

ASEAN SOGI Caucus: We are ASEAN

We, the ASEAN SOGI Caucusⁱ are deeply outraged and concerned by the decision of the National Organizing Committee (NOC) of Brunei Darussalam's to restrict discussions and limit civil society spaces at the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People's Forum 2013 (ACSC/APF) for selective groups of people whose opinions and views are not aligned with the state's views, namely sexual orientation and gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE), sex work, sexual and reproductive health rights.

We are disappointed that even in spaces that are meant to foster and uphold democracy and human rights principles by and for civil society organizations, specific sectors of society are being discriminated against and are restricted.

People of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity as well as sex workers and advocates of sexual and reproductive rights are banned and given conditions from organizing educational workshops that promote understanding and address the human rights violations that we are subjected to because of our identity and orientation.

We strongly believe that the invisible hand of the state in policing civil society spaces is highly unacceptable, and if such policing continues the ACSC/APF will no longer be a relevant space for civil society. We strongly urge the ACSC/APF to immediately address and correct this matter.

We are at the stage in our struggle for equality and respect that we will not accept discrimination, abuse and violence or state sanction as a part of our existence by the denial of our rights and our humanity.

It is in this spirit of pride and dignity that we are reclaiming our rightful space in our respective countries and in our region, and we demand our governments to:

1. **Immediately repeal laws that directly and indirectly criminalize SOGI**, recognizes LGBTIQ rights as human rights, and harmonizes national laws, policies and practices with the Yogyakarta Principles.
2. **Establish national level mechanisms and review existing regional human rights instruments** (e.g. AICHR, ACWC) to include the promotion and protection of the equal rights of all people regardless of SOGI with the active engagement of the LGBTIQ community.
3. **Depathologize SOGI and promote psychological well being of people of Diverse SOGI** in accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) standards, and ensure equal access to health and social services.

We urge the ACSC/APF 2013 to correct and apologize for the discriminatory and regressive action that grossly disrespected our basic human rights as members of the ASEAN community. We call on members of society to support our call for a TRULY INCLUSIVE and a REAL ACSC/APF that protects and promotes the human rights of ASEAN peoples regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity as well as socio-economic background.

ⁱ *The ASEAN Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Caucus or known as "ASEAN SOGI Caucus" is a network of people who respect and promote the human rights of people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE)*