



**MEDIA STATEMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

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**1st SEANF TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING CONCLUDES WITH
STRONG COMMITMENT TO PARIS PRINCIPLES AND REGIONAL
COLLABORATION**

KUALA LUMPUR (27 APRIL 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), in its capacity as Chair of the South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF), successfully convened the 1st Technical Working Group (TWG) Meeting of SEANF and two side events from 21 to 23 April 2026 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with participation both in person and virtually.

The 1st TWG Meeting brought together member institutions of SEANF, namely SUHAKAM, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP), the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT), the Provedor de Direitos Humanos e Justiça (PDHJ) of Timor-Leste, the National Commission on Human Rights of Indonesia (Komnas HAM), and the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC). The three-day engagement also featured meaningful participation from civil society organisations (CSOs), regional experts, and other stakeholders.

The 1st TWG Meeting was officially opened by SUHAKAM Commissioner, Tuan Abdul Kadir Jailani bin Ismail, who underscored the need for SEANF to move beyond dialogue towards coordinated and courageous action, particularly in protecting human rights defenders, advancing human rights in the context of business and climate change, and strengthening regional solidarity in the face of growing challenges

Over the course of the 1st TWG Meeting, SEANF members exchanged updates on key developments, initiatives, and challenges since the 22nd SEANF Annual Conference. Discussions focused on the continued implementation of the 2022–2026 SEANF Strategic Plan, with emphasis on its four strategic priorities: ensuring human rights remain central in a post-pandemic environment, advancing business and human rights, preventing torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and strengthening SEANF as a credible, independent, and effective regional network. Adherence to the Paris Principles was reaffirmed throughout the TWG, underscoring the continued commitment of SEANF members to independence, credibility, and effectiveness in the promotion and protection of human rights.

In line with its leadership role under Strategic Priority 4(a), SUHAKAM shared progress in reviewing SEANF's institutional framework, including proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure to enhance clarity on the definition of NHRIs and introduce a two-thirds majority decision-making mechanism where consensus cannot be reached. The 1st TWG Meeting also deliberated on a range of emerging and cross-cutting issues, including the rights of older persons, the Inter-NHRI Mechanism, and the human rights impact of armed conflict and related energy crises in the region. These discussions highlighted the importance of coordinated regional responses and strengthened collaboration among SEANF members.

A dedicated session with CSOs, including the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) and Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM), provided a valuable platform for dialogue on the role of NHRIs in advancing environmental rights and supporting human rights defenders (HRDs). Participants also reflected on the ANNI 2025 Report and explored avenues for joint advocacy and capacity-building.



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Two side events further enriched the 1st TWG Meeting. The “Defending the Defenders” session underscored the critical role of NHRIs in protecting HRDs, including child human rights defenders, and addressing challenges such as intimidation and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP). Meanwhile, the Forum on Human Rights, Business and Climate Justice 2026 held on 23 April 2026 examined the intersection of environmental rights, corporate accountability, and climate justice, highlighting the need for stronger governance frameworks and inclusive, rights-based approaches.

The 1st TWG Meeting concluded with a closing address by SUHAKAM Chairman, Dato’ Seri Mohd Hishamudin Yunus, who reaffirmed SEANF’s collective commitment to carry forward the momentum of the meeting by translating dialogue into concrete action, particularly in strengthening the protection of HRDs, including children, while deepening regional cooperation and institutional effectiveness.

The successful convening of the 1st TWG Meeting marks an important step forward as SEANF enters the final year of its current Strategic Plan. SEANF Members reiterated their shared commitments to enhance regional solidarity, respond effectively to emerging human rights challenges, and uphold the fundamental principles of human dignity, justice, and equality across South East Asia.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
27 April 2026**