

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



# ASEAN MATTERS: EPICENTRUM OF GROWTH



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one vision  
one identity  
one community

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967.  
The Member States are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.  
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**ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All**

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

# ASEAN MATTERS: EPICENTRUM OF GROWTH

**The ASEAN Secretariat  
Jakarta**

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**W**elcome to the ASEAN Annual Report for the year 2023 which provides a comprehensive overview of the remarkable efforts and achievements of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in strengthening resilience and ensuring an enduring recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past year, ASEAN has continued to deepen its commitment to regional integration, and the promotion of peace, prosperity, and stability for the ASEAN Member States. In the face of global uncertainties and continually emerging challenges, we have remained resolute in our pursuit of a cohesive and resilient ASEAN, and underpinned by a firm sense of ASEAN Community that reflects our shared vision and collective efforts.

Significant developments have unfolded in the past year, highlighting that “ASEAN Matters” for the ASEAN Member States, ASEAN’s peoples, and the wider international community. For the ASEAN Political-Security Community, work toward the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) served as a guiding principle for ASEAN’s engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, emphasising inclusivity, cooperation, and dialogue among stakeholders. Through the pursuit of the AOIP, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to maintaining peace, stability, and prosperity while promoting mutual respect and understanding, and strengthening the strategic trust in the region and beyond.

Moreover, various preparations continue toward welcoming Timor-Leste as ASEAN’s newest member, which will further strengthen ASEAN unity and solidarity. Timor-Leste’s upcoming accession recognises the country’s potential to

contribute to the region, as well as ASEAN’s commitment to foster cooperation and partnership among the nations of Southeast Asia.

Despite facing multifaceted global challenges and recessionary forces following the COVID-19 pandemic, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) pillar has remained steadfast and resolute in its pursuit of building a cohesive, integrated, competitive and inclusive regional economy that is ready to face the uncertainties of global challenges. During the period in review, ASEAN has made significant headway in various AEC initiatives. Leveraging the region’s growth momentum, the AEC pillar aims to create a more resilient regional economy as it embarks on its Post-2025 journey. Moving forward, AEC pillar’s initiatives are directed at creating an agile, responsive, forward-looking and sustainable regional economy. Efforts are focused on creating an enabling environment for ASEAN businesses, driving the ASEAN sustainability agenda, and accelerating its digital transformation. These strategic actions aim to ensure that ASEAN is well prepared to navigate future challenges and seize new opportunities.

ASEAN Connectivity has seen notable progress in the implementation of 15 initiatives across sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence, and people mobility. The work to support sustainable infrastructure and smart cities have advanced.

People-to-people connectivity initiatives, such as the ASEAN-ROK Technical and Vocational Education and Training Mobility

Programme, are underway. The importance of digital connectivity and innovation has been emphasised, including supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and promoting digital financial services. Stakeholder engagement and planning for the ASEAN Connectivity Post-2025 Agenda have also been prioritised.

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) has achieved significant milestones in various areas. ASEAN focused on strengthening health systems, implementing initiatives on health security and universal coverage, and establishing the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases. Progress was made in achieving global nutrition targets. ASEAN also worked on education and skills development, launching guidelines for reopening schools safely, promoting digital transformation in education, and enhancing higher education. Work was done to protect children and migrant workers, promote youth and women’s inclusion, improve governance, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance resilience to disasters and climate change action.

This report not only celebrates ASEAN’s achievements and progress. It also reflects our commitment to foster a resilient and inclusive Community—and reminds us of the work that lies ahead as we continue our journey toward a more peaceful, prosperous and resilient Southeast Asia. ■

**DR. KAO KIM HOURN**  
Secretary-General of ASEAN

# ASEAN POLITICAL-SECURITY COMMUNITY



Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship for 2023 focuses on how ASEAN must prepare for future regional and global challenges, as well as how ASEAN can maintain regional strength as a global driver of economic growth. These priorities build on the pillars of "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth" and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). While former priority has been pursued by

Foreign Ministers of ASEAN gathered at ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta on Oct. 27, 2022 for the Special AMM.



ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), activities under the pillar of ASEAN Matters affect and underpin ASEAN as an epicentrum of growth. In this context, the contributions of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) are elucidated below.

### AN AGILE AND ADAPTIVE ASEAN

Ensuring that “ASEAN Matters” requires that ASEAN remain relevant in a fluid global and regional strategic environment. This obliges ASEAN to continue to develop and enhance its capacity and institutional effectiveness.

Following adoption by the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summits of the Recommendations on Strengthening ASEAN’s Capacity and

Institutional Effectiveness, the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit issued the ASEAN Leaders Statement on the Strengthening of ASEAN’s Capacity and Institutional Effectiveness. As indicated in the Chairman’s Statement from the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit, “ASEAN [needs] to strengthen its capacity and institutional effectiveness to ensure its robustness and agility in facing present and future challenges and to match ASEAN’s commitment to advance regional integration and deepen its Community-building process.”

In this context, the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) Working Group on Decision-Making Process (SOMWG-DMP) was established. Following adoption of its Terms of Reference (TOR) in March 2023, the SOMWG-DMP met three times in Jakarta on March, April

and June. Meanwhile, discussions pertaining to the recommendations on strengthening the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and the East Asia Summit Ambassadors’ Meeting in Jakarta (EAMJ) mechanisms; enhancing the role of the ASEAN Secretary-General and mobilising resources for ASEAN Community-building and the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC); and modalities for hosting meetings at ASEC are also being pursued.

### SECURITY CHALLENGES IMPACT ASEAN’S PEOPLES

Amid myriad challenges, ASEAN has focused on an increasing number of cases involving the irregular movement of persons, including people smuggling and trafficking in persons.

This prompted ASEAN Leaders to adopt the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on Combatting Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Caused by the Abuse of Technology. The declaration emphasised a need to synergise ASEAN commitments, mechanisms, and modalities, and to promote cross-pillar activities to address, prevent, and combat TIP.

In the context of dealing with this challenge, a National ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

**President Joko Widodo of Indonesia is flanked by some cabinet members and dignitaries at the launch of Indonesian chairmanship of ASEAN in February 2023.**





Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia joins ASEAN Foreign Ministers and SG of ASEAN at the opening of AMM last year.

(ACTIP) Representatives was established through the adoption of its TOR as well as the development of the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan against TIP 2023-2028.

Coordination among sectoral bodies (SB) in addressing TIP has materialised in the establishment of the National ACTIP Representatives and the development of a new Work Plan to succeed the Bohol TIP Work Plan, which ended in 2020.

National Representatives have been assigned to collect national data on ACTIP implementation progress, including data on policy enhancement, enforcement, protection services, and public awareness efforts, and to report progress to the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). National Representatives are expected to coordinate with relevant national inter-agency mechanisms to counter TIP.

Meanwhile, to keep the momentum of cross-sectoral cooperation in addressing TIP, work is

underway within 10 SBs to finalise the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan against TIP 2023-2028, involving nine SBs that helped implement the Bohol TIP Work Plan and an additional SB that will take part in the new Work Plan.

On people smuggling, a new mechanism was established: Heads of Specialist Unit (HSU) on People Smuggling, of which the TOR was adopted in July 2022. This implemented a task assigned by the Emergency ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime Concerning Irregular Movement of Persons in Southeast Asia (EAMMTC) in 2015. Under the ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of Ministries of Foreign Affairs Meeting (DGICM), the HSU aims to strengthen cooperation in identifying, investigating, and preventing people smugglers, organisers, and facilitators. The HSU aims to foster exchanges of relevant information and statistical data, as well as to provide protection and assistance to smuggled migrants.

A new entity—the Working Group on General Transnational Crime Matters under the SOMTC—held its inaugural meeting in March 2023 in Jakarta. The group will focus on emerging transnational crime issues.

The Bali Work Plan Multi-Sectoral Task Force and ASEAN Partners Meetings resumed work after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its 2<sup>nd</sup> meetings brought together 10 of 19 SBs, organs, and entities tasked with implementing the Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (Bali Work Plan) 2019-2025 along with Dialogue Partners and other external parties. Members of the Task Force Meeting reviewed implementation of the Work Plan and identified challenges and recommendations for the remaining implementation period.

Keeping ASEAN drug free remains a priority, with ASEAN remaining steadfast in its zero-tolerance of illicit drugs. This will again be manifested in the Joint ASEAN Statement to be delivered at the 67<sup>th</sup> United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in 2024, on the occasion of the mid-term review of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration titled “Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional, and

International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem”.

The ASEAN Narcotics Cooperation Centre (ASEAN NARCO) continues to publish the annual *ASEAN Drug Monitoring Report (ADM)*. The *ADM Report 2021* was officially launched during the 43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) in November 2022. Development of the *ADM Report 2022* is ongoing.

## KEEPING THE REGION PEACEFUL AND STABLE

Under the rubric of ASEAN Matters is keeping the region’s maritime domain peaceful and stable. In this context, AMS and China have worked closely to implement the Declaration on the

President Joko Widodo, some ministers, ambassadors, and SG of ASEAN strike a formal pose at the launch of Indonesian chairmanship of ASEAN.





29<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety, including through practical maritime cooperation activities and the early conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is effective, substantive, and consistent with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS). Textual negotiations of the Single Draft Negotiating Text (SDNT) were resumed in July 2021, after being stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic. The second reading of the SDNT has been completed. AMS and China continue to expedite COC negotiations and aim to complete a second reading of the Single Draft Negotiating Text (SDNT) by the end of 2023.

Related to strengthening maritime cooperation is the annual ASEAN Maritime Forum as well as the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF/EAMF).

AMF was established as a forum involving Track 1 and relevant Track 1.5, Track 2, and business sector representatives, where appropriate, to foster maritime cooperation through consultations and dialogue on issues of common concern, in line with UNCLOS and other relevant international agreements. It was designed to undertake a comprehensive approach to maritime-related challenges and threats pertinent to all three ASEAN Community pillars. The EAMF was established in 2012 involving ASEAN’s external partners. AMS recently revised the concept paper for the AMF/EAMF to include discussions of challenges, dynamics, opportunities, and trends to enhance maritime cooperation. To ensure continuity, the AMF/EAMF Chairs will rotate following ASEAN’s Chair.

