E-commerce is now the dominant sector in ASEAN’s Internet economy. According to studies done by Temasek and Google in 2019, e-commerce has overtaken online travel to become the biggest sector of ASEAN’s Internet economy. In just four years, e-commerce recorded an impressive growth trajectory from $5.5 billion in 2015 to over $38 billion in 2019 and is well on track to exceed $150 billion by 2025.¹

One contributing factor to this is the rapid growth of the number of Internet users in ASEAN that have reshaped consumer behaviour in the region. This massive trend towards e-commerce also opens up the opportunity for micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) to introduce their products to a wider group of potential customers and grow their businesses, including through cross-border e-commerce. With the growing importance and potential of the e-commerce sector in ASEAN, it warrants the need to ensure that both consumers and sellers in the e-commerce marketplace know their rights and obligations, and are well protected from any wrongdoing or potential fraud risks.

**ASEAN’s Guideline on Accountabilities and Responsibilities of e-Marketplace Providers**

Following the adoption of the ASEAN Work Programme on Electronic Commerce (AWPEC) 2017-2025, which aims to facilitate cross-border e-commerce in ASEAN,

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the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Electronic Commerce (ACCEC) has adopted the Guideline on Accountability and Responsibilities of e-Marketplace Providers. This set of guidelines focuses on online intermediaries providing platforms for online selling of goods/services, which are known as e-marketplaces. The Guideline was developed with the objectives to:

1) Provide guidance to and encourage online intermediaries to issue transparent and fair terms and conditions for online transactions on their e-marketplaces;
2) Build and strengthen consumer trust in e-commerce; and
3) Create a healthy and user-friendly business environment on the Internet.

The Guideline consists of four Principles, which e-marketplace providers are encouraged to consider and incorporate when developing their platforms’ policies, terms, and conditions. The principles are as follows:

**Principle 1: Personal Data Protection**

The principle on personal data protection is intended to ensure the privacy and security of customer information and to prevent it from being misused and accessed without authorisation. It encourages e-marketplace providers to develop clear policies on the protection of personal data and to make the information easily accessible to customers upon request in local/preferred language, where applicable.

**Principle 2: E-contracting**

The principle on E-contracting aims to ensure transparency and accountability in the e-marketplace by defining the responsibilities of parties including the e-marketplace providers, merchants, and customers. This principle encourages e-marketplace providers and merchants to provide all information related to: (i) product or service; (ii) terms and conditions; (iii) detailed transactions records; and (iv) return or exchange policy, to the customers in local/preferred language, and allowing customers to review, modify or confirm the detailed transaction before placing order.

**Principle 3: Honest Advertising**

The principle on honest advertising encourages e-marketplace providers to provide factual and clear information to customers when promoting or conducting marketing campaigns/programs. Additionally, the e-marketplace providers and merchants should provide customers with ethical and honest information in their advertisements.

**Principle 4: Dispute Resolution**

This principle aims to ensure that e-marketplace providers put in place a clear dispute resolution mechanism that is applicable to all merchants. The mechanism should include clear terms and information on contact points in local/priority languages and displayed at an appropriate location on the e-marketplace.

**The benefits of the Guideline**

The Guideline serves as a simple reference/checklist for the e-marketplace providers, so as to ensure the safety, transparency, and accountability of e-marketplace in ASEAN, which will be beneficial for the end consumers, merchants, and e-marketplace providers. All of the principles, once implemented, will help minimize the risk of fraud (e.g. payment fraud) and data breaches, and promote a better understanding of each party’s rights and responsibilities. This condition will then create a safer and more comfortable transaction between the customers and merchants in the e-marketplace.

Although the Guideline is non-binding, it will provide a clear reference on the principles for ensuring a safe and trustworthy e-commerce transaction. The Guideline embodies the principles in the ASEAN Online Business Code of Conduct, published by the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection (ACCP) in 2019, which is aimed to fostering good online business practices in ASEAN and building consumer confidence in e-commerce.

