



REMARKS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ASEAN-IPR
EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE (E4J) SOUTHEAST ASIAN YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT DIALOGUES SPECIAL WORKSHOP 1:
YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“ASEAN-IPR as a platform for the Youth in promoting peace”

Friday, 16 July 2021, 2000-2200 GMT+7
Videoconference

Distinguished Speakers,

Dear Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. A very good evening from Jakarta! It is truly a privilege for me to join you all today.
2. Before we start, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Education for Justice (E4J) initiative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with the support of the Government of Japan, for convening this Special Workshop on “youth leadership for peaceful and inclusive society”.
3. The youth – is considered one of the most important, as well as a significant majority in the population of ASEAN – as they are approximately one in three persons, with a total of around 213 million in the region.
4. This is indeed a tremendous opportunity to discuss the important role of the youth in peace-building, as well as peace-processes in general. More so, mindful that we live in a region known for its beautiful diversity.
5. For nearly two years now, we have been restrained to many adjustments in our lives – find new and innovative ways to continue our lives, our work, and our goals.

6. However, history has shown again and again that the youth – like all of you participating – despite being those deeply affected, **have shown to lead with creativity and innovation during challenging times.**

7. The youth has shown its strength and resilience through difficult and challenging times, to break boundaries to give way to new ideas.

8. I now have the pleasure to share some of my thoughts and experiences on how the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation can provide a platform for all of you to participate in promoting culture of peace, and build peace for the benefit of the peoples of ASEAN and beyond.

I. ASEAN regional peace & security and its challenges

Ladies & Gentlemen,

9. I would like to start by underlining that the ASEAN journey has demonstrated the journey of a remarkable region, in which peace and stability have been safeguarded and maintained.

10. During the past fifty-four years, ASEAN has secured continued peace and stability in the region. We can see that no military conflicts have happened between countries of ASEAN. On the other hand, some internal conflicts once ravaging in certain ASEAN countries were settled peacefully, and some border disputes resolved through negotiations.

11. As a result, peace has allowed ASEAN countries to achieve remarkable progress in their economic development and elevated millions of their peoples out of poverty.

12. As an organisation itself, ASEAN has also developed into one whose role is recognised by the international community – as the driving force of many initiatives. ASEAN has provided platforms for dialogue and cooperation for regional and major powers on a wide range of issues – from political, economic, socio-cultural, to defence.

13. Today, ASEAN has further developed as a more integrated and rules based organisation from where it started. It has managed to transform itself from an association of states, to a community of nations with its three pillars – Political and Security Community; Economic Community; and Socio-Cultural Community.

14. However, building and maintaining a peaceful and prosperous Community is not without its challenges.

15. Security challenges posed by old issues – such as unresolved border issues and internal conflicts – still persist in the region. Even more so, **contemporary security challenges** – such as radicalisation and violent extremism; terrorism; trafficking in persons; drug trafficking; ethno-religious discord; climate change; and even intense geopolitical rivalries – have all surfaced as potential disrupts to the security and stability of Southeast Asia as a region, and ASEAN as an organisation.

16. Given the increasing complexity of the challenges and contemporary threat that ASEAN is facing, it is not only for the governments or Track 1 institutions to be the only actor in this endeavour.

II. Inclusivity for the youth in peace process in ASEAN

Ladies & Gentlemen,

17. As in any process, it is paramount to ensure not only the inclusivity, but also participation and engagement of all related stakeholders from the grassroot to the policy-making level.

18. This is where **the youths of ASEAN enter the picture**. It is my belief, that peace building is only sustainable if it embraces core principles of conflict prevention. The youth, acting as peace builders, can play an important role in preventing conflict.

19. In ASEAN context, we have seen an abundant example of how Youth is actively engaged in economic and cultural discourses that contributes to

societal development. The engagement and contribution of the youth in the discourse of peace is as equally vital as other stakeholders – if not more.

20. As the next generation, the youth would have a leading role as peace builders, and bring the ASEAN Community forward towards sustainable peace.

21. Contemporary challenges in the region poses a demand that ASEAN should maintain lasting peace and stability through, among others, promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue, taking initiatives in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and reconciliation.

22. But just as important, the next question would be: “**How** can we share the youth’s engagement in peace building?” Also, “**What kind of role** can the youths of ASEAN contribute to the building and maintaining of a peaceful and prosperous ASEAN Community?”

