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ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC)

The Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967 that established ASEAN declared among others the following aims and purposes to this day remain relevant for ASEAN political and security cooperation, namely:

- To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asia; and
- To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Preserving regional peace and stability, adopting a comprehensive approach to security challenges and developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with external parties have been the underlying principles of ASEAN’s approach to political and security issues and developments.

Serving as the bedrock for peace and stability in Southeast Asia are ASEAN political instruments such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) which is a key code of conduct governing inter-state relations in the region; the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) which preserves our region free of nuclear weapons; and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the on-going discussions on a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) which promotes peaceful settlement of disputes and practical maritime cooperation in the South China Sea.

Seven years of implementation of the APSC Blueprint (2009-2015) has cemented the foundation of the APSC by deepening and expanding ASEAN political and security cooperation and strengthening ASEAN capacity in responding to regional and international challenges. Building upon these achievements, the APSC Blueprint 2025 aims to elevate ASEAN political-security cooperation to an even higher plane as an integral part of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

It is envisaged that the ASEAN Political-Security Community by 2025 shall be a united, inclusive and resilient community where the ASEAN peoples shall live in a safe, harmonious and secure environment, embrace the values of tolerance and moderation as well as uphold ASEAN fundamental principles, shared values and norms. It is further envisaged that ASEAN shall remain cohesive, responsive and relevant in addressing challenges to regional peace and security as well as play a central role in shaping the evolving regional architecture, while deepening our engagement with external parties and contributing collectively to global peace, security and stability.

The APSC has the following key characteristics:

(i) A rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred community bound by fundamental principles, shared values and norms, in which our peoples enjoy human rights, fundamental freedoms and social justice, embrace the values of tolerance and moderation, and share a strong sense of togetherness, common identity and destiny;

(ii) A resilient community in a peaceful, secure and stable region, with enhanced capacity to respond effectively and in a timely manner to challenges for the common good of ASEAN, in accordance with the principle of comprehensive security;

(iii) An outward-looking community that deepens cooperation with our external parties, upholds and strengthens ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture, and plays a responsible and constructive role globally based on an ASEAN common platform on international issues; and

(iv) A community with strengthened institutional capacity through improved ASEAN work processes and coordination, increased effectiveness and efficiency in the work of all ASEAN Organs, including a strengthened ASEAN Secretariat, as well as with increased ASEAN institutional presence at the national, regional and international levels.

To build a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred community, the APSC has consistently promoted cooperation in political development that adheres to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance as well as respect for, promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In the area of human rights, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was established in 2009, which spurred the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN. This was further enhanced with the promulgation of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD), adopted in November 2012 with the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD signed by our Leaders. These two documents embody the commitment of the Governments of the ASEAN Member States to safeguard the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of ASEAN. The AICHR has institutionalised its engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs) to encourage meaningful and constructive interaction. Recognising the cross-cutting nature of human rights, the AICHR as the overarching human rights institution in ASEAN continuously undertake cross-sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation and collaboration to ensure that human rights are mainstreamed in all pillars of ASEAN, including, among others, on rights of persons with disabilities, business and human rights, and trafficking in persons.

In building a peaceful, secure and stable region, ASEAN adopts a comprehensive approach to security which enhances our capacity to deal with existing and emerging challenges. It pursues peaceful settlement of disputes and renounces aggression and the threat or use of force or other actions in any manner inconsistent with international law. Relevant bodies in the APSC continues to work in addressing non-traditional security challenges including drug trafficking, terrorism, trafficking in persons, people smuggling, cybercrime, illicit trafficking of wildlife and timber, disaster relief and pandemics, among others.

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