

**Talking ASEAN on
“Preventing Violent Extremism through Good Governance and Rule of Law”**

OPENING REMARKS

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Events such as the 9/11 attacks, 2002 Bali bombing and the Marawi Siege tell us that violent extremism is by no means a new phenomenon and that it continues to persist. The lack of a universal definition makes it a state’s prerogative on how to define and address it considering its government structure, social and cultural norms, economic development and civil society involvement. Around the globe, governments have evolved their efforts to counter violent extremism.

The Philippines for one, recently adopted a national action plan for preventing and countering violent extremism. This plan seeks to address the root cause or the drivers of Violent Extremism, such as the socio-economic gaps, marginalization, poor governance, human rights violations and non-adherence to the rule of law. Unsurprisingly, the plan also identifies the need to strengthen Good Governance and the Rule of Law as one of the keys to countering these root causes.

Additionally, after years of struggle, the Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified after a plebiscite held in January 2020. This has allowed a path towards peace and development in the Mindanao region through the self-determination of the Bangsamoro people. This will allow for a better platform regarding political, legal, social and economic issues uniquely for the Bangsamoro – including women’s rights, conflict transformation and administration of justice.

There are limits to what governments can do by themselves. As stated by the former UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-moon, “Governments cannot do it alone. We need to engage all of society – religious leaders, women leaders, leaders in the arts, music and sports.”. Hence, civil society must be regarded as a critical interlocutor in identifying and responding to popular clamours and aspirations. As mentioned by our Research Fellow in his paper titled: “Civil Society Engagement in Addressing Terrorism in Southeast Asia”, civil society must have an institutional relationship complementary with the state. The legitimacy of its platforms and networks is established on values and interests they promote.

Countering violent extremism is not an easy task to be done alone. It will require the strong coordination of public institutions, the youth, academe, media, civil society, international community and the private sector to successfully tackle violent extremism.

With that, I look forward to discussing with you all the importance of good governance embracing international human rights norms and standards, promote good governance, upholding the rule of law and eliminate corruption, and identifying concrete steps the all sectors in the ASEAN region can take to counter violent terrorism.

Thank you.