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**ASEAN Civil Society 2015 – ACSC/APF  
National Organizing Committee (NOC)**

**Accelerating a People-Centered Region:  
Introspection of the Envisioned ASEAN Community in 2015**

***Press Release, 6 August 2014, Kuala Lumpur***

As Malaysia will be chairing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2015, the next ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples Forum (ACSC/APF)<sup>i</sup> will also be held in Kuala Lumpur in March/April 2015, parallel to the ASEAN Summit. We are proud to say that it was the Malaysian government, under Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Prime Minister, which initiated the first ASEAN civil society conference in 2005. Thus, the ACSC/APF 2015 marks a full circle since the meaningful initiative by Malaysia 10 years ago. Malaysian civil society welcomes the conference home and invite our governments as well as partners and allies from ASEAN civil society to join us in our reflection of our past initiatives and future directions together.

While globally the world is deliberating on a post 2015 development agenda, the ASEAN is geared towards regional integration and realising the ASEAN Community by 2015<sup>ii</sup>. The national and regional civil society have geared up for introspection regarding the implication of ASEAN Community 2015 and the impact of this on the development and human rights practices of the member states.

The coming 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the ACSC/APF, therefore, will be a space for retrospection of the successes, challenges and threats that we experience in the region. This is an opportunity for the civil society movement in ASEAN to continue to learn from experiences and remain united in our quest for a regional development in Southeast Asia that upholds democracy, human rights, justice, peace and sustainable development as well as a transformative and “people-centred ASEAN”.

Subsequent to the exceptional participation of more than 3000 participants from all levels of civil society in the ACSC/APF held in Myanmar this year, we are expecting similar commitment and show of solidarity from grassroots, national and regional civil society organizations and movements at the next ACSC/APF in 2015.

To that end, the Malaysian National Organizing Committee (NOC) was constituted a month ago through a series of consultations over the last 3 months, to manage the ACSC/APF 2015. We now have about 60 active groups participating in the ACSC/APF process representing various themes and issues relevant to Malaysia. We are actively engaging with the regional and national NGOs from ASEAN as a follow up from the Myanmar APF process.

As civil society, we recognise the need for guiding principles that support the modalities of engagement and facilitate the sharing of the ACSC/APF 2015 platform. Thus, guided by the principles of human rights, democracy, good governance, rule of law, non-discrimination, progressiveness and non-retrogression, our modalities of engagement therefore shall ensure independence, transparency, accessibility, representation, participation as well as diversity and inclusivity. All NGOs involved in this process shall agree to abide by these principles.

In strengthening our regional solidarity and partnership we look forward to the next step of the plans which will be the convening of the first Regional Steering Committee meeting in September 2014 in Kuala Lumpur. This shall bring together civil society organizations from the various ASEAN member states as well as other regional organizations based on common and shared norms and values. We call on all Malaysian civil society to join this symbolic 10<sup>th</sup> year celebration and be part of the evolving ASEAN Community.

We further call on Malaysia and all other ASEAN member states to ensure that the ASEAN Community in 2015 shall be reflective of its other global commitments and uphold the principles of universal human rights and non-discrimination amongst all its people regardless of nationality, political opinion, ethnic and religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, economic status and other status.

Finally, the NOC will be initiating meetings and dialogues with relevant Malaysian state agencies, primarily the Wisma Putra, to share our plans. We urge the Malaysian government, as chair in 2015, to replicate, if not better, its commitment in 2005 and give its full support, cooperation and ensure a safe and conducive environment for the events in 2015. This shall demonstrate the true nature of Malaysian hospitality that is anticipated and respected globally.

For further inquiries, please contact the following members of the NOC:

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<sup>i</sup> ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum is an ASEAN civil society event first held in Malaysia in 2005 and has been carried on since. Its sole purpose is to channel voices of the grassroots civil societies of different backgrounds from across the ASEAN region. As an annual event the ACSC/APF has allowed us to strengthen our ongoing partnerships to highlight, address and resolve the urgent and emerging concerns in the region. The regional identity of the ACSC/APF has been upheld since by the civil society in the region.

<sup>ii</sup> 2003 DECLARATION OF ASEAN CONCORD II, adopted by the Heads of State/Government at the 9th ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia on 7 Oct 2003, declared that an ASEAN Community shall be established comprising three pillars, namely political and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural cooperation that are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing for the purpose of ensuring durable peace, stability and shared prosperity in the region. At the 12th ASEAN Summit in January 2007, the Leaders affirmed their strong commitment to accelerate the establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015 and signed the [Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015](#). The ASEAN Community shall be established along the lines of the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Vision 2020 and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, in the three pillars of the ASEAN Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.