



PRESS RELEASE

9 November 2012

WOMEN CHALLENGE PHILIPPINE AND CAMBODIA HEADS OF STATE TO MAKE ASEAN AT THE FOREFRONT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Women from various groups mobilized today in front of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Cambodia to call on the governments of the Philippines and Cambodia to take heed and reflect the concerns of women in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD.)

With the Cambodia government gearing to finish and launch the declaration under its chairship, women's rights and human rights groups and advocates expressed their dismay over the impetuous processes of adopting the AHRD. Despite persistent demands from the civil society groups for postponement and wider consultations, the ASEAN seemed adamantly bent on adopting the AHRD during the ASEAN Summit to be held on 18-20 November 2012 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The public action was held under the banner of Philwomen on the ASEAN, a network of around 80 organizations that work together for women's rights and gender equality in the ASEAN. The groups carried elaborate megaphones and passports. Printed on the megaphones is the call, "*pakinggan ang boses ng kababaihan*" (listen to women's voices) as women's concerns have been glaringly ignored in the AHRD. On the passports are the issues and recommendations they wish to be integrated in the declaration. These issues are access to justice, violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and migration.

While the protest was ongoing outside the Department of Foreign Affairs, representatives of the Philwomen on ASEAN went to the offices of Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. Del Rosario to hand their position paper on the AHRD entitled, "**A Challenge to ASEAN: Be at the Forefront of Human Rights Building in Southeast Asia.**"

The advocates of Philwomen challenged ASEAN and AICHR to "raise the bar" in developing a progressive AHRD and putting in place mechanisms in the ASEAN for human rights promotion and protection. The groups demanded that the Philippine and Cambodia governments enjoin the ASEAN member states in ensuring that the ASEAN declaration will not retreat from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) standard of universality and non-discrimination. ASEAN must continue to uphold that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Access to justice should be at the core of the declaration, urged Jelen C. Paclarin of Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau. Access to justice leads to the creation of mechanisms that provide redress and remedies for human rights violations suffered by peoples, especially

women in the region. Access to justice is the "teeth" of the AHRD that will pave the way to a strong, independent, credible and effective regional human rights system in the ASEAN, she added.

Non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity has continuously been rejected by some ASEAN member states. Maica Lagman of Rainbow Rights urgently cautioned ASEAN that, "excluding rights of women and lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender persons (LGBTs) in the declaration denies people of Southeast Asia, the LGBTs especially, of their inalienable human rights and equal protection of the law. ASEAN must ensure that rights and freedoms are enjoyed by all in the region, regardless of one's sex or sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). The heads of state must affirm equality of all by adopting a declaration that has inclusive provisions of non-discrimination, which allow everyone to live with dignity and respect, free and protected from any forms of discrimination and violence."

On violence against women, "Philwomen on ASEAN is calling for full employment, which includes the creation of jobs that are genuine, with dignity and sustainable, in order to reduce Filipino women's vulnerability to trafficking and prostitution. We are also calling on our government and all other members of the ASEAN to protect migrants and victims of trafficking from further abuse, and to repeal all laws that criminalize them," asserted Clydie Pasia of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women - Asia Pacific (CATW-AP).

Rebecca Lozada of the Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court also called attention to the violence experienced by women in times of conflict. "Armed conflict has meant rape and other sexual and gender-based violence in the country and in other ASEAN member-states. The AHRD should uphold the right to basic necessities of life, physical integrity and dignity of populations affected by armed conflict."

Sexual and reproductive health and rights were also seen to be ignored in the AHRD draft. "The draft AHRD mentions reproductive health, but makes no mention of sexual health and rights. These two issues — reproductive and sexual health and rights — are interrelated but are not the same," pointed out Ana Maria R. Nemenzo of WomanHealth Philippines. She added that "taken together, they are integral to advancing gender equality and are the foundation for women's autonomy in their personal/domestic and sexual relations."