Meanwhile, ASEAN is preparing an ASEAN Maritime Outlook to assist ASEAN Leaders and Ministers in developing an integrated and comprehensive approach for maritime issues. Intended as a reference on maritime regional

trends and challenges, the Outlook will help ASEAN avoid duplication of work among relevant mechanisms, and synergise existing programs and work plans across relevant SBs.

Contributors to regional peace and stability include ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year in 2023. The ARF continues to foster constructive dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues, and strengthen confidence building and preventive diplomacy in the region. The ARF is currently implementing the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025), including Work Plans on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Disaster Relief, Maritime Security, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Preventive Diplomacy, and Security of and in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT Security).

### CONTRIBUTING TO STABILITY IN ASEAN

On promoting peace and stability within ASEAN and AMS, the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar conducted working visits to Myanmar in March and June 2022, supported by the Secretary-General of ASEAN (SG). The visits helped maintain communication channels and engagement with stakeholders to find peaceful solutions, including how to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need in Myanmar.

Progress has been made on providing humanitarian assistance in Myanmar, following the Leaders’ Review and Decision on the

A colourful welcome at one of the venues for ASEAN meeting in Cambodia last year





Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus in 2022. Work was coordinated by the ASEAN Secretary-General in his role of ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator (SG-AHAC). Ground operations were conducted by the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre). AMS, ASEAN's external partners, and other organisations provided financial and technical support.

ASEAN continues its collective efforts in facilitating the repatriation process in Rakhine State. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and recent developments, progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) Report of 2019, particularly by planning and implementing projects aimed at creating

a conducive environment for safe and voluntary repatriations, coordinated through the Ad Hoc Support Team of the ASEAN Secretariat (AHAST).

**PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS, HUMAN SECURITY, AND OTHER SECURITY ISSUES**

Complementing the thrust to make ASEAN matter to its Peoples is ASEAN's commitment to human rights. ASEAN continues to uphold human rights to economic growth, social progress, and sustainable development in the region. The advocacy work of the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) included promoting the protection of vulnerable groups, access to universal healthcare, labour migration management,

measures that enabled freedom of religion and counter hate speech, and human rights education for youths on sustainable peace and conflict prevention.

ASEAN is committed to climate justice and the right to a safe, clean, and sustainable environment for its peoples. Development of an ASEAN regional framework on environmental rights is an important step toward upscaling regional instruments and tools for environmental governance and the protection of gender and rights imperatives. To raise awareness, an exhibit, titled "Land of the Sea", featuring photographs depicting the impact of climate change on the livelihoods of vulnerable communities in coastal areas, was held at the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) in December 2022. Advocacy efforts were made to advise

companies of their responsibilities to respect to human rights in the conduct of business, including by sharing good practices on National Plans of Action and Business and Human Rights, as well as regional dialogues on policy implications arising from mandatory systems and corporate sustainability.

Other initiatives worked to ensure that ASEAN human rights mechanisms were more accessible, effective, and fit for purpose in responding to rights holders and victims. AICHR worked to create adequate regional platforms for cross-border referrals, accountability, and access to justice, and served as a platform

2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Global Dialogue held on November 13, 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia





Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia chairs the AMM Retreat in ASEAN Secretariat

for sharing experiences and practices by the National Task Forces on Anti-Trafficking in Persons that convened in October 2022. AICHR engaged with the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF) to address human rights protection challenges for a better recovery as well as solicited good governance and practices in the context of crisis and public health emergencies.

Meanwhile, ASEAN continues to contribute to emerging security issues, particularly the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. A Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in ASEAN was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders during the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summits in November 2022, to promote a whole-of-ASEAN approach in strengthening the operational readiness and capacity for implementation of the WPS agenda.

Recognising the essential role of the youth in preventing violence and sustaining peace, ASEAN continues to identify programmes

to advance Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) through regional consultations. A baseline study will be conducted in 2023 by the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR).

### ASEAN AS A LOCUS OF ENGAGEMENT

ASEAN continues to strengthen and deepen engagements with its Dialogue, Sectoral, and Development Partners while exploring mutually beneficial partnerships with external partners.

ASEAN's relations with India and the US were given the nomenclature of Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships during the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit and the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-US Summit, in November 2022. Additionally, 2022 also marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-India relations and 45<sup>th</sup> year of ASEAN's relations with Canada, the EU, and the US. Summits with these partners were held to commemorate these milestones. In 2023, ASEAN commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its relations with Japan, with a commemorative summit to be held in December in Tokyo.

The number of ASEAN's formal partners also continues to increase, with the designation of Brazil and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as Sectoral Dialogue Partners of ASEAN in August 2022 on the sidelines of the 55<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM).

Cooperation in the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) frameworks continue to be strengthened, including through the implementation of the APT work plan 2023-2027, and the ongoing development of an EAS plan of action 2024-2028.

As of March 2023, 95 non-ASEAN ambassadors have been accredited to ASEAN, while 55 ASEAN Committees in Third Countries and International Organisations (ACTCs) continue to promote and raise ASEAN's interests and profiles in their respective host countries and organisations.

An increasing number of countries continue to request status as High Contracting Parties (HCP) to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). From a current 50, four nations are expected to be added to the list of HCP, with the formal accession of Mexico, Panama, Saudi Arabia, and Spain in 2023.

Sectoral engagements with ASEAN's external partners continue to expand. In the defence sector, Canada, France and the UK will be observers of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWG) for a one-year period in 2023. Allowing EWG observers will engage ASEAN's partners that are not currently ADMM-Plus participants and strengthen the ADMM-Plus as an open and inclusive platform that is ASEAN-centred while providing meaningful ways for the ADMM-Plus and non-Plus countries to collaborate.

The law enforcement sector has deepened engagement with ASEAN's Dialogue Partners. Cooperation on border management expanded with the establishment of the ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of Ministries of Foreign Affairs Meeting (DGICM) Plus Three Consultation. Participants in the inaugural consultation in Singapore in August 2022 agreed to develop a DGIM+3 Work Programme.

The ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Dialogue held its inaugural meeting in 2022.

The Leaders of ASEAN join hands at the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo



It is a platform to guide implementation of the 2018 Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and Australia on Cooperation to Counter International Terrorism. In 2022, the annual ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Drug Matters (ASOD) Consultations with Dialogue Partners resumed after a hiatus for the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to existing consultations, AMS agreed to establish the ASOD Plus Australia Consultation, which will tentatively commence in 2023.

### IMPLEMENTING THE ASEAN OUTLOOK ON THE INDO-PACIFIC (AOIP)

ASEAN Leaders, during the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit in May 2023 reaffirmed their commitment to implement the mainstreaming of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). This follows adoption of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Mainstreaming Four Priority Areas of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) within ASEAN-Led Mechanisms during the 40<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in November 2022. The areas of cooperation include maritime cooperation, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, and economic and other areas of possible cooperation.

Subsequently, ASEAN welcomed the support of external partners, including Dialogue Partners, Sectoral Dialogue Partners and Development Partners, as well as international and regional organisations that have established partnerships with ASEAN. These organisations include the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the European Union (EU), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Pacific Alliance (PA), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the South Asian Association

for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), and the United Nations (UN).

Noting the benefits to deeper engagement with the wider Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions while maintaining ASEAN Centrality, Indonesia, in its ASEAN Chair's Statement, is looking to establishing secretariat-to-secretariat cooperation between ASEAN and the Pacific Island Forum (PIF), and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Indonesia invited the Chairs of PIF and IORA as Guests of the Chairs at the 18<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit.

ASEAN likewise shared a list of criteria for mainstreaming the AOIP that was endorsed by the CPR in late 2022. These criteria are meant to ensure that AOIP activities contribute to ASEAN Community building while ensuring that partnerships are mutually beneficial.

The defence sector is currently developing a Concept Paper on the Implementation of the AOIP from a Defence Perspective. This will allow the ADMM to expand outreach beyond the ADMM-Plus framework and its current engagement platforms, such as the observer programme. Proposed activities include dialogues, education, exercises, research, and training.

### MOVING TO THE FUTURE

ASEAN Leaders issued the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on the Development of the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision and encouraged the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision (HLTF-ACV) to continue drafting the ASEAN Community Post-2025 Vision, building upon core elements that have been adopted. They recognised that

the new Vision should have political, economic, and socio-cultural relevance to build a united, resilient and inclusive ASEAN Community.

Since its establishment in 2022, the HLTF-ACV has made progress in crafting the ASEAN Post-2025 Vision, including engaging stakeholders to ensure that the visioning exercise is inclusive, holistic, participatory, and reflecting greater engagement and consultations with relevant stakeholders. The HLTF-ACV interfaced with ASEAN Leaders during the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit and briefed Leaders on the progress of work thus far, as well as elicited guidance on crafting the ASEAN Post-2025 Vision.

Following the ASEAN Leaders' decision in 2022 to accept in principle Timor-Leste as the 11<sup>th</sup> Member of ASEAN, the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit in May 2023 adopted the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN, encouraging Timor-Leste to intensify its efforts to prepare for full ASEAN membership. Since the start of 2023, Timor-Leste has participated in ASEAN

Meetings as an observer at the ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM), the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC), and the ASEAN Political-Security Community Council (APSC Council).

Meanwhile, ASEC continues to facilitate Timor-Leste's full membership in ASEAN. ASEC is contributing to finalising a revised TOR for the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group (ACCWG) and is drafting Guidelines for the Implementation of the Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste in ASEAN. Another program on deck for 2023 is the ASEAN Travelling Resource Persons Programme (ATRPP), a six-month programme for ASEC staff to visit Dili to orient and train Timor-Leste's desk officers in preparation for Timor-Leste's ASEAN Membership. ■

**The Heads of State/Government of ASEAN in a family photo at the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summits in Cambodia**



# ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

Interface between  
ASEAN Economic  
Community Council  
and relevant ministers

Three years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN remains steadfast in its commitment to recovery, building upon the successful implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF). Despite multifaceted global challenges, ASEAN sustained its growth momentum in 2022. The region achieved an impressive economic growth rate of 5.7% during the year thanks to resilient domestic consumption and thriving trade activities. This accomplishment highlights the strength of the region's robust fundamentals.



