

# 2nd Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in South East Asia

**Dili, East Timor  
1 & 2 October, 2016**



**BPSOS, CSW & ICJ**

# SEA FoRB II

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## BACKGROUND

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Freedom of Religion or Belief is the right that every individual has to freely choose and practice any religion without the fear of prosecution or discrimination. In Southeast Asia, many individuals and groups are continuously being harassed by the local government for their religious activities. The Southeast Asia Freedom of Religion or Belief Conference (SEA FoRB) was established to provide a space for all individuals to discuss concerning issues and to create action plans addressing the challenges pertaining to freedom of religion or belief.



The SEA FoRB conference was attended by 84 participants with the following breakdown: Burma (5), Indonesia (10), Laos (1), Malaysia (4), Philippines (3), Singapore (1), Thailand (5), and Vietnam (17); 6 members of our Thailand team (2 Vietnamese from Vietnam, 1 Vietnamese American, 1 Thai and 1 American); 21 members of the Vietnamese diaspora; and 8 international experts from Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Stefanus Alliance International, CSW, Freedom House, USCIRF and BPSOS. This does not include 3 Vietnamese who were blocked at the airport in Vietnam. Nor does the list include former President of Timor-Leste and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta who attended as a keynote speaker and two representatives from the Prime Minister's and the Foreign Minister's offices.

The two-day conference, conducted as a series of roundtable discussions and workshops, provided participants with both new knowledge and understanding of FoRB issues and time to share their specific experiences. For half of the second day, some 25 Vietnamese participants from Vietnam and the diaspora held a separate meeting, titled Vietnam Civil Society Meeting, in an adjacent room. They discussed post-conference collaborative initiatives and worked through a collective assessment of needs, assets and strategies.

A highlight of the conference was the joint announcement of the Vietnamese edition of Stefanus' booklet titled "Freedom of Religion or Belief for Everyone". All Vietnamese participants received a copy of the Vietnamese edition. Copies of the English original were available for non-Vietnamese. This booklet provided the necessary background for meaningful discussion throughout the conference.

After the SEA FoRB Conference, most participants stayed for the ASEAN Civil Society Conference / ASEAN People's Forum (ACSC/APF). We had an exhibition booth to highlight human rights issues, including religious persecution, in Vietnam and chaired a panel on FoRB, where we reported the results of the SEA FoRB Conference and recruited interested attendees. BPSOS also co-chaired a panel on land rights, an issue affecting many unrecognized religious communities in Vietnam and Laos. BPSOS also contributed a speaker to the panel on defending human rights defenders.

All participants recommended that the 2017 SEA FoRB Conference be held in the Philippines, to coincide with the 2017 ACSC/APF.

## IMPACTS

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The impacts of the SEA FoRB Conference and ACSC/APF are diverse, and some may not be immediately observable. Following are the immediate impacts:

1. The difficult and perilous conditions faced by unrecognized religious communities became evident to all participants, leading to heightened attention from organizations such as Asia Center, Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Stefanus Alliance International, and US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Vietnam's multi-faith roundtable is already talking to a trainer affiliated with Norwegian Helsinki Committee about providing on-the-ground training in Vietnam later this year.
2. Similarly, the situation of minority religions in Indonesia was highlighted at the conference. Asia Center is thinking of making a trip to Indonesia later this year or early next year to explore collaboration opportunities. In the meantime, Asia Center has invited BPSOS to contribute a paper to a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) workshop hosted by Asia Center on 15-17 September in Bangkok. Similarly, experts from other Southeast Asian countries contribute their comments on how each respective country has complied with UPR recommendations, with religious freedom as an area of focus.
3. Many participants from Vietnam became more informed about the multi-faith roundtable and expressed interest in joining. Most notably, a member of the Group of Independent Hoa Hao Buddhists in Western Region has started attending the monthly online meeting of the roundtable.
4. Many participants reported better understanding of freedom of religion or belief and reporting mechanisms as a result of the conference.
5. For the first time representatives of Hmong Christian communities attended such a regional event. They are interested in sending their pastors to BPSOS's training on documenting and reporting violations to UN Special Procedures.
6. The large contingent of participants from Indonesia expressed interest in replicating the multi-faith roundtable that was implemented in Vietnam earlier this year.
7. Many representatives of international organizations participating in the conference made first contact with a large number of organizations and individuals working on FoRB in the region. Many international participants expressed pleasure with becoming connected with severely persecuted and hard-to-reach religious communities in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia.
8. For most of 21 participants from the Vietnamese diaspora, it was the first time they met face to face representatives of groups inside Vietnam that they "sponsored" – in our capacity building model, we pair persecuted communities in Vietnam with overseas sponsors. The bond created over the seven days spent together in Timor-Leste has given them greater impetus to support religious communities and CSOs in Vietnam. Many of them are already taking the initiative to raise funds to support of those communities and CSOs.

