Notes of ACS/APF 2018 1st Regional Steering Committee Meeting  
4th April 2018, Singapore

Singapore LOC Representatives:
Dr. Adrian Heok - President Think Centre and Convenor LOC  
Mr. Sinapan Samydorai – TFAMW and Co-convenor LOC  
Ms. Huiwen Heng – Think Centre and LOC  
Mr. Ted Tan - ASETUC/UNI APRO and LOC

National Representatives:

Brunei: Datin Paduka Hjh Mariam (RSC)  
Indonesia: Ms. Jane Tedjaseputra (RSC)  
Malaysia: Ms. Sumitha Kishna  
Philippines: Ms. Raquel Castillo  
Thailand: Ms Sunsanee Sutthisunsannee (RSC)  
Timor Leste: Mr Fernando Costa 'Ato' (Alt RSC)

Cambodia: Ms Sotheavy (RSC)  
Laos: Dr. Maydom (RSC) and Mr. Khammouane  
Myanmar: Mr. Ke Jung  
Singapore: Mr. Soe Min Than (RSC, Chairperson)  
Vietnam: Ms Dong Thi Nga (Alt RSC) and Mr. Dong Huy Cuong

Regional Caucus Representatives:  
Ms. Rachel Arinni Judhistari (Forum Asia) (RSC)  
Mr. Gus Miclat (IID)

Welcome Remarks:
Dr Adrian Heok, President of the Think Centre, and Convener of the 2018 ACSC/APF LOC (Singapore Local Organising Committee) welcomed the delegates to the meeting.

I. National Processes and Updates

General overview of 2018 ACSC-APF Process by Mr. Soe Min Than (RSC – Chairperson)

Discussed processes for convergence space, timeline for national RSC representatives to be nominated by April 30th, ACSC-APF National processes and evaluation/surveys of activity since last year’s ACSC-APF National Processes. Invited the representatives to cover these following questions in brief:

- Work done by RSC with Country (National) Process / Regional Process (Caucus) since last APF 2017 RSC meeting (Nov 2017)
- RSC communication with Country (National) Process / Regional Process (Caucus) Since Call for RSC reps to be selected (12 March 2018)
- Brief general work plan by RSC with Country (National) Process / Regional Process (Caucus) After the 1st APF 2018 RSC meeting (4th April 2018)
Brunei: Highlighted national process, modes of election, strategic planning, information sharing and expected election outcomes post-RSC. Informal meetings have been held but no official meetings to-date at national level have taken place.

Cambodia: Communications of CSOs through email rather than face-to-face meetings are preferred and similar issues have arisen in Thailand. GONGOs (Government organized/supported NGOs) are gaining more ground and emphasize different agenda from the independent CSOs with grassroots organization losing their voices (context of shrinking civil society space). The need for inclusivity is critical as communications between grassroots, CSOs, and government-linked organizations are nominal or absent.

Indonesia: Communications and sharing of statement and reports are done through mail listservs and social media platforms. To-date, four CSOs are involved and criteria have been identified to call for representatives to the RSC (experience required for future membership) and drafting committees. They are expected to confirm committee members by end-April.

Laos: There is regular circulation of reports (APF statements and reports), national-level drafts and specific meetings convened amongst CSOs. Documents, updates and activities are uploaded on websites and social media platforms, especially in lead-up to future APFs.

In-person meetings are challenging although both formal and informal meetings are regularly held. Elections are expected to be for new representatives to APF. Government regulates funding made available to CSOs – the CSOs need to apply for permission from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs to seek funds from embassies and funding agencies.

Malaysia: Addressing a question on seeming emphasis on process rather than spirit of the event – In 2015, due to concern regarding exclusion of some groups and for efficient information dissemination; need for new blood and leadership and process of identification; customized process determined at national level with autonomy to decide on operational processes and select representatives internally within local processes.

Myanmar: A national core committee has been formed but they have not assigned representatives to specific committees. This is expected to be done post-RSC meeting (this meeting), where they will take an inclusive approach in selecting representatives.

