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Joint Press Statement: Civil Society Calls for Decisive ASEAN Action to Hold the Illegal Myanmar Military Junta Accountable

Manila, Philippines | 4 August 2026

The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP), together with Myanmar and Philippine civil society and women organizations, convened the Forum **“Strengthening Regional Accountability through the Lens of the Women, Peace, Security, and Humanitarian Situation in Myanmar”** to examine how ASEAN can strengthen its response to Myanmar’s deepening human rights and humanitarian crises through the effective implementation of its Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments and the Five-Point Consensus (5PC). The Forum was held on 3 August in Manila.

Bringing together approximately 80 representatives from Burma/Myanmar women’s rights organizations, civil society organizations, humanitarian and peace actors, regional and international experts, academics, members of the diplomatic community and the media, the forum critically assessed the implementation of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (ASEAN RPA on WPS). The Forum examined the widening gap between ASEAN’s commitments and the realities faced by women and conflict-affected communities in Myanmar, and put forward concrete recommendations to strengthen ASEAN’s accountability, protection efforts and humanitarian response. WPS is a critical global priority framed by the UN Security Council’s Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

The forum was organized around two thematic panels addressing the interconnected dimensions of the WPS agenda and the humanitarian situation in Myanmar. A photo exhibition, HER Archive, was also set up by the Myanmar civil society group – A New Burma at the venue.

The first panel examined the current WPS landscape through the lived experiences of Myanmar women directly affected by the conflict. Alongside video testimonies from a former woman political prisoner and a young woman resistance fighter, panelists highlighted the gendered impacts of the military’s ongoing violence, widespread displacement, and the junta’s systematic attacks on civic and humanitarian space. At the same time, they underscored the leadership of Myanmar women as human rights defenders, peacebuilders, humanitarian responders, and agents of democratic change.

Panelists made concrete recommendations urging ASEAN to strengthen implementation of its WPS commitments by advancing accountability for the military junta, ensuring meaningful and full participation of women in decision-making, and responding more effectively to the protection needs of conflict-affected communities.

The second panel focused on the humanitarian consequences of Myanmar’s ongoing conflict, highlighting the experiences of diverse communities affected by the military’s campaign of violence that deepened the human rights and humanitarian crisis. Panelists examined how local frontline responders, women’s organizations and community-based humanitarian actors continue to sustain life-saving assistance, strengthen community resilience and protect the dignity of affected populations despite severe resource constraints, restricted humanitarian access and escalating security risks.

Regional experts further situated these realities within the broader WPS agenda, examining the regional implications of the Myanmar crisis and assessing ASEAN's humanitarian and political responses.

Despite ASEAN's commitments under the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, the 5 Point Consensus (5PC) and the ASEAN RPA on WPS, women and conflict-affected communities across Myanmar continue to face systematic and widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The military's ongoing aerial bombardments, ground offensives, forced displacement, weaponization of humanitarian assistance, and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) continue to inflict devastating harm on civilians while humanitarian and civic space remain under severe attack. These realities underscore the widening gap between ASEAN's commitments and their meaningful implementation, reinforcing the urgent need for stronger, coordinated and people-centered regional action.

The forum served as a platform to elevate the voices, expertise and policy recommendations of Myanmar women, civil society leaders and regional experts within ASEAN's policy discourse on peace, security and humanitarian action. It fostered dialogue between Myanmar civil society, regional stakeholders and the diplomatic community on the regional implications of Myanmar's protracted crisis, ASEAN's responsibility to uphold its human rights and humanitarian commitments, and practical pathways for strengthening implementation of 5PC and the WPS agenda.

Panelists underscored that the military junta's escalating attacks against civilians, women and humanitarian actors demand a more principled and effective regional response. Despite ASEAN's continued reaffirmation of the 5PC, civilians across Myanmar continue to face widespread violence, forced displacement, forced conscription, humanitarian blockades, and other grave human rights and humanitarian violations. These realities highlight the urgent need to translate ASEAN's WPS commitments into concrete action through stronger accountability, meaningful engagement with affected communities, and tangible protection outcomes.

