

ASEAN-U.S. Leaders' Statement on Digital Development

WE, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States of America, met via videoconference, on 26 October 2021, under Brunei Darussalam's 2021 ASEAN Chairmanship, on the occasion of the 9th ASEAN-U.S. Summit;

RECOGNISING the important role that smart digital development can have in creating economies that are resilient to the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and other economic shocks, ensuring that economic gains can be accessed by all sectors of the population and potentially enabling a sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic growth, especially during and in the post-pandemic era;

REAFFIRMING commitment to support digital development in ASEAN so as to realise our vision of a peaceful, secure, open, interoperable, reliable and resilient ICT environment;

NOTING that our reliance on digital infrastructure during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of accelerating the development of digital infrastructure, digital competitiveness, and digital literacy of users, while reducing the digital gap among and within ASEAN Member States, including women, youth and rural communities;

UNDERLINING the importance of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan in guiding ASEAN towards inclusive digital transformation in preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) as outlined in the Consolidated Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution for ASEAN, as well as to boost economic growth and improve society;

RECALLING the adoption of the ASEAN-U.S. Leaders' Statement on Cybersecurity Cooperation at the 6th ASEAN-U.S. Summit on 15 November 2018 and the subsequent convening of the 1st ASEAN-U.S. Cyber Policy Dialogue held in Singapore on 3 October 2019 and the 2nd ASEAN-U.S. Cyber Policy Dialogue held virtually on 8 October 2021, as well as the U.S.' participation at the 1st ASEAN Digital Ministers + U.S. Meeting held virtually on 22 January 2021, as manifestation of our commitment towards the advancement of a shared digital future;

FURTHER RECALLING the adoption of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership (2021-2025) and the ASEAN-U.S. Joint Statement on Human Capital Development at the 8th ASEAN-U.S. Summit in November 2020, which underscored the importance of enhancing cooperation in digital literacy education, digital economy especially the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and improving cybersecurity capabilities;

FURTHER RECALLING the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 71/199, which affirms that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online;

Hereby decide to:

1. Support ASEAN's vision for a leading digital community and economic bloc, powered by secure and transformative digital services, technologies and ecosystem, and undergirded by a secure and resilient cyberspace that fosters trust and sustainable growth in the digital economy;
2. Support the continued implementation of ASEAN-U.S. cooperation in the area of cybersecurity, including through relevant ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Security of and in the Use of ICTs (ARF ISM on ICTs Security), the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security (ADMM-Plus EWG on CS), as well as other relevant platforms including the ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity and the ASEAN-U.S. Cyber Policy Dialogues;
3. Support the development of ASEAN's digital infrastructure to drive robust, inclusive economic growth and prosperity; and promote the development of a secure, resilient and innovative 5G ecosystem and networks, as well as exchange views and experiences on cyber threats and on regulatory framework and technical standards that protect personal data in light of emerging technologies and their vulnerabilities;
4. Enhance digital infrastructure development to facilitate cooperation in disaster response in areas such as search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster management in support of existing regional mechanisms and platforms;
5. Support implementation of the ASEAN-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA) and Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) Work Plan, including the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Inclusive Growth in ASEAN through Innovation, Trade and E-Commerce (IGNITE) programme, and deeper cooperation through the ASEAN Digital Integration Index, the U.S.-ASEAN Connect Digital Economy Series and the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership (DCCP), and other initiatives on digital literacy, digital development and integration;
6. Collaborate to broaden and deepen cooperation on mutually identified areas of cooperation under the 2021 ASEAN-U.S. ICT Work Plan and to promote an open, interoperable, reliable and secure ICT environment that fosters efficiency, innovation, communication and economic prosperity, as well as promote growth

in the digital economy, including through enhancing the ease of doing business and promoting a business-conducive ecosystem;

7. Explore ways to accelerate economic recovery from COVID-19 by strengthening cooperation on digital trade;
8. Explore cooperation in mutually identified areas such as smart manufacturing, blockchain applications, trade facilitation, promotion of digitalisation and E-commerce of MSMEs, emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 5G, digital connectivity, cross-border data flows, data governance cybersecurity, digital financial services and regional payment connectivity, and digital health, in line with relevant ASEAN agreements and frameworks such as the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), the ASEAN Digital Integration Framework Action Plan (DIFAP) 2019-2025, the ASEAN Agreement on E-commerce and the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025 (ADM2025), as well as increase technical assistance, including new and emerging technologies for ASEAN Member States;
9. Support the development of interoperable digital solutions to facilitate safe and seamless travel in the region, and the consideration of digital health certificate solutions for COVID-19 tests and vaccinations;
10. Strengthen cooperation on low carbon energy transformation, in particular digitalisation in the energy sector in line with the ASEAN-U.S. Energy Cooperation Work Plan 2021-2025. Explore collaboration on digital solutions, smart grids and systems integration of renewables in the region;
11. Explore possible platforms for collaboration on digital development, including through the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, U.S.-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership programmes, cybersecurity capacity-building initiatives delivered through the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE) and the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC), USAID assistance on digital literacy and digital entrepreneurship on other areas, and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) program to educate youth and support entrepreneurship, as well as cooperation with other regional partners;
12. Explore further cooperation in bridging the digital divide and ICT development gaps within ASEAN, including for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), through developing digital competencies, to include cybersecurity best practices, market-driven approaches and exchange of views on regulatory best practices, while promoting the importance of performance, security and resilience in next generation ICT networks;

13. Exchange views and best practices on the responsible design, development, and deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and promote partnerships for AI research and development (R&D) while supporting capacity building activities on the responsible use of AI;
14. Support the improvement of digital inclusion in the region, including for women, young entrepreneurs, and vulnerable or marginalised groups as part of increasing their participation in the economy through promoting digital and financial inclusion in MSMEs, capacity-building activities, facilitating access to finance and alternative financing, mentorship, technical assistance, technologies and sharing of best practices;
15. Enhance collaboration with stakeholders, including the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC), the ASEAN-U.S. Digital Policy Consultative Forum, and the ASEAN Telecommunications Regulators' Council's (ATRC) Stakeholders' Consultative Dialogue in developing the region's digital ecosystem that is conducive to the growth of digitally-enabled innovation and trade, as well as investment in the digital sector, development of ICT infrastructure, and support for digitalisation of MSMEs;
16. Strengthen human capital development in ASEAN, including promoting digital skills and literacy, as well as 21st century skills in basic education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through the ASEAN TVET Council (ATC), and higher education, and human resource development towards 4IR and developing standards and the quality of the workforce to meet the demands of the global labour market, reskilling and upskilling for employment, including digital skills for the benefit of the people in the region;
17. Encourage partnerships between universities and TVET institutions in ASEAN Member States and the U.S. on curriculum exchanges and vocational training in the areas of business administration, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and other related fields;
18. Support the next generation of ASEAN leaders in the technology and digital sectors by providing scholarships through the Billion Futures Program and through YSEALI programs that promote human capital development, including the YSEALI Academy at Fulbright University Viet Nam; and
19. Cooperate with the private sector as well as relevant stakeholders in the implementation of this Joint Statement.
