

People's Empowerment

มูลนิธิศักยภาพชุมชน

Empowering People for a strong Civil Society

Summary of the ASEAN Civil Society Discussion and Proposals

ASEAN was established in 1967 as an agreement among member nations to follow principles of non-interference and common understanding. However, after more than four decades of the body's existence, the people of ASEAN countries still do not have sufficient understanding of ASEAN and its affairs. Thus, for 41 years, ASEAN has been an assembly of governments with limited, if any, participation by the people. Thailand will host the 14th ASEAN Summit in Hua Hin, Prachuabkirikan, on 27 February – 1 March 2009.

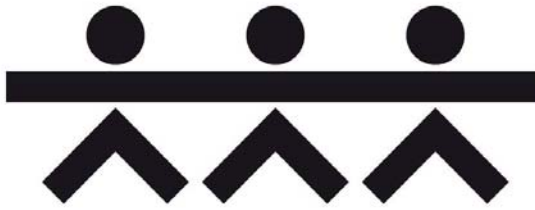
ASEAN people realize the importance of unity and harmony among all citizens. As such, organizations in each nation have held respective workshops in order to educate their people about ASEAN. Throughout Thailand in 2008, People's Empowerment Foundation, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SEARCH-Canada, the Embassy of the United States of America in Thailand, and ActionAIDS in Thailand, carried out a national process consisting of 12 community discussion forums on ASEAN. Participants of the forums were members of grassroots networks, including those of ethnic groups, community radio members, Southern people, disabled people, labor representatives, university students, community leaders, Northeastern people, farmers for development, Central biological agriculturists, LGBT people, aids groups, and refugees in Thailand, totaling 634 people from 41 provinces.

From the forums, participants have gained much knowledge and understand about ASEAN. Having previously known close to nothing about ASEAN, these members of civil society are now able to thoroughly examine and criticize the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Community Action Plans, and ASEAN's Human Rights Mechanism. Thus, after much discussion and debate, clear positions on ASEAN matters have been agreed upon by a diverse collection of civil society groups. We admire the Thai government for remaining open to criticism and recognizing the participation of Thai people in the ASEAN process.

Civil Society Proposals on the ASEAN Charter (taken from views expressed in 12 forums)

The Thai people propose that:

1. the ASEAN charter be accepted only after the fulfillment of appropriate conditions;
2. ASEAN, being a "people-centered" body, include a People's Forum in its structure;



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3. all ASEAN people have the same status, rights and freedoms, and that the state commit to this principle of equal rights;
4. participation in the ASEAN process be varied and inclusive of such groups as the disabled, LGBT people, and refugees, with the ratio of male to female participants consistently balanced;
5. Timor-leste be included as a member of ASEAN;
6. the principle of entities relating to ASEAN under article 16 of the ASEAN Charter, including consideration of organizations in appendix 2, be revised;
7. state decision-making be transparent and open to the scrutiny, debate, and suggestions of civil society before final implementation;
8. English remain the working language of ASEAN, but respect for the variety of ASEAN languages be demonstrated through the translation of documents to various languages of ASEAN nations for wide accessibility;
9. ASEAN travel documents be made available for people to travel freely throughout the region;
10. ASEAN institutions allocate 30 percent of their budgets to civil society programs and activities;
11. the motto of ASEAN people be, "Unity among diversity, participation and transparency";
12. an ASEAN people's symbol, different from that of ASEAN governments, be established;
13. people be allowed to participate in the amendment of the ASEAN Charter every 5 years;
14. an ASEAN People's Charter be drafted to serve as a standing point for ASEAN people working together.

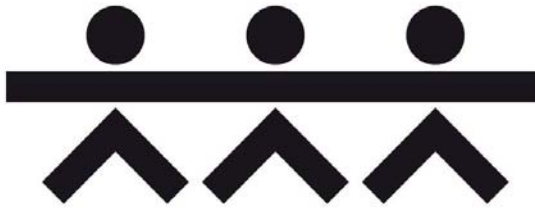
Summary of ASEAN Community Action Plan Proposals

Economic Action Plan

Agriculture

Those representing agriculture groups propose the formation of a central market for ASEAN agricultural products, the establishment of a fund for risk insurance, the provision of land for people, the identification of a clear agricultural and industrial zone, the support of people to participate in land-use decisions, direct links between agricultural products and the agricultural industry, the minimization of production costs, the establishment of a rice bank, and support for a network of farmers.

Labor



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Those with particular concern for labor propose the free movement of capital and labor, allowing workers to legally travel and work throughout Southeast Asia. Furthermore, it is requested that ASEAN nations protect the rights of workers by adopting all international labor standards.

Socio-Cultural Action Plan

It is proposed that a healthcare system, free from discrimination toward stateless people, refugees, and minorities, be implemented. Through this system, the state should care for those suffering from HIV and focus on containing the spread of HIV infections among all people. Civil society groups also propose the promotion and maintenance of local cultures, as well as programs for ASEAN cultural exchanges. In addition, such groups wish to support ASEAN policies that reflect principles of gender equality and respect for the rights of disabled people, who for too long have been treated as a burden on Thai society.

Media

Those representing community radio and media groups propose the support of creative, independent media, along with a commitment to media freedom and regular cooperation with ASEAN.

Education

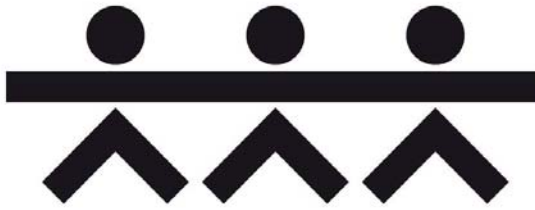
Support for a variety of cooperative educational programs is proposed, particularly those that promote the international exchange of students (i.e. the ERASMUS programme). The development of an ASEAN curriculum and associated fund is desired to spread knowledge about people's rights and freedoms.

Environment

To establish sustainable security of environment, to let people to do environmental research and to listen to people sector before invest megaproject every time.

Political and Security Action Plan

Civil society groups propose good governance education for leaders at the local and national levels, transparent budget management, support for participatory democracy, the protection of marginal people's freedom to express their opinions, the establishment of a mechanism to investigate work performance of the state, the guarantee of people participation in all sectors, the development of political education processes, and



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the building of regional mechanisms, recognized by the UNHCR and international community, for determining the status of refugees throughout ASEAN.

Summary of the Proposals on the proposed draft of ASEAN Human Right Body

Members of Thai civil society insist on the previous draft of people submitted to the High Level Panel and deny the first draft of the High Level Panel, especially the mandate of ASEAN human right body. The minimum standard is that the ASEAN Human Rights committee should be independent, have more protection role, for example AHRB should be able to receive complaint from people and concede humanitarian interference.

Apart from People's Empowerment Foundation, there are also other groups who organize conference on ASEAN, for example the ASEAN study project of Thammasart University, the Institute of Asian studies, the Institute of Social Research, and the Working Group of ASEAN Civil Society.

The ASEAN People's Forum and ASEAN Civil Society Conference will be held on 20-22 February 2009 at Chulalongkorn University, parallel to the ASEAN Summit meeting that will be held later that week. Approximately 700 people from all ASEAN countries are expected to attend.

People's Empowerment Foundation

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