## **BANGKOK DECLARATION 2015**

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The first SEA FoRB Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand on September 30 – October 1, 2015. It concluded with a conference declaration, laying the foundation for a long-term movement building initiative to promote freedom of religion or belief throughout Southeast Asia, particularly in light of the official formation of the ASEAN Economic Community in late 2015. The 2016 SEA FoRB Conference was held to materialize the commitments expressed in the Bangkok Conference Declaration.

### **Conference Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia 1 October 2015, Bangkok, Thailand**

We, the undersigned participants to the Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia, co-organized by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Boat People SOS (BPSOS), held on 30 September to 1 October 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand hereby declare:

Whereas the prospect of greater economic, social and cultural integration among the States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides an important opportunity for acknowledging existing and emerging diversity of religions or beliefs in the region;

Whereas violations of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief [henceforth ‘freedom of religion or belief’] continue to occur around the world and in Southeast Asia, perpetrated by both States and non-state actors;

Whereas Southeast Asian national and regional institutions are beginning to recognize the prevalence of violations of the freedom of religion or belief in the region;

Whereas the freedom of religion or belief is a universal, established, and non-derogable human right, enshrined in international treaties at the United Nations, regional instruments, and domestic constitutions;

Whereas States are accountable under international human rights law to respect, protect and promote freedom of religion or belief in conjunction with all other human rights;

The signatories REAFFIRM:

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and

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observance.” Freedom of religion or belief is an inalienable, non-derogable human right, encompassing the right to hold or not to hold any faith or belief, to change belief, and to be free from coercion and to manifest religion or belief.

For freedom of religion or belief to be fully enjoyed, other human rights must also be respected, particularly the principle of non-discrimination and freedoms of expression, assembly, association, movement, and the right to education.

The signatories COMMIT to:

Defend and promote freedom of religion or belief as a universal, inalienable and non-derogable human right, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in international law and declarations, and in the work of national, regional, and global institutions.

Defend and promote freedom of religion or belief for all persons, as individuals and in community with others, through their work and respective institutions by sharing information and mobilizing effective responses.

Work toward the non-discriminatory realization of freedom of religion or belief in recognition of multiple and intersectional discriminations and vulnerabilities, including, among other grounds, on grounds of ethnicity, indigenous identity, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship, and disabilities.

Enhance global and regional cooperation by working across geographical, national, racial, ethnic, political and religious boundaries.

Advocate for accountability and remedies for individuals and communities suffering from violence, persecution, discrimination, harassment, marginalization or other abuses of human rights because of their religion or belief.

Express and act in solidarity with individuals and communities suffering from violence, persecution, discrimination, harassment, marginalization or other abuses of human rights because of their religion or belief.

\*The text above was based on the 2014 Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief and the 2015 New York Resolution for Freedom of Religion or Belief of the International Panel of Parliaments for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB)

## OUTCOMES OF DAY 1

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**Objective:** The purpose of Day 1 was to ignite the conversations on freedom of religion or belief, and action plans to set forward the 2015 Bangkok Conference Declaration through an informal open discussion.

### **Roundtable: Promotion of FoRB**

Session 1 served as an introduction to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Kristin Storaker from Stefanus Alliance International and Dr. Achmad Munjid from the Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies of Gadjah Mada University led the discussion. Both speakers opened the conversation by sharing the challenges encountered in their work with freedom of religion or belief and addressing the importance of promoting freedom of religion or belief.

