



Defending Democracy and Advancing Human Rights in Southeast Asia

Statement of the 6th APHR Members' Forum 2024

We, the members and former members of parliaments from Southeast Asia gathered at the 6th ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) Members' Forum and Parliamentary Forum on Human Rights and Democracy in Southeast Asia in Bali, from 6 to 8 December 2024, to collectively address the pressing issues facing our region.

ENVISIONING a Southeast Asia where democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are firmly entrenched and universally respected, we, as members of APHR, pledge to strengthen regional resilience against authoritarianism and disinformation; advocate for inclusive policies that prioritize justice and equity; and leverage collective action to establish and advance regional standards for good governance.

DEEPLY CONCERNED by the mounting challenges that threaten democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia, including the rise of authoritarianism, which erodes democratic institutions, restricts freedoms, and consolidates unchecked power; the proliferation of disinformation during election periods, which undermines public trust in democratic processes, distorts electoral outcomes and diminishes confidence in governance.

FURTHER CONCERNED by the systemic repression designed to silence dissent, where opposition Members of Parliament, human rights defenders, and political parties are subjected to harassment, arbitrary detention, and even dissolution—actions that erode political pluralism and entrench authoritarian rule.

ALARMED by the escalating threats to democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia, which undermine the region's peace, stability, and prosperity, including persistent human rights violations against vulnerable and marginalized groups, environmental degradation, gender-based violence, and the continued repression of minority communities.

RECOGNIZING that parliamentarians hold a unique and indispensable role in shaping the democratic and human rights landscape of Southeast Asia. Their responsibilities include (a) safeguarding democracy by upholding accountability, transparency, and the rule of law in governance, ensuring that power is exercised responsibly and in the public interest; (b) defending human rights and democratic values by challenging oppression, protecting



fundamental freedoms, and advocating for justice and equity both within their nations and across the region, and (c) advocating for policies that are inclusive, equitable, and reflective of the needs, rights, and aspirations of the people they represent, bridging the gap between governance and citizens' realities.

ACKNOWLEDGING the urgent necessity to confront these escalating threats to democracy and human rights to prevent further conflict, instability, and irreversible harm to the region's democratic institutions and human rights foundations. Parliamentarians must act decisively to ensure that the principles of democracy and justice remain central to Southeast Asia's future

DO HEREBY DECLARE our shared commitment to take the following actions to promote and protect democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia:

- To stand in solidarity with parliamentarians facing political oppression, imprisonment, and systematic targeting, including the suppression of opposition voices and political parties.
- To promote, amplify, and strengthen the voices of parliamentarians advocating for a safe, clean, and sustainable environment for all ASEAN citizens.
- To ensure that laws addressing cybercrimes do not infringe on fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech, assembly, and association, and secure that digital spaces remain platforms for democratic engagement.
- To promote open, inclusive, and transparent parliamentary practices that strengthen solidarity among parliamentarians and foster meaningful civic engagement between parliamentarians and the people they represent.
- To engage in consistent communication and collaboration with stakeholders in Myanmar to support democratization and address the ongoing human rights crisis caused by the military regime.
- To develop a Regional Framework on Democracy and Good Governance in ASEAN, emphasizing shared accountability, protection of democratic institutions, and regional collaboration to uphold human rights.

We also urge ASEAN and its member states to:



- Take bold and decisive action to address the democratic backsliding that threatens the region's stability.
- Uphold the values enshrined in the ASEAN Charter by committing to democracy, good governance, and human rights.
- Actively engage in developing mechanisms to protect parliamentarians, opposition parties, and civil society from repression and harassment.

As parliamentarians and advocates, we stand united in our mission to address our region's challenges. With collective action, unwavering resolve, and a commitment to justice and equity, we can create a Southeast Asia where democracy thrives and human rights are protected.

Adopted in Bali, Indonesia, 8 December 2024.