

## **Words mean little without implementation**

Over the last days – 2-5 September 2017 – the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and its members from Mongolia, the Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD) and Globe International (GI) consulted and met with a range of stakeholders on human rights issues in Mongolia, including civil societies, local human rights defenders, political parties – among them the Mongolian People’s Party (MPP) and the Democratic Party – and the Mongolian National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC). Son Chay, a Member of Parliament from Cambodia joined in most of these meetings to share his experiences and insights.

FORUM-ASIA is impressed with and welcomes the seeming dedication to the promotion and protection of human rights by all these actors. Particularly recommendations accepted in the recent Universal Periodic Review cycle, new legislations and draft laws seem promising. However, unless these are translated into concrete actions, human rights defenders in Mongolia will continue to face intimidation and harassment in their work, both on the policy level and on the ground. Words mean little without implementation.

Stemming from the consultation with the human rights defenders – on 2-3 September – there are six areas of concern, which echo those raised in similar meeting in 2015 and 2016, which were presented to the other stakeholders: the need for a national action plan on business and human rights, particular related to mining and large development projects; the urgency to address the right to food; the realisation of women’s rights, including on effective protection of victims of domestic violence, income inequality, health and political participation; children rights; discrimination; an independent investigative mechanism on torture; and freedom of expression and defamation. In all these areas some progress has been made in the last years, however, true change seems to be blocked by the lack of comprehensive action.

In the dialogue with political parties questions were raised on whether they have a dedicated structure or unit within their party to engage with human rights defenders and civil society. More so, several parties expressed their commitment to start meeting with local human rights organisations on a regular basis.

During the meeting with the MPP human rights defenders and civil society were invited to formally approach the Strategy Research Centre of the party about their various human rights concerns. They specifically invited the local human rights defenders to work with the MPP on child rights and the right to food. Additionally, the party welcomed the suggestion to have human rights training for all party members.

In the meeting with the MNHRC the two main topics of conversation were: the draft Law on Human Rights Defenders, and the need for amendments to the founding law of the National Human Rights Commission. There was also mutual agreement to collaborate further and more in the future, particularly on the rights of children, specifically when it comes to horse races.

Unfortunately, requests for meetings with the Legal Standing Committee did not come to fruition. While a meeting with the Human Rights Sub-Committee was cancelled at the last moment.

Much progress has been made over the last years in Mongolia when it comes to human rights. However, there are still many areas of concern when it comes to human rights defenders and reporters being

harassed and intimidated. For many of these issues structures and proposals are in place to address these areas of concern. What is need now is comprehensive actions. If words are translated into implementation, we might finally see true protection for human rights defenders in the country.