As Delivered

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The Joint Webinar Of The
Asean Federation Of Accountants (Afa),
Confederation Of Asian And Pacific Accountants (Capa) And The Association Of Chartered Certified Accountants (Acca)

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Executive Director of the Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants Jennifer Lopez,

Members, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Afternoon,

The work of building a resilient, integrated ASEAN economy does not happen in policy documents alone — it happens when practitioners, professionals, and institutions align around shared priorities. This is precisely what brings AFA, CAPA, and ACCA together for this webinar, and it is why the ASEAN Secretariat is glad to be part of this conversation.

At stake is something consequential: strengthening the region's economic resilience, rebuilding market trust, and ensuring that ASEAN's shift toward a more sustainable, digitally-driven economy is grounded in credible, high-quality financial practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme for this year, ***"Navigating a Changed World: Recommendations for ASEAN,"*** could not be more timely. Trade tensions are rising. International economic and political relationships are being renegotiated. And ASEAN, like every other major economic bloc, must respond with clarity and purpose.

What gives us reason for confidence is ASEAN's track record. Our economy grew by 4.8% in 2024 and is projected to grow by 4.3% in 2025 — this is at a time when UNCTAD projects global growth is only at just 2.6%. That gap really matters. It reflects the work that ASEAN has put into building its economic competitiveness, supply chain resilience, and a foundation for sustainable and digital-first growth.

The five pillars spanning of (i) sustainability; (ii) AI, innovation and technology; (iii) trade; (iv) talent; and (v) accountancy and finance profession, are not just internally relevant to accountants; they map directly to ASEAN's own strategic priorities under the AEC Strategic Plan 2026–2030: for this year: advancing regional integration, facilitating the mobility of high-quality talent, promoting sustainable investment, and ensuring inclusive growth. That alignment is significant, and it is the kind of professional leadership that ASEAN needs more of for today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With that in mind, I want to speak directly to the practitioners in this audience: the region is counting on you to move beyond technical compliance and to take on a more active role in shaping the economic environment you operate in. The four areas I want to highlight and share with you are intended as a contribution to today’s conversation.

First is sustainable reporting. Accountants need practical, coordinated tools to translate global sustainability standards into ASEAN-level practice. The ASEAN Chartered Professional Accountant Coordinating Committee has begun developing regional guidelines on sustainability reporting — your expertise and input will be critical to ensuring those guidelines are comparable, interoperable, and fit for purpose as ASEAN transitions toward a low-carbon economy. I would also encourage you to look at the ASEAN Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance as a concrete framework for identifying, measuring, and reporting sustainability-related activities.

Second is digital transformation. With the Digital Economy Framework Agreement nearing conclusion — and ASEAN's digital economy projected to reach as much as USD 2 trillion by 2030 — accountants are not just record-keepers in this environment. They are the custodians of trust and governance in a digital economy. That means staying ahead of new tools, maintaining rigorous ethical standards, and ensuring that financial ecosystems remain transparent as business models evolve.

Third is talent development and mobility. The ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Accountancy Services exists to support cross-border movement of qualified professionals and raise the quality of accounting education across the region. But these frameworks need to be continuously strengthened, not just maintained. As ASEAN's economic integration deepens, the profession must be ready to meet new demands — and that starts with investing in people.

Fourth is unlocking intangible assets. ASEAN has significant creative and entrepreneurial capital that remains largely invisible in financial reporting — particularly for MSMEs. Intellectual property, brand value, and innovation capacity: these are real economic assets, but they are often unrecognised because they are not systematically identified, valued, or reported. Accountants can help change that.

This year, under the Philippines' ASEAN chairship, we will be launching an ASEAN Intellectual Property Valuation Handy Manual — a resource designed to give businesses, including accounting professionals, the tools to bring these assets into the financial picture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As ASEAN enters a new chapter under the AEC Strategic Plan 2026–2030 this year, working toward the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, the profession has the opportunity to move beyond compliance and become active contributors to regional policy. Today's webinar is one step in that direction — from dialogue to action.

I wish you all productive discussions.

Thank You.

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