



**37<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Item 5: Human rights bodies and mechanisms – General Debate**  
**Oral Statement Delivered by Rosanna Ocampo on behalf of**  
**Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

**Thursday, 15 March 2018**

Mr. President, the work of regional human rights bodies are important to the work of this Council. In this regard, we draw your attention to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). We regret that AICHR has failed to meaningfully address gross human rights violations in the region. For instance, AICHR has remained irresponsive on gross violations in Myanmar/Burma, shrinking democratic space in Cambodia, extrajudicial killings in the Philippines' 'war on drugs' as well as restrictions to fundamental freedoms and attacks on human rights defenders in several ASEAN states.

FORUM-ASIA's monitoring of AICHR indicates that it has been unwilling to engage on the protection of human rights.<sup>1</sup> This has seriously compromised its ability to deliver to victims and those affected by human rights violations in ASEAN countries. This has often left international human rights bodies such as this Council as the only resort to those affected in the region – when domestic mechanisms fail. Closing such gaps in regional protection is key to improving the efficiency of international human rights bodies such as this Council.

We call on the Council and its mechanisms to engage on this with ASEAN member states and urge them to strengthen AICHR in accordance with their commitments on regional human rights bodies under the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and other UN standards. We further call on Singapore as the Chair of AICHR in 2018 to play a proactive role in empowering AICHR to implement its mandate to monitor and protect human rights in ASEAN.<sup>2</sup>

Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> FORUM-ASIA and SAPA Task Force, 2017. "Have They Passed the Litmus Test: A Report on the Performance of the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanisms in 2016".

<sup>2</sup> ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (Terms of Reference), Article 1 (1.6)