

**ASEAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
(AICHR)
STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF ASEAN DAY 2026**

On this ASEAN Day, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) joins the peoples of Southeast Asia in commemorating the 59th anniversary of the Association's founding. This day is not only an occasion to celebrate ASEAN's journey toward peace, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and shared prosperity, but also a moment to take stock of how far our region has come — and how far it must still travel — in building an ASEAN Community where the human rights and dignity of every person are respected, protected, and fulfilled. The Commission extends its warm welcome to Timor-Leste as part of the ASEAN family and looks forward to working together to advance the human rights and dignity of all peoples across our enlarged ASEAN Community.

AICHR recalls that the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is not an external standard imposed upon our region, but a purpose and a principle of ASEAN itself. It is enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, elaborated in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, and given institutional form in the AICHR Terms of Reference (TOR). In implementing these commitments, AICHR reaffirms that the promotion and protection of human rights shall be pursued in accordance with the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter, including respect for sovereignty, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States, and taking into account different national circumstances and levels of development. AICHR also reaffirms that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that the right to development remains central to the full enjoyment of all human rights and will continue contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, guided by the principle of leaving no one behind.

Translating these commitments into results also calls on ASEAN Member States to review progress, on a voluntary basis and in accordance with their national laws and circumstances, through context-sensitive and participatory approaches. Sharing of experiences and good practices can help inform policy, promote mutual learning across Member States and support the realisation of these commitments in ways that improve people's lives.

Nevertheless, AICHR has observed a gradual momentum in the region's human rights landscape over the past few years. Under the AICHR work plans, the latest being the Five-Year Work Plan 2026–2030 aligned with *ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future*, ASEAN Member States are moving to translate long-standing commitments into concrete actions impacting the lives of people on the ground. For example, these are seen in the adoption of the landmark *ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and the Right to Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and*

Sustainable Development and *ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*, which are milestones for AICHR. They reflect a widening understanding of human rights as ASEAN faces evolving challenges across different domains.

AICHR's growing engagement with international human rights mechanisms, thematic work on business and human rights, gender-responsive governance, telecommunications network fraud, non-punishment principle, peace pathways, and the rights implications of new and emerging risks such as online harms, digital surveillance, vulnerable fishers at sea, among others, further signal a Commission — and a region — increasingly willing to confront difficult questions openly. The task before AICHR is thus to support their implementation consistent with its mandate under the TOR through dialogue, consultation, advice, assistance, and the sharing of good practices.

At the same time, AICHR is mindful that these gains remain uneven across the region, as there are vulnerable communities that at the margins of national protection systems. The Commission is likewise attentive to the situation of children, older persons, and those trafficked into forced criminality in online scam operations across our borders — a regional harm that no ASEAN Member State can address alone, and on which ASEAN Leaders have already resolved to act together. The rapid expansion of digital technologies has brought new opportunities alongside new threats — from online exploitation to the erosion of privacy — that our normative and institutional frameworks are still learning to address.

AICHR therefore renews its call on ASEAN Member States to strengthen national implementation of international and regional human rights commitments, to invest in accessible remedies for survivors and victims of rights violations, and to ensure that the voices of civil society, women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other groups in marginalised situations are heard in shaping ASEAN's future. In the same spirit, the Commission encourages ASEAN Member States to consider accession to and effective implementation of the core international human rights treaties to which they are not yet party; to sustain constructive engagement with the United Nations human rights system, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in accordance with their respective international obligations, national priorities and circumstances; to strengthen national human rights institutions (where available) and access to justice, including legal aid; and to foster an enabling and constructive environment for meaningful participation and cooperation with ASEAN's human rights bodies. The Commission reaffirms its own resolve to serve as a credible, impartial, consultative body of ASEAN — one that listens, studies, and advises with rigour, in accordance with its mandate.

To that end, AICHR will continue to strengthen its own institutional capacity, working with ASEAN Member States to ensure that the Commission is adequately resourced, that its mandate is realised in full, and that its engagement with stakeholders, sectoral bodies, national human rights institutions and international partners is broadened and deepened. AICHR will continue to promote human rights through dialogue, consultation, technical cooperation, exchange of good practices and capacity-building, fostering mutual trust and understanding among ASEAN Member States. In this regard, AICHR recognises that international cooperation, regional solidarity and dialogue remain indispensable for the promotion and protection of human rights and for addressing common and

emerging challenges; supports a human-centred, inclusive and responsible digital transformation that ensures emerging technologies contribute to sustainable development while respecting human rights; encourages South-South and triangular cooperation and the exchange of good practices among ASEAN Member States; and will continue providing advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building support to ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and Member States, in accordance with its TOR.

On this ASEAN Day, we are reminded that a truly resilient and rules-based ASEAN Community is one built on the human rights and dignity of all our ASEAN peoples. AICHR stands committed to walking this path together with ASEAN Member States, national institutions, and the region's vibrant civil society, in the shared pursuit of an ASEAN where human rights are not the exception, but the norm.

Dated this 8th day of August 2026

ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)