

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Regional Consultation on UN Human Rights Council

2-3 February, 2007

Windsor Suite Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

Background Note

A. Introduction

- 1) The Regional Consultation on the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) is a FORUM-ASIA regional initiative. It will assess the progress of the HRC and UN treaty body reform, and will facilitate the development of joint action plans among FORUM-ASIA members and partners engaged with these bodies, particularly, the Human Rights Council.
- 2) FORUM-ASIA, together with other national and regional NGOs, launched a campaign on the election of the HRC members in early 2006 and has continued to engage in the sessions of the Human Rights Council since its opening session in June 2006. FORUM-ASIA, in cooperation with international NGOs based in Geneva, has managed to put Asian human rights issues, in particular Sri Lanka, on the HRC agenda and has jointly advocated for other issues, including human rights defenders, migrant workers, etc.
- 3) However, the impact of the advocacy work of Asian NGOs, including FORUM-ASIA, would have been greater if more effective communication and coordination mechanisms were in place. Weak human and financial resources, as well as the absence of permanent supporting structure in Geneva, were identified as key obstacles in that respect. There has, therefore, been an increasingly-felt need to develop a more long-term strategy based on collective evaluation of the performance of FORUM-ASIA and its partners, and a critical assessment of the challenges and needs these organisations are facing.
- 4) The Regional Consultation is also expected to be a preparatory meeting to discuss how to institutionalise cooperation and coordination of HRC and treaty body-specific work amongst regional and national NGOs under the umbrella of Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA). The inaugural meeting of SAPA Working Group on the HRC is to take place on the morning of 4 February 2007.
- 5) About 30 participants from national and regional NGOs or networks are expected to attend the Consultation. Some participants will stay on to attend the SAPA General Forum, to be held in Bangkok on 5-6 February 2007. Representatives from seven of the ten Asian HRC member countries will be in attendance: India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from South Asia; Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines from Southeast Asia; and South Korea from Northeast Asia have been identified as key priority countries for this Consultation. Regional thematic priorities will be identified through presentations by participating regional NGOs during the Consultation.
- 6) The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat has prepared two background papers for participants on the HRC and UN human rights treaty body reform proposals.

B. Objectives

- To provide an update on the work and outcome of the HRC sessions
- To assess the progress or lack of progress of the HRC and Human Rights treaty body reform from an Asian NGOs perspective
- To develop common goals, strategies and action plans among national and regional human rights NGOs

C. Programme Agenda

Programme Agenda

(Version 2, 22 Jan 2007)

1 Feb 2007 (Thursday) Arrival and Registration	
18:30-20:00	Welcome Dinner at a restaurant near the Windsor Suites Hotel – to be confirmed
Day 1: 2 Feb 2007 (Friday)	
08:00 onward	Registration at Windsor Suites Hotel
09:00-09:30	Welcome and introduction Anselmo Lee, Executive Director, FORUM-ASIA
09:30-11:00	Session 1 : Update on the Human Rights Council Panel Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Joseph Rajkumar, India• Ms Cecilia Jimenez, Geneva,• Mr Budi Tjahjono, Geneva, Pax Romana ICMICA
11:00-11:20	Tea / Coffee Break
11:20-12:30	Session 2 : Update on UN Human Rights Treaty Body Reform Presentation by Mr Benjamin Lee, FORUM-ASIA Research Consultant Discussants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Rafendi Djamin, HRWG, Indonesia• Ms Kim Giyoun, KOCUN, South Korea
12:30-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:30	Session 3 : Reporting from national NGOs and coalitions on Human Rights

