

# **GPPAC SOUTHEAST ASIA REGIONAL ACTION AGENDA**

## **I. PREAMBLE**

Southeast Asia (SEA) is a region of diverse peoples and cultures. There are hundreds of ethnic groups and a high degree of religious plurality. The region's experience with conflict is also varied, ranging from countries struggling to prevent the escalation of armed conflicts to those dealing with post-conflict reconstruction. There are also differences between the character of civil societies in the region and the roles they play, as well as the political environment in which they exist.

The borders and political systems of many nation-states of Southeast Asia today were molded by colonial powers and in fact, remain colonial "constructs." The legacy of colonialism is a recurring factor in our analyses of contemporary conflicts in the region. We identify how struggles for self-determination – such as those in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia – stem from the configurations and geographical boundaries created in the context of decolonialization, as well as neglect and injustice imposed by elite-dominated, authoritarian governments. In many of these cases, the suppression of legitimate dissent has spiraled into armed conflicts as marginalised communities have asserted their right to self defence. In the contemporary political context, these non-state armed groups often have been tagged as "terrorists."

We also note how many of the contemporary conflicts in SEA occur along ethnic and religious lines. This belies the reality that the region's diverse peoples and cultures exist in peace, but highlights the complexity of ethnic and religious relations in the prevailing political context. We witness how the suppression of legitimate assertions of ethnic and religious identities and the marginalization of minority groups has created a deep-sense of injustice and hence, the conditions for conflict and disharmony between different identity groups. The discriminatory policies of states and structural violence have caused much suffering, particularly for indigenous communities and minority groups – in some cases constituting cultural genocide.

Within the SEA region, there is uneven development between countries and within countries. Neo-liberal globalization has been exacerbating economic disparities by undermining the competitiveness of those of the margins of the economy. Power inequalities and unequal access to resources lie behind many conflicts in the region. The problem of unequal control and access of natural resources is particularly acute among the region's indigenous communities, and has had grave impacts on their economic, social and cultural livelihood.

We are also concerned about the impacts of the US-led "war on terror" on the region. We witness how the war on terror has been used by some governments in the region to legitimize the use of violence as means to address conflict situations. It has also provided a rationale for repressive internal security laws. The war on terror is fueling militarization of the region and the expansion of US military influence, most notably in the southern Philippines, which was singled out by the US as the "second front" of the global war on terrorism. In our communities, the war on terror has led to targeting of Muslim communities as alleged havens or bases for terrorist cells and trainings.

We recognize how issues of our Asian regional neighbors, in particular the security situation in Northeast Asia, will also have an impact on our regional peace and security. We view Japan's resurgent militarism, especially the possible revision of Japan's renunciation of war (Article 9 in

the Japanese Constitution) with concern. We stand with civil societies of Northeast Asia in defending the symbolism of Article 9 and opposing resurgent Japanese militarism given its potential to destabilize the East Asian region. We are also concerned about the growing power of China, the cross-straits tension between China and Taiwan, nuclear armament of North Korea and militarization in Northeast Asia.

We also watch the situation in the Middle East with interest, mindful of the fact that thousands, if not, millions of migrant workers from Southeast Asia work and virtually keep their countries' economies afloat with their dollar remittances.

Irrespective of the many factors behind the potential and actual state of armed conflict in SEA, we believe that there is much room for improvement in official and unofficial mechanisms for conflict prevention.

ASEAN is the primary official mechanism in SEA, yet we have been disappointed with its role in conflict prevention. ASEAN's policy of non-interference in the affairs of member states has rendered the body ineffective in preventing armed conflict. In fact, we are concerned that non-interference is exacerbating conflict, injustice and the human rights situation in some member countries.

We have also been disappointed with the role of the United Nations in preventing conflict in the region. For example, the UN interventions in post-conflict Cambodia and Timor Leste (then East Timor) produced less than optimal results. These interventions highlighted the critical need for effective and transparent partnership between the UN and civil society for sustainable peace.

We recognise that the effectiveness of official mechanisms also depends on civil society. We need to explore, develop and expand partnership both with official mechanisms and among ourselves. The onus for developing a stronger role for civil society rests with us.

