

Concerning Human Rights Issues in Marine Business Activities in the ASEAN Region

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Abstract: This article examines human rights in marine business activities in ASEAN region from the perspective of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Despite the economic potential of maritime industries, various human rights violations have been reported, particularly in the fishing sector involving migrant workers. Environmental pollution caused by shipping of oil and hazardous substances also poses risks to marine ecosystems and coastal communities. The complexity of the environment and limited enforcement capacities make it challenging to address these issues effectively. While the UNGPs on BHR provide a global framework for states and businesses to respect human rights, their adoption and implementation in the ASEAN region remain uneven. This article analyzes specific human rights issues such as modern slavery, forced labor, marine pollution, and marine debris. It argues that strengthening regional collaboration, transforming voluntary commitments into binding action plans, and engaging all relevant stakeholders are crucial for ensuring responsible and sustainable marine business practices that uphold human rights. The article offers an original contribution by integrating the impact of maritime industries with the human rights paradigm.

Keywords: ASEAN; Business; Human Right; Marine.

Introduction

Business activities affect the lives of millions of people in various parts of the world. On the one hand, business activities can act as a powerful catalyst for sustainable development, providing access to socio-economic opportunities and a path to prosperity. On the other hand, the actions of business entities have the potential to affect human rights, with the greatest impact often experienced by the most vulnerable groups (Prihandono & Khairunnisa, 2016). This led to the creation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs on Business and Human Rights), which were adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011 as an instrument of international law aimed at promoting corporations as actors responsible for advancing human rights (Astuty et al., 2025). These Principles also form the basis for standardizing regulations on the relationship between business and human rights and call on governments and corporations to identify, prevent, mitigate, and remedy human rights violations that have occurred or are likely to occur (Hughes-Jennett, 2019).

Furthermore, John Ruggie emphasized that the normative objective of the Guiding Principles is not to create new international legal obligations, but rather to clarify the implications of existing standards and practices, both at the state and business levels (Ruggie, 2013). Thus, the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights are intended to be universally recognized reference standards that must be adopted by companies, regardless of their location and business sector, including the maritime business.

Maritime business activities are experiencing an upward trend in the number of individuals involved, both directly and indirectly. Data from the Food and Agriculture Organization shows that around 90% of total international trade is transported by sea, resulting in an estimated 1.6 million commercial seafarers actively operating in the waters (FAO, 2024)(Lee & Viswanathan, 2020). However, this figure does not include workers and their families whose livelihoods depend on the global shipping industry. In addition, there are also workers involved in the offshore energy sector, including oil, gas, and renewable energy, the maritime tourism industry, and various other maritime economic activities. Although the number of individuals worldwide involved in the maritime sector contributes significantly to the global economy and food security. Their work activities often take place in conditions that are not acceptable according to international standards. The complexity of the maritime environment, which involves various stakeholders, makes it urgent to enforce human rights in maritime business activities. Despite the existence of these Guiding Principles, in practice there are still many human rights violations in the maritime business sector.

The most serious violations in the maritime industry have been reported on fishing vessels that employ foreign workers (ILO, 2013). Based on reports from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Indonesia has recorded various cases of human trafficking involving domestic and international fishermen, migrant fishery workers, and ship crews (International Organization for Migration, 2016). Although Indonesian fishery workers are exploited in various countries and other regions, Indonesia is actually the main destination for nearly half of the migrant workers in the fishery sector who are trafficked from Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam (Zimmerman et al., 2014).

In addition, in 2015, Thailand reported that more than 2,000 workers, mostly from Myanmar and Cambodia, were found stranded on Benjina Island, Indonesia, where they were forced to work in conditions resembling slavery on Thai fishing boats (Wilhelm et al., 2020). Both in Indonesia and Thailand, cases of modern slavery against workers have not been resolved through existing mechanisms, even though both countries have attempted to develop concrete actions such as adopting the UNGPs on BHR through National Action Plans (NAPs) into their domestic policies.

Another problem comes not only from labor, but also from the environmental pollution caused by the activities of large corporations. An example is the shipping industry that transports oil commodities and their derivative products, from the initial activities of mining to the distribution of products or goods. The risk posed by high distribution in line with the demand for petroleum and its derivative products is an increase in the types of pollutants that are hazardous and noxious substances (HNS). HNS itself has many types, such as flammable chemicals, toxic materials from exploration activities that are dumped into the ocean, to elements that are corrosive, oxidative, radioactive, and toxic (Buist et al., 2013).