Dr. Munjid explained how the academia may utilize research to promote FoRB by educating society in general about the important role of FoRB in social development. According to Dr. Munjid, one of the challenges that Indonesia faces in promoting FoRB is the complex inter-faith relations that started during the New Order period in 1967. The complexity of the inter-faith relationship between Christians and Muslims created division in the community. Disagreements sometimes were manifested in the form of public altercation that resulted in property damages to religious structures. The lack of understanding among the different religions creates friction in local communities and incites social intolerance. The history of Indonesia highlights the need for inter-faith and multi-faith dialogues combined with a national policy to promote FoRB.

Ms. Storaker described the way Stefanus Alliance International promotes FoRB through public education. She believed that religious discrimination occurs because people do not have a clear understanding of FoRB and how to address conflicts related to FoRB as they arise. To raise public awareness, Stefanus has published the booklet “Freedom of Religion or Belief for Everyone” in different languages. Ms. Storaker introduced its Vietnamese-language edition, which was jointly produced with BPSOS just prior to the conference. In her view, educational and informative materials such as this booklet allow religious and non-religious individuals to have a better understand of FoRB, and thus decrease discrimination against religious groups or individuals.

### **Roundtable: Multi-faith or inter-faith collaboration**

Session 2 focused on the importance of the multi-faith and inter-faith dialogue among different religious groups. The members of the roundtable discussion included Dr. Ahmed Suaedy from the Indonesia-based Abdurrahman Wahid Centre for Inter-faith Dialogue; Prematilaka Serisena from the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism; and Datuk Denison Jayasooria from the PROHAM-Society for the Promotion of Human Rights

Malaysia and Institute of Ethnic Studies, National University of Malaysia.

All three speakers encouraged proponents of FoRB to speak out and faith communities to join forces across religious boundaries. The speakers gave examples of inter-faith and multi-faith efforts to promote FoRB and encouraged sharing of stories from conference participants. The group Millah Abraham from Indonesia described the challenges that they have endured due to their religious affiliation. A young Vietnamese woman spoke about the two-year prison sentence that resulted from her standing up for the right to FoRB of a Hoa Hao Buddhist group in Vietnam. Other participants shared their individual stories as well as best practices. The session concluded with the general agreement that inter-faith and multi-faith collaboration is critical to promote FoRB for everyone.

***Panel Discussion: Protection and emergency assistance***

Session 3 focused on practical suggestions for human rights defenders and religious freedom defenders facing threat. Atty. Caroline Stover, Legal Advocacy Director of BPSOS-Bangkok, and Mr. Felix of Freedom House presented. Former U.S. Ambassador to Timor-Leste Grover Joseph Rees was the moderator.

Ms. Stover explained that relocation is one means for refugee protection, and introduced three forms of relocation: 1) relocation within one's home country 2) international relocation through regular visa programs, and 3) international relocation within the refugee framework. She noted that internal relocation was the lowest cost and most flexible, but often does not provide sufficient protection for those at risk. Commenting on international relocation through regular visa programs, Ms. Stover highlighted scholarship programs to protect individuals at risk through education visas. She noted that while such programs increase the network of support, they are generally temporary and individuals can face retaliation on return to their home countries. On international protection within the refugee framework, Ms. Stover elaborated on the challenges including risk of exploitation in transit, human rights abuses in host countries, and the difficulties refugees face in proving their claims for refugee status. Ms. Stover noted that in such cases, networks of regional and international support, as well as emergency funding assistance, could be of great use.

Mr. Felix presented the emergency assistance fund administered by Freedom House for victims of religious freedom violations, defined what constitutes "emergency" and described the allowable types of assistance as well as the application process. He noted that this fund does not support general programming or meetings. He also brought up the need for NGOs and advocates working in closed societies to increase their Internet security, also known as "digital hygiene." He encouraged vulnerable groups and NGOs in Southeast Asia to consider emergency assistance as one additional resource to supplement their work to promote FoRB.

## *Panel Discussion: Mechanisms for intervention*

Session 4 introduced different intervention mechanisms to address the challenges to FoRB. The panelists consisted of a representative from Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Ed Brown from the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPP-FoRB), and Tina Mufford from the U.S. Commission of International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The session was moderated by Marc Batac of Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict – Southeast Asia (GPPAC-SEA).

The general theme of this discussion focused on the mobilization effort in different sectors of the community from the governing body to local community members. One of the mechanisms that CSW utilizes advocate for discriminated religious individuals or vulnerable religious groups consists of training workshops on incident reporting. Since 2014 many such workshops have been jointly conducted with VETO! and BPSOS for unrecognized religious communities in Vietnam. Through education, CSW empowers individuals and communities to exercise their rights and report violations of their rights according to UN special procedures.

