



The University of Sydney



JAPAN FOUNDATION



Australian Human Rights Centre

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ASIA: TOWARDS INSTITUTION-BUILDING

### Call for Papers

The Australian Network for Japanese Law (ANJEL), Sydney Centre for International Law (SCIL), and The Centre for Asian and Pacific Law in the University of Sydney (CAPLUS), in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Centre (AHRC) will host an international conference on **Friday 27th and Saturday 28th November 2009** at Sydney Law School. The theme of the conference is **Human Rights in Asia-Pacific: Towards Institution-Building**.

This Call for Papers is for scholars and practitioners who wish to participate in debates as to what role the existing and potential human rights monitoring institutions can play in fostering an environment conducive to the establishment of a broader “Asia-Pacific Community” locally and internationally. A list of panels and a brief summary of the issues to be addressed in each panel are set out below. We are seeking for papers on subjects within these themes.

Interested persons should submit a paper title and a synopsis (200-500 words) of their proposed paper **no later than 30 June 2009**. The submission should include:

- the author’s name, institutional affiliation, and contact details;
- the title and synopsis of the paper;
- a short CV (no more than 2 pages).

Paper proposals should be sent by email to the Program Director, Dr Hitoshi Nasu at [<NasuH@law.anu.edu.au>](mailto:NasuH@law.anu.edu.au). The proposals will be considered by the organising members of the conference. The outcome of the review will be notified by email in early August 2009.

Within the limits of financial support provided by the Japan Foundation and Sydney Law School, successful applicants will be granted funding to cover their (international or domestic) return airfares to Sydney; and/or two nights' accommodation in Sydney, which will be arranged by the conference organisers.

### **Conference Theme**

In the 1990s, the “Asian values” debate – with its attack on the discourse of the universality of human rights – presented a challenge to building human rights capacity in the Asia-Pacific region. Since then, however, a growing number of inter-governmental networks and non-governmental organisations have emerged, sharing human rights concerns throughout the region. As Asia-Pacific becomes inextricably enmeshed in global markets, its human rights record is also coming under increasing international scrutiny.

On 4 June 2008, Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, announced his vision for the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Community that:

- spans the entire Asia-Pacific region – including the United States, Japan, China, India, Indonesia and the other states of the region.
- engages in the full spectrum of dialogue, cooperation and action on economic, political, and security matters.

Subsequently, the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has undertaken [an inquiry into international and regional human rights mechanisms and possible models for the Asia-Pacific region](#).

Will such a regional institution include a function to monitor and protect human rights across the region? If so, will it succeed in effecting policy change in the face of the strong assertion of state sovereignty away of degradation of domestic political legitimacy? The success of the European Union suggests that regional integration might be possible despite the heterogeneity of the Asia-Pacific region. Yet European integration has grown in parallel to, and has been backed by, the shared views and practice of human rights protection.

The time is ripe to consider the extent to which existing or potential institutional arrangements might advance human rights record and facilitate the development of a regional community in the Asia-Pacific region. The primary purpose of this conference is to explore how current practices might be effectively harnessed to realise a truly effective and integrated regional community based on the norms and spirit of human rights protection.

Confirmed speakers include: Professor Nisuke Ando (Director, Kyoto Human Rights Research Institute in Kyoto University, a former member of the International Human Rights Committee); Professor Emeritus Ivan A Shearer (The University of Sydney, a former member of the International Human Rights Committee); Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn (Chulalongkorn University); Associate Professor Simon Tay (National University of Singapore).

## **Conference Panels**

### **1. Institutional Norms**

This panel will discuss possible normative, overarching frameworks for building and fostering human rights monitoring institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. Considerations will be given to the role of multiculturalism and critical, non-conventional perspectives on envisaging institutional models reflecting the political, social and cultural background of this region.

### **2. International Institutions**

This panel will consider the role that the existing international human rights monitoring institutions have played and their potential further contribution to fostering human rights protection in the Asia-Pacific region. Discussion will focus on the work of the International Human Rights Committee, Human Rights Council and Universal Periodic Review, and other specialised human rights committees.

### **3. Regional Institutions**

The focus of this panel will be on evolving regional human rights mechanisms, looking at both formal and informal regional bodies, including ASEAN, APEC and Asian Human Rights Commission. It involves the examination of the potential for, and difficulties with, regional approaches to greater human rights protection.

### **4. National Institutions**

This last panel will review the development of national human rights institutions in the Asia-Pacific region, especially looking at the work of Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. It will examine the potential of such national bodies and their initiatives.

## **Format**

Speakers will be required to prepare a 2,500-4,000 word draft paper for presentation in advance of the conference. The papers will be distributed to the participants so that the conference presentations will stimulate interactive discussion with the audience as well as among the panelists. We hope that papers will be published in an edited book in due course.