



## ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT FOUNDATION

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### **AIPP Press Statement**

18 November 2025

Chiang Mai, Thailand

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) congratulates the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and ASEAN Member States on the adoption of the *ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment* and the *ASEAN Declaration on Promoting the Right to Development and the Right to Peace Towards Realizing Inclusive and Sustainable Development*, during the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (26–28 October 2025). AIPP welcomes these important milestones reaffirming ASEAN's commitment to human rights and sustainable development and calls on ASEAN Members States and AICHR to ensure the meaningful inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples in their implementation at all levels.

AIPP considers this as an important regional milestone that affirms the inseparable link between environmental protection and human rights, emphasizing that a healthy environment is essential to the well-being of all people across Southeast Asia. Equally vital is the right to development that fully respects the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their effective and meaningful participation in decision-making processes and their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

We commend the efforts of AICHR and ASEAN Member States in developing this Declarations, and we appreciate AICHR's openness in engaging with rightsholders, civil society and stakeholders through both formal dialogues and informal discussions throughout the process.

*"This Declaration is a step forward for ASEAN, but for Indigenous Peoples, it must also recognize our role as stewards of the land, forests, and rivers that sustain all life,"* said **Ms. Nittaya Earkanna**, from Thailand and AIPP Executive Council Member for Mekong region.

As AIPP and our members were actively engaged in this process, we take pride in having contributed our perspectives and recommendations, especially emphasizing the [non-negotiables from the rights holders](#) and the connection between Indigenous Peoples' rights, land tenure security, and Indigenous knowledge systems in environmental governance.

*"This Declaration opens a door for ASEAN to work hand-in-hand with Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous rights is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainable development, and the two cannot be separated. Recognizing us as rights holders and partners will ensure that Indigenous Knowledge and governance systems guide the region's path toward environmental*



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*protection and sustainable development.” - **Abdon Nababan**, from Indonesia and AIPP Executive Council Member for Southeast Asia region.*

While we welcome the adoption of the Declarations and echoing the UN experts' [press release on 30 October 2025](#), we remain deeply concerned that Indigenous Peoples continue to be referred to as “vulnerable groups/situations and stakeholders” rather than recognized as rights holders and environmental stewards. By dismissing AIPP’s non-negotiables, ASEAN’s declaration sidelined the rights of millions of Indigenous Peoples who has been protecting land, territories, and waters from generation, essential to everyone’s right to a safe, clean, sustainable environment. This failure was not just a missed opportunity-it was a breach of ASEAN states’ own commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

As AIPP stated in its [press release 7 May 2024, public position](#) and non-negotiable [demands](#), Indigenous Peoples’ relationship with the environment is one of stewardship and responsibility — not vulnerability alone. For ASEAN, any effective regional or national environmental policy must reflect this reality. Despite strong advocacy from AIPP and allies, the Declaration reduces Indigenous Peoples to just “Indigenous”- erasing the very term that affirms their distinct identities, cultures, languages, and way of life. Using the full term Indigenous Peoples is about acknowledgement and recognition of the existence of millions of Indigenous Peoples across the region who refuse to be made invisible.

*“The Constitution of the Philippines explicitly recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples, supposedly operationalized through the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997. As the Philippines prepares to chair ASEAN in 2026, it must demonstrate leadership by example, by upholding and promoting Indigenous Peoples’ rights within the Philippines and addressing long-standing issues on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in mining, energy, and other extractive and infrastructure projects that dispossess Indigenous communities, undermine self-determination, and threaten the safety of Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights Defenders. It must ensure that the full term Indigenous Peoples—and the collective rights it affirms—is fully reflected and protected in the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action.” - **Ms. Beverly L. Longid**, from the Philippines and AIPP Chairperson.*

AIPP notes that under the upcoming ASEAN Chairship of the Philippines in 2026, AICHR has the opportunity to take leadership in advancing the implementation of initiatives related to Indigenous Knowledge and Good Practices, as reflected in the AICHR Work Plan. We emphasize the importance of ensuring the meaningful participation and engagement of Indigenous Peoples and their organizations in this process. We therefore urge ASEAN and AICHR to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge and cultural heritage are recognized as integral components of environmental protection and sustainable development.



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We call upon ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, ASEAN Member States, and AICHR to uphold the rights and dignity of Indigenous Peoples by ensuring our full, effective, and meaningful participation in the formulation of the ASEAN Regional Action Plan—centering the voices of Indigenous Women, Indigenous Youth, and Indigenous Persons with Disabilities. This includes engaging Indigenous communities and networks in consultations and monitoring processes, and recognizing our rights to land, territories, and resources as the foundation for environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

This participation must be institutionalized through direct engagement with Indigenous Peoples' organizations and networks in all national consultations and regional monitoring processes.

As a regional alliance of rights holders, AIPP asserts the following as non-negotiables, that must be explicitly reflected in the ASEAN Regional Action Plan:

- Explicit use of the term “Indigenous Peoples”;
- Right to land, territories, and resources of Indigenous Peoples;
- Right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples;
- Full protection of Indigenous Peoples' Environmental Human Rights Defenders and Indigenous Women's Environmental Human Rights Defenders;
- Right to maintain, control, protect, and develop cultural heritage and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples;

ASEAN Member States must also take concrete measures to end the criminalization, militarization, and violent attacks against Indigenous communities and Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights Defenders, ensuring conditions for genuine peace and inclusive and sustainable development.

AIPP remains committed and open to collaborate with AICHR, ASEAN Member States, civil society organizations, and other partners to ensure that Indigenous Peoples voices are not invisible in the Declaration's implementation — but visible, valued, and central to the region's shared future.

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