

## An Overview of ASEAN-UN Cooperation

### I. Background Information

1. ASEAN's relations with the United Nations (UN) system started in the early 1970s through initial cooperation with the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The UNDP sponsored a two-year study to assist ASEAN in its economic cooperation activities, which later provided the basis for ASEAN to forge cooperation in industrial development, agriculture and forestry, transport, finance, monetary and insurance services. The ASEAN-UNDP Sub-regional Programme was launched in 1977, aiming to better assist ASEAN with its regional cooperation and integration efforts.

2. The 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit was held in Bangkok on 13 February 2000, at the sidelines of the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

3. The ASEAN Leaders met with the UN Secretary-General and heads of various UN bodies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit at the UN Headquarters in New York on 13 September 2005. In their Joint Communiqué, the ASEAN Leaders expressed appreciation for the UN's support for ASEAN's goals in realising the ASEAN Community as envisaged under the Declaration of Bali Concord II and ASEAN's decision to establish an ASEAN Charter. The UN also welcomed the possibility of ASEAN seeking an observer status in the UN. Both sides agreed on the need to broaden ASEAN-UN cooperation with the involvement of the various UN agencies to encompass all areas related to community building, including key issues related to development in particular poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), prevention and control of infectious diseases, disaster management, transnational issues, trade and investment as well as peace and security.

4. On 27 September 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ASEAN and the UN on ASEAN-UN Cooperation was signed in New York, which established a partnership that would encompass the full range of cooperation based on mutual benefits, including political, economic, and socio-cultural areas. It also provides that ASEAN and the UN shall maintain and hold regular consultations on issues and activities of strategic importance to the effective achievement of common objectives and maximise complementarity and mutual support.

5. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit held on 29 October 2010 in Hanoi, Viet Nam, the Leaders reaffirmed their commitments to working more closely in exploring enhanced cooperation in addressing global financial crisis, climate change, food and energy security, MDGs, disaster management, peace and security, international and regional issues of common concern, as well as human rights. At this occasion, the Leaders adopted the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-UN Collaboration in Disaster Management. A Co-Chairs' Statement was also issued to reflect the outcomes of the deliberation of the Summit.

6. ASEAN-UN cooperation was given further impetus by the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit held on 19 November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia. The Leaders adopted the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN, which

has served as a strengthened framework of ASEAN-UN cooperation in the spheres of political-security, economic and socio-cultural, as well as secretariat-to-secretariat cooperation.

7. The 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit held on 10 October 2013 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, recognised that the Comprehensive Partnership had begun to establish a more coordinated, coherent, and cohesive cooperation among ASEAN sectoral bodies and UN agencies, funds, and programmes. The ASEAN Leaders also encouraged the UN to support the implementation of the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009-2015) and contribute to the ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision, as well as to the Bali Concord III to bring the ASEAN common platform on global issues into reality by 2020.

8. At the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit held on 12 November 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, the Leaders noted with satisfaction the adoption of the ASEAN-UN Work Plan for 2015, which charts out priorities for ASEAN-UN cooperation in all the pillars under the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN and in maintaining and promoting regional peace, security, and prosperity. The Leaders welcomed the establishment of a UN Liaison Officer in Jakarta as agreed at the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit, and encouraged further engagement between the relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and UN agencies to promote substantive cooperation.

9. At the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit held on 22 November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the Leaders welcomed the formal review of the implementation of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership as espoused in the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership 2013-2015 Report jointly submitted by the ASEAN and UN Secretariats, and encouraged both sides to take the necessary measures to advance ASEAN-UN cooperation based on the recommendations contained in the Joint Report. The Leaders also looked forward to the development of a five-year Plan of Action (2016-2020) to implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN, which will take into account the key elements of the ASEAN Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

10. At the 8<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit held on 7 September 2016 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, the Leaders noted with satisfaction the adoption of the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN for period of 2016 to 2020. The Plan of Action, which includes current priority areas of cooperation and takes into account the ASEAN Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will guide both sides to realising the full potential of the comprehensive partnership in the next five years.

11. The annual ASEAN-UN Ministerial Meeting (AUMM) has been held regularly since 2010, providing an opportunity for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Secretary-General to exchange views on issues of mutual interest. The last ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting with the UN Secretary-General and the President of the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the UNGA was held on 22 September 2016 in New York, U.S.A. The Meeting welcomed the good progress made in the ASEAN-UN cooperation through the implementation of the

Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN as reflected in the 2015-2016 Joint Report submitted by the Secretariats of ASEAN and UN.

