

**A caring Asean community** The Malaysian Insider Surin Pitsuwan 10 September 2014  
The Asean Community will be established in 2015. It is indeed a critical year when Asean member states would have realised their vision of a caring and sharing community.

An Asean Community is also one that is democratic, just and tolerant and protects its peoples from all forms of violence, including the worst of crimes known to humanity – genocide and atrocity crimes. Commitment to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) therefore provides Asean with a major pathway toward realising its vision of a caring and sharing community and supports Asean's responsibility to provide protection of its own people.

The Responsibility to Protect is a responsibility solemnly entered into by all UN Member States, including all 10 Asean Members at the 2005 World Summit in New York and a responsibility that converges with the commitment that these same governments have made to each other, through Asean's aspirations of "sharing and caring". R2P is already encapsulated in various Asean instruments, and definitely enshrined in the Asean charter, in spirit, if not in letters. (...)

The core principles of prevention and protection advanced by R2P are not alien to Asean or to its norms and practices. As such, Asean ought to consider being proactive in its efforts to mainstream R2P in Southeast Asia. Mainstreaming R2P would give Asean a stronger voice in global deliberations on these important issues and other humanitarian challenges faced by the international community

We made five specific observations:

First, the ultimate objective of R2P – the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – is consistent with and integral to the overall goals of an Asean Community.

Second, the norms and objectives of R2P are not alien to Asean and the region is already well endowed with norms relating to the prevention of genocide and atrocity crimes and the protection of populations from them.

Third, Asean already has important mechanisms and instruments that are particularly relevant to the implementation of the R2P.

Fourth, the commitment to R2P made by all UN member states, including those from Asean, is compatible with existing international law.

Fifth, as one of the world's leading regional organisations, Asean has worked closely with the UN in promoting international peace and security. Mainstreaming R2P would give Asean a stronger voice in global deliberations.

For these reasons, the commitment of Asean member states to R2P is a logical extension of the commitments that they have made to each other within the Asean framework. Cooperation to protect Southeast Asian peoples from genocide and atrocity crimes is a necessary corollary to the establishment of a caring and sharing Asean Community.

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