ASEAN also experienced substantial expansion in key manufacturing sectors in 2022. The remarkable 14.9% growth in merchandise trade, valued at US\$3.8 trillion serves as evidence of this progress. Additionally, the intra-ASEAN trade ratio increased to 22.3%, up from 21.3% in 2021, reflecting the growing regional integration within ASEAN. The successful rollout of vaccination campaigns played a crucial role in reopening the region and facilitating the recovery of its services sector. Furthermore, foreign direct investment inflows rose by 5.5%, amounting to US\$224.2 billion in 2022. The intra-ASEAN FDI inflows ratio also exhibited positive growth, reaching 12.3% in 2022 compared to 12.1% in 2021.

Building upon these solid foundations, ASEAN is projected to sustain its growth trajectory, with a projected growth rate of 4.7% in 2023 and 5% in the subsequent year. This positive outlook demonstrates ASEAN's resilience in navigating uncertainties and seizing opportunities. Despite lingering risks such as financial instability, geopolitical tensions, high inflation, and inward-looking policies that may

pose threats to long-term objectives, ASEAN's resilience, demography and positive growth trajectory inspire optimism. Looking ahead, as the region faces emerging multidimensional challenges beyond the pandemic, the invaluable lessons learned and experiences gained from implementing the ACRF's initiatives will serve as a foundation for fortifying the region's long-term resilience through collaborative cross-pillar efforts.

Notably, under Cambodia's Chairmanship the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) made significant strides in its regional integration agenda as evidenced by the successful implementation of several key initiatives outlined in the Blueprint. This progress sets the stage for Indonesia's Chairmanship this year with a focus on solidifying ASEAN's position as epicentrum of growth.

### PROMOTING A COMPETITIVE AND INTEGRATED REGIONAL ECONOMY

Several initiatives have been implemented to ensure that ASEAN remained on track and steadfast to become a highly integrated

and cohesive, and dynamic and competitive economy.

**Facilitating Seamless Movement of Goods Across Borders.** To ensure a forward-looking, modern, and responsive goods agreement to regional and global developments, ASEAN launched the negotiations for the upgrade of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) in March 2022. Aiming to be comprehensive in scope, the upgrade negotiations go beyond the traditional trade-in-goods elements and cover emerging issues, such as circular/green economy, digitalisation, and sustainability. Since its launch, ASEAN has held four rounds of intensive negotiations desiring to conclude this in the near future.

At the core of regional economic integration agenda is trade facilitation as ASEAN aims to achieve seamless movement of merchandise goods across borders. A major step to this has been the signing of the ASEAN Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (AAMRA). Through this Arrangement, ASEAN aims to

enhance international trade security, facilitate movement of goods and help reduce regulatory burdens as ASEAN Customs Administrations and businesses build and establish trusted partnerships through the AAMRA.

In addition, also aiming to reduce the technical barriers to trade, ASEAN continues to harmonise standards, conformity assessment procedures, and regulations. To this end, several new trade facilitation initiatives were endorsed in 2022-2023, including the ASEAN Guidelines for Harmonisation of Standards, the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Regulatory Policy, the ASEAN Pharmaceutical Regulatory Framework, the Information Booklet on the ASEAN Harmonised Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulatory Regime, the Guidelines for Implementation of Harmonised Accreditation in ASEAN, the Landscape Study on E-Invoicing Standards in AMS, and the ASEAN Guidelines in Increasing Public Awareness in Legal Metrology.

**Facilitating Flow of Trade in Services.** To address unnecessary regulations and administrative burdens in trade in services and



*In standards and conformance, ASEAN continues to harmonise standards, regulations and conformity assessment procedures to further reduce technical barriers to trade.*



reduce cost of doing business in ASEAN's services sector, ASEAN is currently negotiating an ASEAN Services Facilitation Framework (ASFF), which is targeted to be concluded in 2023. The ASFF aims to help improve the policy and regulatory environment to facilitate free flow of trade in services within the region. In parallel, ASEAN is also working towards the smooth transition from the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) with the entry into force of the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA). Discussions on the technical and legal transitioning of AMS market access services commitments under AFAS to the negative list schedule under ATISA are progressing. On mobility of people, ASEAN updated AMS commitments under the Movement of Natural Persons (MNP) Agreement, which will adopt a common format that is easier for stakeholders to understand and use.

Aerial view of Cat Lai container harbor, center Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam with development buildings, transportation, energy power infrastructure



#### Enabling Investment Environment.

Continuing to improve the investment environment in the region, Member States completed the ratification of the Fourth Protocol to Amend the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA) leading to its entry into force on 10 January 2023. The Protocol introduced additional discipline on Prohibition of Performance Requirements (PPR) to enhance transparency and ensure predictability for investors in the region.

ASEAN is also now focused on transitioning the ACIA reservation list (i.e., list on non-conforming measures) to a modern and more transparent two-annex negative list, which would represent a significant milestone for ASEAN's investment integration. ASEAN also recognised the importance of aligning investment integration with sustainable development. Following the Forum on Sustainable Investment in ASEAN, held in November 2021, as well as publication of an analytical report on sustainable investment in ASEAN in January 2023 with support from the



Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, ASEAN is developing the ASEAN Sustainable Investment Guidelines.

#### Enhancing Financial Integration and Financial Inclusion.

The region has positioned itself as a global leader in payments connectivity. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation on Regional Payments Connectivity by the ASEAN-5 members (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) will foster and enhance bilateral and multilateral payment connectivity and enable fast, seamless, and more affordable cross-border payments across the region. Significant progress has been made on the ASEAN Multilateral Payment Linkage Framework to facilitate AMS payment connectivity via instant payment systems by collaborating with Project Nexus of the Bank for International Settlements Innovation Hub (BISIH). Further, recognising the benefits of local currency use to strengthen financial resilience and boost regional integration, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the Declaration on Advancing

Regional Payment Connectivity and Promoting Local Currency Transactions, which offers policy direction to encourage local currency use, and links this to other regional payment connectivity initiatives.

#### Creating a Competitive Regional Economy.

ASEAN implemented several initiatives to protect ASEAN businesses and consumers, promote consumer rights, and address the challenges of the digital economy. To safeguard ASEAN businesses and consumers against cross-border competition distortions, ASEAN developed the ASEAN Guidelines for Sharing Merger Cases to serve as a reference for developing the ASEAN Information Portal on Merger Cases, a platform and electronic messaging application to help inform ASEAN Competition Authorities on features of merger cases for swift collaborative effort.

Recognising the importance of consumer protection in the digital economy, ASEAN has developed the ASEAN Guidelines on Consumer Protection in E-Commerce, and

plans to provide a comprehensive framework to develop and refine regulatory responses and institutional mechanisms for consumer protection in e-commerce.

To develop a robust intellectual property (IP) system, improve IP services for stakeholders, and develop regional IP platforms for users, ASEAN has undertaken several projects to help stimulate growth, intra-regional development, and regional economic integration. In line with ASEAN's goals of building regional platforms to support a stronger and more competitive regional economy, ASEAN conducted the Feasibility Study on an ASEAN Patent System. The Study provided Member States with the context to understand and chart ASEAN's course toward a unified regional patent system. Another study undertaken was the Study on Harmonising Formality Requirements for Industrial Designs, which has similar goals, aims to implement medium-to-long-term recommendations to merge filing requirements and processes for industrial designs in ASEAN.

### ENHANCING SECTORAL COOPERATION FOR GREATER CONNECTIVITY

**ICT Cooperation.** Significant progress was made across various economic sectors, resulting in enhanced connectivity and sectoral cooperation. Digital transformations have brought about fundamental changes in how the economy functions and how societies interact. Despite the ongoing recessionary impact from the pandemic, digital solutions have emerged as alternative ways to provide services to customers and enable businesses to capitalise on new market opportunities.

ASEAN has made notable progress in implementing the Bandar Seri Begawan Roadmap: An ASEAN Digital Transformation Agenda to Accelerate ASEAN's Economic Recovery and Digital Economy Integration (BSBR), especially in paperless trade, digital payments, consumer protection, and e-commerce. As one of the major goals of the BSBR is to build the foundation for an ASEAN Digital Economy through the preparation for the launch of the negotiation for ASEAN Digital Framework Agreement (DEFA), ASEAN has agreed to accelerate the completion of its study on DEFA by 2023, with substantive modules to be concluded by 2025. The DEFA, when completed, will be a crucial step for ASEAN to realise its goal of becoming the leading digital community and economic bloc, powered by secure and transformative digital services, ecosystems, and technologies, as identified in the ASEAN Digital Master Plan 2025.

**Transport Cooperation.** ASEAN transport cooperation continued to make headway in 2022. The ASEAN-European Union (EU) Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement



(AE CATA), the world's first bloc-to-bloc Air Transport Agreement, was signed on 17 October 2022, in Bali, Indonesia. The AE CATA strengthens air connectivity between ASEAN and Europe; fosters greater business, trade, tourism, and people-to-people links between the regions, and establishes a foundation for better aviation cooperation. To support the International Civil Aviation Organization's goal of net-zero carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) aviation emissions by 2050, ASEAN is developing the ASEAN Sustainable Aviation Action Plan focusing on Sustainable Aviation Fuels. The rise in technology-driven mobility has led ASEAN to enhance Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) by adopting the Guiding Principles for the Regulation of Application-Based Mobility Services for Passenger Transport in ASEAN. These Principles offer guidance for AMS to develop regulatory frameworks, as well as to enhance inter-agency coordination and compliance monitoring. ASEAN also adopted the Implementation Framework to Enhance Container Circulation on 17 October 2022, which aims to strengthen the long-term capabilities and resilience of regional container

shipping and multimodal transport, and support the growth of maritime trade as ASEAN economies recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

**Energy Cooperation.** ASEAN advanced sustainable energy development through significant measures in 2022. The 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Energy Outlook and 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Renewable Energy Outlook were released during the 40<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting in September 2022. The first report explored future scenarios for energy demand taking into consideration all fuels and technologies, assessed energy access and socioeconomic impacts, and provided critical energy policy proposals and strategic measures to address barriers to sustainably meet the region's growing energy requirements. The second report, prepared for ASEAN by the International Renewable Energy Agency, focused on end-use sector electrification; the expansion of renewable generation; energy efficiency solutions; emergent technologies such as electric vehicles, hydrogen, and battery storage-systems; and the significance of expanding regional power sector integration, all of which will help frame the development of an ASEAN Long-Term Renewable Energy Roadmap. The energy sector conducted the ASEAN High-Level Policy Dialogue on Coal and Clean Coal Technologies, which recommended enhancing the stability of coal trade through deployment of Clean Coal Technologies (CCT) and Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) to assure energy security, economic growth, and a just energy transition for ASEAN.

