

# 2020 HA NOI DECLARATION ON STRENGTHENING SOCIAL WORK TOWARDS COHESIVE AND RESPONSIVE ASEAN COMMUNITY

*Adopted on 12 November 2020*

**WE**, the Heads of States or Governments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (hereinafter referred to as “ASEAN”), namely: Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, on the occasion of the 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit;

**UPHOLDING** the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 which seeks to build upon and deepen the integration process to realise a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 which aims to provide mechanisms and enhance institutional capacity to promote equitable access to social protection, and basic social welfare for all, and particularly for vulnerable groups including older persons, persons with disabilities, women and children, as well as encourage institutional and technical innovations for the provision of social services;

**REAFFIRMING** the complementarity between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025), particularly in addressing inequality, facilitating access to services, promoting social justice and social cohesion, preventing and responding to violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination, neglect and family separation, and addressing harmful behaviours and social norms by creating policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, and ensuring mobilisation of resources and strengthening relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation for building capacity at all levels;

**COMMENDING** the progress of work of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD) and the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD) that continues to harness the potential of social welfare and development in reducing inequality, empowering peoples of ASEAN, mitigating the impacts of economic downturn, as well as the negative impacts of public health emergencies, and natural and human-induced disasters on vulnerable groups;

**ENCOURAGED** by the progress of social work development in ASEAN Member States and the work of the ASEAN Social Work Consortium (ASWC), which continues to strengthen solidarity and cooperation among social work practitioners, educators, and schools of social work, which was well documented by the Annual Publication of ASEAN Social Work Journal as a part of knowledge management as well as the establishment of the ASEAN Training Centre for Social Work and Social Welfare (ATCSW) as noted at the 35<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit, with a vision to be a leading training center on social work and social welfare in ASEAN focusing on building capacities and skills, sharing knowledge and expertise, and enhancing collaboration and partnership;

**RECOGNISING** the critical role of social work in mitigating the impacts of economic and social crises, and risks and vulnerabilities on individuals, households and communities, mitigating risks and improving stability and the overall resilience of vulnerable groups to withstand the impact of these crises, and addressing vulnerabilities arising from natural and human-induced disasters, conflict, climate change, rapid urbanisation, disparity and inequality.

**COGNISANT** of the vital role fulfilled by the social workers in ensuring high quality, timely delivery of and accessibility to social welfare and accessibility to social protection for vulnerable groups, and, as such, their immense contribution to poverty eradication, reduction of social barriers, inequality and the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that no one is left behind;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that social work is an essential part of social welfare and that a holistic and comprehensive approach to social service workforce strengthening is needed in order to effectively and comprehensively strengthen social work and to realise the vision of key ASEAN instruments such as the *Hanoi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children*, the *Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection in ASEAN*, and its regional framework and action plan, the *ASEAN Enabling Master Plan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN* and its regional action plan, the *ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children* and its regional plans of action, and *Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025)*, among others, towards a more cohesive and responsive ASEAN Community;

**TOGETHER, WE DECLARE OUR COMMITMENT TO** promote social work and strengthen its catalytic role in realising a people-centred, people-oriented, and inclusive ASEAN Community, that enhances the capacities of the poor, vulnerable groups, achieves inclusion and enhances equitable access of those groups, including but not limited to persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, women, children and adolescents, migrant workers and victims of violence, trafficking in persons, pandemics and disasters, among others and, in accordance to the prevailing national laws, policies and regulations of ASEAN Member States, through the following:

1. Develop and strengthen legislation and policies on social work including defining, reinforcing and enhancing the roles and functions of social workers, validate and create (if any) social work positions in social welfare, health, education and justice systems covering the areas of prevention, response, and rehabilitation at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. Such legislation and policies are aimed at addressing professional practice gaps, enhancing professionalisation and competencies, promoting standards and accountability, increasing efficiency and effectiveness.
2. Develop a strategic plan for the progressive strengthening of social work, based on an assessment of needs and current social service system capacities and a multidisciplinary, inclusive and participatory approach, to deliver quality social services nationally. In order to effectively plan, develop and support the strengthening of social work, promote the adoption of information management systems for both human resource management and case management and the development of indicators for tracking and monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policies and strategic plans.
3. Adopt, standardise and strengthen accreditation, certification, registration and licensing systems for social workers and para-social workers. Develop, standardise and strengthen quality education, research, studies, and pre- and in-service training programmes for social work professionals and para-professionals, and other professionals to produce social work graduates in various fields in order to fulfil the demand, and ensure responsiveness to national priorities, and alignment with international standards. Facilitate the availability of education and training opportunities at regional and international level including through the ASEAN Training Centre for Social Work and Social Welfare (ATCSW).

4. Enhance interagency coordination at the national level, and cross-sectoral collaboration at the ASEAN level, between social welfare, health, education, justice, labour, community development, finance, disaster risk reduction and management to explicitly reference social work in relevant mechanisms, platforms, and regulations. Encourage government and non-government agencies to provide opportunities for social workers relevant to their work setting.
5. Promote the establishment of national associations or councils of social workers, support collaboration with professional associations or councils, both government and non-government, and foster partnerships with other professionals and paraprofessionals, allied workers and civil society organisations and with the private sector through Corporate Social Responsibility.
6. Promote the retention of social workers through the provision of career progression opportunities and professional development. Promote continuous capacity building and establish and strengthen systems for quality supervision and support for social workers.
7. Allocate adequate resources to strengthen social work, including workforce development and financing for education, training, research and publications.
8. Develop and enhance regional networks of social workers and regional platforms including but not limited to the ASEAN Social Work Consortium for exchange of good practices and enhancing social work and social welfare in the region, establishing referral system, meeting the supporting needs of the citizens toward substantive equality and effective social development.
9. Work towards regional professional recognition of social work, render necessary assistance to narrow social work education gaps among ASEAN Member States, and develop regional professional and occupational standards, social work ethics, standardised competency frameworks, standards/core curriculum and guidelines for the supervision of social work.
10. At the national and regional level, endeavour to develop strategies to enhance positive public perception of social work and social workers, including building the capacity and engaging various types of media, including the social media network to promote an understanding of the role and impact of social work in ASEAN.
11. Undertake cross-sectoral and inter-pillar cooperation across the ASEAN Community, as well as engage ASEAN's partners including the ASEAN Plus Three Countries, ASEAN Dialogue Partners, international organisations and civil society organisations, academe, and private sector, among others, to continue the development and support social work in ASEAN.

**WE ENCOURAGE** relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies in the three ASEAN Community Pillars to promote the implementation of this Declaration, and task the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD), with the support of the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD) and ASEAN Social Work Consortium (ASWC) to develop a Roadmap to implement this Declaration, and review, coordinate, monitor and report the progress of its implementation in partnership with other sectoral bodies and partners.

**ADOPTED** at the Summit, this Twelfth day of November in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty, in a single original copy in the English Language.