



**28th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 8 General Debate: Follow-up to and Implementation of Vienna Declaration and Programme of
Action (VDPA)**

**Oral Statement Delivered by R. Iniyang Ilango on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Monday, 23 March 2015

Thank you Mr. President. Article 76 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) refers to the strengthening of regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights. In this regard, FORUM-ASIA draws the attention of this Council to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). Since its establishment in 2009, AICHR has not substantively addressed nor responded to human rights violations in the region. The Terms of Reference (ToR) which constitutes the body fails to provide it with a clear and adequate protection mandate.

ASEAN member states were to undertake a review process on the ToR of AICHR in 2014 and enhance it¹. As a part of this process, in 2014, AICHR held 2 regional consultations with various stakeholders including a number of civil society groups as well as UN bodies². Important recommendations made at these consultations called for a ToR that strengthens the body's protection mandate and ensures its independence. The recommendations also emphasised on the need for both strengthening the AICHR secretariat and promoting stronger engagement with stakeholders; including civil society groups and national human rights institutions.

Unfortunately the review is still incomplete while the outcomes remains uncertain and the process un-transparent. AICHR has submitted its recommendations on its ToR to ASEAN member states however this has not been published, and no information is available publicly on the next steps in the review process.

FORUM-ASIA calls on the international human rights community, to encourage ASEAN member states including those who are members of this Council, to ensure that the review of AICHR's ToR will continue in a transparent and participatory manner. We further urge the international community to work together with ASEAN member states in ensuring that the outcomes of the review process meets the objectives of the VDPA and enables AICHR, to both promote and also protect human rights in line with universal human rights standards.

Thank you Mr. President.

¹ The Term of Reference of the AICHR, article 9.6.

² See: <http://aichr.org/report/press-release-the-aichr-workshop-on-regional-mechanisms-best-practices-on-implementation-of-human-rights-with-partial-support-from-un-women-and-regional-eu-asean-dialogue-instrument/#more-1695>