One notable example is the mass death of fish along the coast from Ha Tinh Province to Thua Thien-Hue in central Vietnam, which was caused by contamination from hazardous substances such as cyanide (ITOPF, 2024; Kim, 2015). On the other hand, there are also factors that cause oil spills, such as natural disasters and technical errors (Ishak et al., 2018).

The various impacts of marine business activities that have occurred in the ASEAN region must be understood from the perspective of human rights fulfillment, both in terms of employment and the environment. International instruments on business and human rights (UNGP on BHR) can actually serve as guidelines for countries and industries, but they are often considered a burden or additional cost. Therefore, this article will discuss the approach of business and human rights principles in dealing with complex issues such as migrant workers, forced labor practices, and marine ecosystem degradation in the ASEAN region.

Academically, research on business and human rights has developed rapidly since the introduction of the UNGPs on BHR. However, most studies still focus on the manufacturing, energy, and global supply chain sectors in general (Mahdev & Cynthia, 2015), while the maritime business dimension in the ASEAN region has received relatively little attention. For example, MacDonald's research evaluates the challenges of implementing the UNGPs on BHR in ASEAN but focuses on broader business sectors like agribusiness, logging, and mineral extraction, highlighting varied implementation of the UNGPs across different industries (Macdonald, 2020). Several previous studies have raised issues of illegal fishing, human trafficking, and marine pollution, but they still tend to place these issues within the framework of environmental law or labor law without integrating them into a broader human rights paradigm (Zimmerman et al., 2014).

Therefore, this article offers an original contribution through an integrative analysis of the impact of maritime business activities in the ASEAN region with an emphasis on a human rights perspective. This approach is important not only to assess the extent to which the principles of the UNGPs on BHR have been adopted and implemented by ASEAN countries, but also to integrate the impact of maritime industries with the human rights paradigm.

Literature Review

Business and Human Rights Principles

The international business and human rights principles or UNGPs on BHR stem from the fact that the private sector has become one of the actors in the fulfillment of human rights alongside the state, in line with the development of human rights thinking (Thuy et al., 2023). The private sector is responsible for the realization of human rights in various ways, including respecting and protecting human rights throughout the company's value chain; avoiding causing or contributing to human rights violations through business activities and conduct; and providing remedies to those whose rights have been violated by businesses (Bernaz, 2017). In business and society studies, human rights issues and related behaviors have been discussed, such as workers' rights,(Soundararajan et al., 2018) child labor(Pelenc & Ballet, 2015) , modern slavery, physical integrity violations, or businesses that operate or collaborate with oppressive regimes (Thuy et al., 2023).

The UNGPs on BHR, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, are the first global legal framework to guide states and businesses on human rights responsibilities. The establishment of the UNGPs on BHR was the result of the UN's preparations and efforts to set global standards for business actors (Buhmann, 2006). In fact, the idea to research and develop human rights standards for business began in the 1970s (Buhmann, 2006), but the initial process faced opposing views and disagreements among countries (Deva, 2012).

In general, the UNGPs on BHR outline human rights responsibilities for states and businesses through three main pillars: First, the state duty to protect human rights, which is essentially a legal and moral obligation to protect individuals from human rights violations committed by third parties, including businesses or corporations. This obligation can be fulfilled by creating and enforcing national laws that protect human rights, regulating and supervising corporate activities, especially in high-risk sectors (such as mining, forestry, and manufacturing), and providing effective complaint and remediation systems.

Second, corporate responsibility to respect human rights, which in principle is the responsibility of companies to ensure that there are no causes or other factors that contribute to human rights violations, either directly or indirectly, and corporations must develop strategies or active measures to prevent such violations. Examples include developing clear and comprehensive human rights policies, conducting Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) in business operations, and addressing human rights impacts that have occurred through remediation mechanisms.

Third, the right to access remedy, which in principle emphasizes effective access to remedy for victims of human rights violations in business activities, both through legal and non-legal mechanisms. Examples include providing access to judicial or court assistance and mediation mechanisms at the company level. In this case, the state has a role in providing access to remedies and as a mediator in the settlement of industrial relations.