We assert that conflict prevention requires equitable economic development, democratic governance, social justice and respect for the cultural integrity of peoples. We affirm that this process cannot be achieved without constructive engagement between civil society, governments and regional/international bodies.

## **II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- **We are committed to peaceful means to prevent and resolve armed conflict, in particular those means that are local and indigenous**
- **We reject war and terrorism**
- **We believe peace cannot be realized and sustained without addressing the underlying causes of conflict**
- **We believe in the primacy of prevention over reaction to armed conflict**
- **We are concerned about the negative impacts of globalization**
- **We respect the right of peoples to self-determination**

- **We are committed to strengthening people’s solidarity**
- **We are committed to promoting participation by grassroots communities and marginalized groups**
- **We believe in the need to promote peace education and a culture of peace as we develop peace constituencies**
- **We are committed to justice and reconciliation as the prerequisites of sustainable peace**
- **We recognize the need for gender justice**
- **We believe in the importance of constructive engagement with the UN, multilateral agencies and governments**
- **We recognize that we cannot realize peace without respecting and protecting the environment**
- **We uphold the imperative of protecting non-combatants**
- **We are committed to supporting each other to develop our capacity**
- **We approach conflict prevention in the spirit of learning.**

### **III. AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT**

#### **1. Encouraging and Engaging Peace Talks in the Region**

##### **1-1. Advocacy for peace talks and dialogue**

Helping the ongoing peace processes in the Philippines; reviving stalled talks in Aceh and West Papua; and encouraging tri-partite dialogue in Burma and dialogue in southern Thailand and in all other conflicts in the region.

##### ASEAN tasks

- For an ASEAN government (formerly Indonesia, now Malaysia) as third-party mediator in Mindanao peace talks
- Political and electoral reforms, also security sector reform, that are needed to support peace processes

##### Government Tasks

- For the Thai government to dialogue with Muslim leaders in the three southern provinces and agree on a resolution
- For the Philippine government to resume formal talks with the MILF and the NDF-CPP-NPA

- For the Indonesian government to restart peace negotiations with the GAM in Aceh
- For the Burmese military government to accede to a tri-partite dialogue on democratic reforms with the opposition and the ethnic groups

#### UN Tasks

- Acknowledging and supporting peace processes specially the formal peace talks in the region.
- UN as facilitator in confidence building between government, the opposition and the ethnic groups (but UN role needs the agreement of the government and the support of the international community)

#### Civil society tasks

- For Thai CS to serve as communications link between government, the southern provinces and the Thai public
- For Philippine CSOs to form working groups for specific peace processes (NDF and MILF)
- For Indonesian CSOs to assist in confidence building between GROI and GAM
- Tap international solidarity for these peace processes
- In countries where there are intra-state conflicts, CSOs to initiate and promote peace dialogue together, in order to reduce tension.

### **1-2. Developing the role of CSOs as third party in any peace processes**

The communities are the main stakeholders of peace and should not be left out in any peace processes between government and armed groups. CSOs meanwhile are specially skilled and strategically located in the communities to manage intra-state conflicts.

#### Government Tasks

- For governments engaged in peace talks to recognize CSOs as independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party and allow access and transparency to the negotiations and any signed agreements
- For governments to acknowledge and ensure legal protection for CSO activists in conflict areas

#### UN Tasks

- Recognize CSOs as independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party in any peace negotiations in the region

#### Civil society tasks

- For Philippine CSOs to bring their peace agenda to the negotiating table
- For Burma CSOs to lobby the participation of the ethnic peoples in dialogues with the government and the opposition
- For Indonesia CSOs to ensure peoples participation in the peace building process and empower local initiatives, mechanisms and local wisdom in conflict prevention and peace building

### **1.3 Adherence to agreements and treaties**

#### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Ensure funding for final peace agreements it signs with non-state actors specially in post-conflict and development phases, including reconstruction and rehabilitation.

