



Resolution to Protect, Defend, and Promote Academic Freedom

The 9th Education International Asia-Pacific (EIAP) Regional Conference, meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on 18–20 October 2022:

- (1) Affirms the critical importance of exercising academic freedom to: advance and disseminate knowledge and information; foster independent thinking and expression; strengthen democratic processes; and promote dynamic and healthy exchanges of ideas and information that contribute to the common good of all sectors of society;
- (2) Recalls the *1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* and the *UNESCO Recommendation from 1974, amended in 2017, on Science and Scientific Researchers* on academic freedom as the right of all academic and research staff, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to:
 - (i) freedom of teaching and discussion;
 - (ii) freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof;
 - (iii) freedom to express their opinion about the institution or system in which they work;
 - (iv) freedom from institutional censorship; and,
 - (v) freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies;
- (3) Notes the definition of academic freedom as stated in the *1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* and the *UNESCO Recommendation from 1974, amended in 2017, on Science and Scientific Researchers*;
- (4) Asserts that education sector personnel should enjoy, without interference, internationally recognised civil, political, social, and cultural rights applicable to all



citizens, including the right to write and publish materials that air legitimate criticisms on past and previous authorities;

- (5) Notes with great concern the many threats to academic freedom today including state interference and repression of individual academics and even entire academic institutions, as illustrated by examples such as:

in the Philippines,

- (i) permanent closure of 55 *Lumad* (Indigenous) schools in Mindanao, Southern Philippines, in 2019 due to false allegations that these schools teach “left-leaning ideologies”;
- (ii) state authorities-led and -authorized pulling out of alleged “subversive books” (including books on peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines) from libraries of some public universities in 2021; and
- (iii) government order in 2022 to stop the distribution of at least 16 books which a government agency published and are now being labelled as “subversive” and “anti-government” within the context of the *Anti-Terrorism Act*, which critics (including academics who questioned its constitutionality at the Supreme Court) rightfully describe as an instrument of repression and a violation of academic freedom;

in Fiji,

- (iv) government interference in university appointments of staff and leadership, including punitive terminations;

and in Australia,

- (v) high levels of casual and other forms of insecure employment.

- (6) The 9th EIAP Regional Conference calls upon the EI leadership to:

- (i) ensure the adoption of a rights-based approach to academic freedom in the context of safe and inclusive education;



- (ii) monitor threats to academic freedom and communicate them to national organisations and governments accordingly;
- (iii) create a network of higher education organisations within EI;
- (iv) provide a forum for member organisations to discuss and communicate issues relating to academic freedom;
- (v) collect and promote successful campaigns on academic freedoms for publication in a regional forum;
- (vi) organise campaigns to disseminate the *1997 UNESCO Recommendation* and to defend higher education and research personnel whose academic freedom is threatened or violated;
- (vii) assist affiliates with monitoring the implementation of the *1997 UNESCO Recommendation* and submissions to the Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART); and
- (viii) encourage member organisations to lobby for a convention on academic freedom.