Marine Business Activities in the ASEAN Region

The maritime sector is one of the potentials in the ASEAN region. Geographically, ASEAN has a coastline stretching 173,000 kilometers and borders a number of the most productive sea areas. The Southeast Asian region has about 30% of the world's total coral reefs, 35% of the world's mangrove forests, and at least 18% of the seagrass beds on earth (Gamage, 2016). In the context of blue economy development, ASEAN has the advantage of rich marine resources that give it a strategic competitive position in the region. Southeast Asian waters represent a strategic area covering up to 2.5% of the world's oceans, with territorial waters covering more than 66% of its total geographical area and an estimated blue economy valuation ranging from US\$1.3 trillion to US\$2.5 trillion (Randhawa, 2024). Based on these conditions, Southeast Asian waters serve as a driving force in international economic development.

Data shows that ASEAN has abundant blue economy resources in the form of geographical advantages, namely a long coastline and vast sea area, which are expected to create optimal opportunities for collaboration in various marine economic sectors.

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Table 1. Potential of the Maritime Economy in the ASEAN Region

Scope	Maritime Sector	Potential Advantages
Water resources	Fisheries (land, coastal, and deep water) & Aquaculture	The six major fishing countries in the ASEAN region (The Six Top Countries are Indonesia (8%), Vietnam (4%), the Philippines (2%), Thailand (2%), Malaysia (2%), and Myanmar (1%)) contribute 19% to the total global fish production (FAO, 2024). For Indonesia and Vietnam, the fisheries sector contributes to their GDP—Indonesia 15% and Vietnam 22% (Suparmoko, 2016).
Trade	Ports, Shipping & Maritime Transport	Singapore Port, Port Klang, Tanjung Pelepas Port in Malaysia in the Malacca Strait, Tanjung Priok Port in Indonesia, Laem Chabang Port in Thailand, and Ho Chi Minh Port in Vietnam are key strategic points in the maritime shipping route in ASEAN with advanced infrastructure to handle more than 20.8 million TEU in 2018 (Chang et al., 2023).
	Tourism, resorts & coastal development	In 2018, ASEAN recorded more than 100 million tourist visits (Sari & Cahyadin, 2021). In addition, there are several Special Regional Tourism Areas such as the Singapore-Johor-Riau (SIJORI) Triangle and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) (Chheang, 2013).
Extraction of Natural Resources and New Energy	Oil & Natural Gas	In 2023, ASEAN experienced fluctuations in oil and natural gas potential, with ASEAN oil reserves increasing by 1.25% while natural gas reserves decreased by 0.94%. Meanwhile, oil production fell by 0.51%, while natural gas production rose slightly by 0.84%. Furthermore, economic growth drove oil and gas consumption in the region to increase by 4.19% and 4.56% respectively (ACE, 2024).

Source: compiled by the author from various

Methods

This article is the result of doctrinal research using a comparative approach between ASEAN member countries. The primary legal sources analyzed in this study include international instruments such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, ILO conventions on forced labor, and ASEAN regional action plans related to marine environmental protection. Secondary sources consist of academic journal articles published in journals as well as reports from institutions such as FAO, UNCTAD, ILO and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The selection of these sources is based on their normative authority, relevance to the ASEAN maritime context, cases and frequency of citations in business and human rights scholarship, ensuring analytical depth rather than numerical representativeness.

To mitigate internal biases in qualitative doctrinal legal research, this study employs several safeguards. Data triangulation is conducted by cross-referencing primary legal sources with relevant academic literature and institutional reports. In addition, the study prioritizes authoritative and widely cited sources and applies reflexive legal reasoning to minimize normative bias in synthesizing conclusions. This study does not employ human or survey-based sampling. Instead, the qualitative data consist of legal and documentary sources selected purposively based on relevance to BHR in the maritime sector. The sample includes: 6 international legal instruments and policy frameworks (including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, ILO instruments, and ASEAN policy documents); 10 national statutes and policy documents from selected ASEAN member states; 49 academic journal articles, institutional reports, and authoritative publications relevant to maritime business, human rights, labor exploitation, and marine environmental protection. No quantitative statistical sampling is applied, as numerical data presented in tables are derived from secondary sources published by international organizations and peer-reviewed studies.

Result and Discussion

Maritime Business in the ASEAN Region: An Analysis from Business and Human Rights Principles

The economic potential of developing maritime business activities in the ASEAN region is not immune to human rights violations. Various reports, law enforcement, and recovery efforts are often carried out due to the complexity of the maritime environment, which is difficult to access. In fact, most violations occur in locations that are far from the reach of government supervision (Tickler et al., 2018). The vastness of the maritime area makes monitoring activities difficult, while law enforcement efforts are often ineffective due to limited resources or the reluctance of authorities to take decisive action (Derks, 2010). With this premise, the CEO of Human Rights at Sea International, David Hammond, stated that the maritime industry shows resistance to collective initiatives and cooperation to implement the principles of the UNGPs on BHR, including facilitating effective recovery mechanisms (Guzmán et al., 2022).