According to Ed Brown, (IPP-FoRB) defends FoRB by unifying religious and non-religious advocates in various regions around the globe. The organization encourages members to use their vantage points as parliamentarians of different countries to advocate for the persecuted individuals and advance FoRB globally. As a network, IPP-FoRB members operate in a collaborative effort and with like-minded individuals and organizations who support FoRB. Mr. Brown emphasized that the challenges to FoRB are complex and multi-faceted, which requires FoRB advocates to use multi-pronged and collaborative approaches and engage multiple sectors: Religious communities, businesses, NGOs, the government, parliamentarians, regional and international bodies...

Tina Mufford concluded the session by pointing out the need for collaborative efforts at the local level and non-governmental level. USCIRF works with Amnesty International and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commissions to advocate for the prisoners of conscience by encouraging members of the U.S. Congress to adopt cases of prisoners of conscience and advocate for their freedom, by raising awareness through the media, conducting congressional briefings or introducing legislations. Ms. Mufford encouraged the local community members to report human rights violations and ask their governments to use of the Universal Periodic Review process to raise concerns about human rights abuses.

## OUTCOMES OF DAY 2

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*Objective:* The purpose of Day 2 is to identify best practices that can be incorporated in a plan of actions to implement the 2015 Bangkok Conference Declaration at both the national and the regional levels.

The second day started with a multi-faith prayer service followed by the keynote speech by Former Timor-Leste President and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jose Ramos-Horta. He shared the up and down moments in Timor-Leste's struggle for independence and stressed the importance of international and regional support. He called on participants to not relent in their fight for FoRB.

*Roundtable: Opportunities and challenges relating to FoRB emerging from ASEAN integration*

The first roundtable session provided an overview of challenges on promotion and protection of FoRB across ASEAN. Sam Zarifi from the International Commission of Jurists and Debbie Stothard from AltSEAN Burma led the discussion. Khin Ohmar of Burma Partnership moderated the session.

One of the challenges to FoRB that emerged from ASEAN integration consisted of the lack of inter-faith and multi-faith dialogue addressing violations of FoRB. Mr. Zarifi pointed out that within that challenge lies an opportunity to bring together human rights community and religious civil society organizations to advance FoRB. Another opportunity that arises from ASEAN integration is solidarity that can be translated to a larger network of supporters who can mobilize and advocate on the behalf of the victims of religious discrimination.

Ms. Stothard shared her experience working on FoRB-related issues during the time Myanmar was still ruled by the military junta. She emphasized the benefits of having a network of regional partners working on country-specific issues.

*Roundtable: Moving forward on establishing a platform for interfaith dialogue and discussion on freedom of religion or belief*

The second roundtable session focused on creating a foundation and space that allows religious and non-religious individuals to discuss FoRB. Presenters included James Gomez of Asia Centre, Gus Miclat of Initiatives for International Dialogue, and Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang of BPSOS. Ben Rogers of CSW moderated the session.

Mr. Gomez addressed the need and benefits of collaborative efforts to address issues pertaining

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to FoRB at both the national and the regional levels. Mr. Gomez pointed out that FoRB is an under-explored and under-advocated issue in Southeast Asia, and suggested that the SEA FoRB conference, by allowing everyone to freely exchange ideas and best practices, is one of the best methods to begin the inter-faith dialogue and discussion on FoRB.

Mr. Miclat shared IID's experience in facilitating dialogues to mitigate conflicts among communities and between communities and government in the Philippines. According to Mr. Miclat, dialogues can defuse an otherwise tense situation before it escalates into a large-scale conflict.

Dr. Thang presented a five-component model to build capacity for persecuted religious communities, which includes advocacy, training, organizing, pairing with a sponsoring organization overseas, and networking/coalition building. This model has been pilot-tested with significant successes in over a dozen religious communities in Vietnam.

*Workshop: Developing and drafting plans to advance interfaith discussions and collaboration at the national level*

Day 2 concluded with an interactive workshop to discuss concrete plans in addressing and advancing FoRB. Ed Brown from the IPP-FoRB and Fr. Marcian Thet Kyaw from the Ehipany Church in Yangon co-facilitated the workshop.

