



**34th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 8: General Debate**

**Oral Statement Delivered by R. Iniyan Ilango
On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Monday, 20 March 2017

Mr. President, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) encourages the establishment and strengthening of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in accordance with the Paris Principles. In Asia we continue to witness increasing attacks on human rights defenders (HRDs). In this context we strongly call on Asian NHRIs to strengthen and exercise their mandates to take pro-active action on protecting HRDs.¹

Recalling the importance of the independence of NHRIs we reiterate that the appointment process for these bodies must be transparent and participative. For example in Bangladesh, the founding law of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Bangladesh does not provide for the inclusion of civil society and during recent appointments the selection committee failed to consult with the public.² In India, we remain concerned that the founding law of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India falls short of providing for a consultation mechanism on the selection and appointment of the commissioners.³ This is also the case with the Burma/Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC).⁴ In Thailand, given previous flawed selection process,⁵ we urge for the government to ensure that the new National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) Act will be in full compliance with Paris Principles including on selection and appointment process.

We urge Asian governments to urgently reform appointment process for National Human Rights Institutions and to follow a clear, comprehensive and consultative process that leads to open and transparent merit-based selection.

Lastly we call on Asian states without NHRIs to take immediate steps towards establishing effective and independent NHRIs.

¹FORUM-ASIA, [2016 ANNI Report on the Performance and Establishment of National Human Rights Institutions in Asia, Regional Overview](#)

²FORUM-ASIA, [2016 ANNI Report on the Performance and Establishment of National Human Rights Institutions in Asia, Bangladesh: Change of Direction Needed](#)

³See [GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation Report – November 2016](#)

⁴FORUM-ASIA, [Time for a Paris Principles-Compliant National Human Rights Commission in Myanmar](#)

⁵FORUM-ASIA, [Flawed Selection Process Leads to Controversial Human Rights Commission](#)