The application of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights is not limited to corporations operating on land, but also in the maritime sector. Data from the UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) states that more than 80 percent of world trade depends on sea routes; the maritime shipping industry is the main foundation of the international trading system and therefore an important pillar of the global economy (UNCTAD, 2024). In fact, oceans and seas cover more than 70% of the planet's surface, so various marine exploration activities are increasing significantly every year.

Despite the availability of an international legal framework in the form of the UNGPs on BHR, in practice, both countries and corporations that are actors in the fulfillment of human rights face uncertainty with these instruments. This is because the available international instruments are classified as soft law and can even be considered voluntary guidelines (Pascal, 2021).

Table 2. Status of NAPs of ASEAN Member Countries

Countries	Status		
	Active	Developing	Other
Indonesia	✓	-	-
Philippines	-	-	-
Vietnam	✓	-	-
Brunei	-	-	-
Cambodia	-	-	-
Lao PDR	-	-	-
Thailand	✓	-	-
Malaysia	-	✓	-
Myanmar	-	-	-
Singapore	-	-	-

Source: The Danish Institute for Human Rights(The Danish Institute for Human Rights, n.d.)

Although the marine and ocean environment has unique and complex characteristics that require an approach tailored to these conditions, this cannot be used as an excuse to ignore or reduce human rights protection standards.

The Global National Action Plans classify three categories for countries committed to forming national action plans (NAPs) through their domestic regulations. Active status is defined as countries that implement NAPs or are accompanied by updates for development, while development status is based on countries that are developing NAPs but have not yet implemented them.

On the one hand, soft law has several advantages, such as flexibility, which is expected to influence human rights actors politically to take on roles that are specified in domestic regulations. However, conditions such as those described above have led to soft law being underappreciated in the international arena, as it appears to be ineffective because it is not binding on all countries and there are certainly no sanctions for violating soft law(European Commission, 2020) .

Not all ASEAN member states have adopted soft law, which means that ASEAN's commitment to enforcing the UNGPs on BHR is not yet 100% unanimous. Table 2 shows that only 4 out of 10 ASEAN member states are committed to enforcing human rights in the realm of business activities through National Action Plans (NAPs).

Human Rights Issues in Marine Business Activities in ASEAN

Several human rights issues related to maritime business activities can be analyzed as follows:

a. Modern Slavery: Forced Labor

The fishing industry run by large corporations faces human rights violations, both internally and externally. In the context of maritime business, the labor sector and environmental are representative aspects of business activities that are vulnerable to human rights violations. The Asia-Pacific region ranks third as the region with the highest vulnerability to modern slavery practices globally. This high risk is triggered by several key factors, including the existence of discriminatory social norms, social inequality accompanied by political instability, and economic uncertainty [29]. The combination of these factors creates a "hotbed" for the development of labor exploitation and other forms of modern slavery in Asia-Pacific .

Therefore, these conditions indicate the need for serious attention and comprehensive coordination efforts to address these complex root problems. Table 3 attempts to provide data on the estimated proportionality of the population involved in modern slavery in ASEAN, where ASEAN member countries contribute around 13.5 million people to modern slavery practices worldwide.

Table 3. Modern Slavery Data in ASEAN

Ranking in Asia	Country	Estimated prevalence of modern slavery (per 1,000 of the population)	Estimated Population Involved in Modern Slavery	Population	Country Vulnerability to Modern Slavery
3	Myanmar	12.1	657,000	54,410,000	67
7	Philippines	7.8	11,050,000	1,380,004,000	66
10	Indonesia	6.7	1,833,000	273,524,000	49
12	Malaysia	6.3	202,000	32,366,000	37
14	Thailand	5.7	401,000	69,800,000	46
15	Lao PDR	5.2	38,000	7,276,000	52
16	Cambodia	5.0	83,000	16,719,000	58
17	Vietnam	4.1	396,000	97,339,000	44
23	Singapore	2.1	12,000	5,850,000	24

Source: The Global Slavery Index (Walk Free, 2023)

Based on several previous studies compiled by the author, the factors causing modern slavery come from various aspects as described by the author in the following table:

