action, human rights can continue to serve as a unifying force, necessary enabler and catalyst to build and foster a resilient, peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable ASEAN Community. AICHR stands ready to play its part in this shared journey and seeks the AMM's continued support in our mission to promote and protect human rights across the region and in discharging AICHR's mandates and functions effectively.

Thank you.