Adopted ad referendum on 13 October 2026

AICHR PRESS RELEASE ON TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION AND THE RIGHT TO A SAFE, CLEAN, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) expresses its deep concern over the forest and land fires and the resulting transboundary haze affecting communities in parts of Southeast Asia, and its corresponding impact on all those affected, including people in vulnerable situations who face heightened exposure or greater barriers to protection and essential services.

The scale of exposure is severe. The ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC) has activated regional “Alert Level 3” since 26 August 2026, the highest transboundary haze alert. Unhealthy to hazardous air quality has been recorded across several affected areas, posing health risks and disrupting education, livelihoods, and daily life. While the effects are felt across society, they are not evenly borne, for example by those in vulnerable situations such as children and young people, older persons, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and persons with pre-existing health conditions such as chronic heart and lung disease, ethnic groups, and indigenous and local communities, as applicable.

This is not only an environmental or disaster management concern. Prolonged exposure to hazardous air affects the enjoyment of the rights to health, an adequate standard of living, and to development, among others. These rights are recognised in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) and given fuller expression in the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment and the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and the Right to Peace Towards Realising Inclusive and Sustainable Development, both adopted by ASEAN Leaders in October 2025.

Recognising the transboundary nature of haze pollution, ASEAN Member States are encouraged to strengthen regional cooperation, information sharing and coordination, consistent with applicable national laws and existing ASEAN frameworks, to address the impacts of environmental harm. AICHR further recognises the role of ASEAN's existing institutions and mechanisms in supporting regional coordination and response, such as the ASMC, the designated body to monitor and assess land and

forest fires and the occurrence of transboundary smoke haze in ASEAN, and the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), signed in 2002 and in force since 2003, which remains the principal regional framework for preventing, monitoring and mitigating transboundary haze through concerted national action and regional cooperation. ASEAN has also continued to strengthen this framework. The Second Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation (2023–2030), adopted in 2023, sets a renewed vision of a transboundary haze-free ASEAN by 2030 through nine mutually reinforcing strategies. The present situation underscores the importance of the full and effective implementation of these existing regional commitments. AICHR further encourages the accelerated efforts to operationalise the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACC THPC), as a demonstration of ASEAN's collective commitment under the AATHP.

AICHR appreciates the efforts of ASEAN Member States on the timely, accessible and understandable dissemination of air quality data, health advisories, fire information, and hotspot data including through existing ASEAN mechanisms. AICHR also encourages the meaningful participation of affected communities and stakeholders in the development, implementation and monitoring of measures that prevent and address haze, and notes that local and traditional knowledge can contribute to effective and sustainable solutions. AICHR further encourages ASEAN Member States, in accordance with their respective national laws and legal systems, to promote access to justice for environmental harm, and to promote the meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders in environmental protection.

Preventing the recurrence of haze ultimately requires sound environmental governance and accountability. AICHR calls on ASEAN Member States to continue strengthening the implementation of environmental laws and policies addressing activities that contribute to agricultural land, peatland, and forest fires, including through environmental impact and risk assessment. At the same time, AICHR underlines the responsibility of business enterprises and other relevant non-State actors to respect the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment and encourages them to promote responsible environmental practices across their

operations and value chains, including through environmental due diligence and sustainable supply chain management.

At the same time, recurrent haze underscores the importance of climate-informed fire prevention and the sustainable management and restoration of peatlands and other fire-prone ecosystems, particularly as climate change may increase the risk of drier conditions and fires in parts of the region.

As AICHR develops its Regional Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in consultation with the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN), AICHR stands ready to work with relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, and other relevant mechanisms and stakeholders, fostering a people-centred approach to environmental governance.

AICHR reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN, including the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment and calls on ASEAN Member States to take all necessary measures to protect the human rights of those affected by transboundary haze pollution, including strengthening relevant national and regional institutions and mechanisms, and enhanced regional cooperation in addressing transboundary environmental impacts.

Dated this 13th day of October 2026