12. The UN has made continuous commitments to increase contacts and strengthen cooperation with ASEAN, which is manifested in various Resolutions of the UNGA, namely: Resolution (57/35) of 21 November 2002; Resolution (59/5) of 22 October 2004; Resolution (61/44) of 4 December 2006 on granting the Observer status for ASEAN at the UN; Resolution (67/110) of 17 December 2012; Resolution (63/35) of 26 November 2008; Resolution (65/235) of 22 December 2010; Resolution (67/110) of 17 December 2012; Resolution (68/49) of 5 December 2013; and Resolution (69/110) of 10 December 2014. Through these Resolutions, the UN has expressed its appreciation and continued efforts to engage ASEAN in high-level meetings of the UN with regional organisations as well as its decision to include the sub-item on “Cooperation between the UN and ASEAN” in the provisional agenda of the annual sessions of the UNGA.

13. Engagement between the two Organisations has been intensified, including through the following high-level visits: (i) in May 2015, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Le Luong Minh, met the newly appointed UN Assistant Secretary-General (UN ASG) for Political Affairs, Mr. Miroslav Jenca, at the side-lines of the UN High Level Retreat with Heads of Regional and other Organisations in New York; (ii) UN ASG Jenca paid a courtesy call on Secretary-General Minh on 26 June 2015 at the ASEAN Secretariat and had an interface with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) to discuss matters related to ASEAN-UN cooperation as well as other international and regional issues of common concern; (iii) on 20 October 2015, H.E. Shamshad Akhtar, Under Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary of UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) had a meeting with H.E. Latsamy Keomany, Permanent Representative of Lao PDR to ASEAN, the then incoming Chair of the CPR, in Jakarta during which they discussed ASEAN-UN collaboration in the economic and socio-cultural pillars and the development of the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action (2016-2020) as mandated by the AUMM on 29 September 2015; and (iv) on 13 March 2017, UN Under-Secretary-General High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, H.E. Kim Won-soo paid a courtesy call on Secretary-General Minh to discuss issues relating to disarmament as envisaged in the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action (2016-2020).

14. Taking the opportunity of the UN high-level officials' presence in Jakarta for the ASEAN-UN Secretariat-to-Secretariat (S2S) Meeting, the UN has regularly engaged the CPR since 2016 to discuss matters related to ASEAN-UN cooperation as well as other international and regional issues of common concern. To date, two interface meetings between the CPR and the UN have been held, viz. on 31 March 2016 and 19 April 2017.

## **II. Status of Implementation of the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN and its Annex**

15. The Annex of the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN identifies major action lines for ASEAN and the UN to work on the prioritised cooperation pillars. Most of the activities to implement this Joint

Declarations have been conducted by relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and UN agencies. Following are the key activities undertaken in each pillar:

## **Political-Security Cooperation**

### **Peace and Security**

16. Cooperation to promote regional and international peace and security is a key feature of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership. The UN has contributed to activities within ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

17. ASEAN-UN collaboration in peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building continues to be strengthened. This includes activities conducted through national focal points of ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network (APCN). As of July 2015, ASEAN Member States have contributed approximately 5,500 military and police personnel as well as technical expertise to the UN peace-keeping missions. Continued focus will be on enhancing the peace-keeping capacities of ASEAN Member States through training programmes and exchanges on policies and best practices.

18. Exchange of experiences and best practices in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy has been intensified including through a series of Track 1.5 ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue (AURED) held since 2012. To date, three AURED workshops have been convened, namely: (i) the 1<sup>st</sup> AURED Workshop on Conflict Prevention and Maintenance of Peace and Stability in Multi-cultural and Pluralistic Societies in June 2014 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; (ii) the 2<sup>nd</sup> AURED Workshop in support of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) in February 2015 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar; and (iii) the 3<sup>rd</sup> AURED Workshop on Conflict Prevention and the Prevention of Violent Extremism in November 2016 in Jakarta, Indonesia. In November 2016, the UN also organised the 1<sup>st</sup> UN Preventive Diplomacy and Peace-making Training programme for the Asia Pacific Region, which was hosted by Lao PDR.

19. At the invitation of the UN Secretary-General, H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN attended the UN Secretary-General High Level Retreat with Heads of Regional and other Organisations on 1-2 May 2015 in New York. The Retreat focused on cooperation between the UN and regional organisations in three key areas of mediation, peace-building, and peace operations. Secretary-General Minh shared with the participants ASEAN's on-going efforts in peace-building and contribution to the UN peace operations, as well as the need to promote ASEAN-UN cooperation in mediation through: i) upholding the rule of law; ii) strengthening regional institutions; and iii) sharing experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

20. Cooperation has intensified on matters related to transnational crime and international terrorism. Representatives from ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat have participated in UN sponsored regional workshops and conferences on issues such as counter-terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters, cybercrime, environmental crime, illicit drugs, and human trafficking, while the UN

has participated in various ASEAN meetings convened to address specific transnational crime issues such as irregular migration and drugs.