Table 4. Factors Contributing to Modern Slavery in the Maritime Business

Scope	Causal Factors	Explanation
Internal	Economic Instability	Individuals who have no alternative means of livelihood tend to engage in high-risk work situations that can lead to slavery. This condition is particularly experienced by migrants, both legal and illegal, who are more vulnerable to becoming victims of slavery.
	Lack of Understanding of Workers' Rights	Many workers are unaware of, or even indifferent to, their rights as workers. This can lead to modern slavery due to internal factors such as workers' lack of access to knowledge about their rights.
	Untrained Labor	Prospective workers do not have specific skills, and many of them only rely on manual labor, making them vulnerable to exploitation.
	Poor Foreign Language Skills	Some prospective workers do not have the ability to communicate in a language understood by employers, which leads to abuse.
External	Weak institutions	Problems arise when institutional capacity is inadequate, inspection systems are ineffective, and sanctions imposed on violators are not commensurate with the economic benefits gained from slavery practices.

Bribery	The practice of bribing government officials to ignore the existence of slavery.
Poor Corporate Culture	In certain sectors, particularly those that are relatively unorganized, this hinders the formation of labor unions and leads to employment practices with flexible working relationships.
Credit slavery	Wage payments are sometimes used as a strategy to retain individuals in employment relationships. In addition, employers often withhold wages earned with the promise of future payment, but these funds are forfeited if the individual leaves the employment relationship, known as credit slavery.
Poor Recruitment Process	The recruitment process by employers often requires prospective workers to pay recruitment fees, causing them to go into debt.
Length of Voyage	This makes it difficult to identify and track rights violations that occur at sea due to the lack of clarity <i>regarding the time frame</i> .

Source: compiled by the author from various literature (Bebingtona et al., 2021; Bernstein et al., 2007; Chantavanich et al., 2016; Darusman, 2022; McGrath, 2013)

b. Environmental Issues: Marine Hazardous and Noxious Substances and Oil

In addition to labor issues, the activities of large corporations are not immune to environmental pollution. An example is the shipping industry, which transports oil commodities and their derivative products. In fact, these commodities are an important element in stimulating economic development and growth, as well as increasing prosperity in various countries. The ASEAN region is strategically located on the world's main maritime trade routes, which serve as catalysts for the transportation of goods and energy resources to major Asian economies such as China, Japan, and Korea.

This strategic geographical position means that the ASEAN region faces a higher risk of oil spills and other hazardous materials than other regional areas.

Meanwhile, the risk posed by high distribution in line with the demand for petroleum and its derivative products is an increase in the types of pollutants that are hazardous and noxious substances (HNS). HNS itself has many types, such as flammable chemicals, toxic materials from exploration activities that are dumped into the ocean, to elements that are corrosive, oxidative, radioactive, and toxic (Buist et al., 2013).

Furthermore, both HNS and oil spills in the marine environment can cause significant losses to the fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism industries, as well as have adverse social and environmental impacts. One notable example is the mass death of fish along the coast from Ha Tinh Province to Thua Thien-Hue in central Vietnam, which occurred due to contamination by hazardous substances such as cyanide (ITOPF, 2024; Kim, 2015). On the other hand, there are also factors that cause oil spills, such as natural disasters and technical errors (Ishak et al., 2018).

Table 5 shows that the majority of oil spill incidents occur due to collisions involving commercial shipping activities, especially tankers. Thus, it can be hypothesized that shipping activities are the main cause of large-scale oil pollution in marine waters. This finding confirms that the shipping sector is a dominant contributor to oil pollution incidents in the maritime environment.

Table 5. Data on Pollution due to Oil Spills in ASEAN (Hung et al., 2019)

Event	Year	Country	Oil Spill	Spill Size (Tons)
Natuna Sea	2000	Indonesia/Singapore	Crude Oil	700
CMA CGM Normandie	2001	Singapore	Fuel Oil (FO)	-
MT East Singapore	2001	Malaysia	Bitumen	1500
Indah Lestari	2001	Malaysia	Phenol	630
Neptank VII	2002	Singapore	FO	450
Dragon 1	2004	Thailand	FO	150

Solar 1	2006	Philippines	(Industrial Fuel Oil) IFO180	8000
Princess of the Stars	2008	Philippines	Sulfuric acid	1000
Charlotte Maersk	2010	Malaysia	Trichloroisocyanuric acid, calcium hypochlorite solid, and methyl ethyl ketone peroxide liquid	71.22
Alpinia flower	2012	Malaysia	Methanol	6
Dong Bac channel	2014	Vietnam	Linear Ankyl Benzene (LAB)	300
Vung Ang Factory	2016	Vietnam	Phenol, Cyanide	-

Table 5 shows that ASEAN is not the first to experience oil spill incidents due to shipping activities. Therefore, the issue of HNS and oil pollution has developed into a regional issue that requires joint handling, especially in ASEAN. Our hypothesis is that regional collaboration needs to be strengthened in efforts to prevent and handle HNS and oil pollution incidents in order to minimize the potential negative impacts.

