



Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development  
<http://www.forum-asia.org> [una@forum-asia.org](mailto:una@forum-asia.org)

**38<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Item 8: General debate on follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action**  
**Oral Statement Delivered by Hafizullah Nadiri on behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

**Monday, 02 July 2018**

Mr. President, this year, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which lays a heavy emphasis on regional human rights bodies and directly influenced the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) – one of the most significant regional human rights bodies in Southeast Asia. To take human rights ahead in the region, it is critical that bodies such as AICHR are effective and meaningful in both promoting and protecting human rights.

We urge AICHR to start taking substantive steps to address serious rights situations and shrinking democratic space in the region, including: the curtailment of civic space in Cambodia,<sup>1</sup> the increased risks faced by human rights defenders in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand,<sup>2</sup> as well as gross human rights violations in Myanmar.

We call on the Council to strengthen collaboration with AICHR and urge ASEAN Member States to advance regional human rights mechanisms, including AICHR, and ensure their independence and effectiveness. To this end, there is an important need for the body to enhance its substantive engagement with civil society on key human rights situations, and ensure inclusivity and diversity in such engagement. Lastly, we call on Singapore as the current Chair of ASEAN to take leadership in enabling the body to effectively fulfil its mandate as a regional human rights body.

Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=26014>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=26530>