The participants were divided into 4 groups to discuss and identify the challenges in practicing religion in different regions of ASEAN. One exercise was to identify forms of discrimination and harassment of religious communities. Once the challenges were identified, the different groups discussed strategies to overcome or mitigate the identified challenges. To capture the different ideas and strategies, each group was asked to come up with a creative method to be shared with all other participants.

Group 1 developed the acronym M.I.L.D., which stood for Meditation Solidarity, Identification, Location, and Documentation. Meditation Solidarity (M) refers to public mediation and or prayer in solidarity to promote FoRB and support those who are facing prosecution; Identification (I) means finding a common symbol to represent the unity of FoRB advocates; Location (L) refers to collaboration at different location levels in documenting and creating public/policy advocacy to support oneself and others; Documentation (D) refers to continuing efforts to document human rights violations so as to raise awareness and enhance advocacy.

Group 2 created an imaginary garden that represented the importance of collaborative efforts. They believed that the key to advancing FoRB starts with a common ground and foundation that consists of different religions or beliefs. Group members suggested the following strategies:

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Training, work together with other religious groups to form solidarity, report the human rights violations to international community and NGOs as part of a monitoring and evaluation system, multi-faith dialogue, and social media campaign.

Group 3 focused on the strength of solidarity. The group believed FoRB first exists within oneself, but cannot be separated from the right to FoRB of others. In order to expand FoRB for everyone, solidarity is critical and people must work together to support the minority voices.

Group 4 suggested religious solidarity in actions, which consist of: discussions that unite people, documentation of human rights violations using social media, and capacity building for stakeholders such as journalists to advocate for those who are discriminated and prosecuted.

The group discussions and activities ignited awareness among participants about the need for multi-faith collaboration and inter-faith conversations.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Timor-Leste Grover Joseph Rees delivered the closing remarks. He urged participants and all advocates for FoRB to “tell the truth” about human rights violations and repressive policies. Bringing to light the truth for the world to see would contribute to pushing back religious intolerance and promoting FoRB.

At the conference’s conclusion participants made a decision to hold the 2017 SEA FoRB Conference in conjunction with the ACSC/APF, which will be organized in the Philippines. Meanwhile, many participants suggested the following activities to continue existing inter-faith dialogues and on-going initiatives to advance FoRB:

- Continue the documentation of human rights violations;
- Use innovative tools such as an app for smart phones to track religious persecution and discrimination;
- Create a conceptual framework and start with an overview of what’s happening in ASEAN;
- Establish some forms of measurement to track country-by-country progress; and
- Conduct training on FoRB.

Sam Zarifi of ICJ closed the conference with one call for action:

“I’m asking the members of religious organizations to take back the declaration made in 2015 and share it with the community members, then bring it back with more signatories because it is a commitment to the human rights system”

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## ACSC/APF

With few exceptions, participants of SEA FoRB Conference stayed for the ASEAN Civil Society Conference / ASEAN People's Forum (ACSC/APF). An exhibition booth was set up to educate some 850 ACSC/APF participants of FoRB issues and the SEA FoRB Conference. Conference activities and results were presented at a panel on FoRB chaired by BPSOS. Many participants also spoke at the panel on land rights, an issue affecting many persecuted religious communities in Southeast Asia. An impromptu demonstration was held on the last day of ACAC/APF that was joined by advocates from Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Timor-Leste calling for the release of political and religious prisoners.



*Exhibition booth of SEA FoRB at ACSC/APF*

## CONCLUSION

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### Unexpected successes:

Inspired by their experience and the international contacts made in Timor-Leste, Vietnam's multi-faith roundtable decided to join with the roundtables in the U.S. and in Europe in a joint letter to Russian President Putin regarding Russia's new law that would significantly restrict freedom of religion. This cross-continental collaboration got noticed by members of the U.S. Congress and the U.S. State Department.

Representatives of a large network of Hmong Christian communities spanning the border areas of Vietnam, Laos, China and Burma left the event with a commitment to train members on reporting FoRB violations.

Our exhibition booth was the most popular at ACSC/APF and was featured on the official 2016 ACSC/APF website.

Representatives of independent CSOs from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia joined forces in an impromptu demonstration at lunchtime on the last day of ACSC/APF. It attracted a large crowd and many supporters from different countries. It was captured on video and viewed by over 100,000 people.