#### UN Tasks

- Formulate a mechanism for the UN and the governments for monitoring adherence to agreements and treaties
- Ensure funding and international support for any final peace agreements signed between state and non-state actors

#### Civil society tasks

- Bring down agreements to the people and strengthen public participation especially on monitoring the implementation of provisions
- Monitor ceasefire compliance and contribute to improved mechanisms
- In post-conflict community capacity building, CSOs need to assist communities identify and develop mediators who can facilitate dialogues between and among stakeholders

## **2. A Culture of Peace**

### **2-1. Developing a peace constituency**

#### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Mainstream peace education
- Enshrine the culture of peace in constitutions
- Encourage interfaith dialogues and commissions
- Promote dialogue as a way to prevent conflict

#### UN Tasks

- Strengthening the UN charter provisions against the waging of war and using armed force, and providing sanctions to nation violators.

#### Civil society tasks

- Link up with existing anti-war coalitions and formations especially those addressing the 'war on terror'
- Form coalitions that will resist the expanding influence and interventionist moves in the region of the superpowers US and China
- Campaign against the US concept of a "pre-emptive war" and aggression against third party countries under the banner of "war on terrorism"
- Mass education popularizing the value of a culture of peace

#### Media tasks

- Promote Peace Journalism and support marginalized voices

### **2-2. Developing a regional peace agenda**

#### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Financial support for the activities evolved under the regional peace agenda

#### UN Tasks

- Establish a specialized UN agency for peace research in the region, in cooperation with CSOs and academe
- Financial support for the activities evolved under the regional peace agenda

#### Civil society tasks

- Identify and link CSO centers for peace research
- Start peace education networks and institutes
- Intensify peace education at the grassroots
- Strengthen networking among civil society organizations
- Strengthen research and documentation to study and analyze experiences, including conflict themes and international dynamics like terrorism
- Identify donors who will support the process

### 2-3. **Women peace agenda and women roles in resolving conflict**

#### ASEAN Tasks

- Ensure support and funding for the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), specially in the formulation of an ASEAN Declaration Against Gender-Based Violence
- Implement the Ha Noi Declaration of 1998 and the Ha Noi Plan of Action, and the Vientiane Declaration of November 2004 against Trafficking in Persons particularly Women and Children

#### Government Tasks

- Full adoption of CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325
- Include women in all aspects of peace processes, including decision-makers in peace negotiations and in reconstruction and reconciliation processes
- Pass domestic violence legislation

#### UN Tasks

- Ensure implementation of CEDAW (1979)
- Ensure implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) which outlined the need for explicit gender mainstreaming in the peace and security policies of the United Nations system
- Include women in all aspects of peace processes

#### Civil society tasks

- Monitor the adoption of CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 by the ASEAN governments
- Expose gender injustice and address domestic violence
- Bring to the forefront of discussion and research the issue of domestic violence
- Campaign to end impunity and ensure redress for crimes committed against women

### 3. **Constructive Engagements with UN, ASEAN and governments**

#### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Consider recommendations of Second UN-ASEAN conference on Conflict Prevention, for the ASEAN Regional Forum or ARF to be involved in other conflict prevention areas such as:

- a) exchange of ideas, information and other resources with relevant actors/parties;
- b) adoption of early warning tools and mechanisms;
- c) establishment of regional mechanisms for peace-building;
- d) institutionalizing regular consultations among ASEAN, the ARF chair, and the UN SecGen.

#### UN Tasks

- Establish a specialized UN agency for conflict prevention in the region
- UN to re-study with ASEAN plans to establish a Center for Peacekeeping in ASEAN.
- Maintain UN missions (at the least, a special unit) in Cambodia specially for sustained human rights training and demobilization; and in Timor for peace building and reintegration of former combatants into Timor society.
- Ensure that the GPPAC international mechanism will have South representation

#### Civil society tasks

- Have smaller, continuous fora in between the 2-year ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) meetings
- Greater CSO and grassroots participation in existing Track 2 mechanisms on conflict prevention and regional security such as the ASEAN-UN Conferences on Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Southeast Asia, the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP)
- Establish links with the ASEAN desk officers in the political departments or respective foreign ministries
- Explore engagement in the ASEAN's new "Dialogue Partnership" with 10 countries, with the UNDP as institutional partner
- Engage the 24-nation ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on conflict resolution in the Asia Pacific
- Engage the ASEAN Security Community (ASC) specially on its stated commitment to building a "zone of peace" in Southeast Asia
- Engage other regional mechanisms like APEC, SEAMEO and identify other inter-governmental groups for engagement
- Expand networking beyond regional and sub-regional networks