The Code of Conduct and the Guideline combined will enable the promotion of a conducive environment for the growth of e-commerce platforms, unlock cross-border trade opportunities and foster the development of consumer confidence in the region.
Recent Updates

Negotiations to draft ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework Agreement continue

The 5th Task Force Meeting of the ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework (AFSRF) was held on 10 – 12 December, 2019 at the ASEAN Secretariat. The three-day meeting was attended by delegates from ASEAN Member States from the agriculture, economic and health sectors to continue negotiations on the draft implementing instrument of the AFSRF. The negotiation is the follow up action from the adoption of the AFSRF by ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry, ASEAN Economic Ministers and ASEAN Health Ministers in 2015.

Viet Nam ASEAN Chairmanship 2020 Priority Economic Deliverables

Viet Nam has officially assumed the ASEAN Chairmanship for 2020. With the chairmanship theme of “Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN,” Viet Nam has outlined three main priorities for its chairmanship focus: (i) promoting intra-ASEAN economic integration and connectivity; (ii) deepening ASEAN engagement with global community for peace and sustainable development; and (iii) enhancing the responsiveness and institutional capacity of ASEAN. These three priorities will be further translated into specific priority economic deliverables, details of which will be available in due course.

ASEAN seeks to boost intra-regional trade and investment

High-level symposium on promoting greater trade and investment in the region was held on 10 January 2020 in Hanoi, Viet Nam, which kicks off discussions on the priorities under Viet Nam’s ASEAN 2020 Chairmanship. Attended by experts from the academia and private sector, as well as policy makers from the ASEAN member states, the symposium examined measures to boost trade and investment in ASEAN by addressing institutional and policy barriers, maximising global value chain participation, and improving seamless logistics.

Coordinating works of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2020

Senior Economic Officials and Chairs of sectoral-bodies of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) pillar met on 11 January 2020 for the 10th Meeting of the Committee of the Whole for the AEC (CoW) in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, to take stock of AEC implementation progress, share their priorities for 2020, and coordinate on cross-cutting issues. The Committee discussed the priority economic deliverables for 2020, progress in the development of the consolidated strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) for ASEAN, as well as the planned conduct of the Mid-Term Review of the AEC Blueprint 2025, among others.

The 23rd Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers

The 23rd Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers (23rd M-ATM) was held on 15 January 2020 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2020. The meeting discussed progress in the implementation of two strategic directions of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 which aim to ensure ASEAN’s competitiveness as a single tourism destination and to realise the sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

The 4th ARISE Plus Roundtable Discussion on Trade Facilitation

With the support from the ARISE Plus, the 4th ARISE Plus Roundtable Discussion on Trade Facilitation was held on 21-22 January 2020 in Bangkok, Thailand. Among the issues discussed during the Roundtable was the socialisation of the e-Platform for consultation with the Private Sector (e-Platform) that aims to provide an online channel for the private sector to submit their recommendations on trade facilitation issues to relevant ASEAN sector bodies. This initiative is also in line with one of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blue Print 2025’s key objectives to promote the principles of good governance, transparency, and responsive regulatory regimes through active engagement with the private sector, community-based organisations, and other stakeholders of ASEAN.
### Upcoming Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37th Meeting of the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI 37) and Related Meetings</td>
<td>Ha Noi</td>
<td>12-13 February 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>76th Coordinating Committee on Investment Meetings</td>
<td>Yangon</td>
<td>24-26 February 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>32nd Coordinating Committee on ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (CCA)</td>
<td>Bandung</td>
<td>24-28 February 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>25th ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Retreat</td>
<td>Da Nang</td>
<td>8-11 March 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st ASEAN Digital Senior Officials Meeting (ADGSOM) – ASEAN Telecommunications Regulators’ Council (ATRC) Leaders Retreat of 2020</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>11-12 March 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th ASEAN Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting and Related Meetings (AFMGM)</td>
<td>Quang Ninh</td>
<td>24-27 March 2020</td>
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### ASEAN Single Window (ASW) Trader Survey

The ASEAN Secretariat, with the support of the ASEAN-USAID IGNITE, would like to seek your feedback for improving the current operations of the ASW electronic certificate of origin (Form D) system through the **ASEAN Single Window (ASW) Trader Survey**.

Please help us by answering the questions in the following link, which will take just about 10 minutes: