



DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF BULLYING OF CHILDREN IN ASEAN

WE, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (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:

UPHOLDING the goals of ASEAN to end all forms of violence against children as reflected in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN (2013); the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children (2015); the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society (2017); the Declaration on the Protection of Children from all Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN (2019);

REAFFIRMING ASEAN's commitment to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015); the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (2012); the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for out-of-school Children and Youth (OOSCY) (2016); the ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals (2017); the Joint Statement on Reaffirmation of Commitment to Advancing the Rights of the Child in ASEAN (2019); the Narrative of ASEAN Identity (2020); Ha Noi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work Towards Comprehensive and Responsive ASEAN Community (2020), as well as ASEAN Roadmap on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2025, in order to eliminate all forms of bullying, towards a more caring, inclusive, child-sensitive and child-friendly ASEAN Community;

RECALLING the obligation of all ASEAN Member States to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182); and that the CRC, CEDAW, CRPD, and ILO's related Conventions emphasize the principles of non-discrimination; and that the CRC, in particular, underscores the principles of right to life, survival, protection and development; the best interests of the child; and respect for the child's views;

RECOGNISING bullying as a repeated or persistent behavior intended to hurt or cause distress to a person, which could be physical, verbal, or relational in nature, occurring online or offline, hostile intent and involves an observed or perceived power imbalance;

RECOGNISING FURTHER the risks and vulnerabilities of children brought by varying socio-economic and cultural factors such as gender, income level, ethnicity and disability, among others, that may cause bullying in schools, communities, other private and public spaces and even in cyberspace with the rapid advancement in technologies, communication and connectivity. Cognizant also of the exacerbated incidences of bullying such as physical, verbal, psychological, passive and active, harassment, assaults, and cyberbullying; as vulnerabilities and susceptibilities of children have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

DEEPLY CONCERNED by the harmful and long lasting impacts of bullying on the physical and psycho-emotional and socio-cultural development, health, self-esteem, sense of confidence and overall well-being of children in ASEAN, especially since it can be unseen physically;

ENDEAVORING to leverage targeted collaborative actions and optimise regional cooperation towards the elimination of bullying among and against children in the ASEAN region through evidence-based policy strategies, meaningful dialogues, development and active enforcement of preventive measures and education, and comprehensive responses and rehabilitation to end bullying for all children across ASEAN Member States;

STRESSING the need for partnership among ASEAN Member States and the crucial roles of the parents, guardians, caregivers families, teachers/educators, community leaders, religious leaders, psychologists, social workers, and social service workforce, technology industry, private sector, and the responsible government institutions, educational institutions, neighbourhood and community partners, civil society organisations, service providers, the media, and other relevant parties to prevent and end the bullying of children, hand in hand with the active participation of children and the youth themselves;

REAFFIRMING FURTHER the distinctive contexts of the different perspectives on bullying from the victim, the bully, and the bystander, to identify clear pathways on how protection shall be made available in case of bullying involving children.

DO HEREBY:

AGREE to strengthen concerted efforts and undertake appropriate measures to promote and protect children in ASEAN against all forms of bullying in different settings, ensuring that their best interests and welfare are upheld.

ENHANCE the improvement of accessibility of a mechanism or helpline for reporting of cases of bullying of children that is effective and accessible to children and the public while respecting the privacy rights of the children involved as well as the persons providing the report, in accordance to the ASEAN Member State's national laws, policies and regulations. The reporting mechanism could empower children to be agents of change being able to step up for themselves and/or for other children who are in situation of bullying.

PROMOTE a culture of prevention that educates and empowers people, detects, prevents and immediately responds to bullying to children through a holistic, cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary, integrated, and participatory approach from family development, comprehensive and inclusive education, social norms and behavioral changes, digital literacy, access to health and social services, social work strengthening and economic empowerment, as well as cognitive and affective empathy, among others.

STRENGTHEN efforts to address the root causes and drivers of bullying among and against children, including bullying in cyberspace, and its impacts on children, their families and communities through the generation of appropriate and relevant statistical information and sex- and age-disaggregated data, and conduct of dialogues and learning exchanges, among others, taking into account the ASEAN Member State's national context, to inform practical solutions and actions to accelerate efforts to eliminate bullying of children in ASEAN.

DEVELOP inclusive, gender responsive child protection systems and child safeguarding measures for the ASEAN Member States in accordance with their prevailing national laws, policies and regulations, that are applicable to communities in ASEAN to ensure effective response for needed support and services to children, their families and schools in situations of bullying, offline or online.

ENCOURAGE to undertake capacity building and increased awareness-raising activities on preventing and responding to bullying of children among children, parents, families, caregivers, teachers/educators, social workers, health personnel, government agencies and relevant institutions such as schools, media organisations, service providers, civil society organisations, community partners and other relevant actors.

ENCOURAGE the development of educational programs, including capacity building in life and social skills, and communication strategies with positive/uplifting messages that affirm the child to promote a better understanding of the ASEAN people on the issue of bullying of children and its exponential impacts on the society as well as support children's safe and creative interactions on the internet by utilising various types of interventions, including social media, innovative learning methods and tools and other online platforms, taking advantage of the opportunities on the use of digital technologies.

IMPROVE the availability and accessibility of support services and referral system for the children and the concerned public in reporting cases of bullying of children and making sure it is safe, accessible, and confidential in accordance with the ASEAN Member State's national laws, policies and regulations. The reporting mechanism could empower children to be agents of change, being able to step up for themselves and/or for other children who are in situations of bullying.

LEVERAGE on and strengthen existing regional cooperation with regional inter-governmental organisations and development partners, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, community partners, and relevant actors, among others in accordance with national context, to better protect and empower children, particularly those in vulnerable situations, from all forms of bullying.

ENCOURAGE relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies in the three ASEAN Community Pillars to promote and support this Declaration, and **TASK** the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD), with the support of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD) to develop a Roadmap to operationalise this Declaration, and mobilise resources to coordinate, monitor and report its progress of implementation in partnership with other relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and partners.

Adopted in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, this Twenty Sixth Day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty One.