### **4. Justice and Reconciliation**

#### ASEAN Tasks

- For ASEAN governments involved in regional aggression such as armed occupation to provide equitable remedies including reparation and compensation to victims

#### Government Tasks

- Early ratification of international treaties and relevant protocols on international human rights law, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and establish related domestic legislation.
- In Timor, the recognition by government of the former combatants and ensuring their welfare

#### UN Tasks

- Establish war tribunals for Cambodia and East Timor, at the least, truth and reconciliation commissions

#### Civil society tasks

- Ensure GPPAC CSO membership in the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism
- Elicit international support for judicial processes that will bring war criminals to justice
- Serve as a platform to develop alternative concepts of justice and reconciliation
- Help transform victims of conflict to survivors
- In Timor, to support UN Sec-Gen initiative to form a commission of experts to probe grave crimes in Timor
- In Timor, to monitor the government initiative to establish a truth and friendship commission for Timor and Indonesia

### **5. Promoting human security in the region**

#### **5-1. Weapons reduction and disarmament and against proliferation of small arms and light weapons**

##### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- For ASEAN governments to sign agreements or treaties agreeing to weapons reduction and disarmament and against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; and for stricter gun controls and ownership laws
- For ASEAN governments to reduce budgets for defense spending and reallocate to basic services
- For ASEAN governments to cooperate in stopping the illegal arms trade
- To provide equal opportunity, equity and social justice to all
- Promote food security and sustainable development at grassroots and national level
- For Thai governments to revoke/lift martial law in the 3 southern provinces

#### UN Tasks

- Accelerate implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (2001)
- Put diplomatic pressure on arms-manufacturing countries over their arms sales and transfers to governments with bad human rights records

#### Civil society tasks

- Lobby UN and donor governments for sanctions, such as suspension of Official Development Aid or halting military aid to governments committing repeated and massive human rights violations on segments of their population.

#### **5-2. Protection of internally displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees**

##### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Strict adherence to international laws on asylum and refugees like the UNGPID, Convention on Refugees (1951), including the Convention against Torture, CEDAW and the Declaration on the Rights of the Child.
- Establish a regional mechanism for the protection of the rights of IDPs

#### UN Tasks

- Clear guidelines distinguishing between political refugees fleeing conflict and other undocumented aliens, and issue 'temporary protection letters' to individuals deemed as needing protection from their country of origin
- Special protection and fulfillment of basic rights for IDPs

#### Civil society tasks

- Continue lobby for promotion of human rights, including of IDPs

### **5-3. Promoting economic independence of south countries**

#### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Call for debt cancellation or debt repudiation of southeast Asian countries

#### UN Tasks

- Study alternatives to the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions

#### Civil society tasks

- Support global campaign for the cancellation of foreign debt payments or debt repudiation by developing countries
- Call for the abolition of the Bretton Woods Institutions
- Strengthen anti-globalization formations

### **5-4. Right of self-determination for all peoples**

#### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- ASEAN to abandon its policy of non-interference in domestic affairs of member nations, especially in human rights and democratic governance

#### UN Tasks

- Implement provisions in the UN charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN declarations on the inherent rights of all peoples, including the right to resist

#### Civil society tasks

- Lobby ASEAN to abandon its policy (under the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation) of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member countries
- Develop alternative political options or self-determination structures
- Propose alternative processes to attain self-determination such as referendum or popular consultative vote
- Promote consultations on ancestral domain and ancestral land issues
- Support indigenous peoples assertions such as the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples- engage UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

## **6. Respecting and Protecting the Environment**

### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Reinforce laws on environment management and protection
- Legislation for total log ban in critical environment areas
- Legislation against large-scale mining in IP areas

### Civil society tasks

- Promote community participation in protecting natural resources
- Educate people on land, forestry and fishery laws

## **7. Promoting Freedom of Expression and Free Speech**

### ASEAN and Government Tasks

- Pass national legislation protecting the fundamental freedoms of expression and free speech
- Enforce laws protecting the media

### Civil society tasks

- Lobby for enforcement of laws protecting the media