



ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue on "Women, Peace and Security - The Role of Women in the Prevention of Violent Extremism" (AURED IV)  
Kuala Lumpur, 7 December 2017

Closing Remarks by UN Resident Coordinator for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to close on behalf of the UN this ASEAN-UN dialogue on The Role of Women in Preventing Violent Extremism. It is the first such dedicated dialogue on women and preventing violent extremism in the ASEAN region.

I would like to thank all participants – from governments, civil society and the UN - for their active participation and contributions to the sessions in the last two days.

The focus of the discussions cannot be more timely for both ASEAN and for the United Nations as we redouble our efforts in preventive action. We are agreed on the importance of two priority agendas for our organisations and our civil society partners – preventing violent extremism and the promotion of women.

The rich and wide-ranging discussions have demonstrated a clear synergy of our global-regional agendas, including the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism and ASEAN new initiatives on prevention including plans to develop 'a regional plan to counter and to prevent the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism' and a 'culture of prevention'.

Importantly, the discussions over two days have also reaffirmed that violent extremism in this region is closely associated with wider violent conflict. Violent extremism has been on the rise in those places, when insurgencies, criminal violence, civil conflict, and have specific impacts on women and girls. It has declined in countries that have worked to reduce conflict, widen political participation, and improve their record on gender equality and human rights.

As the UN Secretary-General raised at the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-UN summit, there has been increasing concern about violent extremism globally and also regionally. Indeed, the influence of ISIS outside of the Levant was seen most starkly in this region, in Marawi, Philippines this year. The violence was carried out by several local extremist organizations affiliated with ISIS. The ‘Marawi Siege’ resulted in hundreds of deaths and over a million displaced. Importantly, it highlighted the ability of transnational terrorist organizations to exploit local grievances.

Within these discussions, several participants have highlighted increasing concerns about the situation. It has also been significant that the need for ASEAN, governments and civil society organisations to work together to prevent violent extremism has been reinforced.

The discussions have also strongly reinforced how Women can play powerful roles as preventers on the frontlines. Women are mediating conflicts in communities, offering critical care and support, and actively challenging extremist narratives. Growing evidence shows how women’s participation in our peace and security efforts improves their effectiveness. ASEAN and the UN must urgently redouble our investment in women as an effective resource for peace.

The challenge now will be to move from global and regional frameworks to action, particularly the realisation of preventive action.

The United Nations is committed to work closely with ASEAN and civil society to develop these issues. You saw here yesterday and today a joined-up UN team who is already working with a broad range of stakeholders in the region.

Last week, six UN agencies came together as one for a workshop on innovative approaches to National Action Plans on PVE. A central consideration was how to integrate gender and promote the role of women in prevention efforts. Seven countries from Asia sent participants from government, security services and civil society including women’s groups, reflecting the holistic and inclusive strategy necessary for these national Plans of Action.

Government and civil society actors from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand actively participated (and some are here today too). Participants from three of those ASEAN member states requested to partner with the UN in their efforts to prevent violent extremism.

Given that violent extremism is a local, national, regional and global problem, the collaboration of ASEAN member states on national action plans can provide a good foundation for ASEAN's own intentions to move ahead with a regional ASEAN plan of action. The discussions here have reaffirmed the importance of comprehensive approaches to that initiative and to integrating gender perspectives and civil society within that process. While regional ownership of that process will be essential, the UN Secretary-General has affirmed the willingness of the UN to provide technical support, which would include comparative experiences of other regional organisations.

The Outcome document and its policy recommendations provides a great opportunity for us all. The Foreign Ministry of Malaysia has agreed to share this formally with all ten ASEAN member states to inform their internal policy discussions.

In particular, as ASEAN maps its strategy to develop a regional Plan of Action on PVE, this outcome document will no doubt help guide its development, in particular ensuring women play a central role in prevention efforts and that violent extremism is addressed within a gender equality and human rights framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have agreed that we are at a critical moment in the ASEAN region in the fully recognising the role of women in preventing violent extremism. Indeed, ASEAN and its civil society counterparts now have the opportunity to stand up as a regional and global leader integrating a gender perspective into the prevention agenda. Indeed, ASEAN's rich and creative experiences can be effective means to support other regions in these areas.

To end, I wish to express the sincere gratitude of the United Nations to our co-organisers for their dedication and commitment.

The ASEAN team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been able to successfully organise this event so quickly after the heavy workload of the ASEAN Summit which was held three weeks ago in Manila.

Elina Noor and her team at ISIS Malaysia has provided important advice over many months on structuring this event and support logistics. Lastly, I should recognise the commitment of UN regional colleagues in the Department of

Political Affairs, UNDP, UN Women and UNODC, as well as the hard work of Linda and the UNDP team in my office in Kuala Lumpur.

This has been a rich and valuable experience. Let's now commit to concretely move the agenda forward within ASEAN with the support of the UN and civil society organisations.

Thank you