The Philippines: Meetings in process evaluation following last November’s conference have been held. Challenges include roll-over of funds to support this year’s activities and the need to identify successors for national committee leadership and participation. A newly constituted committee is expected by end-April, which is the deadline for completion of committee reports. Shared with those present copies of the Cultural Committee Report

Singapore: The civil society in Singapore is not facing a clamp-down as some would believe and assurance is given that the ACSC/APF hosting will proceed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been made aware of the conference and has no objections to it being organized here. The LOC is acknowledged by the Singapore International Foundation have been allowed the use of their meeting space. A key factor in managing CSO-government relations is trust-building towards an ongoing vibrant civil society within Singapore.
Thailand: Highlighted were inclusivity towards CSOs, lack of funds for regional participation and particular groups working together exclusively for issue-specific matters. A challenge would be to gather various subject matter interest groups to go through a national process.

Timor Leste: Communications and statement are shared via email pending confirmation of elected representative to RSC. Challenges include identifying new representatives through the national process and gathering various youth, labour and women groups for better reach. An outcome of the added CSO efforts from the 2016 ACSC/APF for a campaign saw a recent national-level agreement signed with the Australian government.

Vietnam: A national-level meeting was held to share and evaluate the APF process and challenges ahead. A first consultative meeting at the national level is also planned for 2nd half of April. Names for representatives will be submitted thereafter. Challenges include providing opportunities for greater participation in national conventions where a co-operative approach is preferred for an inclusive voice.

II. Local Organising Committee and ACSC/APF 2018

- Briefing on ACSC/APF 2018 (targeted for 2-4 November 2018) and introductions to sub-committees: ICOM, Program and Drafting, supported by a central secretariat.

- Key issues in participation: specific tasks may not necessarily flow into the work of regional representatives; the need for structure and availability of funds determines the level of commitment and willingness to participate; as shared responsibility from scratch is nominal here in Singapore, trust-building may have to be take place.

- National process and expected numbers: Up to about 300 participants are expected, therefore it would be good to project how many are self-funded and how many are able to attend the conference in order to get a clearer sense of budget. It was requested that the national processes start earlier to help feedback and better gauge attendance and participation.

- Meeting structure: Plenaries and workshops similar in format to the last conference hosted in the Philippines. They will use convergent spaces processes and workshop rooms allocated for parallel thematic discussions e.g. 2-hour slots. Film screenings on human rights themes are planned for. It was noted that the schedule should not be overly packed e.g. no cultural events that end late in the evenings; and that the schedule could accommodate (i) time for topic-specific small groups to meet informally; (ii) community visits and pre-meeting arrangements e.g. to migrant community spaces, sex workers support facility, women’s group facility, alternative sightseeing/leisure locations and local cultural experiences; and (iii) proposed half-day plenary and half-day exploration/excursion format as part of the main program. A proposal will be distributed to members for their input.

- Proposed overall theme for ACSC/APF 2018: “Strengthening ASEAN Peoples’ Solidarity and Struggle Against All Forms of Discrimination Within ASEAN and Beyond” was proposed as 2018’s theme.
Members were asked to obtain feedback from their local groups on this proposed theme. The Singapore LOC will also go back and work on the wordings.

- **Thematic involvement:** It was highlighted that national representatives might better prepare for the conference by looking over the various issues, condensing them and grouping them into convergent space topics. As there are about 3-4 expected workshops/breakout groups, participation across these groupings is encouraged. Thematic topics are the 5 from last year: corporate greed; labour mobility and mixed migration; peace and human security; human rights and access to justice; Social protection and with an addition: All forms of discrimination.

- **Interface with government:** There is potential for interface/engagement with government as Singapore looks to maintaining space for CS-government relations. Although there is no guarantee of a head of state meeting, interacting with other layers of government is not ruled out e.g. embassy participation. Local participation is fund-dependent and about 50 representatives from Singapore can be expected to attend.

- **Resources and funding for participation:** Recognizing difficulties in funding, individuals are encouraged to source for funds through national processes. For Singapore, NGOs have limited funding from government and other organizations so no funds are forthcoming. Representatives are advised to: procure funding early even before the conference program is finalized; factor in cost of flight, length of stay, workshop budgeting/partial funding; work out costing estimates by end-April and headcount on available budget.

