As a key stakeholder, the participation and involvement of the private sector is crucial to the creation of a strong foundation for the successful implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Greater involvement and more structured participation of the private sector can contribute to the success of ASEAN in designing regional strategies and initiatives as well as in identifying impediments to deepen regional economic integration.

Despite its importance, private sector engagement in ASEAN has not yet reached its utmost potential. This is partly due to the lack of available information on how the private sector can map effective engagements with the ASEAN Sectoral Bodies. The Bulletin, through this inaugural edition, aims to plug this information gap. It will provide information on the rules of procedures for private sector engagement as well as the mechanism on how the private sector can engage with relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.
Key guidance for the engagement

Public-private sector engagement is crucial for the realisation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) since it allows the private sector to better understand the desired outcomes and workings of the AEC, and provide the necessary input to the regional process particularly in reducing current and future trade impediments faced by business enterprises. ASEAN has developed the Rules of Procedure for Private Sector Engagement under the ASEAN Economic Community (RoP) in order to ensure that the engagement between the public and private sector can be done in a transparent and effective manner.

The RoP provides comprehensive explanation on the criteria for engagement, levels of engagement, types of engagement, administrative procedures of the engagement, private sector engagement mechanism, and response mechanism to the issues/recommendations raised by the private sector.

Engagement avenues

It is important for the private sector to understand the various avenues that are available for their engagement with ASEAN. Under the purview of AEC, there are several avenues for public-private sector engagement. First is through the ministerial level meetings for the private sector to undertake high-level policy advocacy. Second, through the sectoral bodies to channel the specific inputs/recommendation to the sectoral working level bodies. And third, through the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Dialogue to discuss intensively the follow up of the private sector’s specific inputs/recommendations to the sectoral bodies with the staff of the ASEAN Secretariat.

The RoP provides the necessary guidance in engaging the ministerial and sectoral bodies’ meetings. As for the engagement through the AEC Dialogue, it will be done-biannually (approximately in April and October each year), in which the ASEAN Secretariat will invite the private sector entities to attend the Dialogue.

Comprehensive engagement mapping

Identifying the appropriate and relevant bodies to engage on specific issues, be it on high-level policy advocacy to the ministers or channelling specific inputs/recommendation to the sectoral working level bodies, is important. Hence, a proper understanding of the AEC institutional mechanism and the respective work areas will help. The detailed information under the selected areas of trade facilitation, standard and conformance, finance, services, investment, transportation, tourism, energy, mineral, food and agriculture, intellectual property, consumer protection, competition policy, ICT, and science and technology, are available by clicking on the link embedded in each area.

Pitching your advocacy to the appropriate level is also critical in order to expedite the engagement process and to make the engagement more effective and meaningful for both the public and private sector. A good policy advocacy will pique the interest of ministers and will provide the necessary mandate for the sectoral bodies to further address the matter at a more technical level. Recommendations to technical and working bodies should ideally be very specific in order to expedite their consideration by the ASEAN sectoral bodies.

Engagement mapping is important for the private sector to ensure that their advocacies and recommendations are channelled properly to the ASEAN policy-makers. Through the information provided in this bulletin, it is hoped that the engagement between the public and private sector can be more effective and productive.
Recent Updates

ASEAN Framework on Digital Data Governance officially endorsed

ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers (TELMIN) have endorsed the ASEAN Framework on Digital Data Governance at their 18th Meeting in Ubud, Bali on 5-6 December 2018. The framework aims to strengthen data ecosystem, harmonise legal and regulatory frameworks, and foster data innovation in ASEAN.

Work plan of the ASEAN MRA for tourism professional

ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professional (MRA-TP) Work Plan 2019-2023 was officially adopted by all ASEAN member states at the 49th Meeting of ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) held on 16 January in Ha Long City, Vietnam. The Work Plan envisions that tourism professionals in the region are certified to deliver quality tourism services, through the completion and continuation of existing initiatives and achievements, such as: improving existing tools and infrastructure, operationalising the Regional Secretariat for the Implementation of the MRA-TP, and developing regional infrastructure and capacity.

Green and blue finance to help bridge infrastructure investment gap in Southeast Asia

ASEAN Workshop on Innovative Financing Approaches for Sustainable Infrastructure, was held on 11 February in Bangkok, Thailand, in conjunction with the ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies’ Working Group Meeting. The workshop provided some recommendations for regional policy makers to further scale up innovative green and blue finance to address the rising financing gap for sustainable infrastructure in the region.

Informal dialogue on trade facilitation with Joint Business Councils

Together with the Joint Business Councils, the ASEAN Secretariat held an informal dialogue to discuss the follow-up actions on various recommendations from the private sector pertaining to trade facilitation. The Dialogue was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 21-22 February with the support from ARISE Plus.

ASEAN SME Policy Index (ASPI) 2018 dissemination roadshow

SME Corp. Malaysia and Office of SME Promotion of Thailand held two seminars on 12 and 18 February 2019 in Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok respectively. The seminars aimed to encourage sharing of the ASPI’s findings among relevant agencies and ensure that the report of ASPI 2018 gets its due attention of relevant stakeholders. Seminars were also recently held in Vientiane, 26 March; and Phnom Penh, 29 March. Upcoming seminars will be in; Bandar Seri Begawan, 1 April; and Manila, 3 April 2019. Seminars in Indonesia, Viet Nam Myanmar, and Singapore were held in the last quarter of 2018.

ASEAN Agreement on E-commerce

The text of the ASEAN Agreement on Electronic Commerce now available on the ASEAN website. The Agreement aims to facilitate cross-border e-commerce transactions in the ASEAN region, by creating an environment that will boost confidence in the use of e-commerce in ASEAN. It also aims to deepen cooperation among member states to further develop and intensify the use of e-commerce to drive inclusive growth and narrow the development gap in the region.