On energy efficiency and conservation, ASEAN organised numerous capacity building initiatives in the transportation and industrial sectors. A Deep-Dive Workshop on Energy Efficiency and Conservation in the Power Sector was held

to highlight ASEAN’s commitment to improving regional energy efficiency. In 2022, ASEAN recorded an energy intensity reduction of 23.8% from 2005 levels.

**Minerals Cooperation.** Following the adoption in October 2021 of the ASEAN Minerals Cooperation Action Plan (AMCAP-III) Phase 2: 2021-2025, ASEAN made several advances in promoting the region as a sustainable mineral investment destination. Work focused on making ASEAN a reliable supplier of sustainable minerals (e.g., raw materials, semi-processed materials, and downstream manufactured products) to respond to the global transition to a low-carbon economy that has driven advances in among others, digitalisation, electric vehicles, green technology, the Internet of Things, and renewable energy. Major deliverables included:

- i. the ASEAN Minerals Exploration Strategy (Version 1 2023), finalised in January 2023, to bolster support for policy and geological prospecting in the region;
- ii. development of the ASEAN Principles of Sustainable Minerals Development (ASEAN SMD Principles), to be adopted by the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Minerals in November 2023;
- iii. completion in March 2023 of the Rolling Work Programme on Improving ASEAN Capabilities in Minerals Governance, to improve the region’s institutional capacity for efficient management and regulation of mineral resources; and
- iv. launch of the Scoping Study on Critical Minerals Supply Chains in ASEAN, jointly published with the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals, and Sustainable Development.

**Cooperation in Agriculture and Forestry.**

ASEAN is committed to promoting the transformation of the agri-food sector,

Recipients of the ASEAN Business Award given at the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit 2022



Participants of the Regional Workshop “Sharing Best Practices on the Development and Promotion of On-Farm Irrigation Management among the Water-User Groups in CLMV Countries” in Chiang Mai, Thailand

with a focus on building inclusive and resilient food systems. The ASEAN Guidelines on Sustainable Agriculture were adopted in 2022, providing AMS with broad strategies to integrate sustainable and circular agriculture principles into agro-food systems. Innovative solutions and best practices are being consolidated into an Action Plan to define activities to support the Guidelines’ implementation. In addition, ASEAN adopted the Study on Nature-Based Solutions in ASEAN to provide evidence-based results on nature-based solutions to mitigate the impact of climate change, including recommendations on how to enhance the uptake of such solutions in the agriculture sector. A Joint Ministerial Statement is also under development to call for coordinated action to prevent and eliminate highly hazardous pesticides that have been banned but remain in use in the region.

**Tourism Cooperation.** The tourism sector plays a crucial role in ASEAN’s economy, as a principal source of foreign exchange earnings and a contributor to job and income generation for local communities. As ASEAN gradually reopens borders to international travelers, the tourism sector is experiencing positive growth.

To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP), the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) commissioned a Comprehensive Study on the Implementation of the MRA-TP to provide insights, facilitate the mobility of tourism professionals, and strengthen the global competitiveness of the regional tourism industry. In accord with its Sustainability Agenda, ASEAN is also promoting sustainable tourism to foster environmental protection and economic development. In early 2023, the Framework on Sustainable Tourism Development in ASEAN in the Post-COVID-19 Era was endorsed to enhance social protection and empower local communities, as well as to provide benefits for visitors and host communities while preserving the region’s unique heritage and natural resources for future generations.



**Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI).**

ASEAN has implemented more than 50 initiatives covering areas as diverse as biotechnology, meteorology, microelectronics, and space technology. To promote green growth, several initiatives were implemented, such as establishment of the ASEAN Network on Bio, Circular, and Green Economy; the development of Climate Change Guidelines; and tech transfers of greentech-to-business e-ready solutions. STI cooperation has also contributed to fostering regional competitiveness, as evidenced by the increased use of high-performance computing among ASEAN's peoples; the upskilling and reskilling of ASEAN's peoples through the STI Education Platform; the STI Startup and

Small medium enterprises in Yogyakarta making handicraft for both domestic & export market

Grassroot Innovation Forum; as well as the establishment of regional platforms such as the Regional Research Infrastructure, Talent Mobility Expert Group, and Technology Management Hub, all of which benefited the academia, civil society, industries, and policy makers.

### ENSURING A RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE, PEOPLE ORIENTED, AND PEOPLE-CENTRED ASEAN

As part of ASEAN's focus on economic inclusivity, particularly for women, ASEAN launched a Toolkit for Policymakers: Strengthening Women's Entrepreneurship in National Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Policies and Action Plans was launched in November 2022 to improve understanding of the context in which women operate businesses, and provide a framework for coordinated

policies to foster women's entrepreneurship in the region.

On capacity building for MSMEs, the ASEAN SME Academy was updated and improved to become a premier e-learning platform, providing 110 free, high-quality courses from 20 service providers that benefitted approximately 3,500 MSMEs in the region. In addition, a Business Continuity and Resilience Tab was introduced on the ASEAN SME Academy website in May 2023 to help MSMEs become more agile, empowered and future-proofed to face any upcoming challenges. To support the growth and internationalisation of the ASEAN Access platform was upgraded to provide better business matching opportunities and trade and market intelligence across all AMS. As of April 2023, approximately 3,000 users registered on the platform.

Currently, ASEAN is intensifying its engagement with key stakeholders, including businesses of all sizes, to ensure the relevance and inclusivity of its initiatives.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, ASEAN increased its engagement with the private sector by 64% in 2021, followed by a 28% increase in 2022. In addition, ASEAN has organised the AEC Dialogue twice a year since 2018, offering a platform for stakeholder consultation on important regional initiatives.

ASEAN will continue to publish the ASEAN for Business Bulletin, a monthly publication aimed at providing updates and information on the work of ASEAN to enterprises in the region. This demonstrates ASEAN's prioritisation of people and business as key stakeholders in advancing the region's economic integration process.



## ENGENDERING SUSTAINABILITY: TOWARDS GREENING THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

ASEAN remains committed to sustainable development by emphasising cross-cutting work on the circular economy and carbon neutrality. The Implementation Plan for the Framework for Circular Economy for the AEC, as well as the corresponding Work Programme to support the Implementation of the Framework for Circular Economy, are key for achieving a low-carbon future for ASEAN. Development of the ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality is underway to provide an inclusive, orderly, and systematic pathway for ASEAN to become carbon neutral. The Strategy will build upon existing initiatives and identify common areas to accelerate the region's transition to carbon neutrality and sustainable development.

Singapore highway near commercial port. It's the world's busiest port in terms of total shipping tonnage, it transships a fifth of the world shipping containers



To support the regional transition pathway to a low-carbon future, ASEAN published in March 2023 Version 2 of the ASEAN Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance, which further developed the first version released in 2021. The ASEAN Taxonomy serves as an overarching guide, common language and a classification and assessment tool to Member States on among others, principles, concepts and definition of green and sustainable activities and assets, which are important for sustainable financing and transition financing.

## GLOBAL ASEAN: TOWARDS CREATING ASEAN AS A SUPPLY CHAIN HUB

ASEAN continues to shape the regional economic architecture, reinforce its commitment to multilateralism, and promote economic integration. This was demonstrated most recently by ratification and implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnerships (RCEP) Agreement, which provided a much-needed boost to ASEAN's

postpandemic economic recovery by encouraging the creation of new business and employment opportunities in the region. In the face of unprecedented global crises, ASEAN reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to an open, inclusive and rules-based trading system as a pivotal means to boost trade and investment while solidifying ASEAN as the central hub for regional supply chains. ASEAN has achieved key milestones such as:

i. the conclusion of text-based negotiations of the upgraded ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA, which is targeted for signing in 2023;

ii. the launch of the ASEAN-China FTA upgrade negotiations; and  
iii. commencement of the review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement. ASEAN is also negotiating an FTA with Canada and exploring possibilities of strengthening existing FTAs including the ASEAN – Korea FTA and ASEAN – Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP).

These efforts are aimed at ensuring that ASEAN's FTAs are business friendly, comprehensive, equitable, forward-looking, high quality, inclusive, modern, and trade facilitative. ■

## SUCCESS STORY: ASEAN SINGLE WINDOW

Digital trade has significantly driven the global economic recovery and it is evident that the ASEAN Single Window (ASW) plays an important role in facilitating trade by providing a platform for the exchange of electronic documents. In December 2019, all AMS started the exchange of electronic Certificate of Origin or e-Form D through the ASW which reduced the requirement of hard copies of Form D to the Customs authorities, enhanced security, lessened verification checks, and as a result, cut down the trade transaction costs.

As praised by the private sector, this improvement has significantly reduced the transaction time and cost, streamlined processes, and encouraged them to enhance the utilisation of the ATIGA. Progressively, the number of e-Form D exchanged has increased from 500,000 in 2019 to more than 1 million in 2022 with an estimated saving of 6 million days of business operation and cost saving of USD 150 million.

Following the success, ASEAN has expanded the exchange of e-documents to the ASEAN Customs Declaration Document (ACDD) with 1.7 million ACDD in 2022. In addition, Indonesia and Thailand have also exchanged the electronic Phytosanitary (e-Phyto) certificates in December 2022, while the Philippines would join the exchange in 2023.