### Lessons learned:

We wish we could start the planning stage sooner. However, we had to wait for the Steering Committee of ACSC/APF to announce the date and location of APF events. When this happened, we had only five months to plan our own conference, from start to finish. This short planning period left us with little time to apply for funding to finance the conference. Learning from this experience, we have already started planning for the 2017 SEA FoRB Conference in the Philippines.

An informant for the Vietnamese government infiltrated our conference on its first day. He took pictures of Vietnamese participants, which might have led to many participants being held for questioning at the airport upon return to Vietnam. In the future we need to tighten our control of people entering the conference room. This would serve the purpose of letting the Vietnamese government know that it must respect the separation between government and civil society. In term of protection, our policy is not to conduct clandestine activities – having nothing to hide would be the best protection for at-risk participants.

While we assigned note-takers for each roundtable and workshops, this did not work very well because we were short in staff. The assigned note-takers ended up doing other tasks. Consequently, to compile the conference report, we had to review video clips of the conference.

**Follow-up activities:**

Right after the conference, our team in Thailand has monitored closely the safety of participants upon return to Vietnam. We have compiled and regularly updated reports on government-directed harassment of these participants. These reports have been submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB, USCIRF, U.S. State Department, and U.S. embassy in Vietnam. We also shared these reports with organizers of ACSC/APF.

BPSOS has collaborated with Bangkok-based Asia Center to incorporate FoRB as a topic in Asia Center's initiative to review the implementation by all ten ASEAN governments of accepted UPR recommendations. The first such review was held at Asia Center on September 17-19.

Co-organizers of the conference plan met in mid-October to review lessons learned and start planning the next one in the Philippines in conjunction with the 2017 ACSC/APF.

We are working with a number of international and regional organizations to organize a three-day training program in Thailand for Vietnamese religious leaders and civil society advocates on UN instruments and mechanisms, reporting violations of FoRB, and networking with ASEAN CSOs.

## APPENDIX A – Program

2<sup>nd</sup> Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in South East Asia

1 - 2 August 2016

Timor Plaza Hotel, Dili, Timor-Leste

<b>DAY 1 – Monday – 1 August, 2016</b>	
<b>Workshops</b>	
8:00 – 9:00	<b>Registration</b>
9:00 – 9:30	<b>Opening remark by Father Nguyen Van Ly (remote)</b>
9:30 – 11:00	<b>Roundtable on promotion of FoRB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Kristin Storaker, Stefanus Alliance International</b></li><li>• <b>Dr. Achmad Munjid, Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies of Gadjah Mada University</b></li><li>• <b>A representative of the Vietnam FoRB Roundtable</b></li></ul> Facilitator: Ed Brown, International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 12:30	<b>Roundtable on multi-faith or inter-faith collaboration:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Dr. Ahmed Suaedy, Abdurrahman Wahid Centre for Inter-faith Dialogue</b></li><li>• <b>Prematilaka Serisena, Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism</b></li><li>• <b>Datuk Denison Jayasooria, PROHAM-Society for the Promotion of Human Rights Malaysia and Institute of Ethnic Studies, National University of Malaysia</b></li></ul> Facilitator: Debbie Stothard, AltASEAN Burma
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch

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14:00 – 15:30	<p><b>Panel Discussion: Protection and emergency assistance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Caroline Stover, BPSOS</b></li><li>• <b>Representative, Freedom House</b></li><li>• <b>A presenter about EU-HRDF</b></li></ul> <p>Moderator: (Retired) Amb. Rees</p>
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 17:15	<p><b>Panel Discussion: Mechanisms for intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Representative, Christian Solidarity Worldwide</b></li><li>• <b>Ed Brown, International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief</b></li><li>• <b>Tina Mufford, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom</b></li></ul> <p>Moderator: Marc Batac, Southeast Asia of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict</p>
19:00 – 22:00	<b>Dinner &amp; musical performance</b>