	<p>Council and Treaty Bodies (7 countries and 15 minutes for each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Asia : India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka • Southeast Asia : Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines • Northeast Asia : South Korea
15:30-16:00	Tea / Coffee Break
16:00-17:30	Session 4 : Sharing and Reporting from national NGOs and coalitions on Human Rights Council - continued
18:30-20:00	Dinner
Day 2: 3 Feb 2007 (Saturday)	
09:00-09:15	Recap of Day 1
09:15- 10:30	<p>Session 1 : Sharing and Reporting from regional NGOs and coalitions on Human Rights Council and Treaty Bodies (15 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian Center for Human Rights (ACHR) • Asian Federation Against Disappearance (AFAD) • Asian Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD) • Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) • International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) • International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) • International Women Rights' Action Watch – Asia Pacific (IWRAW-AP) • Migrant Forum Asia (MFA)
10:30-11:00	Tea / Coffee Break
11:00-12:30	<p>Session 2 : Sharing and Reporting from regional NGOs and coalitions on Human Rights Council and Treaty Bodies – continued</p> <p>Special Session : dialogue with Prof. Vitit Muntarbhorn, chairperson of the UN Special Procedures – to be confirmed</p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:30	Session 3 : Strategic planning for the HRC – March/April and June sessions; May HRC membership election
15:30-16:00	Tea / Coffee Break
16:00-17:30	Session 4 : Strategic planning for the HRC – continued

	Closing session : synthesis and conclusions
18:30-20:00	Dinner
Day 3: 4 Feb 2007 (Sunday)	
10:00-12:00 am	SAPA Working Group on Human Rights Council - agenda to be announced later on.

D. Key Guide Questions and Issues

Day 1: 2 Feb 2007 (Friday)	
09:30-11:00	<p>Session 1 : Update on the Human Rights Council</p> <p>Guide questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is your overall assessment of the current situation in HRC? 2) What are issues more relevant and important for Asia? (list of issues) 3) Please highlight some of them which you think are most important for NGOs in Asia? Short analytical description. 4) What are your suggestions regarding the role and strategies of Asian NGOs at the forthcoming HRC sessions (March/April and June 2007), membership election in May, as well as long-term?
11:20-12:30	<p>Session 2 : Update on UN Human Rights Treaty Body (TB) Reform</p> <p>Guide Questions / Issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assessment of the effectiveness of the current TB mechanisms and their use by Asian NGOs 2) Analytical update about the ongoing TB reform debate / negotiations 3) Asian NGOs' engagement strategies regarding TB reform and mechanisms and 4) Inter-linkage between HRC, Special Procedures and TB reform
14:00-17:30	<p>Session 3 & 4 : Reporting from national NGOs and coalitions on Human Rights Council and Treaty Bodies (7 countries, 15 minutes each)</p> <p>Guide Questions / Issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is your overall assessment of the current situation in HRC? (response/feedback to the Panel at the Session 1) 2) What are key issues and concerns for your country and own organization? 3) What are your organisation's plans for the forthcoming HRC sessions (March/April and June 2007) as well as long-term? 4) What are your suggestions for FORUM-ASIA regarding the HRC

	sessions (March/April and June 2007) as well as long-term?
Day 2: 3 Feb 2007 (Saturday)	
09:00-12:30	<p>Session 1 & 2 : Sharing and Reporting from regional NGOs and coalitions on Human Rights Council and Treaty Bodies (15 minutes for each)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is your overall assessment of the current situation in HRC? (response/feedback to the Panel at the Session 1) 2) What are key issues and concerns for your own organisation? 3) What are your organisation's plans for the forthcoming HRC sessions (March/April and June 2007) as well as long-term? 4) What are your suggestions for FORUM-ASIA regarding the HRC sessions (March/April and June 2007), membership election in May, as well as long-term?
14:00-17:30	<p>Session 3 & 4 : Strategic planning for the HRC – March/April and June sessions, May elections and beyond</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Agenda of the HRC March/April and June sessions. 2) List of Asian HRC members whose terms expire in May 2007 3) Working calendar and schedule of the UN Special Procedures (country visit) and Treaty Bodies (report review). 4) 2008 double anniversary : 60th anniversary of UDHR and 10th anniversary of UN HRD Declaration (to be submitted to the NGO Liaison office of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) 5) SAPA Working Group on HRC 6) Other important initiatives by participating organisations
	Special Session : dialogue with Prof. Vitit Muntarbhorn, chairperson of the UN Special Procedures – to be confirmed

E. Contact Persons in FORUM-ASIA

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