



STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ASEAN SENIOR ECONOMIC OFFICIALS (SEOM) ON THE CONCLUSION OF ASEAN DEFA NEGOTIATIONS

30 May 2026, Manila, Philippines

1. The Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM) of ASEAN successfully resolved all outstanding issues in the negotiations of the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) during its Second Meeting of the 57th ASEAN SEOM, held in Manila, Philippines on 27-29 May 2026. This marks the successful conclusion of the negotiations on ASEAN's first region-wide digital economy agreement and a major milestone in advancing the ASEAN Leader's vision of a digitally integrated, secure, interoperable, competitive, and inclusive regional economy.
2. The ASEAN DEFA is expected to play a transformative role in unlocking the full potential of ASEAN's digital economy, which studies indicate could reach as much as USD 2 trillion by 2030 with its successful implementation. The outcome follows the 27th ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council Meeting held on 7 May 2026 in Cebu, Philippines where Ministers directed ASEAN SEOM to resolve all remaining negotiating issues, underscoring the strategic importance of the DEFA as ASEAN's response to a rapidly evolving global economic landscape and its commitment to building an open, rules-based, and seamlessly connected digital economy.
3. The ASEAN DEFA forms part of ASEAN's broader and rapidly evolving digital architecture that is shaping the future of trade, investment, and innovation in the region. More than a digital trade agreement, the ASEAN DEFA seeks to make it easier, safer, and more seamless for business and consumers to participate in the digital economy across ASEAN.
4. The Agreement provides a regional framework for ASEAN's digital economy ecosystem, covering areas such as digital trade, cross-border e-commerce, data governance and privacy, digital identity, electronic payments, online safety and cybersecurity cooperation, competition policy, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, and digital talent mobility.

5. The Agreement contains forward-looking and high-quality provisions that build on ASEAN's ongoing digital integration efforts, including the ASEAN Single Window, digital payments connectivity, cross-border data initiatives, online consumer protection, and the ASEAN Unique Business Identification Number (UBIN).
6. By strengthening digital connectivity, enhancing trust in online transactions, and reducing barriers to cross-border digital trade, the ASEAN DEFA will help create a more seamless and enabling digital environment for business of all sizes. It reflects ASEAN's collective commitment to deepen regional economic integration, strengthen competitiveness, and unlock new opportunities for innovation, investment, and sustainable growth across the region.
7. Importantly, the ASEAN DEFA is not only an economic agreement, but also a development and integration tool. Its objective is not merely to increase digital trade, but to ensure that the opportunities created by digital transformation are more widely shared across ASEAN Member States and their peoples.
8. The Agreement is expected to help narrow development gaps, strengthen participation of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), support economies at different stages of digital development, and ensure that the benefits of digitalization are accessible to all. In doing so, it will help create more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth opportunities throughout the region.
9. ASEAN's digital economy is projected to reach approximately USD 1 trillion by 2030 under current growth trends. With the implementation of ASEAN DEFA, studies indicate that the region's digital economy could potentially double in value to USD 2 trillion by 2030.
10. This growth would further strengthen ASEAN's position as one of the world's leading digital growth hubs, attracting investment, creating jobs, supporting entrepreneurship, and expanding opportunities for businesses and communities across the region.
11. The ASEAN DEFA will play a central role in advancing ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future and the AEC Strategic Plan 2026-2030. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council Ministers underscored that the full benefits of the Agreement can only be realized through its timely signing, effective implementation, and sustained cooperation among ASEAN Member States and stakeholders.
12. ASEAN SEOM looks forward to the signing of the ASEAN DEFA in November 2026 alongside the 28th AEC Council Meeting and the 49th ASEAN Summit,

marking a significant milestone in ASEAN's digital integration journey and laying the foundation for a more connected, innovative, and prosperous regional economy.