<b>DAY 2 – Tuesday – 2 August, 2016</b> <b>REGIONAL CONFERENCE</b>	
8:30-9:30	<p><b>Multi-faith opening ceremony</b></p> <p>Keynote Speaker: <b>Former President of Timor Leste Jose Ramos-Horta</b></p> <p>Group photo</p>
9:30-10:00	<p>Introduction of participants</p> <p>Review of the Conference Declaration on Freedom of Religion of Belief in Southeast Asia, adopted in Bangkok, Thailand in 2015 by <b>Mr. Andrew Khoo, Bar Council of Malaysia</b></p>
10:00 – 11:15	<p><b>Roundtable: Opportunities and challenges relating to FoRB emerging from ASEAN integration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mr. Sam Zarifi, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ):</b> Overview of regional challenges on promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief in the ASEAN</li> <li>• <b>Ms. Debbie Stothard, AltSEAN Burma:</b> FoRB for all - non-discriminatory realization of FoRB in ASEAN</li> </ul> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Ms. Khin Ohmar, Burma Partnership</b></p>
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 12:45	<p><b>Roundtable: Moving forward on establishing a platform for interfaith dialogue and discussion on freedom of religion or belief</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang, Boat People SOS (BPSOS)</b> – An overview of FoRB roundtables around the world</li> <li>• Examples of interfaith discussion and collaboration in ASEAN countries: Representatives from The Philippines and Singapore</li> </ul>

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	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Moderator: <b>Mr. Ben Rogers, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)</b></p>
12:45-13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 15:15	<p><b>Workshop: Developing and drafting plans to advance interfaith discussions and collaboration at the national level</b></p> <p>Note: In this session, participants will be requested to sit in country groups. Each group will discuss concrete steps to be taken to facilitate more dialogue and cooperation among various faiths and religions in the country.</p> <p>A facilitator and a rapporteur must be identified by each group prior to starting the discussion.</p> <p>Co-facilitators: <b>Mr. Ed Brown &amp; Fr. Marcian Thet Kyaw</b></p>
15:15 – 15:30	Coffee break
15:30 – 16:30	<p><b>Workshop (cont'd): Reporting back on plans at the national level and plenary discussion on next steps</b></p> <p>Co-facilitators: <b>Mr. Ed Brown &amp; Fr. Marican Thet Kyaw</b></p>
16:30 -17:45	<p><b>Closing Remark by Grover Joseph Rees, former U.S. Ambassador to Timor Leste</b></p>

## APPENDIX B- Concept Note

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### 2016 Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia

At the conclusion of the 2015 Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Southeast Asia (SEA FoRB Conf) held in Bangkok, Thailand on Sep 30 – Oct 1, 2015, participants issued a conference declaration that acknowledges that violations of freedom of religion or belief continue to occur in Southeast Asia, perpetrated by both States and non-state actors. The declaration, however, recognizes that “the prospect of greater economic, social and cultural integration among the States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides an important opportunity for acknowledging existing and emerging diversity of religions or beliefs in the region.”

Signatories of the declaration expressed their commitment to defend and promote freedom of religion or belief throughout the region by sharing information and mobilizing effective responses; working toward the non-discriminatory realization of freedom of religion or belief; enhancing global and regional cooperation by working across geographical, national, racial, ethnic, political and religious boundaries; advocating for accountability and remedies for affected individuals and communities; and expressing and acting in solidarity with such individuals and communities.

The purpose of the 2016 Conference is to develop a plan of actions to implement the stated commitments made at the 2015 SEA FoRB Conference.

Participants of the 2016 Conference jointly develop strategies and plans of action at both country and regional levels to implement this commitment over the following 12 months. In promoting regional solidarity and advocacy, diverse strategies ranging from the use of social media campaigns to joint statements will be explored. Additionally, the creation of a regional coordinating mechanism will be one of the key points to be addressed. Conference participants will explore best practices, including interfaith action and setting up religious freedom roundtables, so that communities can learn from one another. Finally, the outcomes of the Conference will be presented to participants of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference / ASEAN People’s Forum (ACSC/APF) that will take place immediately after the 2016 Conference at the same venue. This will effectively link diverse religious freedom advocates with the largest civil society forum in the region and enhance the visibility of FoRB issues on a regional level.

We anticipate 80 participants coming from all 11 Southeast Asian countries, including members of civil society and faith-based organizations. Representatives of international organizations/agencies with interest in freedom of religion or belief also attended.

The 2016 Conference are co-organized by Boat People SOS (BPSOS), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Burma Partnership, and Freedom House.