In addition to the main causes of oil spills at sea, ASEAN has experienced several incidents that have had a destructive effect on marine ecology. The following are some data on pollution that has brought HNS pollutants as a result of oil spills from the petroleum extraction industry in the ASEAN region:

- c. Environmental Issue: Marine Plastic Pollution (MPP), Marine Debris, and Abandoned, Lost, and Discarded Fishing Gears (ALDFGs)

Marine debris is one of the main threats to marine ecosystems, water systems, and coastal areas around the world. The massive spread of marine debris has become a serious concern at various levels, from local, regional, and national to international (Liu et al., 2024). Various types of materials such as plastic bottles, product packaging, abandoned fishing nets, and other equipment remain in the marine and coastal environment, creating unique challenges for global conservation efforts (Royer et al., 2023). The presence of these materials severely pollutes the marine environment, and the problem requires a special approach, given that the impact is not limited to the environment but also extends to broader social and economic dimensions (Siriraksophon et al., 2016). In Indonesia alone, it is reported that small-scale fishing industries contribute up to 60,000 units of fishing equipment each year that are classified as "ghost gear" (Wibowo et al., 2017). Thus, this condition will certainly have a significant impact on marine life, ecosystem balance, economic stability, and the quality of life of the communities involved.

Southeast Asia has been recognized as a major contributor to global environmental pollution, particularly in terms of marine plastic pollution, which is now an urgent problem in the region (Putri et al., 2023). Table 6 attempts to explain objective data on countries with poor waste management systems, which shows that six of the eleven Southeast Asian countries are included in the list of countries surveyed (Jambeck et al., 2015).

These six countries produce 1.4 to 3.54 million metric tons of plastic waste per year, which even exceeds China's total plastic waste production. Cumulatively, these countries are responsible for dumping 1.32 to 1.53 million metric tons of plastic waste into the ocean each year (Xanthos & Walker, 2017). Meanwhile, the main sources of microplastics on the sea surface come from various activities, including those in the marine business sector, such as tourism in coastal areas, the fishing sector, the shipping industry, and the practice of disposing of waste that is not properly managed in the marine and ocean environment (Biswas & Pal, 2024).

Furthermore, to address this issue, in 2019, ASEAN held a meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, which became an important momentum to unravel the problem of marine debris as it has become a cross-border issue. This strategic meeting encouraged member countries to develop comprehensive action plans, both at the national and regional levels, to address collective problems. In response to this urgency, ASEAN member countries in the same year initiated the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Member States (2021—2025) as a concrete step in overcoming this problem.

Although this framework shows a positive commitment for the future, its implementation still requires transformation into an operational regional action plan through a mechanism that has binding legal force, accompanied by measurable achievement targets and clear roles for all stakeholders.

Table 6. ASEAN Countries with the Highest Contributions to Marine Plastic Waste (Jambeck et al., 2015)

Country	Poorly Managed Plastic Waste (Millions of Tons/Year)	Marine Plastic Waste (Million Tons/Year)
Indonesia	3.22	0.48—3.53
Philippines	1.88	0.28—0.75
Vietnam	1.83	0.28—0.73
Thailand	1.03	0.15—0.41
Malaysia	0.94	0.14—0.37
Myanmar	0.46	0.07—0.18

Conclusion

This article discusses human rights issues in marine business activities in the ASEAN region. Despite the economic potential of maritime business in ASEAN, various human rights violations occur due to the complexity and limited supervision of the maritime environment and limited regulatory oversight. Key issues include modern slavery and forced labor in the fishing industry, environmental pollution from hazardous substances and oil spills caused by shipping activities, and marine plastic pollution and debris. The article analyzes these issues from the perspective of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. It highlights that not all ASEAN countries have adopted these principles into domestic policies through National Action Plans. The conclusions of this study are derived from a structured doctrinal analysis that cross-verifies international legal instruments, national regulations, and academic literature, ensuring interpretative consistency and minimizing qualitative bias. The article emphasizes the need for comprehensive regional collaboration and legally binding mechanisms to address these human rights challenges in order to support sustainable economy development in line with international human rights standards.

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