Witnessing the tremendous benefits of paperless trade, ASEAN has discussed with its dialogue partners, i.e. China, Korea, Japan, and the United States the possibility of exchanging trade administration documents. This reaffirms that ASEAN remains committed to digital trade as a practical means to significantly expand the boundary of trade networks and foster resilient supply chains. ■

# ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

Youth delegates interface  
with ASEAN Leaders at the  
40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summits,  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia,  
10 November 2022

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) has made significant progress in fostering an inclusive and people-centred recovery, as well as in building future resilience and sustainable development in the region. Under Cambodia as ASEAN Chair in 2022, ASEAN Leaders adopted 30 declarations and frameworks that conveyed the highest level of political commitment and set the direction for regional cooperation in vital areas of socio-cultural development, such

## ASEAN LEADERS' INTERFACE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ASEAN YOUTH

10 November 2022 | Phnom Penh, Cambodia



as climate change; disaster management; digital transformations in education; enhancing health, well being, and social protections; enhancing the role of women in inclusive development; and youth and sports that demonstrate ASEAN’s commitment to fostering transformative change in the region.

**BUILDING ROBUST HEALTH SYSTEMS TO SUSTAIN CARING COMMUNITIES**

The ASEAN health sector contributed significantly to regional recovery efforts and helped restructure development priorities by drawing on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. Priorities were refocused to address existing regional challenges more comprehensively—and to build more robust health systems and defences against future health threats.

The sector implemented initiatives on health security for resilient health systems, sustainable universal health coverage, and workforce development and capacity building. It also advanced regional coordination mechanisms for public health emergency preparedness and health security by maximizing existing regional mechanisms on big data analytics and visualization, biosafety, biosecurity, disease surveillance, emergency operation networking, and laboratory strengthening.

Progress was also made in operationalising the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) with the launch of the ACPHEED Secretariat in Bangkok in 2022. Steady progress was also made in developing its establishment agreement. ACPHEED’s initial implementation will be through the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System

(APHECS), which was designed to provide means and protocols for ASEAN to respond collectively to public health emergencies.

Remarkable progress was made in achieving global nutrition targets to reduce the prevalence of anemia, low birthweight, overweight and obesity, stunting, and wasting, as well as to promote exclusive breast-feeding.

ASEAN conducted dialogues to aid policy makers and health practitioners, developed guidelines and standards, established a web-based nutrition surveillance system, and released the ASEAN Food and Nutrition Security Report 2021 and the ASEAN Guidelines

and Minimum Standards for the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breast-Feeding and Complementary Feeding.

**EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR FUTURE-READY HUMAN RESOURCES**

To support the regional recovery and address a crisis in learning, ASEAN launched and operationalised Reopen, Recover and Resilience in Education: Guidelines for ASEAN Countries, which provided strategies to reopen schools safely and help children from the pre-primary to secondary level recoup pandemic-related learning losses and strengthen the resilience of

educational systems in ASEAN against future disruptions. The education sector also conducted capacity-building activities, exchanges, mentoring, and policy dialogues on learning assessments to prepare for the 2024 survey of Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics, an international regional learning assessment.

ASEAN also adopted the Declaration on the Digital Transformation of Education Systems in ASEAN to raise the digital literacy of teachers and students, develop innovative learning

School children in Jakarta are back to school after a prolonged COVID-19 lockdown



solutions in partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders, and expand access to safe digital technologies and e-learning resources.

To enable greater harmonisation and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education, and especially to enhance people-to-people connectivity and support ASEAN Community building, the Roadmap on the ASEAN Higher Education Space 2025 and its Implementation Plan was launched.

On human resource development, studies were commissioned to explore establishing a central pool of funds for human resource development and to enhance competitiveness of human resources through a responsive technical and vocational education and training (TVET) curriculum. ASEAN also started work on guidelines to implement the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Competitiveness, Resilience, and Agility of Workers for the Future of Work, which supports referencing the national qualifications frameworks of ASEAN Member States (AMS) against the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, encourages capacity building and fair treatment of workers, and promotes knowledge-sharing and partnerships on labour and employment strategies.

On labour and employment, ASEAN developed baseline data for the ASEAN Labour Productivity Index to support AMS in crafting evidence-based policies. ASEAN likewise launched a pioneering ASEAN Employment Outlook in July 2023 to assess the impact of platform work on employment and working conditions.

ASEAN also continued to recognise the contributions of the private sector in realising a safe and inclusive work environment. Seventeen enterprises from the region were awarded at

the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Occupational Healthy and Safe Network (ASEAN-OSHNET) Awards while six companies received the ASEAN Red Ribbon for Outstanding Workplace (ARROW) Award for outstanding initiatives in preventing and controlling HIV in the workplace.

### SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

On providing a safe environment for children, ASEAN held in May 2023 an inter-sectoral workshop for representatives of 10 relevant ASEAN bodies and other stakeholders to share knowledge in preventing and combating child labour. This is in line with the implementation of the Roadmap on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2025, which provides for interventions to prohibit child labour practices and promote good governance for the elimination of child labour; prevent child labour; and protect children.



*One recommendation is for ASEAN Member States to adopt policies that will motivate workers to migrate through regular channels, especially by reducing the cost of migrating through regular channels to a minimum. Since there are already many migrants in an irregular situation, countries should offer opportunities to regularise their immigration status. Another recommendation is to adopt an ASEAN Protocol on Return and Reintegration. A third recommendation is to promote agreements among the sending and receiving states that will enable migrant workers to access essential benefits by becoming contributing members of social security systems or social insurance schemes. A fourth recommendation is to establish a digitised system for collecting, processing, and sharing information.*

*Excerpt from the Executive Summary, ASEAN Migration Outlook (2022), p.4*

ASEAN also held the inaugural ASEAN ICT Forum on Child Online Protection to discuss risks that threaten the health and safety of children in digital spaces and to explore ways to contain these risks. The 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Children Forum was held with the theme “Building a Digital Resiliency for ASEAN Children” that gathered child delegates from all AMS and ended with a call to action that emphasised the rights of children to a safe online environment through digital literacy, digital participation and resiliency, and digital security.

Ensuring the welfare of migrant workers also continues to be a priority of ASEAN, which launched the ASEAN Migration Outlook to examine the challenges and lessons learned from the return, repatriation, and reintegration of migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gender analysis of legal protection of women migrant workers and study on the protection of migrant domestic workers through standard employment contracts were undertaken to ensure that migrant workers’ rights are better protected. Audio-visual presentations were produced to educate migrant workers on safe and fair migration and translated into national languages of several ASEAN Member States.

In May 2023, ASEAN Leaders adopted the Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations and the Declaration on the Placement and Protection of Migrant Fishers at the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit. The ASEAN labour sector started translating these declarations into guidelines for action. ASEAN is also drafting guidelines to implement the Declaration on the Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers in ASEAN. ASEAN Labour Ministers also adopted the Work Plan 2022-2030 of the



“ I think what the youth bring to the table is really a pristine sense of idealism and hopeful visions of what the world could be... when it is paired together with the knowledge that government and businesses have, it can help to drive healthy change for the world. ”

*Dorcas Tang Wen Yu (Excerpt from Conversations, in The ASEAN Magazine, Issue 26, 2023, p.34)*

1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Youth Dialogue delegates, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 25-26 July 2022

ASEAN Labour Inspection Committee (ALICOM), and the ASEAN Guidelines on HIV Counseling and Testing in the Workplace to promote decent work and to ensure inclusive workplace for all workers.

### GREATER INCLUSION OF YOUTH AND WOMEN

ASEAN declared 2022 as the Year of ASEAN Youth to affirm their importance in building a strong ASEAN Community. The inaugural ASEAN Youth Dialogue, held in Cambodia in 2022, made recommendations to ASEAN Leaders on issues such as climate change, the future of work, and infrastructure and connectivity. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Youth Dialogue in 2023 focused on digital development for sustainable development and produced a youth

statement and recommendations on ASEAN’s digital transformation to be delivered to ASEAN Leaders at the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit.

In line with a whole-of-ASEAN approach to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021-2025, led by the ASEAN Committee on Women and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. The Framework outlined steps for incorporating gender in ASEAN’s policy and programme initiatives across ASEAN’s Economic, Political-Security, and Socio-Cultural pillars. Several complementary initiatives were realised in 2022, including the ASEAN Guidelines on Gender Mainstreaming into Labour and Employment Policies Towards Decent Work for All; Guidelines for Operationalising the ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion in Disaster Management; and the

Roadmap on Accelerating ASEAN Renewable Energy Deployment through Gender-Responsive Energy Policy.

The ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security was adopted and demonstrates the region’s commitment to addressing the deepening and gendered impact of traditional and non-traditional security issues on women. ASEAN also continued to promote women’s economic empowerment, especially women with disabilities and those in vulnerable situations, through adoption of the *Declaration on Building a More Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Future: Unlocking Women’s Entrepreneurship in ASEAN*.

### PROMOTION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

To strengthen ASEAN’s efforts to promote good governance, the Framework for Strategic Partnerships was adopted and discussions on civil service modernisation were convened by the ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM) to promote future-ready, citizen-oriented, and agile civil services.

ACCSM continues to mainstream gender in the human resource policies of AMS civil services by the updating and implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit.

### PROMOTING CULTURAL HERITAGE AND SOCIAL COHESION

ASEAN is at the forefront of efforts to develop a cohesive regional identity. It held a symposium titled “ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation: Now and Beyond” where academics, creative makers, media practitioners, and youth exchanged ideas on ways to create a “we-feeling” among ASEAN citizens and deepen their sense of regional belonging.

To promote and protect ASEAN’s rich cultural heritage and history, ASEAN adopted the Ministerial Statement on Cultural Property Protection. ASEAN also conducted the

Sarong Diplomacy: Unity in Cultural Diversity, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2-6 October 2022  
Photo credit: ASWARA, Malaysia



International Conference on Cultural Property Protection: Prevention of the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Properties: An ASEAN Perspective, which facilitated knowledge sharing to support the protection and repatriation of looted and illicitly trafficked cultural heritage artefacts.

ASEAN also supported AMS' initiatives to harness their cultural heritage and creative resources for sustainable and inclusive

Women laborers working on a road construction in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

development. It adopted the Siem Reap Declaration on Promoting a Creative and Adaptive ASEAN Community to Support the Cultural and Creative Economy. ASEAN's culture sector is set to undertake activities to support cultural and creative industries in the region.

