

UPDATED CONCEPT NOTE

STRATEGY PLAYBOOK ON PROMOTING AN ADAPATIVE ASEAN COMMUNITY OF GREATER UNDERSTANDING, TOLERANCE AND A SENSE OF REGIONAL AGENDAS AMONG THE PEOPLES OF ASEAN

INTRODUCTION

1. During the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore in April 2018, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam raised the importance of fostering greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN in light of global and regional uncertainties, and highlighted – the value of education and sports, greater information accessibility, and initiatives to showcase the benefits of living in harmony – are some examples to foster greater regional understanding and tolerance.
2. In this regard, a series of activities working towards the development of a strategic policy framework – online survey consultations with ASCC sectoral bodies, two project steering committee meetings, a High-Level Cultural Forum and a Regional Workshop were convened in 2021. Following the consultations, the Strategic Policy Framework on Promoting an Adaptive ASEAN Community of Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a Sense of Regional Agendas Among the Peoples of ASEAN has been developed and was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 38th ASEAN Summit on 26 October 2021. Subsequently, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Pillar is tasked to oversee the overall process of the implementation of the ASEAN Strategic Framework, with the support of the ASEAN Political-Security Community and the ASEAN Economic Community Pillars.
3. The Strategic Policy Framework will serve as an overarching document to lend greater coherence and narrative in guiding the efforts of the ASCC Pillar and its stakeholders to promote greater understanding, tolerance and to imbue a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN. While ASEAN has several initiatives in place to foster greater understanding, tolerance and regional solidarity through a multitude of regional policy initiatives and project implementation, these policy and project initiatives could benefit from greater cross-sectoral, and potential cross-pillar collaboration and coordination to deliver greater impact.
4. As a follow-up to the adopted Strategic Policy Framework, it was proposed that a Playbook is developed to delineate pragmatic strategies that could be applied in

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fostering a concert of efforts to promote greater tolerance, understanding and engender a sense of regional belonging.

5. Challenges to foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas are multi-faceted. Conflicts, intolerance and schisms may arise due to a clash of cultures, beliefs and values, among others. They may also fester as a result of trust deficit. Non-traditional security threats such as the impacts of climate change, natural and human-induced disasters, health emergencies including pandemics may have the potential to exacerbate tensions. Other asymmetric threats including the proliferation of fake news and its negative impact, hate speech and extremist views may also contribute to a climate of distrust. These fault lines are not just underpinned by political-security aspects because more often than not, the underlying causes are differences in cultural or socioeconomic factors.

OBJECTIVES

6. The objective of the project is to develop a Playbook that outlines and identifies pragmatic strategies especially to implement cross-sectoral policies and programmes in fostering greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN.

7. We recognise that under a traditional sectoral and silo approach, the attempt to address developmental issue independently is likely not only inadequate, but it may also compromise the sustainability of such efforts as it may fail to reconcile competing sectoral interests. Against this backdrop, a more coordinated approach that carefully considers the interlinkages, correlations, synergies, and trade-offs between sectors will be highly useful. Through a more coordinated approach, we seek to move away from traditional sectoral thinking toward building a more holistic understanding of the underlying causes of developmental challenges that could be systemic and structural in nature, and in doing so enable ASEAN to better address them in a more upstream and systematic manner by ensuring sustainability in the mobilisation of limiting resources and reconciliation of conflicting sectoral interests to optimise synergies and efficacy.

8. The Strategic Playbook shall set out two major scenarios – one *adverse*, and one *positive* – to which strategies will be identified and developed in a pragmatic way to address these scenarios. In doing so, this substantive envisioning exercise may lend greater clarity and impetus in our efforts to foster greater understanding, tolerance and engendering a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN.

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APPROACH

9. The proposed Strategy Playbook will develop and envisage two scenarios in 2035 and beyond. The “adverse scenario” shall describe the acute state of fragility in Southeast Asia resulting from regional frictions and (re-)emergence of fault lines due to competition for increasingly scarce resources (food, energy, clean air and water etc.), asymmetric threats, climate change and disasters in the region. In response to this adverse scenario, the Playbook shall identify practical strategies that can be considered to (re-)build resiliency, tolerance, mutual understanding and engender a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN.

10. On the other hand, the Playbook shall identify practical strategies to upkeep the momentum in response to a “positive scenario” that describes a well-integrated flourishing ASEAN community in 2035 and beyond, where ASEAN continues to be a peaceful and harmonious oasis despite an increasingly harsh environment globally.

11. Through such scenario-settings and the attendant strategies identified, the Playbook could serve as a useful guide for sectoral bodies in ASCC to be better apprised of viable pathways to foster a continuum of efforts in upkeeping the vitality and momentum to foster tolerance and mutual understanding in spite of socio-cultural challenges that could arise due to extenuating circumstances including rising fragility and friction as a result of resource scarcity, climate change, disasters and geopolitical challenges.

12. The playbook shall assess the multifaceted issues related to fostering stronger social cohesion and regional solidarity to provide strategic directions and guidance on how sectoral bodies can attempt to work beyond their sectors to treat underlying causes of socio-cultural issues.

13. Actors and stakeholders with important roles to play in promoting regional peace, social cohesion and regional solidarity, as well as actors and stakeholders who will be the main users of the Playbook will be identified.

14. Recognising that our people, especially the youth, are not just beneficiaries and recipients of interventions but also persons with lived experiences and expertise, it is important that efforts to foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas’ value-centric ASEAN citizenry and communities must be people-oriented and people-centred, and that universal participation of all relevant stakeholders can be facilitated in promoting greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas. Furthermore, cooperation and efforts must be enhanced to build strategic partnerships, develop proactive stakeholder engagements and

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ensure robust and sustainable project management with effective performance monitoring.

