

GUS MICLAT Statement

(Unofficial Transcription from webcast)

Thank you for the space given to civil society organizations in general. I speak on behalf of Initiatives for International Dialogue, which is a steering committee member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect.

Our region in Asia has witnessed, if not experienced, the four crimes that RtoP wishes to address. Take the case of Cambodia, take the case of Timor-Leste, and there is a debate now about it being applied to Sri Lanka and even Burma. But, governments in Asia have mixed positions on RtoP – although we have seen in the past few years many dialogues, conferences, events, and article formations by governments, civil society and academia on RtoP.

First awareness raising and capacity building activities are therefore essential in order to clarify if not sharpen norm, dispel myths and build consensus. It is here that regional organizations and sub-regional organizations can help facilitate this process, not only in their respective region, but also among regions and across regions. For example, there is also a need for region-to-region solidarity for inspiring each other. ASEAN, for example, can take a leaf from its African counterparts in the AU or ECOWAS for moving from the principle of non-interference to non-indifference. But it is, of course, essential that civil society should be considered an essential part of these efforts. The United Nations multilateral organization, sub-regional organizations, or even regional organizations and civil society can't do it alone. They need to partner.

We need to partner in shifting the paradigm from reaction to prevention. While we are after this partnership, while RtoP has three pillars – and I refer to what Mr. Luck said that there are three pillars to a stool, there is also a stool that is in the bar that has only one pillar. And if that pillar can be the prevention pillar then let it be so, and that is where we want to focus on as civil society. If we cannot rely on governments then the people, civil society, can rely on PtoP-RtoP or people-to-people – responsibility to protect. But then we are hopeful of discussions happening in our region, particular in the study group of CSCAP, which will feed to the ASEAN regional forum and will allow for more regional deliberation and dialogue on RtoP.

In closing, may I invite and announce to you for those regional organizations around here that the global partnership for prevention of armed conflict, a civil society network, in coordination with the OAS will be sponsoring a conference between and among regional organizations and civil society organizations to discuss issues and mechanisms in developing mechanisms held to prevent conflict.

In closing may I also say that the norm of RtoP has been embedded in our different great cultures and civilizations in modus and in customs. In the Philippines, for example, we have a saying that even if you only have a small little cut or wound in your little pinky, the whole body feels that small wound or small cut, and it takes the whole body to cure and respond to that wound or cut.