

Guidelines on ASEAN's Relations with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) *

1. A civil society organisation (hereinafter referred to as “CSO”) that is a non-profit making association of ASEAN persons, natural or juridical, organised to promote, strengthen and help realise the aims and objectives of ASEAN cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, medical and technological fields, may be affiliated to ASEAN.
2. For the purpose of the guidelines, such organisations or associations perform functions and activities that are governmental or quasi-governmental in nature but they are not part of the formal structure of ASEAN.
3. It shall be normal for a CSO to establish a working link with an ASEAN body through the ASEAN Secretariat. Basically, the working link shall allow the CSOs to submit written statements to include proposals or positions and other recommendations.
4. ASEAN bodies may, if need be, formulate additional rules on the linkage peculiar to their respective needs and practices. These additional rules should be subject to the approval of the ASEAN Standing Committee.
5. The main objectives of affiliation are:
 - a) To draw the CSOs into the mainstream of ASEAN activities so that they are kept informed of major policies, directives and decisions of ASEAN and are given the opportunity and the privilege of participating in ASEAN activities;
 - b) To ensure interaction and fruitful relationships between the existing ASEAN bodies and the CSOs; and
 - c) To help promote the development of a people-centered ASEAN Community.
6. All applications for CSO affiliation shall be submitted to the Secretary-General of ASEAN. If the ASEAN Secretariat considers the application in conformity with the Guidelines, it shall be referred to the appropriate link body, or when an appropriate link body cannot be identified, the ASEAN National Secretariats, for their views. After four months, unless there is an objection, the application shall be submitted to the ASEAN Standing Committee for its consideration.
7. Application for affiliation shall include, at a minimum, information regarding the nature and purpose of the application of the CSO, its constitution and by-laws, a copy of its registration

papers, its membership, background on its key officials, its function, activities, and projects, and its link body.

8. Subject to paragraph 6 above, the Secretary-General shall formally present, with his recommendations, applications for affiliation to the ASEAN Standing Committee which shall consider the applications using, among others, the following criteria:

- a) As a general rule, only a CSO whose membership is confined to the ASEAN nationals may be considered for affiliation with ASEAN;
- b) Approval of application for affiliation of a CSO with ASEAN shall be based primarily upon the assessment of the positive contribution which such a CSO could make to the enhancement, strengthening and realisation of the aims and objectives of ASEAN;
- c) Affiliation status with ASEAN may not be granted to a CSO if it has objectives, activities or projects which are contrary to or inconsistent with the aims and objectives of ASEAN embodied in the Bangkok Declaration and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord;
- d) The objectives of the CSO's activities should contribute towards achieving community building that is in line with one or more of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community – the ASEAN Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community; and
- e) A CSO whose membership comes from a relatively even spread of the ASEAN Member Countries may be allowed affiliation, provided that ASEAN is satisfied that the CSO merits affiliation and the non-participating Member Countries have given their consent to the CSO and provided further that membership shall remain open for other Member Countries.

9. An affiliated CSO shall enjoy the following privileges:

- a. It may use the name “ASEAN” and display the official ASEAN logo in correspondence and communications and its official meetings so long as the displaying of the logo is non-commercial in nature;
- b. It may submit written statements or recommendations and views on policy matters or on significant events or regional or international concerns, to the ASEAN Standing Committee through the ASEAN Secretariat;

- c. It may submit its own project proposals for Third Party funding, to be channelled through the ASEAN Secretariat, to the ASEAN Standing Committee for approval;
 - d. It may initiate programmes of activities for presentation to its link body for appropriate action;
 - e. At the discretion of the Chairman of the link body, it may, through its representative, attend meetings of the link body for consultation on matters and issues of direct concern to the CSO;
 - f. For purposes of doing research for its projects, it may be allowed access to the ASEAN documents on a selective basis in consultation with the ASEAN Secretariat and or its link body;
 - g. Subject to rules and regulations, it may be allowed the use of the facilities of the ASEAN Secretariat for its official meetings and other official activities in Jakarta;
 - h. It shall be encouraged to be self-reliant in terms of its material requirements; and
 - i. The ASEAN Secretariat shall provide CSOs with key ASEAN publications every year.
10. As a general rule, none of the foregoing privileges in paragraph 9 will be extended to organisations not formally affiliated with ASEAN.
11. All affiliated CSOs shall be required to comply with the following:
- a) They shall undertake in writing to abide by the policies, guidelines, directives, and other decisions of ASEAN;
 - b) They shall undertake to advance ASEAN interests and promote the awareness of ASEAN's principles and activities;
 - c) They shall be held responsible for their actions, especially those found detrimental to ASEAN as a whole;
 - d) They shall invite participation of officials of ASEAN Member Countries at their meetings and activities;
 - e) They shall submit, annually, a written summary of their activities to the ASEAN Standing Committee through the ASEAN Secretariat; and

f) They shall inform the ASEAN Secretariat of changes in their officials and memberships, as well as changes of address.

12. They shall endeavour to link up with national organisations accredited officially to ASEAN National Secretariats and echo their activities in advancing ASEAN interests. In so doing, the affiliated CSO can expand their membership or establish linkages and informal ties with national organisations in ASEAN.

13. Upon recommendations by the ASEAN Secretariat, after complaint has been lodged by an ASEAN link body or an ASEAN Member Country, the ASEAN Standing Committee shall, at its discretion, terminate the affiliation of CSOs if:

- a. They engage in acts inimical to ASEAN or any of the ASEAN Member Country;
- b. They act in contrary to the aims, objectives and fundamental principles of ASEAN;
- c. They are found to have committed gross misconduct which brings disrepute to ASEAN;
- d. They are inactive, defunct or fail to submit an annual summary of their activities, as required under paragraph 11.e. for three years in succession; and
- e. They change their constitutions, officials and membership resulting in their inability thereafter to adhere to the guidelines.

14. CSOs whose affiliation have been terminated under paragraph 13 above, shall not take legal action against any ASEAN Member Country or the ASEAN Secretariat. However, they may appeal to the ASEAN Standing Committee for a consideration of the termination. The decision of the ASEAN Standing Committee shall be final and binding.

15. The Member Countries through the ASEAN Secretariat shall regularly monitor the activities of the CSOs and their relations with ASEAN, and recommend to the ASEAN Standing Committee appropriate measures to deal with CSOs that have not acted in accordance with the provisions set forth in paragraph 11.

16. A CSO whose affiliation is terminated shall be denied exercise of the privileges provided under paragraph 9. Such termination shall be made public.

* Versions of the Guidelines prior to March 2006 used the term "non-governmental organisations" instead of "civil society organisations".

Notes

- 1) The original Guidelines were adopted at the 5th Meeting of the 19th ASEAN Standing Committee (ASC), Manila, 16-18 June 1986.
- 2) The 2nd Meeting of the 39th ASC, Jakarta, 18-19 January 2006, revised the original guidelines into its present form. The 39th ASC adopted the above version of the Guidelines on 3 April 2006.