### Human Rights Promotion

21. Cooperation in the promotion of human rights remains a priority for ASEAN and the UN. Collaboration between relevant UN Agencies, such as Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN Women, with relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies, such as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children's (ACWC), and the ASEAN Committee of Women (ACW), has been strengthened in terms of information sharing as well as capacity building. Representatives from relevant UN Agencies continue to contribute their knowledge and expertise in various training activities organised by ASEAN, including the annual AICHR Advanced Training on Human Rights.

22. Mechanisms for regular consultations among these agencies/bodies have also been instituted. The UN continues to support the engagement between AICHR and ACWC, as well as the participation of these bodies in consultations and dialogue with the relevant international human rights institutions.

### Economic Cooperation

#### Connectivity and Integration

23. The UN, together with other external partners, has supported ASEAN in enhancing regional connectivity through the Regional Action Programme on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific – Phase II (2012-2016). This Action Programme has been aligned with the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), the 2011-2015 ASEAN Strategic Transport Plan, and the ASEAN Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Master Plan 2015.

#### Economy and Development

24. The UN continues to support the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to facilitate ASEAN's participation into the global economy. The focus is on improving operational and regulatory frameworks, enhancing the competitiveness of enterprises, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and narrowing the development gap within and among ASEAN Member States. Promoting inclusive and sustainable development and economic empowerment of women and youth are also priorities of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership. An Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2015: "Supporting Participation in Value Chains", which includes proposals on how countries, including ASEAN Member States, can better integrate into global value chains and promote inclusive growth, was published in November 2015.

#### Food and Energy Security

25. Food security remains a key agenda of ASEAN-UN cooperation, with special focus on the implementation of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework (AIFS) and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS) 2015-2020. The UN has also provided technical expertise to the ASEAN

Secretariat in drafting the Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture, and Forestry (2016-2025), which was endorsed by the Ministers in September 2015. Both sides are also collaborating to enhance competitiveness of food commodities and food safety standards in the ASEAN region through capacity building and implementation of international food safety standards.

26. On energy security, the ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE) and the UN have worked together to develop priority action areas for Southeast Asia, as a follow-up to the Asia-Pacific Energy Forum (APEF) 2013. The two-year ASEAN-Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) project on “Bio-energy and Food Security in ASEAN (2012-2014)”, which aims to ensure more sustainable development of the bio-energy sector in the ASEAN region, had been successfully implemented. Both sides are also collaborating in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a number of ASEAN Regional Workshops and capacity building activities.

#### Attainment of the MDGs and Narrowing the Development Gap

27. The UN has provided technical support to the ASEAN Regional MDGs Assessment, which resulted in a report that reviews regional MDGs achievements, identifies remaining and emerging post-2015 development challenges, and recommends areas and modality of regional support.

28. Relevant UN Agencies such as UNDP and UNESCAP have been assisting Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam in their efforts to accelerate the implementation of MDGs through training and advisory services. The UN has also assisted the ASEAN Member States in data and statistics collection for the post-2015 development framework.

#### Cooperation to Implement the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

29. Cooperation to implement the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been promoted through various initiatives and activities, including the convening of an open-ended Interface Meeting involving the ASEAN Secretariat, Thailand, and the UNESCAP which took place on 23 June 2016 in Bangkok. The Special Session of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting Focusing on Sustainable Development as well as the Special Panel Discussion to Enhance Complementarities between the ASEAN Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development took place on 24 September 2016 in New York at the sidelines of the AUMM.

### **Socio-Cultural Cooperation**

#### Human Development and Social Welfare

30. On social welfare, the UN is working closely with ASEAN to support the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection (2013) through tangible activities such as an on-going research on aging in ASEAN Member States and a report on Social Protection in ASEAN. ASEAN has worked with the UN to developing a Regional Framework and Action Plan on Strengthening Social Protection, which was adopted by the Leaders in November 2015. The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has also provided technical support to the ASEAN Senior Officials’ Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD) in the

development of priorities of work concerning children under the Strategic Framework on Social Welfare and Development for 2011-2015.

31. ASEAN and the UN have fostered cooperation in addressing public health development concerns, including HIV/AIDS and other emerging communicable diseases. The MoU on the Collaborative Framework between ASEAN and the World Health Organisation (WHO) was signed on 18 September 2014, setting the collaborative framework between the two Organisations for the period of 2014-2017. UNAIDS and the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS (ATFOA) are working together in developing the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Work Program 2016-2020 focusing on strategies to fast track the AIDS response among ASEAN Member States.