- **Selection of main and alternate representatives for RSC:** This national selection of representatives needs to be clarified in advance. Discussions centred around decisions to be taken by RSC (key issues) and RCM (where others key committee may join in). It was noted that program committee decisions could be taken primarily by the committee with consultations sought from the RSC through an inclusive process. This would also apply for other working committees. RSC selections, member alternates or a 3rd alternate representative are expected to be secured by end-April.

- **ICOM, Drafting, Program committees:** Members were requested to select representatives for ICOM, Drafting and Program committees by end-April.

### III. Security of ACSC/APF

- On participant safety, it was agreed that at national level, each country would need to assure their participants through drawing up local guidelines and liaising with local immigration on the needful e.g. letters of invitation (only if asked to show).

- An acceptable level of risk depending on the country was recognized as unavoidable, but while guidelines and working principles might be advised, individual representatives should ensure they seek advice and adequate preparations for travel, and do not run afoul of national regulations. While the host
country CSOs may provide legal aid or advice if needed, it was agreed that the onus of personal safety and security in managing immigration and travel matters would be on participants themselves.

- It was recognized that some participants might face security and legal issues upon returning from ACSC/APF. It was felt that due diligence and reminders be regularly issued to participants on entry and exit risks, regardless of whether participants go through their NOC conduit. While help might be rendered by NOCs for “at-risk” people who were NOC-listed, it was noted that non-NOC registrants would have to assume responsibility for safety and security.

For participants who might raise topics that are deemed controversial back in their home country, they would be reminded of consequences of so doing and possible implications on safety and security upon returning home. It was reminded that we are organising an event which is covered by media throughout the region and is it is very hard to control participant’s pictures showing up on social media posts. To address that would require rethinking the nature of the conference itself.

IV. Convergent Spaces

- **Use of convergent space:** Clear principles and guidelines for convergent space and thematic discussions would be shared to give participants an opportunity to register space and voice for inclusion of points towards final drafting. It was noted that there have been past cases where guidelines were not adhered to and last-minute requests for insertions were made. Constant reminders (during and before plenaries) on guidelines were suggested.

- **Terms of reference:** Terms of reference would underscore consensus processes and guidelines to manage conflict and security e.g. mutual respect, no aggravated confrontation.

- **Dealing with difficult statements:** On the question of connecting with ASEAN governments and support from ASEAN peoples, a suggestion would be to include NOC statements which commend government efforts and achievements to-date. An objective evaluation of the work done by governments is clearly needed.

V. Budget and Finance

- Forum-Asia was noted to be the main organization in-charge of financial matters for this RSC meeting. National processes and resources would be sought to raise funds for local meetings, including proposals for local groups on fund-raising. The Singapore LOC will share the proposal for this year’s APF with the NOCs to allow them to approach potential funders/donors.

VI. Discussion on Regional Consultation Meeting (RCM)

- Local national statements should be encouraged as a form of input into final draft statement. National statements can be expected to be released in advance and with a draft consensus statement emerging before November. An RCM is also planned for some time in July or August where discussions on the ACSC/APF program would take place and inputs taken on the conference planning process.
- A suggestion for an expanded RSC meeting instead of RCM was discussed, amongst other possibilities for regional meetings if funds were available. It was noted that if members were to commit to other meetings too close to the main conference, resources could be stretched. Therefore, having the RCM in July or August would be useful and provide sufficient lead time for planning ahead of November.

- **Next RSC Meeting: July/August 2018**

**VII. Any Other Matters**

- For programmatic suggestions e.g. cultural activities and thematic space, groups were invited to propose activities to RSC to see how this could be integrated into the program. Proposals could include either being part of the main program or part of thematic convergence spaces.
- Post-April, the program committee would decide on workshop numbers, spaces and work with convergence leads on shaping components into the program.
- Next steps: Action plan at national level, selection of convergence leads, launch of logo (end-April), announcement of timelines (end-April), planning of next RSC meeting and introduction of RSC 2018 members.
- It is also reminded to all attending that the minutes from this meeting is intended for circulation by RSC with their NOCs so it should be treated as public reference material.

Minutes submitted by: LOC Secretariat

Minutes vetted by: Soe Min Than

Date: 4 April 2018