The Declaration on Fostering ASEAN Identity through the Safeguarding of Traditional Sports and Games in the Modern World and the Declaration on Leveraging the Role of Sports in ASEAN Community Building and Achieving the SDGs were developed to promote, preserve, and recognise the practice of traditional

sports and games and their contributions to development. Two workshops have been conducted, and a study is being undertaken to support the initiative.

ASEAN has also stepped up efforts to strengthen social cohesion and harmony. The ASEAN Task Force on Fake News (TFFN) was established to spearhead initiatives, such as promoting digital and media literacy and strengthening regional response to the deleterious impact of fake news and misinformation. ASEAN, with support from US PROSPECT, also developed and implemented

a toolkit for educators titled Training of Trainers Program to address Disinformation and Promote Media Literacy.

To encourage clean and fair sports, ASEAN signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Anti-Doping Agency and is working with the Southeast Asia Regional Anti-Doping Organization to collaborate on a range of activities to promote fair and healthy competition and prevent doping in sports.

## TOWARD A DISASTER-RESILIENT COMMUNITY

ASEAN continues to strengthen efforts to build resilience to disasters through fostering partnerships, promoting localisation, prioritizing gender and social inclusion, and strengthening anticipatory action. Moreover, ASEAN aims to position itself as a global leader in disaster management by 2025. The ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management was developed to ensure that early warnings will be translated into reliable early action. In addition, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Research and Development Platform on Disaster Management was conducted in 2022 to gain insights on the challenges, opportunities, and trends for disaster management in ASEAN.

Fostering localisation is also crucial for strengthening the region's disaster resiliency. ASEAN conducted workshops and training programs, such as the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) training, the ASEAN Senior Executive Programme in Disaster Management, and the ASEAN Standards and Certification for Experts in Disaster Management (ASCEND) Programme to ensure the readiness of qualified



*This Strategic Framework includes an emphasis on the “internal” aspect of ASEAN’s own policies, practices and organisational culture and structure—and how these shape the way in which the organisation sets priorities, communicates, and works with partners—alongside aiming to progressively increase the volume and quality of its “external” facilitation, dialogue and programming work on gender and inclusion, as well as a strategic regional approach to supporting Member States’ national gender mainstreaming efforts.*

*Excerpt from the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021–2025, p.3*

professionals for disaster management and disaster response in the region. Localisation was also highlighted as the focus for the ASEAN Day for Disaster Management 2022, with the theme “Stronger Together in Balancing Action to Enhance Localisation for Disaster Resilience”.

ASEAN advanced its efforts for gender inclusion and social protections, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations, such as children, people with disabilities, and women. As a follow-up to the ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (ARF-PGI) 2021-2025, ASEAN launched the Guidelines for Operationalising the ARF-PGI and a publication titled *Ensuring Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction: Good Practices from ASEAN*.

ASEAN forged ahead in its vision to be a global leader in disaster management by establishing the ASEAN Disaster Resilience Platform, which promotes a whole-of-ASEAN approach to disaster

Sustainability educator Han Jing Toh teaches food waste composting and sustainable soil farming in Singapore



management, and convening the ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management.

### STRENGTHENING CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

ASEAN reaffirmed its commitment to global climate action with the ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP27). With this joint declaration, ASEAN urged international collaboration on climate change, explicitly establishing loss and damage funds to assist vulnerable areas.

In order to strategically strengthen science and policy interface in climate change cooperation and advancement, ASEAN is also in the process of operationalising the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change (ACCC), which will be based in Brunei Darussalam.

The ACCC will fill knowledge gaps, make policy recommendations, disseminate information on climate change issues.

“As a teen, I think a simpler and easier way to help is to recycle and stop using single-use plastic. We should also plant more trees or try to do urban gardening. I believe everybody should be more aware of the situation of our environment.”

Kyle Oliver Alegre, 13 (Excerpt from *Conversations*, in *The ASEAN Magazine*, Issue 22, 2022, p.37)



The Bantimurung-Bulusaraung National Park in South Sulawesi, Indonesia is one of the 55 ASEAN Heritage Parks

To achieve a haze-free ASEAN, preparations are also underway to establish the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control. ASEAN’s commitment to the full and effective implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) was strengthened by development of the next Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation toward Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation (ASEAN Haze-Free Roadmap), the next ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS), and the ASEAN Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management.

ASEAN contributed to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which was formally endorsed in December 2022, through the ASEAN Joint Statement to the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-15), paving the way for global biodiversity conservation work. Through the ASEAN Green Initiative, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity continued to encourage restoration activities as part of nature-based solutions throughout the region.

Tree planting initiatives for youth will also be carried out with the ongoing ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme.

The ASEAN Environment Ministers approved on October 31, 2022, designating the Pasonanca Natural Park (Philippines), Con Dao National Park (Viet Nam), Mt. Inayawan Range Natural Park (Philippines), and Bach Ma National Park (Viet Nam) as the 52<sup>nd</sup> through 55<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Heritage Parks. The designation recognises more protected areas that exhibit nature-based solutions and offer multiple societal benefits.

ASEAN kicked off the implementation of the Southeast Asia Programme on Marine Plastics (SEA-MaP) to reduce plastics consumption, increase recycling, and minimize leakages to prevent land and sea based marine plastic pollution. ■



# ASEAN CONNECTIVITY

With less than three years left to realise the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC), which facilitates implementation of MPAC 2025 with ASEAN sectoral bodies (ASBs) and relevant national agencies, continued to implement 15 initiatives covering five strategic areas: sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence, and people mobility.



While all 15 initiatives have progressed to implementation as of early 2023, much work remains. Completing the remaining tasks and planning for the ASEAN Connectivity Post-2025 Agenda will be the main focus of ACCC, ASBs, and relevant national agencies in the lead up to 2025.

### SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SMART CITIES ACROSS ASEAN

As a critical aspect of ASEAN Connectivity, implementation of sustainable infrastructure continues to see substantial progress, as coordinated by the Lead Implementing Body on Sustainable Infrastructure (LIB-SI).

Highway intersection with city business area background at sunset, Bangkok Thailand



The Initial Rolling Priority Pipeline of ASEAN Infrastructure Projects, announced in 2019, will be updated to reflect the evolving priorities of ASEAN Member States (AMS). The COVID-19 pandemic and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, for instance, spurred adoption of digital technologies, which has led to increased demand for digital infrastructure. Continuing increases in global greenhouse gas emissions have also propelled interest in sustainable infrastructure.

With this background, the Assessment of Future Sustainable Infrastructure Trends and Priorities in a Post-Pandemic ASEAN was endorsed by LIB-SI in September 2022. The Assessment recognised a need to expand its initial pipeline to include more infrastructure projects on digital as well as logistics and supply chain connectivity, and with a greater emphasis on sustainability.



Senior Asian male mechanical engineer working under a vehicle

Platforms and initiatives such as the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) and the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy (ASUS) have focused on regional cooperation at the sub-national and city levels, so that local governments and stakeholders can access resources and expertise to resolve issues unique to their circumstances.

The ASCN, which currently comprises 26 ASEAN pilot cities, agreed to expand its membership by up to three cities per AMS between 2022 and 2025. Additionally, ASCN also started development of an ASEAN Smart City Investment Toolkit to provide ASCN and other ASEAN cities knowledge of financing options, requirements, and strategies for smart city projects.

On accelerating implementation of ASUS, LIB-SI completed and endorsed City Technical Proposals for eight participating cities.<sup>1</sup> The proposals are aimed at helping cities to engage

partners for further technical assistance, financing, and implementation.

In cooperation with the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), ASEAN launched the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Report, offering updated research on trends and findings from ASUS implementation. The Report captured the diversity of urban contexts across AMS, including the increasing importance of small and mid-sized cities.

### TOWARD A MORE EFFICIENT AND RESILIENT REGIONAL SUPPLY CHAIN

In March 2023, ASEAN endorsed the Framework for Enhancing ASEAN Supply Chain Efficiency

<sup>1)</sup> The eight cities are Kep City, Cambodia; Tomohon, Indonesia; Kaysone, Lao PDR; Shah Alam, Malaysia; Mandalay, Myanmar; General Santos, the Philippines; Hat Yai, Thailand; and Sa Pa, Viet Nam.

and Resilience. Framework development began in 2019 in a different economic situation and was originally focused on supply chain efficiency. However, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was adapted to reinforce resilience. To support implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), ASEAN also concluded a study on the supply chains of 10 specific product groups considered crucial to address the pandemic.

Work is underway on the needed groundwork to implement the Framework, including additional supply chain analyses on food security and energy resilience, and to develop an implementation plan based on the Framework's strategic priorities.

## PROMOTING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONNECTIVITY

ASEAN is currently rolling out the ASEAN-Republic of Korea (ROK) Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Mobility Programme. Around 400 students and recent graduates and 100 faculty members from ASEAN TVET institutions will join exchange programmes across ASEAN. The Programme will give students professional exposure and a chance to build their own networks, while faculty will be able to exchange ideas and good practices so as to contribute to an improved and effective delivery of TVET in ASEAN.

ASEAN has also made strides in other areas of people mobility, such as higher education. A study was concluded in 2022 to assess the impact of student mobility on the employability of graduates. In the field of tourism, work is underway to develop by 2023 a website to



offer information to Chinese tourists interested in visiting Southeast Asia.

## SUPPORTING THE GROWTH OF DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

The pandemic underscored the importance of digital technologies and the impact of digital transformations on peoples' daily lives and the way governments and businesses operate. In this respect, the work under MPAC 2025 supports the growth of digital connectivity and innovation. ASEAN is working on helping micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to assess their digital readiness, promoting the expansion of digital financial services, implementing digital data governance frameworks in the region, and

continuing work to complete an ASEAN Open Data Development Framework, which aims to strengthen the production and shared use of open data, with health and agriculture as priority sectors.

## INTENSIFYING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement remains an essential component for ensuring the successful implementation of MPAC 2025 and ASCN. In 2022, aside from conducting monitoring & evaluation mechanisms, project consultations, and regular meetings; the ACCC organised a workshop to engage with external partners and exchange best practices on national coordination. In addition, the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN

Connectivity Symposium on Enhancing Connectivity Toward an Inclusive, Sustainable, and Resilient ASEAN Community Post-2025 Vision was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on 3 October 2022, bringing together in person more than 150 participants from governments, business, and academia.