23. **Ultimately, this is where the ASEAN-IPR could be the platform.**

III. ASEAN-IPR: mandate, functions and its role within the regional architecture

Ladies & Gentlemen,

24. The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation – or more widely known now as the ASEAN-IPR – was established under an Action Line of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint 2009-2015 to further consolidate the Community building process by **strengthening research activities on peace, conflict management and conflict resolution.**

25. The ASEAN-IPR is **mandated** to be ASEAN’s institution for research activities on peace, conflict resolution, reconciliation and post-conflict peace-building.

26. In dealing with these issues, the Institute is given the flexibility to reach out and collaborate with all stakeholders – including government institutions, academic institutions, civil society groups, and of course women and youth.

27. The Institute's establishment comes from the notion of **positive peace** – not only based on the absence of conflict or war, but sustainable investment in development and institutions, as well as societal attitudes that cultivate peace.

28. This is reflected in the Institute's own motto: **Forging and Fostering Peace**. Thus, peace building is at the very core of our work – namely in promoting culture of peace, and the voices of moderation.

29. To fulfil such mandate, the Institute is given five **functions**: (1) research; (2) capacity building; (3) pool of expertise and support for ASEAN bodies; (4) networking; and, (5) dissemination of information.

30. Of the five functions, I would like to highlight two, which is most relevant to our discussion:

- (i). The first is ***capacity building*** to promote understanding amongst diverse societies, promote the voice of moderation, and advance work in the area of interfaith dialogue;
- (ii). The second is to function as a ***knowledge hub by establishing network*** with relevant institutions with objectives aimed at promoting culture of peace.

31. What I would like to also underline from such functions, the Institute is a track 1.5 platform in its work and activities, that could serve in building capacity, and increase involvement of the youths in ASEAN, to promote dialogue, understanding, tolerance – and in the long run, sustainable peace.

32. Following the completion of APSC Blueprint 2009-2015, ASEAN adopted the APSC Blueprint 2025 – continuing the community-building process for the region. The ASEAN-IPR is assigned to implement ten action lines within the APSC Blueprint. Thus, **within the regional architecture**, the Institute functions as an important tool in achieving the targets and goals laid out in the APSC Blueprint 2025.

Dear participants,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

33. Allow me to highlight some activities that the Institute have carried out in the past which has provided a platform for inclusive participation in peace-building – specifically among the youth.

34. In 2018, the ASEAN-IPR held a **Regional Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance** with the theme “*Building Unity and Common Understanding in Countering Intolerance and Violent Extremism*”.

35. One of the outcomes of the Conference was the **ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance**, that set about a foundation for youth to take part and contribute in the promotion of peace and tolerance, by creating and promoting narratives of peace, tolerance, and pluralism through various platforms such as art, creative industry, and information and communication technology or ICT—including social media. Therefore, ensure the sustainable and inclusive development of its peoples, as part of the ASEAN Community-building process.

36. Another activity, which we had held very recently, is a **Webinar** highlighting the **Empowerment of Women and Youth in Building Sustainable Peace**. Amongst those which was highlighted during the discussions is how dialogues can foster not only understanding and tolerance, but also embrace diversity amongst different groups in the framework of building sustainable peace. It is acknowledged how youth groups are often side-lined by the elders due to perception of behaviour. However, it is also recognised the importance for youth groups to build a strong connection between competencies, skills, and willingness to be agents of change.

IV. Some food for thought

Ladies & Gentlemen,

37. Through the ASEAN-IPR, as reflected in the aforementioned activities, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to ensure the youth participation in the design and implementation of solutions for building sustainable peace.

38. The Institute will hopefully grow not only as “a” but as “the” platforms and hub of ASEAN’s many stakeholders – including the youth groups – to collaborate on relevant issues related to peace processes.

39. Following-up from the Youth Declaration, under the ASEAN-IPR’s Three-Year Work Plan 2021-2023, the Institute has several activities tailored for the youth in the pipeline. The nearest upcoming is a training entitled “Youth-Tech: utilising technology as an instrument of peace”. The training aims to further explore means for the youth in utilising ICT as a tool in spreading culture of peace.

40. Also, be on the lookout for our Discussion Series – of which one Session shall be dedicated to exploring the role of youth as agents of peace.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

41. I would like to conclude by giving you all some food for thought, and hopefully get some feedback from you in our discussion session.

- (i). **FIRST** – what do you think is the most urgent agenda related to peace in ASEAN, that should be taken on board – or even spearheaded by the youth?
- (ii). **SECOND** – what should be done in enhancing the role of youth in countering intolerance, radicalism and violent extremism?
- (iii). **THIRD** – how can ICT be used as a tool for youth in this context?

42. Once again, I would like to acknowledge the organisers for providing this platform to dialogue with all of you.

43. I thank you again for your kind attention.