PROPOSED MODALITIES

15. To develop the Strategy Playbook, an academic consultant/practitioner who has extensive experience and a network of experts will be engaged to work on the Playbook, with the support of the Culture and Information Division (CID) of the ASEAN Secretariat in consultation with SOCA Brunei Darussalam.

16. Up to **six (6) Focus Group Discussions** (FGDs) which shall serve as safe space to deepen dialogue on the various cross-cutting contexts will be undertaken. The participants of the FGDs will involve external entities including CSOs and individual experts and practitioners, alongside representatives of relevant ASCC sectoral bodies. **A Regional Workshop** shall also be convened for the ASCC sectoral bodies and ASEAN WG-CoP to provide feedback on the development of the Strategy Playbook.

17. Possible points of reference to anchor discussions could include the Fragility Framework developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)¹ which identifies five dimensions, namely, economic, environmental, political, security and societal fragility. Pertinent questions that may frame our discussions in the process of developing the Playbook may include:

- a) What are the community-building vectors that may be effective in working across policy areas to address the various dimensions of fragility, and in moving from fragility to resilience?
- b) How do we enhance participation of individuals and communities, especially women, youth and other groups of people who are often underrepresented in decision making level to foster greater understanding, tolerance and regional solidarity?
- c) How do we encourage and create an enabling environment to facilitate the emergence of alternative narratives that underscore the significance and amplify efforts to foster cohesion, tolerance and regional solidarity?

¹ The OECD characterises fragility as the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes including violence, poverty, inequality, displacement, and environmental and political degradation.

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- d) How will the respective cross-cutting areas contribute to identifying pathways to foster cohesion and providing early warning of conflicts, as well as in the development of coping capacities to mitigate, manage and recover from such conflicts?
- e) How do we develop a coordinated approach that promotes sustainable structural or paradigm shift and behavioural changes to address systemic challenges to efforts in fostering regional cohesion and solidarity?

PLAYBOOK OUTLINE

18. The proposed outline of the Strategy Playbook is as follows:

Chapters	Content	Remarks
	Overview	Introduction and Objectives of the Playbook Background on the Strategic Policy Framework adopted at the 38th ASEAN Summit Identifying Pathways - Nexuses and Cross-Cutting Areas Methodology
1	Playbook Setting (I) <i>“Adverse Scenario” – A region fraught with instability, social unrest, intolerance and hate</i>	The “adverse scenario” shall describe the acute state of fragility in Southeast Asia region resulting from regional frictions and (re-)emergence of fault lines due to competition for increasingly scarce resources (food, energy, clean air and water etc.), asymmetric threats, climate change and disasters in the region. In response to this adverse scenario, the Playbook shall identify practical strategies that can be considered to (re-)build resiliency, tolerance, mutual understanding and engender a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN.

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2	Strategies to Mitigate and Manage Fragility in ASEAN	This chapter shall identify key stakeholders and pragmatic strategies and good practices that can be developed to mitigate and manage fragility in the region. These envisaged strategies may seek to anticipate fragility emerging in the region, and identify upstream and downstream interventions that could be considered, in response to the “adverse scenario” described in chapter 1.
3	Playbook Setting (II) A “positive scenario” – A <i>harmonious oasis of peace</i>	The “positive scenario” shall describe a region of peace against a backdrop of global uncertainties and extenuating factors that may undermine the maintenance of peace and social stability. This chapter shall identify strategies that may require better strengthening and coordination to upkeep the momentum to maintain and manage a harmonious and peaceful region.
4	Strategies to Manage and Maintain a Harmonious and Peaceful Region	The Playbook shall identify practical strategies to upkeep the momentum in response to a “positive scenario” that describes a well-integrated flourishing ASEAN community in 2035 and beyond, that continues to be a peaceful and harmonious oasis despite an increasingly harsh environment globally.
5	Developing a Coordinated Approach And Building a Community of Practice	This chapter shall delineate proposed ways to develop an overall coordinated approach to address fault lines that may hamper harmony and peace. A Systems thinking framework and/or Strategic Foresight may be applied.

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		Further, it may be useful for this coordinated approach to consider alignment with the upstream efforts of the ASEAN Culture of Prevention. In addition, this chapter may identify existing champions and communities of practice that foster greater understanding, tolerance and regional solidarity. It shall further identify and propose pathways to build a sustainable community of practice to implement the ASEAN Strategic Policy Framework on Promoting an ASEAN Adaptive Community of Fostering Greater Understanding, Tolerance and A Sense of Regional Agendas Among the Peoples of ASEAN.
6 *	Data collection and Evidence-Building	This chapter shall outline suggestions to gather data and build evidence that showcases efforts to exemplify harmonious living that could serve as a basis for the development of an evidence-based monitoring and evaluation framework.
7	Recommendations	This chapter may outline concrete recommendations on policy-oriented and activity-based initiatives to foster greater understanding, tolerance and regional solidarity. It shall reinforce the coordinated approach to co-opt in the development of cross-sectoral initiatives.

** These chapters may not necessarily prescribe and deep dive in details as these aspects related to evidence-based building and M&Es may require extensive work of its own. Therefore, these chapters may discuss broadly the types of evidence-based analysis and M&E framework to consider, and identify suitable parameters for future work to be done after the Playbook is put in place for dissemination and*

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implementation. In doing so, future work may also benefit from the outcomes of the Playbook when it is put to use.

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