



Raoul Wallenberg Institute
of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law



PRESS RELEASE

11th Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights
National and Regional Human Rights Mechanisms
23 – 25 November 2011 | Prague, Czech Republic

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Human rights start at home

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and international human rights treaties are the minimum standards for human rights protection by national and regional bodies. This was a key message from over 120 civil society and government representatives at the 11th Informal Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Seminar on Human Rights, the largest multi-sector gathering on human rights between the two regions.

Hosted by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Czernin Palace in Prague, the event took place on 23-25 November. The Asia-Europe Foundation, Raoul Wallenberg Institute, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs organised this annual seminar.

“Human rights start at home,” stated Mr Jiří Schneider, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, who encouraged participants to draw their own lessons from the Czech Republic’s experiences in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The seminar aimed to examine how the international human rights architecture can be best strengthened at regional and national levels. Mr. Kieren Fitzpatrick, Director of the Asia Pacific Forum, emphasized that national human rights institutions are “an essential one-stop shop for human rights protection at home. They give local meaning to human rights, promote good governance, and convert international law into local reality. Every country should have one.”

Regional institutions can complement national and UN mandates for promotion and protection. “Regional human rights bodies can be a laboratory for human rights development that go beyond, but not below, international standards,” said Prof. Michael O’Flaherty, recently-appointed Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and member of the UN Human Rights Committee.

“An ASEAN Human Rights Declaration would embody the UDHR, with added value,” said Ambassador Rosario Manalo, Philippine Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), which is currently meeting in Bali to discuss the drafting of the regional statement among other matters. Also present at the Seminar were the AICHR representatives of Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, as well as national human rights commissioners, human rights ambassadors, representatives of justice and foreign affairs ministries, academics, activists and human rights defenders.

The hosting country organised a special panel on “The Transition to the New Legal Order in the Czech Republic” with a special focus on the creation of the national system of protection of human rights.

The 12th Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights will address the theme “Human Rights and Information and Communication Technology” on 27-29 June in Seoul.

More Information: <http://asef.org/index.php/projects/themes/human-rights/1989-11th-human-rights>

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About the Organisers:



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM*). ASEF was established in February 1997 by the participating governments of ASEM and has since implemented over 500 projects, engaging over 15,000 direct participants as well as reaching out to a much wider audience in Asia and Europe. www.asef.org

* ASEM now brings together 46 member states (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam) plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. www.aseminfoboard.org



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Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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