

Press Release
by the Chair of the High Level Panel on an ASEAN Human Rights Body
at the Conclusion of the 6th Meeting of the HLP on AHRB
13 December 2008, Jakarta

The High Level Panel on an ASEAN Human Rights Body (HLP on AHRB) had their 6th meeting on 11-13 December 2008 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. During the meeting, the HLP discussed in further details the modalities for the operation of the AHRB, the issue of secretarial support from the ASEAN Secretariat and funding to ensure the effective functioning of the body.

The HLP was of the view that the AHRB should have at least 2 regular meetings per year with the possibility to have additional meetings as necessary.

They also agreed that the AHRB should report to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting. At the same time, they discussed how relevant matters from reports or recommendations by the AHRB could be brought to attention of various sectoral bodies concerned since human rights cut across all 3 pillars of ASEAN.

In addition, recognizing that sufficient resources and budget are vital to the effective functioning of the AHRB, the HLP had an extensive discussion on how to mobilize and maximize the financial resources for the body. They agreed that it is important that funding should come as much as possible from ASEAN own resources, through contribution from ASEAN Member States. They felt that the principle of equal sharing should be supplemented by voluntary funding by governments Member Countries. The body may also receive funding from other sources, within and outside ASEAN, for promotional and educational activities. It is also important for the AHRB to work on the basis of a work plan which would cover the period of 2-5 years. The work plan will allow for the AHRB to set out its broad goals and identify specific programmes and activities that will be undertaken as well as provide the basis for annual budget estimates.

The HLP has now covered all of the key sections under the proposed TOR. It is hoped that after the next meeting in Brunei on 13-15 January 2009, the HLP will be able to complete the first draft of the TOR of AHRB for submission to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting during the upcoming ASEAN Summit.
