

Press Release

**Announcement on the “Joint Statement on the Referendum of the Draft Constitution to be held on August 7, 2016” and the discussion platforms on the constitution and sustainable development
by Platform of Concerned Citizens (POC)**

Date: Monday, 25th April 2016

Time: 16.00 – 16.30

Venue: Small Conference Room, 12th Floor, Kasem Udhayanin Building, Political Science Faculty, Chulalongkorn University

The Platform of Concerned Citizens (POC) is a joint effort by various professional sectors in Thai society; namely individuals from civil society organisations, political parties and academics who have followed the constitution drafting process. It represents people who are deeply concerned about the referendum scheduled to be held on August 7th 2016, which is an exercise of direct democratic power of the people to determine the direction of the country and pave the way toward a return to democracy.

Having listened to people from various networks and sectors, the POC has reached a consensus that the referendum must be conducted in a free, transparent and fair manner; that people have legitimate rights to freedom of expression and to voice their opinions constructively on the Draft Constitution; that they are entitled to have access to accurate, comprehensive, and thorough information on the Draft Constitution; and must be able to voice their opinions safely, which would make the referendum more meaningful.

The shared vision on the principles on the referendum has led to this **“Joint Statement on the Referendum of the Draft Constitution to be held on August 7, 2016”** which is endorsed by people from various sectors, including political groups and political parties. The statement reflects that although Thailand is a society of different opinions on politics and other issues, the Thai people are capable of forging a consensus on the important principles needed for the political process of the nation.

In this regard, we would like to invite the media to the announcement of the **“Joint Statement on the Referendum of the Draft Constitution to be held on August 7, 2016”** to witness the press conference and be informed about future activities and discussion platforms on the constitution and sustainable development. The POC will continue working with academics and civil society networks to organise discussion platforms on the constitution and Sustainable Development Goals – including rights, inequality, gender, environment, education, and others. Further events will be announced on the POC social media websites.

Platform for Concerned Citizen (POC)

Should you have any questions or would like to request for information, please contact us at

Email: free.fair.referendum@gmail.com

**Joint Statement on the Referendum of the Draft Constitution
to be held on August 7, 2016**

As the Constitutional Drafting Commission chaired by Mr. Meechai Ruchuphan has released the Draft Constitution on March 29th, the Election Commission of Thailand has set the date for the referendum to be held on the Draft Constitution will be held on August 7th this year.

This referendum is significant as it will be an exercise of direct democratic power of the people to determine the future of the country regarding the political governance and the development approaches of the country in every aspect, both for the short and the long term. Therefore, the referendum shall be conducted in accordance with principles and standards that are acceptable internationally. The referendum must be regarded as legitimate and accepted by the people nationwide. Moreover, this referendum shall be part of the process that paves the way for the Thai society to develop sustainably in the democratic system of government.

With this statement, we, the undersigned, announce a shared vision on the principles on the referendum which we call upon all sectors in the Thai society to jointly put into effect these following points

1. The referendum must be conducted in a free, transparent, and fair manner in accordance with international principles and standards.
2. In the process towards the referendum, there must be open and inclusive debates, participated by those who agree and disagree with the content of the Draft Constitution. Voters must have access to accurate, comprehensive, and thorough information on the Draft Constitution, as well as, a safe and public space to voice their disagreements under the laws.
3. People have legitimate rights to freedom of expression and to voice their opinions constructively on the Draft Constitution which is the highest law of the country. Such basic political rights which shall be protected. Suppression on people's rights to express their views on the Draft Constitution by using measures related to security, including taking people to detention in the name of attitude adjustment is not only a violation of basic human rights, but also delegitimizes the referendum process as a whole.
4. Before the referendum is conducted, there must be clearly defined options for what happens in case the Draft Constitution does not pass the referendum, in order to reach a consensus on a constitution agreeable to all sides. People of all groups and all sides must be able to debate and to propose these options freely and constructively.

Signed on 25th April 2016