



## KATHMANDU DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP) REGION

*Adopted at the 5<sup>th</sup> LAWASIA International Human Rights Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal  
on 17 February 2025*

### **PREAMBLE**

WHEREAS the 5<sup>th</sup> LAWASIA International Human Rights Conference, 2025 took place in Kathmandu, Nepal between 15 and 17 February, 2025;

AND WHEREAS the theme of this Conference was ‘**Human Rights Resilience: Navigating Technological, Environmental, and Social Challenges**’;

AND WHEREAS over 300 delegates from 20 jurisdictions deliberated on issues relating to human rights, environmental protection and rights of indigenous peoples;

AND WHEREAS the Conference:

*Notes* the need for stronger enforcement of human rights in the ESCAP region;

*Recognises* the need for urgent action required to address the causes and adverse effects of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss;

*Recognises* the need for lawyers and judicial institutions to play a proactive role in enforcing environmental laws, upholding environmental rights and advocating for green policies to achieve climate justice;

*Acknowledges* the need for preserving indigenous rights while ensuring digital inclusion and access to resources;

*Reiterates* the collective commitment of legal professionals and national bar associations across the ESCAP Region to promote justice, sustainability and inclusivity.

## **STATEMENT**

The Conference, after deliberation resolves as under:

- (i) The decisions and findings of National Human Rights Commissions in the region ought to assume binding character;
- (ii) Legal institutions in the ESCAP region must protect the rights of human rights defenders and indigenous peoples, and ensure that their land rights, cultural heritage, rights of participation, free, prior and informed consent, self-governance and self-determination, are upheld consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007;
- (iii) National bar associations and legal professionals must collaborate in a more systematic way to address transborder issues and strengthen domestic legal frameworks that safeguard fundamental freedoms, promote access to justice, and uphold the rule of law;
- (iv) Calls for the establishment of an intergovernmental judicial body in the ESCAP region to ensure accountability and access to justice for all individuals;
- (v) All actions undertaken in furtherance of preserving and protecting the environment ought to be in consonance with the principles contained in the *United Nations Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992*;
- (vi) National bar associations and national judiciaries should ensure that persons with disabilities have full and complete access to justice and institutions of redress within their jurisdictions; and
- (vii) The legal profession should work towards preserving individual autonomy and privacy rights of citizens and prevent encroachment of digital liberty.