## TOWARD ASEAN CONNECTIVITY POST-2025 AGENDA

Recognising the opportunities and challenges presented by the emerging trends as well as rapidly changing global and regional landscapes; the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on ASEAN Connectivity Post-2025 Agenda was adopted at the 40<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. ■

# ASEAN ANNIVERSARY AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

## 55<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN DAY CELEBRATION

Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia and former SG of ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi cut the cake during the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of ASEAN

The ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) marked ASEAN's 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary at its headquarters in Jakarta on 8 August 2022 with a hybrid celebration on the theme "Stronger Together". The celebration, hosted by then-ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi, was attended by Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and around 150 members of the local diplomatic community.



The event featured musical and cultural performances. A sand art show by Indonesia's first female sand animator, Vina Candrawati, conveyed ASEAN's values of resilience and hope as the region recovers from COVID-19. Musical performances by C asean Consonant member Agung Hero Hernanda from Indonesia and the ISN Orchestra, under composer Isnaeni Achdiat, were also presented.

ASEAN's 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook. As of May 2023, the videos accumulated more than 4,600 views on YouTube and 9,600 on Facebook.

**ASEAN Secretariat Media Gathering with ASEAN Centres and Entities**



**MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**

The 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Media Forum (AMF) was held in December 2022 to present ASEAN's actions, goals, and policies to the region's top journalists. The online forum was participated by 20 media practitioners, among other guests. The highlight of the Forum was an exclusive conversation with the 2022 ASEAN Chair, represented by former ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General for the Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak, in his capacity as Cambodian Secretary of State.

To foster engagement between the current ASEAN Secretary-General (SG) Dr. Kao Kim Houn and international, regional, and local journalists in Jakarta, an informal afternoon tea session was held on March 2023 at ASEC.



Visitors looking at merchandise in the ASEC Gift Shop

The event offered journalists a chance to understand the SG's priorities for his five-year term and to explore how ASEC and media can work together to raise awareness of ASEAN and its activities. Twenty journalists representing 13 media organisations attended.

Since March 2023, ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Houn has given interviews to major media outlets, including Berita Satu and Kompas TV of Indonesia, Channel News Asia of Singapore, the China Global Television Network, CNN Indonesia, Japan's Kyodo News, *Monocle* magazine of the UK, NHK of Japan, the *People's Daily* of China, the Republic of Korea's Yonhap News Agency, Reuters, and the Vietnam News Agency.

**ENTITIES ENGAGEMENT**

The Forum of Entities Associated with ASEAN (Entities Forum) fosters collaborations between and among the entities, ASEC, ASEAN's sectoral bodies, ASEAN centres, and ASEAN

facilities. ASEC hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> Entities Forum in-person in November 2022 after convening the previous two annual meetings online. The event brought together over seventy participants, including business representatives, members of the judiciary, parliamentarians, professionals, women, and youths. The highlight of the day-long programme was a meeting with the outgoing and incoming Chairs of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, Cambodia and Indonesia respectively.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Entities Forum also discussed progress on the use of the Digital Platform for Entities Associated with ASEAN. Embedded in the ASEAN website, the platform allows ASEAN-accredited entities to, among other things, directly interact with one another and update their profiles and documentation. It also streamlines the accreditation process.



As a follow-up to the forum, ASEC started a “Training for the Digital Platform” that attracted over 20 representatives from 14 entities and centres over three training cycles. Additional trainings have been scheduled for May and June 2023.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Entities Forum was held in-person in May 2023 at ASEC. Fifty-seven participants representing 26 entities and centres attended, along with 16 members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and its Working Group. The highlight of the forum was the interface segment with ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn that covered the role of the entities in ASEAN Community building, ASEAN’s Post-2025 Vision, and the SG’s vision and priorities for the next five years as ASEAN Chair.

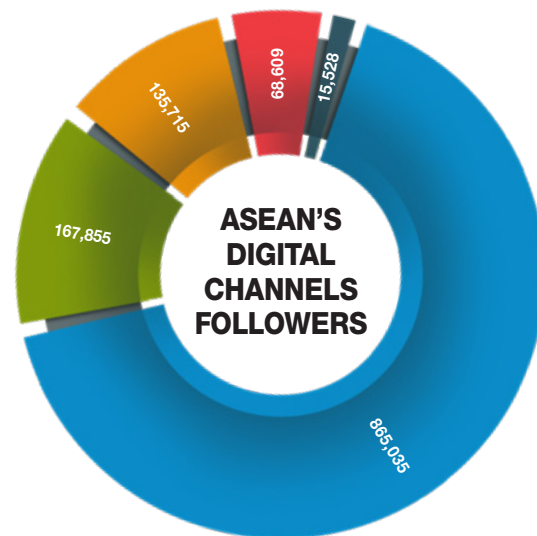
**ENGAGING ACADEMIA**

Given positive feedback from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Studies Dialogues, ASEC plans to hold a third edition in 2023 to discuss cooperation between think-tanks and ASEAN study centres in the region, the potential for joint publication of

articles on ASEAN, and organizing a joint event to discuss relevant regional issues.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

ASEAN boosts its people-to-people engagement by posting content on its website and social media channels. To ensure that content remains relevant, ASEC continually publishes information on ASEAN narratives, ASEAN identity, ASEC’s activities, and its engagement with stakeholders.



AS OF 19 MAY 2023

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- YouTube

There are currently 1.25 million subscribers across all of ASEAN’s social media platforms, with followers increasing from 10% to 20% a year on Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. On Flickr, an online image and video hosting service, ASEAN’s 38,258 photos have

been viewed more than 4.5 million times. The number of visitors to ASEAN’s revamped website (www.asean.org) was 14 million in 2023 as of this report, up 14% from 12 million in 2022.

**OUTREACH**

ASEC welcomed 1,788 visitors from 27 groups between June 2022 and May 2023 under its Learning Programme to introduce to and raise public awareness of ASEAN and ASEC. This was a return to ASEC’s pre-pandemic practice of receiving visitors and offering guided tours.

As one of the most visited spaces in ASEC, the ASEAN Gallery remains an active vehicle for promoting arts, culture, and a sense of ASEAN identity. Since the fourth quarter of 2022, the ASEAN Gallery has added three artworks to its collection. Former President of Viet Nam Nguyen Xuan Phuc presented a painting titled *Hanoi Old Quarter*. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister

of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR Saleumxay Kommasith presented a painting titled *Lao Culture, Heritage, and People’s Livelihood*. Most recently, President Jokowi Widodo of Indonesia presented a painting titled *Pulang Melaut* at the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. With these acquisitions, ASEC’s collection now includes 117 art works.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Artists Residency Programme (AARP) was held in June 2022 and featured Vietnamese artist Pham Ha Ninh. During a month-long residency in Jakarta, Pham produced a work of art titled *Mother Map*, and presented it to ASEC in a ceremony attended by ASEC officials, ASEAN’s formal partners, and the programme’s main sponsor, ThaiBev. Pham also met with several Jakarta-based art communities.

3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Artists Residency Programme for Viet Nam



The AARP upholds ASEAN's commitment to nurture the region's young and upcoming artists by offering cultural exchanges, exhibitions, and studio space for their creativity to flourish. The 4<sup>th</sup> AARP featured Srun Rida of Cambodia for a one-month residency in May 2023.

### ASEC RESOURCE CENTRE (ARC)

ARC resumed its pre-pandemic practice of receiving researchers by appointment in mid-2022. The public may visit the Centre during business hours to access a wide range of primary sources on ASEAN-related topics, including culture, economics, foreign relations, politics, science and technology, social development, and trade. ARC also offers an information service via email, where the public can send questions about ASEAN to [resourcecentre@asean.org](mailto:resourcecentre@asean.org).

### INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITIONS

The 2022 edition of China-ASEAN EXPO (CAEXPO) was held online and in-person in Nanning, China, from 16 to 19 September 2022. ASEC supplied information materials that were disseminated to visitors at a booth managed by the host.

ASEC also participated in the Sustainability Expo 2022 (SX2022) in Bangkok, Thailand, from 26 September to 2 October 2022. SX2022, organised by the Thailand Supply Chain Network, was attended by more than 253,000 people and featured exhibitions, marketplaces, sustainability innovations and a week of panel discussions, talks, workshops, and other activities. ASEC's booth on sustainability offered information on the circular economy and transboundary haze, as well QR codes so people could download

more information. The Bangkok-based ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDDSD) contributed relevant content.

### ASEAN PRIZE

Since 2018, the ASEAN Prize has been awarded to outstanding individuals or organisations to celebrate inspiring achievements and significant contributions that have fostered a stronger sense of ASEAN Community.

During the closing of the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summits in November 2022, Haji Muhammad Iqbal Fakhri Haji Damit from Brunei Darussalam was officially named the Recipient of the 2022 ASEAN Prize. Iqbal Damit was selected for his perseverance in leading a local humanitarian organization that serves displaced and marginalised communities.

His work has forged strong cooperation between youths and an awareness of youth issues, humanitarian action, and volunteerism across AMS.

