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Helping ASEAN Promote and Protect Human Rights



AICHR, ACWC, and student participants at the 8th Summer Institute in Bali in August 11th-14th, 2015.

As the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) becomes more integrated as a community, it is increasingly important for ASEAN Member States (AMS) to recommit themselves to shared principles and values set forth in the ASEAN Charter. These values include respect for the rule of law and adherence to agreed-upon human rights standards set forth in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

The challenges of addressing human rights in a region with such diverse political and historical perspectives cannot be overstated. In order to support ASEAN's institutional facility for addressing human rights, the U.S. Government through ASEAN-U.S. Partnership for Good Governance, Equitable and Sustainable Development and Security (PROGRESS) project, works with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), a body comprised of mostly government representatives from each of the 10 AMS charged with promoting and protecting human rights in the region. In addition, through PROGRESS' grants program, the U.S. is able to strengthen regional networks and civil society efforts to promote and protect human rights in ASEAN.

Over the course of 2015, the U.S. supported four AICHR-sponsored events covering a diverse range of topics, including discourse on human rights obligations relating to the environment and climate change, initial steps for the establishment of regional human rights instruments, journalism training, and a joint workshop between AICHR and the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime to discuss better coordination on Trafficking in Persons. PROGRESS also provided grants to the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) to compile a set of civil society recommendations and inputs for ASEAN's Post-2015 Vision and to the Human Rights Resource Centre (HRRC) to host the 8th Summer Institute focused on TIP.

In 2016, the U.S. will continue to support AICHR initiatives to strengthen its role as the institutional advocate of human rights within ASEAN by supporting its efforts to mainstream the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) across ASEAN entities and member states. PROGRESS will also support youth awareness and engagement on regional human rights issues through a youth debate and will support a thematic study on migration and human rights in ASEAN.

In August 2016, PROGRESS will support the 9th Summer Institute, which will bring together members of AICHR and other relevant ASEAN bodies working on human rights issues, academia, and civil society to discuss the human rights implications of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

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