

# ASEAN Studies Center UGM Celebrates 10th Anniversary of AICHR

Tuesday, 19 November 2019 WIB, By: Marwati



ASEAN Studies Center UGM organised a public discussion and book launching themed *The Evolution of the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism: Institutional and Thematic Issues Within* on Saturday (16/9) at Faculty of Social and Political Sciences UGM.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the discussion talked about human rights issue and challenge in ASEAN.

“There are several challenges nowadays, one of those is the diminishing civilian space in many of Southeast Asian countries,” said Dr. Randy W. Nandyatama, M.Sc., senior researcher of the ASC.

He described existing opportunities such as the increasing agreements on human rights in ASEAN and emergence of activism and civil society networks in Southeast Asia. Challenges include ASEAN exclusivity and the general views that see human rights only as a moralistic matter.

Thus, efforts are needed to make ASEAN more open and inclusive by engaging civil society



organisations not just to exert political pressures but also to give support to member countries.

“Civil society organisations can be essential in improving the communication between state and non-state actors, creating close ties between communities within ASEAN,” he said.

He added to make ASEAN relevant, ASEAN need to always have fresh and creative ideas to respond to contemporary human rights challenges.

Meanwhile, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN, H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono, said it was not easy to build human rights mechanism regionally. He also revealed the importance of building communication between actors so that member countries can reach an agreement or understanding.

This view was shared by H.E. Amb. Phassporn Sangasubana, Permanent Representative of Thailand to ASEAN, saying this effort was an evolutionary process that may take up a long time, but important to do for common goals. “This is an evolutionary process that requires constant dialogue between all member countries,” he said.

AICHR was established on 23 October 2009 during the 15th ASEAN Summit in Cha-Am Hua Hin, Thailand, as a commitment of ASEAN to achieve strategies in strengthening regional cooperation in human rights matters.

Indonesian Representative to AICHR, H.E. Yuyun Wahyuningrum, explained that AICHR was born with limitations and possibilities such as no authorities for fact finding, monitoring and investigation, lack of independence between representatives. AICHR, however, may listen to stories from victims, have power to do persuasion through dialogue, and focus on specific issues.

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