

11th July 2019

Welcome Remarks

Dr. James Gomez

Prof. Parichart Sthapitanonda, (Dean, Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University), Mr. Wasan Paileeklee (CEO, Thai Media Fund), Partners, Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the “International Conference on Fake News and Elections in Asia”, the first in a series of three conferences from Asia Centre’s Freedom of Expression in Asia Project (2019 to 2021).

In this 3-year project, Asia Centre examines the issue of fake news, hate speech and disinformation; challenges of governmental regulation and surveillance; effectiveness of non-legal measures and their impact on academia, civil society, parliamentarians, independent media, INGOs, the UN and their freedom of expression. Asia Centre’s objective is to undertake evidence-based research to present solutions to stakeholders.

Throughout 2018 and to date in 2019 Asia Centre has been active researching answers to these questions and also to identify solutions. During this process we have been invited by government agencies, embassies, universities, media, civil society, international organisations and the UN to share our findings and engage in brainstorming solutions.

In Thailand, in September 2018, Asia Centre delivered a keynote address on "Fake News in Southeast Asia" at the convention organized by the Thai Media Fund and Ministry of Culture at Burapha University. In February 2019, Asia Centre invited to participate at the Multi-Stakeholder Regional Workshop on Social Media and Digital Platform Governance hosted by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society of Thailand. In March 2019, in cooperation with Public Relations Department, Prime Minister’s Office Asia Centre made a lead presentation and facilitated two sessions at the regional meeting of ASEAN journalists entitled “Maintaining Credibility and Trust in Journalism: A Collaborative Workshop for Addressing Fake News in ASEAN”.

At the regional level, Asia Centre was invited by UNESCO to deliver the keynote address on World Press Freedom Day this year in Yangon, Myanmar. We continue to engage on this issue in different countries in the Asia-Pacific region such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. In these interactions we ask are non-legal measures such as fact-checking platforms, quality journalism and media literacy program effective solutions against fake news? What effective measures can we take against the viral power of fake news that moves at a frenzy over online platforms? What can technology companies do the address these challenges?

Asia Centre’s next international conference, *Hate Speech in Asia: Challenges and Solutions*, slated for 8-10 July 2020 and its third conference in the series, *Authoritarian*

Disinformation and Propaganda in Asia, planned for 14-16 July, 2021, both to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, will be part of our search for effective solutions.

On that note, I would like to thank all partners who have joined our journey this time,

1. Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University
2. The Thai Media Fund
3. The Friedrich Naumann Foundation
4. School of Media, Languages and Cultures, University of Nottingham, Malaysia
5. NSHM Knowledge Campus-Kolkata
6. Media Studies and Journalism Department, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
7. The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD)
8. International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
9. Law Faculty, University of Jember
10. International Republican Institute
11. HIVOS
12. The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD)

We look forward to working with you as we expand partnerships, later this year with organisations based in Washington D.C. and New York in the US, in Osaka and Tokyo in Japan and Taipei and Kaohsiung in Taiwan.

As we take the current and future partnerships forward, I hope we can together use evidence-based research to generate solutions for issues related to fake news, hate speech and disinformation.

On behalf of Asia Centre and all partners, I wish you a good conference.