

ASEAN INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (AICHR) NOTE ON ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE

Peace is one of ASEAN's defining aspirations since its establishment. Guided by the principles of the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, ASEAN has contributed significantly to maintaining regional peace and cooperation through dialogue, mutual respect, consensus-building and the peaceful settlement of disputes. These foundations have enabled ASEAN to foster an environment conducive to regional integration, sustainable development and the well-being of its peoples.

As ASEAN advances towards the goals in [ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future](#) for a peaceful, resilient, people-centred and people-oriented ASEAN Community, respect for human rights, sustainable development, environmental stewardship and good governance is key. Achieving this vision requires ASEAN to remain responsive to an increasingly complex and evolving regional landscape.

Contemporary conflicts are influenced by interconnected political, economic, social, humanitarian, environmental and technological factors. Armed conflict, violent extremism, widening inequalities, climate change, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises, rapid technological developments, misinformation and disinformation, cyber-enabled harms and transnational organised crime interact in ways that affect peace, sustainable development and human security. These evolving challenges underscore the importance of preventive, adaptive and cooperative approaches that strengthen human rights and resilience while remaining consistent with ASEAN's principles and diversity.

Building on AICHR's [Thematic Study on the Right to Peace](#) and the [workshops on the intersection between conflict and human rights](#), this Note complements existing ASEAN efforts on the importance of integrating human rights perspectives towards conflict prevention, conflict management, peacebuilding and the work to sustain peace, while supporting ASEAN's long-term vision of a peaceful, resilient and inclusive ASEAN Community.

AICHR reaffirms that peace and human rights are mutually reinforcing and inseparable. Sustainable peace creates the conditions necessary for the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, while the promotion and protection of human rights contribute to preventing conflict, strengthening trust, fostering social cohesion and supporting peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Human rights are essential to prevent conflict, and to build and sustain peace.

This understanding is reflected in the [ASEAN Human Rights Declaration \(AHRD\)](#). Article 38 affirms that every person and the peoples of ASEAN have the right to enjoy peace within an ASEAN framework of security and stability, neutrality and freedom. Read together with the AHRD's affirmation that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, peace should be understood not merely as the absence of violence, but as a condition in which justice, equality, inclusion, human dignity and respect for all human rights enable individuals and communities to realise their full potential.

Conflict and human rights influence one another in a mutually reinforcing cycle. Conflict frequently results in the violation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. At the same time, persistent poverty, inequality, discrimination, exclusion, marginalisation, corruption, unequal access to justice and opportunities, and limited participation in public life contribute to grievances and structural conditions that heighten tensions and increase the risk of violence and instability. Addressing these underlying conditions is therefore integral to advancing sustainable peace.

The relationship between peace and human rights also extends to development and environmental sustainability. The [ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and the Right to Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development \(2025\)](#) recognises that peace, development and human rights are mutually reinforcing and should be advanced together. Likewise, the [ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment \(2025\)](#) affirms that a healthy environment is indispensable to human well-being, sustainable development and the enjoyment of human rights. These commitments recognise that inclusive development, environmental sustainability and respect for human rights strengthen resilience and contribute to conditions conducive to lasting peace.

AICHR further notes that ASEAN has consistently emphasised prevention as a cornerstone of peace. The [ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society \(2017\)](#) promotes dialogue, education, resilience and social inclusion as means to address conditions that contribute to violence and instability. Similarly, the [Manila Declaration to Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism \(2017\)](#) highlights comprehensive and preventive approaches that address conditions conducive to radicalisation while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Complementing these efforts, the [ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security \(2022\)](#) recognises the importance of women's meaningful participation and leadership in conflict prevention, peace processes, humanitarian action and recovery.

These regional commitments are reinforced by the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Peace, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goals 16, 10, 5 and 13. Together, these instruments affirm that peace, development and human rights are universal, indivisible and mutually reinforcing, and that reducing inequalities, strengthening inclusive institutions, protecting the environment and ensuring that no one is left behind are essential to peaceful, just and resilient societies.

Viewing conflict through a human rights perspective provides both a normative and practical framework for advancing peace. Human rights perspectives can help identify emerging risks and vulnerabilities, improve understanding of evolving conflict dynamics, reveal patterns of exclusion and discrimination, and inform timely, preventive and conflict-sensitive responses. Integrating these perspectives into peace efforts contributes to more inclusive decision-making, strengthens accountable institutions, promotes public trust and supports sustainable peace.

