

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY STATEMENT APCOM

The Honourable Michael Kirby (Australia)

I send greetings and best wishes to APCOM and an expression of thanks for all that APCOM does for universal human rights.

Each year Human Rights Day is celebrated on the anniversary of the adoption, by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR).

I was a young boy in August 1945 when the Second World War concluded following the explosion of the two atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This led to the termination of the war and the adoption of the *Charter* of the United Nations. The *Charter* envisaged that universal human rights would be a foundation of the United Nations. The drafting the UDHR took place in a committee chaired by a great champion of human rights, Eleanor Roosevelt. It was adopted by the General Assembly without any dissenting votes. It is the most translated document in the world, having been rendered into every known language. It provides the principles that bind us all together as human beings on this blue planet.

A number of applications of the UDHR were not fully realised back in 1948. These included:

- * The application to terminate the stockpiles of nuclear weapons, recently affirmed by the *Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty* which will come into operation in January 2021.
- * The urgent challenge to protect our global environment and reverse climate change; and
- * Upholding the universal rights of LGBTI+ people everywhere. APCOM is an outstanding champion for this new dimension of human rights. I am proud to be an Ambassador of APCOM which on 27 November 2020 again celebrated its Heroes of the Asia Pacific region.

The year 2020 has been dominated by global concern over the COVID-19 pandemic. This also is a challenge to human rights. Fortunately, the world has learned from tackling the earlier HIV pandemic, how we should act, in cooperation with one another, to overcome COVID-19. The new pandemic falls heavily on LGBTI+ people who are vulnerable. Moreover, it deflects financial support from the HIV pandemic that is so crucial for us. It emphasises the vital necessity of the UN *Sustainable Development Goals*, especially Goal 3 that envisages universal healthcare for all by 2030.

On the 75th anniversary of the UN *Charter* of 1945, we should recommit ourselves to universal human rights. These include tackling COVID-19. But also upholding universal rights of those who are vulnerable because of their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

For the work of the United Nations and APCOM I express gratitude and praise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Kirby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent dot above the 'i' in "Kirby".

Michael Kirby
APCOM Ambassador
December 2020