

Press Release
by the Chair of the High Level Panel on an ASEAN Human Rights Body
at the Conclusion of the 7th Meeting of the HLP on AHRB
15 January 2009, Brunei Darussalam

The High Level Panel on an ASEAN Human Rights Body (HLP on AHRB) had their 7th meeting on 13-15 January 2009 in Brunei Darussalam, during which they completed the first draft of the TOR of AHRB.

The meeting started with consultation between HLP and the Chair of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly as well as the Chairs of sectoral bodies responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of women, children and migrant workers in ASEAN which have provided valuable inputs for the drafting of the TOR of AHRB, and promises to be in close coordination with the AHRB once established so as to ensure synergy and complementarity of ASEAN's efforts to promote and protect human rights in the region.

Later on, the HLP discussed the last chapter of the TOR of AHRB, dubbed the General and Final Provisions, which contain details on the entry into force, amendment, review and interpretation of the TOR. Apparently, the document will enter into force after the approval by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting, hopefully at the upcoming ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in July. There will also be a review of the TOR 5 years after the entry into force to allow for further development of the AHRB.

Despite being successful in wrapping up their work at this meeting, the HLP will go over this draft again to tighten it up in their next meeting in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, on 12-14 February 2009 before submitting the draft to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AFMM) during the upcoming ASEAN Summit by the end of February.

The AFMM is expected to comment on the draft TOR and provide necessary guidance for improvement of the draft. It will also decide on the exact timeline for the finalization of the TOR and the establishment of the AHRB, which was promised to be within this year of 2009.
