



DEMOCRACY CONSOLIDATION IN ASIA

“Renewing Commitment to Uphold and Promote Democracy Together”

CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE: A CALL FOR DEMOCRATIC UNITY

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Approximately 60 key democracy advocates from across Asia convened in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from April 2-3, 2019, at the “Democracy Consolidation in Asia Conference” hosted by the Asia Democracy Network (ADN) and Bersih 2.0 to affirm its commitment to uphold and promote democracy amidst current democracy challenges buffeting the region.

While delegates recognized the positive wind of change of democracy wafting in Malaysia, they also emphasized the general backsliding and assault to democracy in many countries within Asia. The conference calls upon Malaysia—both civil society and its new government, to lead in pushing back the dark phenomena of hate speech, intolerance, extremism and the return of fascism, one party rule, and authoritarianism that are riding on populist sentiments in the region.

The conference recognized the vital role of civil society and democracy advocates to animate the democracy movement in Asia. The delegates realized the urgent need to consolidate efforts of their respective advocacies cutting across research, dialogues, campaigns, constituency building and direct actions in order to build an adequate response to the regression of democracy in the region. It was emphasized that citizens must reclaim their civic space and create Asia’s democracy narrative themselves by strengthening cooperation and solidarity among each other and in order to sustain and build up the democracy movement. It was emphasized that Freedom of Association, Assembly, and Expression are cardinal for the sustenance and strengthening of democratic society and governance.

The delegates committed to continually demand respect for the rights of the people for freedom, social-justice, equality and inclusiveness, and their right to live in dignity. A society imbued with respect, harmony, and the absence of discrimination (caste, gender, ethnicity, etc) with democratic governance respecting transparency and accountability.

Towards this end, the delegates urged national level civil society actors to continue to demand their government to uphold democratic principles within the country and in foreign affairs rather than hide behind a moribund non-interference principle especially in the Southeast Asia region. The delegates also called upon the governments to respect, protect and promote human rights for all and ensure the rights of minorities.

As civil society in Asia welcomes the cooperation of like-minded governments and state agencies in advancing democracy and guaranteeing peoples’ rights and democratic principles in governance, only in partnership with civil society will we be able to achieve unity and consolidate our collective democratic aspirations.

In response to democracy regress in the region, the civil society of Asia renews its commitments to uphold and promote democracy through strengthened and enhanced democracy solidarity and unity.

Kuala Lumpur, 5 April, 2019