32. Gender equality and the advancement of women has been promoted and mainstreamed across different sectors of ASEAN-UN cooperation. UN Women continues to cooperate with the ACW in the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Eliminating Violence against Women and obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). ASEAN has also worked closely with the UN in developing an ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Elimination of Violence against Women (RPA on EVAW), which was adopted by the Leaders in November 2015.

33. ASEAN and UNICEF are working together to implement the ASEAN-UNICEF Framework Agreement for Cooperation (FAC), which was signed on 3 December 2014. The FAC aims to pursue common goals of ensuring sustainable survival, growth, full development and participation of children in the region. The UN is also assisting in the development of an ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children (RPA on EVAC) and a Joint Regional Report on Nutrition Security in ASEAN.

34. In the field of labour, cooperation has been strengthened through the International Labour Organisation (ILO)-funded ASEAN TRIANGLE Project that aims to increase protection of the rights of migrant workers in the ASEAN region. The Project's fund has been utilised to support several regional activities of the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) and its subsidiary bodies.

#### Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management

35. On climate change, continued joint efforts have been made in addressing climate change and responding to its impacts on socio-economic development, health, environment and water resources. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is supporting the Southeast Asia Climate Change Network, which assists ASEAN Member States in fulfilling their commitment under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

36. The ASEAN-UN Post-2015 Environment and Climate Change Planning Meeting, held on 18 May 2015 Bangkok, Thailand, identified a number of areas for future cooperation in the post-2015 period, including Green Economy and support to ASEAN Action Plan on Joint Responses to Climate and Sustainable Cities. The Meeting also agreed for the UN and ASEAN Secretariats to draft an ASEAN-UN Work Plan on Environment and Climate Change that would be part of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership agreement framework.

37. ASEAN and the relevant UN agencies have strengthened cooperation and coordination on disaster risk management, including through the implementation of the ASEAN-UN Strategic Plan on Disaster Management (2011-2015). The UN has also extended capacity and technical support to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre), including providing trainers for the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) and in preparing for the ARF Disaster Response Exercise (ARF DiREx) held in Malaysia in May 2015.

### Culture and Education

38. ASEAN and the UN are working together to implement the FAC between ASEAN and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which was signed in December 2013. In terms of culture cooperation, both sides are focusing on activities such as awards of excellence, conventions, strategic initiatives, workshops, and promotional activities. The UN is also exploring with ASEAN Senior Officials on Culture and Arts (SOMCA) potential cooperation in other areas such as inter-cultural dialogue, promotion of community-based creative industries, and youth volunteer programmes.

39. On education, ASEAN has been initiating a strategic initiative in promoting education access and quality, particularly for those living in under-privileged and marginalised areas. This undertaking is being pursued through the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) platform, in close partnership with the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok. The Ten Collaborative Projects to reach the Unreached in Southeast Asia have contributed to the ASEAN Member States' attainment of the six Education for All (EFA) goals and MDGs-related goals. The UN has also provided inputs to the ASEAN five-year Work Plan on Education (2016-2020).

### Secretariat-to-Secretariat Cooperation

40. Cooperation between ASEAN and UN Secretariats continues to be underpinned through more regular engagements, especially the convening of the Secretariat-to-Secretariat (S2S) Meeting in Jakarta since 2016 aside from the annual S2S in New York. The inaugural S2S Meeting took place at the ASEAN Secretariat in March 2011, following the decision of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit in 2010. In total, nine S2S Meetings, including one sectoral S2S in 2012, have taken place. The last S2S Meeting was held on 18 April 2017 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta where both sides reviewed the implementation of the Plan of Action and agreed to step up the cooperation on areas of priorities towards the achievement of ASEAN Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This S2S mechanism monitors and regularly reports the progress implementation of the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership to the AUMM, and through it to the ASEAN-UN Summit.

41. The UN's cooperation with ASEAN has also been strengthened with the deployment to Jakarta of three UN Liaison Officers to ASEAN, focusing on political-security issues, humanitarian affairs, as well as drug control and crime prevention matters. Additionally, the UNESCAP has appointed its Regional Adviser on ASEAN in October 2015. In September 2016, the UN informed the Secretary-General of ASEAN of the additional responsibilities and designation of the UN Resident

Coordinator in Indonesia to represent the UN with ASEAN in Jakarta. These deployments have contributed to the more effective coordination and collaboration between the UN and the ASEAN Secretariat as well as with various ASEAN sectoral bodies.

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