SEANF
THE SOUTH EAST ASIA NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS FORUM

SEANF CONCLUDES 23RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE, REAFFIRMS REGIONAL COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

KUALA LUMPUR (20 NOVEMBER 2026) – The South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF) has concluded its 23rd Annual Conference and Side Event held from 17-19 November 2026, bringing together five representatives of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from across Southeast Asia which are the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), Indonesia National Commission of Human Rights (Komnas HAM), the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP), the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) and the Provedor de Direitos Humanos e Justiça (PDHJ) Timor-Leste, to discuss shared priorities, challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation.

Hosted by the SUHAKAM, the Conference provided a platform for SEANF members to exchange major developments and activities of their NHRIs and exchange ideas to strengthen regional cooperation in promoting and protecting human rights in the region.

On the first day, SEANF members formally recorded the Resolution on the Disqualification of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) from SEANF. SEANF also adopted the five key areas and list of issues identified as potentially requiring a two-thirds majority vote, shared major developments and activities since its second Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting in July 2026, and held the 6th Interface Meeting with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). There were also updates from the SEANF Strategic Communications Working Group (SCWG), presented by the PDHJ. The first day concluded with the discussion of other matters, including the proposed collaboration between SEANF and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), CHRP's updates on initiatives concerning a legally binding instrument on the human rights of older persons and business and human rights; on the development of the inter-NHRI mechanism and the monitoring of the right to a healthy environment; and on NHRI advocacy and consultations at multiple levels on the proposed UN convention on crimes against humanity.

On the second day, members reviewed implementation of the 2022–2026 SEANF Strategic Plan and held a dialogue with civil society organisations (CSOs) in the region on the situation of Myanmar refugees along the Thai–Myanmar border and proposed that SEANF accept only NHRIs that comply with the Paris Principles; the issue of transboundary haze pollution in Southeast Asia and proposed possible ways forward for the Malaysian Government; the issues faced by migrant domestic workers in Malaysia and proposed recommendations for SEANF members; the perspectives on women's rights and access to justice in Malaysia,; the update on the situation of refugees in Malaysia and proposed that SEANF incorporate refugee and statelessness issues into its Strategic Plan; and the Building and Wood Workers' International's efforts to protect and advance workers' rights in line with International Labour Organization

(ILO) resolutions, including improving workers' rights and their working and living conditions through a human rights-based approach. During the Other Matters slot, CHRP, as the next Chair of SEANF 2027, initiated preliminary discussions on the next SEANF Strategic Plan with SEANF members. The Conference also adopted the Concluding Statement of the 23rd Annual Conference of SEANF 2026. The second day witnessed the handover of the SEANF Chairpersonship for 2027 by the Chairman of SUHAKAM to the Chairperson of CHRP.

A side event forum titled "Corruption is a Human Rights Issue: Advancing Accountability and Justice in ASEAN" was held on the final day, 19 November 2026. The forum examined how corruption undermines the enjoyment of human rights, weakens institutional accountability and limits access to justice. The sharing by 15 panellists in the respective four panel discussions brought the Conference towards the Proposed Resolution on Corruption and Human Rights in ASEAN for SEANF adoption.

The Proposed Resolution calls on SEANF to address corruption as a human rights issue because it diverts public resources, weakens institutions and limits access to essential services and justice, particularly for marginalised communities. It calls for stronger safeguards for judicial independence, greater accountability in anti-corruption and law enforcement bodies, transparent use of public funds, and the use of recovered assets to repair harm where appropriate. It also advocates for safe reporting channels, protection for whistle-blowers and human rights defenders, meaningful participation of affected communities and access to effective remedies. The Proposed Resolution promotes responsible business conduct and stronger regional cooperation to tackle cross-border corruption and environmental harm, including transboundary haze. It also proposes making corruption and its human rights impacts a priority in SEANF's work and strengthening the capacity of its member institutions to address them.

SUHAKAM extends its sincere appreciation to all SEANF members for their cooperation, engagement and support throughout Malaysia's 2026 chairpersonship. The Commission also extends its best wishes to the incoming SEANF Chairperson and Chairpersonship and looks forward to continued cooperation in advancing human rights across Southeast Asia.

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