The call for nominations for the 2023 ASEAN Prize closed in April. To expand awareness of the Prize, ASEC, as Prize Administrator, coordinated with AMS and National Focal Points to issue promotional materials. ASEC has regularly produced digital publications, e.g., social media podcasts, posts, and videos, that promote the recipients' contributions to and perspectives on ASEAN Community building. Materials are accessible on ASEC's digital platforms and the ASEAN Prize's social media channels. ■

Through the ASEAN Secretariat's Learning Programme, students learn about ASEAN



# ASEAN COOPERATION PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

As of March 2023, the cumulative value of ASEAN Cooperation Projects and Programmes (ACP) submitted since 2009 totalled USD 1,837,983,308, of which USD 1,763,874,164 were utilised (on-going, implemented, or completed) and USD 74,109,143 are in process. The utilised portion comprises 1,315 projects (USD 866,224,520) and 117 programmes (USD 897,649,645). By pillar, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) accounted for 44.75% of the utilized portion (USD 789,304,691, supporting culture, disaster management, education, the environment, health, labour migration, and youth,

Capacity building on proposal development by the ASEAN Secretariat in Viet Nam, October 2022

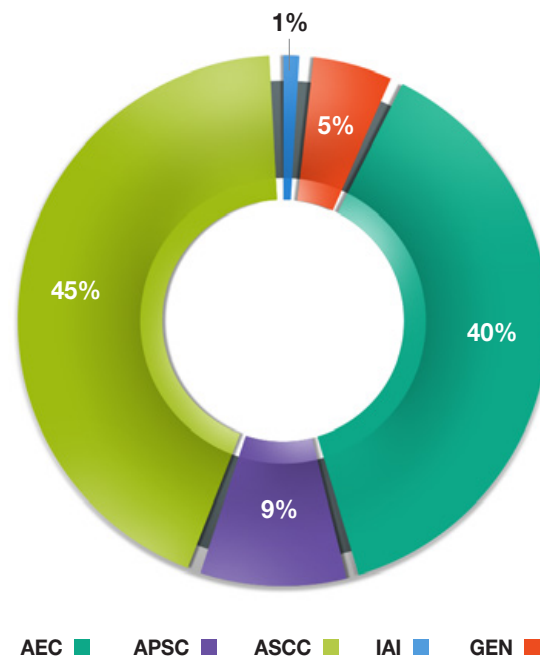






among other things). The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) accounted for 40.02% (USD 705,972,883, supporting information and communication technology; micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs); cybersecurity; energy; forests; food and agriculture; science and technology; trade; transport; and tourism, among other things). The ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) accounted for 9.48% (USD 167,167,658, supporting combating crime, cyber capacity development, development cooperation, human rights, and victim assistance, among other things). IAI/NDG accounted for 0.76% (USD 13,383,878, supporting Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV) attachment and education programmes, as well as CLMV capacity building programmes for electronic commerce, MSMEs, and science and technology). General and cross-pillar projects accounted for 4.99% (USD 88,045,055, supporting connectivity, ASEAN project development trainings, ASEAN promotional activities, and strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat [ASEC]).

**CONTRIBUTION OF ASEAN PROJECT & PROGRAMMES BY PILLAR (2009 - MARCH 2023)**



**REAL-LIFE STORIES:**

**ASEAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION SUPPORT OF THE EU PLUS**

In April 2023, the ARISE Plus completed its support to the ASEAN Economic Community in creating a more strongly connected region to ensure consumers gain more value for their money as well as avail of more quality and choices among goods available to them. The 5 year program supported with funding from the EU delivered crucial results, including partnership building with the private sector for seamless movement of goods in ASEAN through the [ASEAN Customs Transit System](#).

**BETTER CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENT OF GOODS**

The ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS) is a computerised customs transit management system that aims to simplify cross-border procedures for the movement of goods between ASEAN countries. Through the ACTS, ASEAN facilitates trade in the region by allowing traders to transport goods freely between participating countries. This means that a truck can travel from its point of loading (departure) to its destination in a different country with fewer obstacles and delays.

Mr. S Prithviraj of the City Zone Express, a logistics company in Malaysia, summarised the benefits of the ACTS aptly, “I would describe ACTS benefits as seamless clearance, faster transit, precise timing and cost reduction. My motto for ACTS is perfect logistics and digital connectivity for present-day supply chain needs.” The private sector also reported 30-40% cost reduction when using ACTS as compared to other modes of transit available in the region. ACTS eases connectivity between the key supply chains in the region. Three transit routes have been used:

1. Singapore - Malaysia - Thailand;
2. Malaysia - Thailand - Cambodia; and
3. Malaysia - Thailand - Cambodia - Lao PDR - Viet Nam.

Representing one of the logistics companies, Mr. Witoon Santibunyarat of Amazing Logistics & Supply Chain Co. Ltd in Thailand witnessed the benefits of ACTS, “I discovered under ACTS that we can shorten the transit time from Bangkok to Singapore. It takes only two and half days now. This has never happened before!”

The ACTS contributes to significant cost savings, reduced distribution times, and increased efficiency in supply chains in the region. The benefits are felt across multiple stakeholders from governments, to traders, and ultimately, consumers.



Project implementation was made possible with financial and technical support from ASEAN Dialogue Partners, including Canada, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, and Russia; as well as ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partners and Development Partners, including Chile, France, Italy, Norway, Pakistan, Switzerland, and Türkiye.

## ASEAN COOPERATION PROJECTS

In 2022, 52 ASEAN Cooperation Projects were approved for implementation, implemented, or completed with a total utilized value of USD 65,326,666, of which ASCC received 79.17% (USD 51,717,560), to support education and youth related initiatives, such as the ASEAN-China Young Leaders Scholarship and JENESYS programs; environmental programmes, such as Clean Air for a Sustainable ASEAN and Advancing ASEAN-Korean Cooperation in Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management (IMSWM) for Environmentally Sustainable Cities; as well as cultural programmes.

AEC's share of the total utilized value comprised 12.66% (USD 8,272,719), in support of a project titled Enhancing ASEAN-Japan Capacity Building Programme for Cybersecurity and Trusted Digital Services; initiatives on food and agriculture, including Mangrove Ecosystem Management in the ASEAN Region and the Project for Strengthening AFSIS Function for Emergency; and MSMEs.

APSC's share comprised 6.41% (USD 4,187,638), supporting development cooperation programmes; while IAI/NDG's share comprised 1.76% (USD 1,148,748), supporting IAI attachment programmes at ASEC and various projects related to the health sector.

## PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Programme implementation was supported by Dialogue Partners such as the US, as well as Development Partners, such as Germany. Five new and top-up projects, totalling USD 18.45 million, were approved for implementation in

the reporting period. Projects involved climate change programmes, developing regional structures for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), ensuring quality infrastructure, mitigating labour exploitation in fishing, and promoting municipal solid waste management.

## ASEAN COOPERATION WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The ASEAN-Australia Futures Initiative—Economic and Connectivity started implementation on 10 October 2022. The programme operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Australia for the ASEAN Futures Initiative (Aus4ASEAN) that was signed on 20 June 2022. It is a 10-year technical assistance facility totalling AUD 80 million that will support ASEAN economic integration following the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II. Programmes supporting the ASCC and APSC pillars will be developed under the MOU.

The Regional Trade for Development Initiative (RT4D) was approved on 20 April 2023, providing AUD 46 million for the Programme for AANZFTA Implementation Support (AIS) and for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Implementation Support (RIS). RT4D aims to assist ASEAN Member States (AMS) in boosting the capability of their economic institutions, building sustainable economies and resilient communities, and supporting ASEAN to realise the objectives of the AEC Blueprint.

## STRENGTHENING THE ASEAN PROJECT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Full implementation of the ASEAN Project Management Framework (PMF) is ongoing. PMF documents provide guidance for proposal

formulation, appraisal, approval, implementation, monitoring, completion, and reporting of ASEAN Cooperation Projects (ACP). Relevant documents are at [asean.org/asean-cooperation-projects/](http://asean.org/asean-cooperation-projects/).

In the reporting period, the Programme Cooperation and Project Management Division (PCPMD) continuously strengthened M&E for PMF while moving to results-based development and implementation of ACP. The EU's ARISE Plus Grant funded the temporary hire of a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) Specialist from June 2022 to March 2023. The specialist's tenure was extended to December 2023 to aid the PCPMD in developing procedures, processes, and systems for monitoring and evaluating ACPs, as well as to create success stories to enhance outreach and communicate information on ACPs and their contributions to ASEAN Community building. Featured success stories are available at [asean.org/my-asean/](http://asean.org/my-asean/).

The ARISE Plus Grant supported nine PCPMD staff to undertake the Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification Programme from the Project Management Institute. As of this report, seven staff have completed the training, with three gaining certification as Project Management Professionals.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported PCPMD and ASEC staff members by conducting an eight-module customised training on RBME from July 2022 to December 2022. Fifty-three ASEC staff benefitted from the course. A Pause and Reflect Workshop was conducted by USAID consultants in-person at ASEC from 25 to 27 January 2023. Consultants also conducted one-on-one drop-in sessions with PCPMD and ASEC staff that were focused on relevant topics.

### CAPACITY BUILDING ON AMS PROJECT PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

PCPMD has extended capacity-building assistance to ACP stakeholders, especially Proponents and implementing agencies, to develop and implement regional and results-based projects. Approval and implementation of these projects will contribute to the effective and efficient utilization of funds to realize ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

Supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore and Republic Polytechnic of Singapore, the third cycle of the Training on Project Proposal Writing and Project Management for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam benefited 98 CLMV officials. The training comprised four sessions that ran from June 2022 to January 2023. More than 260 CLMV officials have benefitted since training started in 2020.

The ASEAN Development Fund (ADF) funded the second phase of ASEAN Project Development Training under the 5<sup>th</sup> ADF Work Programme. Two activities were conducted in 2022, benefitting 69 Thai and 37 Vietnamese officials, bringing the total number of participants to 664, since the programme's inception in 2017.

Participants offered their appreciation of the training, its interactive approach, the in-depth exchanges with resource persons, and the connections made with support agencies that were interested in developing project proposals. Stakeholders have a great interest in developing regional project proposals—but there is a low awareness of available resources, the emerging demands for specialised or focused topics, the need for continuous follow up to support training outcomes and sustainability, the need to target the right participants for optimal training outcomes, and of needed pre-work activities to enhance training efficiency. ■

### SUCCESS STORY: ASEAN COOPERATION PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES


Under the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV (2021-2025), a Japanese-funded project, Sharing Best Practices on the Development and Promotion of On-Farm Irrigation Management among the Water-User Groups in CLMV Countries, was completed in December 2022.


The project produced an assessment that highlighted the development of on-farm irrigation in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV), and detailed the work of farmers who formed user groups to share and manage water resources for irrigation.

To share the assessment and best practices with CLMV, ASEAN-6 nations, and Japan, a regional workshop attended by 41 participants was held from 12 to 15 December 2022 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Participants visited the Doi Ngu Reservoir, the construction of which helped resolve conflicts between farmers who relied on Mae Jedi River for irrigation. The reservoir, which was completed in 2009 in Chiang Rai, ensures that all farmers, including those downstream of Mae Jedi River, have sufficient access to water for their agricultural needs. ■

# ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All

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