Throughout the forum, Myanmar women shared not only their lived experiences, but also their analysis and recommendations for addressing the crisis. Their contributions demonstrated that women are not merely among those most affected by conflict—they are leading humanitarian responses, protecting their communities, fostering social cohesion, documenting violations, and advancing pathways towards sustainable peace under extraordinarily challenging circumstances. Participants reaffirmed that the knowledge, leadership and policy recommendations of Myanmar women must be meaningfully integrated into ASEAN's responses to the crisis.

The panelists called for the recognition of Myanmar women and conflict affected communities not only as those most affected by the crisis, but as indispensable partners in shaping regional responses. They stressed that the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship presents an important opportunity to translate ASEAN's commitments into meaningful action that protects civilians, safeguards humanitarian space, and advances a just and sustainable peace in Myanmar.

Emphasizing the importance of recognizing and supporting locally led humanitarian responses, Yasmin Ullah of Rohingya Maiyafuinor Collaborative Network said:

"The Rohingya and others from Myanmar are very much capable of creating and sustaining systems of humanitarian processes as we have done for decades."

Reflecting and analyzing on the forum's assessment of ASEAN's WPS agenda, Val of Myanmar WPS observed:

"The overall WPS situation in Myanmar is not a peripheral indicator but a reflection of the lived realities of the people of Burma/Myanmar, against which the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action (RPA) must be measured, and when measured against those realities by Myanmar's affected communities themselves, the conclusion is clear: the ASEAN RPA is overall, failing."

Speaking to the leadership of Myanmar women in responding to the crisis, Naw K'nyaw Paw, Chairperson of the Karen Women's Organisation (KWO) and advocacy team member of the Women's League of Burma (WLB), said:

“The women of Burma are not waiting for someone to save us. We are building courts, training judges, drafting constitutions, feeding the displaced, and healing the wounded—with almost nothing, under fire, every single day. We are only asking the world to stand with us while we do it.”

Reinforcing the central role of women in sustaining communities throughout the crisis, Hnin of Women Advocacy Coalition – Myanmar (WAC-Myanmar) said:

“Local women are the backbone of survival in Burma/Myanmar. Stand with them, resource them directly and champion their leadership for durable peace.”

Reflecting on the implications of Myanmar's evolving conflict dynamics for regional humanitarian responses, humanitarian and peacebuilding expert Adelina Kamal said:

“Myanmar’s complex and decentralized conflict landscape means that there are multiple systems of territorial control, access, service delivery, protection, and local authority. A single state-facing mechanism cannot reliably reach all these realities—especially when the military authority is the principal perpetrator of the crisis, weaponizes humanitarian aid, and deliberately dismantles local systems that sustain communities. In this context, humanitarian action must move beyond delivering relief. It must also defend dignity, justice, and our shared humanity. Humanity is not simply a core humanitarian principle; it is the ultimate goal. And in practicing humanity, we must re-center justice and equity as our guardrails.”

Addressing ASEAN’s responsibility to translate commitments into action, Khin Ohmar, Chair of Progressive Voice, called on the ASEAN Special Envoy to demonstrate principled leadership:

“The Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary and ASEAN Special Envoy Ma Lazaro must urgently undertake the ASEAN’s October 2025 Summit decision by directly supporting locally led, border-based mechanisms to deliver non-discriminatory humanitarian aid to conflict-affected communities.”

Tom Andrews, the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, provided the forum with an analysis and a path forward to protect human rights and democratic values.

The forum further emphasized that the Philippines’ ASEAN Chairship presents a timely opportunity to reinforce ASEAN’s vision of a people-centered, rights-based and accountable regional community. It stressed that Myanmar represents the clearest measure of ASEAN’s commitment to implementing its WPS agenda and called on ASEAN and its Member States to translate regional commitments into sustained, coordinated, and people-centered action.

The forum stressed a shared commitment to continue strengthening collaboration among Myanmar and Philippine civil society and women’s organizations, humanitarian actors and regional partners in advancing the WPS agenda and supporting the Myanmar people’s pursuit of a federal democratic future. The forum concluded with a set of concrete recommendations directed to the Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary and ASEAN Special Envoy Ma. Theresa Lazaro to undertake a more principled, coordinated and effective regional response to the crisis.

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