Applying a human rights-based lens also requires attention to all stages of peace efforts. Preventing conflict through inclusive governance, dialogue, equitable development and meaningful participation remain the most effective means of protecting human rights. Where conflicts or humanitarian crises occur, protecting the rights and dignity of affected populations remains paramount, with particular attention to women and girls, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, migrant workers, displaced and stateless persons, and other individuals and communities in vulnerable situations. Recovery and reconciliation should likewise strengthen social cohesion, restore trust, promote sustainable livelihoods and create opportunities for meaningful participation so that the underlying causes of conflict are addressed alongside their consequences.

Meaningful participation is fundamental to sustainable peace. Peace efforts are strengthened when they are inclusive, locally informed and responsive to the needs and experiences of affected communities. Beyond the participation of relevant government institutions, meaningful opportunities should also be provided for civil society organisations, national human rights institutions, academia, women, youth, religious and community leaders, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to contribute their knowledge, expertise and lived experiences to dialogue, policymaking and peacebuilding processes.

AICHR recognises that ASEAN has developed a broad range of institutions, sectoral bodies and cooperative mechanisms that contribute, directly or indirectly, to the promotion of peace, security, development, humanitarian assistance and human rights. Collectively, these mechanisms reflect ASEAN's longstanding commitment to regional peace and stability and provide a strong foundation for advancing human rights perspectives on peace. Future peace efforts must build on existing ASEAN mechanisms by strengthening coherence, coordination, continuity and complementarity.

As contemporary conflict drivers increasingly cut across political, economic, social, environmental and technological domains, strengthening coherence and collaboration across all ASEAN Community pillars, as well as with relevant stakeholders, will result in more effective responses. Integrating human rights perspectives into existing ASEAN cooperation will strengthen policy coherence, and encourage mutually reinforcing approaches to peace, development and environmental sustainability. This requires stronger partnerships among ASEAN sectoral bodies and institutions, while fostering cooperation with governments, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, civil society and Dialogue Partners, among others.

Sustaining peace also requires continuity. While ASEAN's annual chairship remains an institutional strength, preserving institutional memory, strengthening knowledge-sharing and maintaining momentum across successive chairs can further enhance ASEAN's long-term peace efforts. Continued dialogue, research, capacity-building and the exchange of good practices among ASEAN Member States and stakeholders can strengthen collective understanding of the relationship between conflict and human rights while supporting evidence-informed and conflict-sensitive policymaking.

Recognising the evolving nature of conflict and the importance of strengthening ASEAN's human rights perspectives on peace, the following matters may be emphasised:

- (1) Integrating human rights perspectives in conflict prevention, conflict management, peacebuilding and the work to sustain peace.
- (2) Addressing structural drivers of conflict, including poverty, inequality, discrimination, exclusion and barriers to meaningful participation, while advancing the mutually reinforcing objectives of peace, development, environmental sustainability and human rights.
- (3) Promoting the meaningful participation, particularly of women, youth and persons in marginalised and vulnerable situations, among others, in peace work.
- (4) Strengthening coordination, continuity, institutional learning and cross-pillar cooperation among existing ASEAN bodies and sectoral mechanisms, while promoting the exchange of good practices and conflict-sensitive approaches.
- (5) Deepening cooperation with civil society, national human rights institutions, academia, the private sector, Dialogue Partners, and other relevant stakeholders, consistent with their respective roles and mandates, in advancing sustainable peace and human rights in ASEAN.

Building on AICHR's work on the right to peace and the series of workshops on the intersection between conflict and human rights, AICHR shall on its part continue deliberations on ASEAN's peace pathways framework to enhance coherence, coordination, continuity and complementarity across ASEAN's existing peace-related efforts while integrating human rights perspectives throughout the peace continuum, consistent with existing mandates and ASEAN principles.

AICHR further reaffirms its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights through, among others, dialogue and cooperation in partnership with all stakeholders. To realise a peaceful, resilient, inclusive and people-centred ASEAN Community for the benefit of the ASEAN peoples, human rights are an imperative. It is affected by conflict and indispensable to preventing conflict.

Dated this 21st day of September 2026