

ASIAN YOUTH FORUM 2016
“Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership Toward SDGs”
Co-organized by Asian Youth Council
And Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia
Phnom Penh, Cambodia, February 25-28, 2016

The 111 youth leaders and delegates of Asian Youth Council and youth organizations from 17 countries namely Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, *Georgia*, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yemen gathered here in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, to participate in the ASIAN YOUTH FORUM 2016 under the theme of “Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership Toward SDGs” from 25th to 28th February, 2016.

This forum is to resolute the deliberation on the regional representation, contribution and engagement of the young population toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 2030); and subsequently reiterated with importance in the 2016 ECOSOC Youth Forum “Youth Taking Action to Implement the 2030 Agenda”, on 1-2 February 2016 in the UN Headquarters.

The Opening Ceremony of the Asian Youth Forum 2016 were highlighted and presided over by Samdach Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The Introductory Remarks to AYF 2016 was presented by H.E. HUN Many, GUSI Peace Prize Laureate and President of Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia. The theme chosen for this year forum “Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” is very important and shows the contribution in implementing the 2030 Agenda, which was adopted on the 25th of September 2015 by 193 countries of the United Nations. Peace and Democracy have long been discussed separately at various levels, and most of the times, it is slipping to the circumstance of argument whether it is peace or democracy that is more important for the people, or even which one shall come first. All these debates are important, however, it is tend to forget what is really fundamental to the people themselves. It is not which one is more important for the people but what is vital, is the ability to address and deliver the necessity of our people’s daily life.

In the plenary session, two speakers, H.E. Mr. Kim Rithy and Mr. AZRIL MOHD AMIN, discussed on the topic of “Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership towards SDGs”. In his remark, H.E. Mr. Kim Rithy, vice-president of the Union of Youth Federation of Cambodia (UYFC), briefly elaborated the definition of SDGs, 17 goals and 169 targets adopted on the 25th September, 2015 by 193 United Nations member countries. In addition, he also touched upon the importance of youth in the realization of SDGs as also emphasized by ECOSOC Youth Forum 2016. Linking to the realization of SDGs, the speaker also provide a

brief definition of peace, democracy, and regional partnership. The experience of Cambodia's transition from a war-torn nation to the achievement of peace and prosperity as witnessed today was also highlighted.

In his statement, Mr. AZRIL MOHD AMIN, Chief Executive of Centre for Human Rights Research and Advocacy, shared with the audience the origin of democracy and its role in ensuring good governance. Although the Western model of governance is the best available, it still has an obvious weakness as it does not per se ensure that the rights of minorities are guaranteed in any given policy. In order to overcome this, due regard must be accorded to the human rights and dignity of the minorities, in particular racial and religious minorities. He had also elaborated on the SDGs, in particular Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. This particular goal is multifaceted and includes provision on finance, technology, capacity building and trade.

At the end of the session, participants are given opportunity to express their opinions on the discussed topic. The comments and concerns raised are noted as follow: (1) different levels of country development; (2) countries' cultural and political context; (3) available resources; (4) readiness of each country to implement; and (5) political awareness and participation amongst youth.

The Topic 1 of the break-out session was "Why Peace, Democracy and Development is important to be discussed altogether?" The discussion topic was introduced by Mr. Zhang Kun, Research assistant for International and Strategic and moderate by H.E. Dam Dariny, vice president of UYFC.

Peace is important for the development of economy. Development is in return important for peace and democracy. Domestic and regional conflict have been an obstacles for the development in the region. The ultimate goal of peace and democracy is development. And then, the development will in return promote peace and democracy. We can see clearly why Asia become the most growing region in the world due to its stable peace. Example: democratization process among countries in Asia-Pacific region are also resulted from the development. Asia used to be criticized as Elite Governments. But as a result of development and strengthened democracy, it's not any more. Asian countries has now embarked on new democracy and strong economic development. So it is important to keep this trend by promoting peace and development in the region.

Peace, Democracy and Development are inter-related, but how they are inter-related is very complex and abstract. Moreover, it is very arguable whether which one among these three variables should be the precondition to the others. However, they should be seen as having supplementary role to one another, so it is crucial that they are not discussed separately.

Most of the participants agreed with the above concept, but expressed that there is no one exact standard for democracy. Thus, a nation should not adopt a style of democracy from other nations. A nation should know its own need and use its own style of democracy.

Topic 2: Regional Partnership as a vehicle to enhance Peace, Democracy and Development,

In this session, the Speaker is Mr. Toh Wee Kee, Chairman of PAYM Youth Activities from Singapore and Moderator is Mr. Som Ratana, Vice Rector of Royal University of Phnom Penh from Cambodia.

Regional partnership has long been seen as an instrument for promoting economic growth and political stability around the globe. Partnership can be involved at national, regional, sub-regional and local level. Its specific purposes vary based on the level and objectives of partnerships. Also, it can be in policy making, development of strategy and implementation of strategy.

Voice can be influential. Youth can raise voice and partnership in the region can elaborate the impact of youth's voice.

Regional partnership or cooperation is inevitable ideal activity to enhance peace, democracy and development because they are the three main elements that play important role in the country that has rule of law.

The break-out session on Topic 3 is “How do peace, democracy and regional partnership contribute to SDGs?” Speaker was Mr. Earl P. Saavedra, Commissioner Representing Mindanao of the National Youth Commission, the Philippines and Moderator was Mr. Seang Sopagna, Director of Cambodia ASEAN International Institute, Cambodia.

The presentation mainly focuses on the three dimensions such as peace, democracy and regional partnership that play a greater role in ensuring Asian member states as well as the rest the world to be in a position that takes advantages of pursuing SDGs in attaining their targets.

SDGs should begin with the appreciation of peace and human rights, the importance of inclusive society and the meaningful cooperation among countries to share best practices, adapt success stories and pragmatic experiences in dealing with issues.

The absence of peace hampers a nation to achieve the SDGs. Families are displaced, fatalities, demonstration, destruction of resources. Young people cannot have access to education because of violent conflicts, resulted in illiteracy and Poverty.

Democracy plays a vital role in pursuing the strategies of SDGs. People know what they need so they should demand from their government but they have to make sure that they help

the government as well as the latter needs the guidance from their people because it is so hard for them to reach out to all the people.

In term of Regional Cooperation (outward-looking perspective), Countries must converge in order to achieve the SDGs. They need to share with others in the spirit of unity and solidarity what best have they have done to excel on something. These can be pursued through the sharing of: 1. Programs 2. Policies and 3. Organizations & capacity building. Every Lesson learned from countries is worth sharing. Inter-structure organizations such as EU commission, ASEAN Integration could be exemplary as instrumental in achieving global SDGs. Partnerships will not prosper if the intention only cater to few sectors, the common good of all must prevail.