Dr. Aurora Parong of Amnesty International Philippines drew attention to maternal deaths which increased from 162 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2006 to 221 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010. She said, "This means about 11 Filipino women die everyday. ASEAN states must end preventable maternal deaths by adopting an ASEAN Human Rights Declaration that recognizes and protects women's rights, including the right to information, services and goods to achieve excellent maternal health and sexual and reproductive rights."

On migration, Philwomen urged both receiving and sending countries of the ASEAN to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers. "Move away from implementing anti-migrant workers policies, such as crackdown on undocumented migrants, foreign workers first to be terminated during economic crisis, and similar policies. Recognize the contributions of migrant

workers to the economy not just of the sending countries but receiving countries of the ASEAN as well. We emphasize the need of ASEAN states to be consistent in upholding human rights for all,” said Melanie Valenciano-Cabotaje of Unlad Kabayan.

Philwomen submitted a 4-page position paper to both DFA and the Embassy of Cambodia.

The position paper can be retrieved from the Philwomen on ASEAN’s facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Philwomen-on-Asean/102742296493324?fref=ts> or at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/112657299/Position-of-Philwomen-on-ASEAN>

NOTE: Philwomen on Asean Network

Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) Women’s Committee	Medical Action Group (MAG) Metsa Foundation
Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) Davao	Mindanao Land Foundation
Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao (AFRIM)	Mindanao Migrants Empowering Actions, Inc. (MMCEAI)
Amnesty International Philippines	NORFIL Foundation
Ateneo de Davao University	Pagkakaisa ng Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan (KAISA-KA)
Bantay Banay Federation	Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK)
Batis Center for Women BATIS-AWARE	Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK) – Bohol
Bidlisiw Foundation	Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK) Bukidnon/ Alliance of Urban and Rural Women in Bukidnon (AURWIB)
Cebu Association of the Deaf (CAD)	Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK) – Davao Oriental Partido ng Manggagawa (PM)
Cebu City United Vendors Association (CCUVA)	Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court (PCICC)
Cebu Pride	Philippine Consortium on Migration and Development (Philcomdev)
CEDAW Youth	Philippine Federation of the Deaf Youth Section (PFDYS)
Center for Overseas Workers (COW)	Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK)
Coalition Against Trafficking of Women Asia-Pacific (CATW-AP)	Rainbow Rights Project
Coalition for the Liberation of Other Rising Sexes (COLORS)	Religious of the Good Shepherd-Center for Overseas Workers (RGS-COW)
Development of People’s Foundation	Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC)
Elderly Group of Santolan (EGOSI)	Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingal Panligal
Education Network (E-Net)	
Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC) Inc.	
Euphrasia Development Center FDC-KPML	
Federation of Free Workers (FFW) Women’s Network	
Fellowship for Organizing Endeavors (FORGE) Inc.	

Filipino Deaf Women's Health and Crisis
Center (FDWHCC)
Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC)-Davao
Freedom from Debt Coalition - Women's
Committee (FDC-WC) NCR
Freedom from Debt Coalition - Women's
Committee (FDC-WC) Cebu
Freedom from Debt Coalition- Southern
Mindanao (FDC-SM)
GALANG
IGLHRC
Institute of Human Rights (IHR)
KAISA-KA
KAMAO-APL
KUMPAS-FDC
LAW Center Inc.
Lawig Bubai
LEARN – Gender Committee
Lesbian Activism Project (LeAP!)
Lesbian and Gay Community (LEGACY)
Lihok Pilipina Foundation, Inc.
LINK-Davao
Lumah Ma Dilaut
LUNA Legal Resource Center

(SALIGAN)
School of Labor and Industrial Relations
(SOLAIR)
Social Watch Philippines/ JASS
Society of Transsexual Women of the
Philippines (STRAP)
Stop Abuse of Minors Association
(SAMA) Inc.
SUMAPI-Davao
TALIKALA
Task Force Detainees of the Philippines
(TFDP) – Visayas
Tumbalata
Unlad Kabayan Davao
Unlad Kabayan
UP Baguio Kasarian Gender Studies
UP Institute of Human Rights (IHR)
Visayan Forum
Visayan Forum Cebu
Visayan Forum Foundation,
Incorporated (VFFI)- Davao
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