

Online Consultation on the Draft ASEAN Declaration of Environmental Rights

On 25 April 2025, **APCEL** jointly organised an online consultation on the [draft ASEAN Declaration of Environmental Rights](#), with the **Asian Research Institute for Environmental Law (ARIEL)** and the **Indonesian Center for Environmental Law (ICEL)**.

The draft Declaration is the work of the ASEAN Environmental Rights (AER) Working Group, established by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). The AER Working Group has been developing a regional framework for the promotion of environmental rights since 2022.

The consultation saw 130 participants from across ASEAN attend and offer their perspectives on how the draft could be improved.

APCEL's Senior Research Fellow, **Linda Yanti Sulistiawati**, moderated the opening discussion among experts and activists whose backgrounds represented the NGO sector, academics, and the youth.



Speakers engaged in discussion during the opening discussion, alongside sign language interpreters provided by ICEL

Andri Gunawan Wibisana, Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia, spoke about the importance of recognising environmental rights as human rights, and the interdependence between the two. A clean and healthy environment is needed for the enjoyment of human rights,

while human rights are needed to fight for clean and healthy environment. He mentioned that the greatest challenge would be how to ensure the draft will be adopted by ASEAN member states. He suggested that “future generations” should be mentioned more times in the draft and there should be compensation schemes for environmental harms in place.

Attorney Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Vice-President of Oceana Philippines, articulated the urgency of protecting environmental defenders, especially since humanity faces an urgent climate, biodiversity and even health crises. She felt positive that she and other participants were part of a consultative process, which would strengthen the credibility of the eventual Declaration. She suggested that the draft should have greater reference to oceans and harvesting of fish and fish products. This is especially important for archipelagic nations, Indonesia and the Philippines.

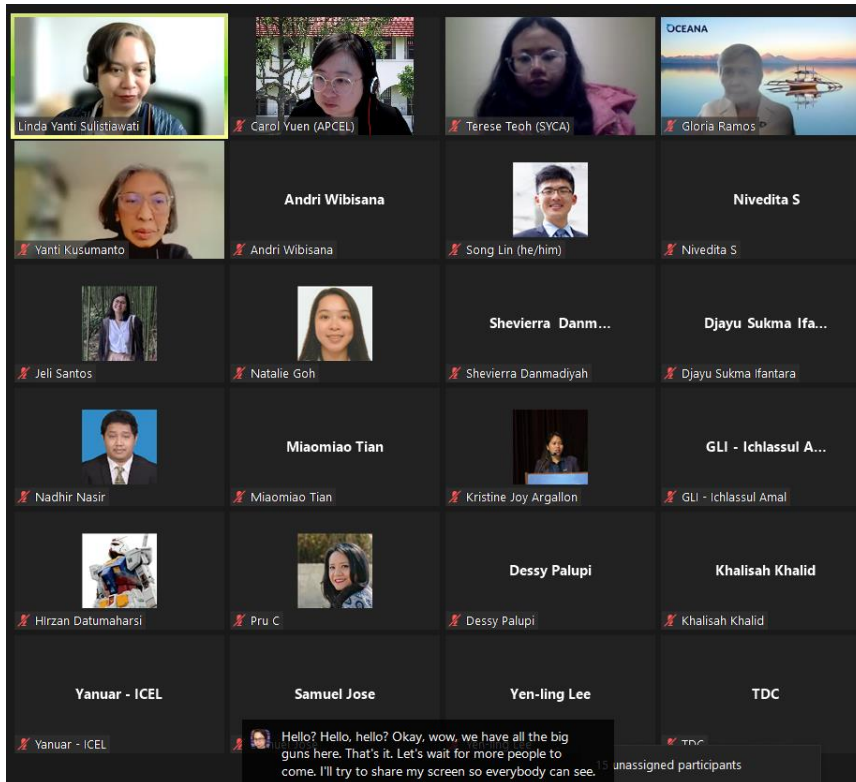
Terese Teoh, President, Singapore Youth for Climate Action, mentioned that access to information is important for frontline workers who disproportionately face the risk of health hazards. She proposed that indigenous peoples be given greater recognition in the draft, and that the implementation plan should be clearer, for example by including a commitment to devote more resources to monitoring purposes.

Breakout groups

The participants were then split into four breakout groups to discuss in-depth the various provisions in the draft Declaration:

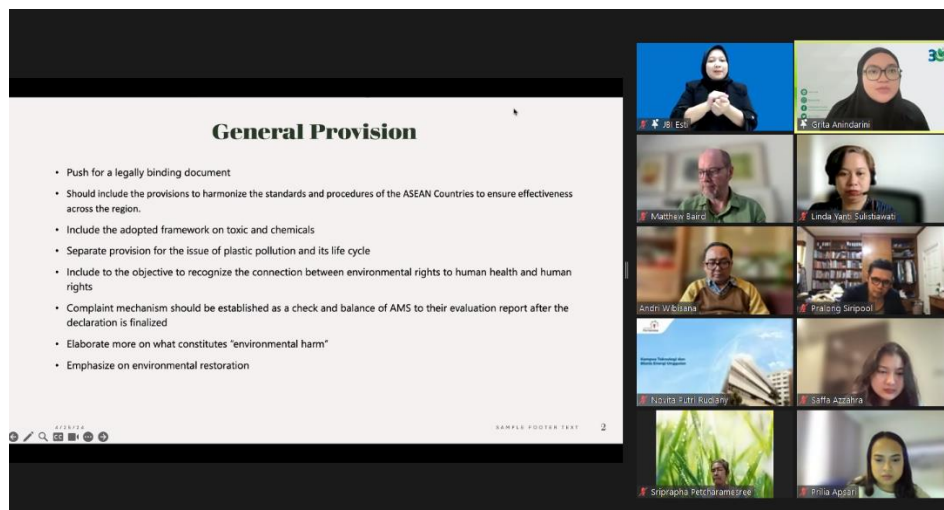
- (1) General Provisions moderated by **Rocky Guzman**, Deputy Director of ARIEL;
- (2) Procedural Elements moderated by **Prilia Kartika Aspari**, Researcher at ICEL;
- (3) Environmental Impact Assessment moderated by **Matthew Baird**, Director of ARIEL; and
- (4) Substantive Elements moderated by **Linda**.

There were several topics discussed, including transboundary pollution, climate displacement, consultation and access for vulnerable groups, and corruption and transparency which affect compliance. Participants gave broad and specific suggestions to amend existing draft provisions and include additional provisions.



The Substantive Elements breakout group

In closing, **Grita Anindarini**, Deputy Program Director of ICEL, summarised the various breakout group discussions for the participants, so that they would know the outcome of the discussions in the other breakout groups.



Closing summaries for the participants

Following the consultation, the participants' inputs were collated into a proposal and submitted to the AER Working Group, for consideration in finalising the draft Declaration. The finalised draft Declaration will eventually be transmitted for approval by AICHR and the ASEAN member states.

The proposal containing participants' inputs can be viewed [here](#).