

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2020-2021**



**WE CARE  
WE PREPARE  
WE PROSPER**



**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. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

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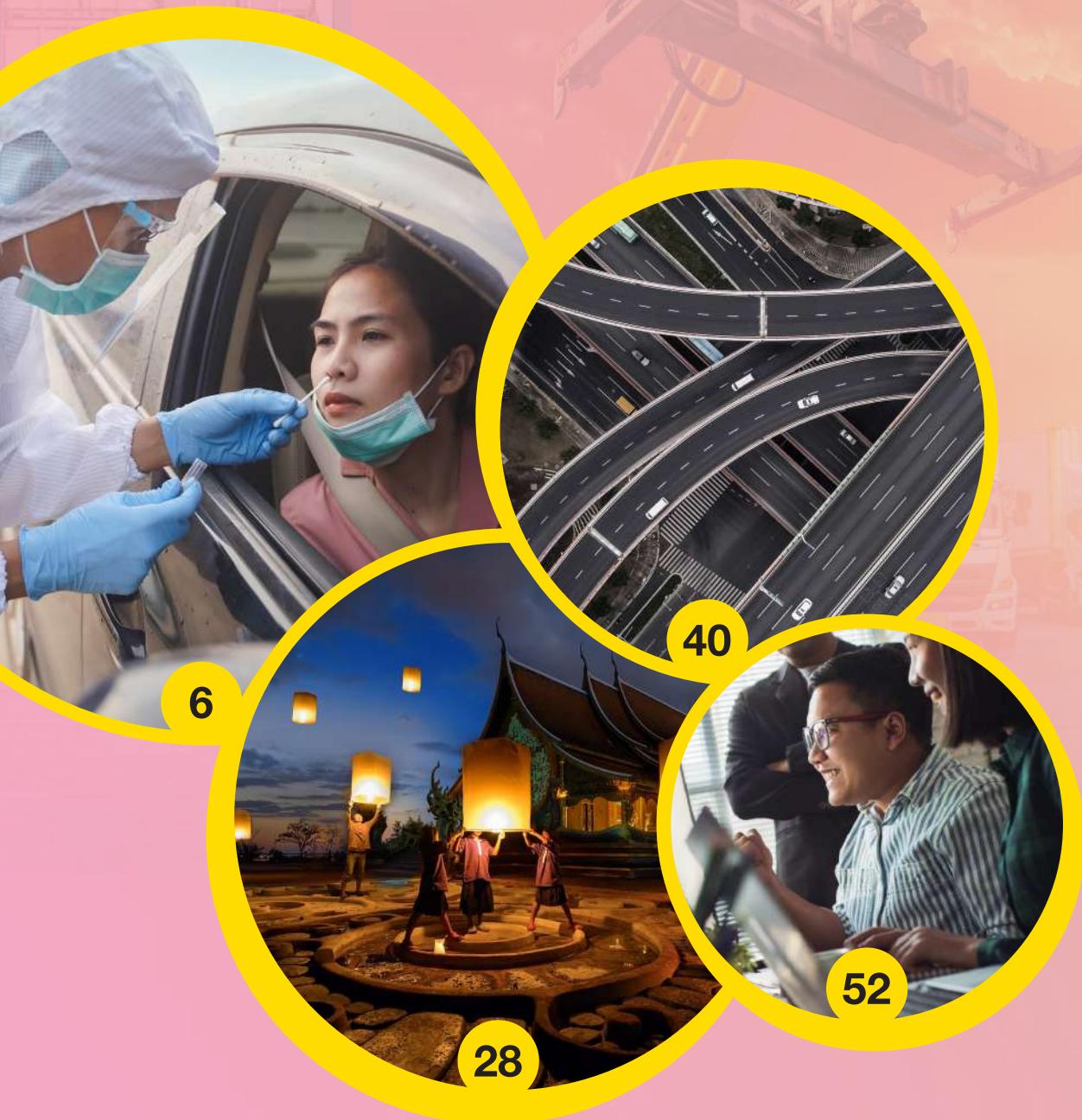
**ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021**

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**The ASEAN Secretariat  
Jakarta**

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# FOREWORD



**A**midst the ongoing global pandemic, efforts to roll out vaccines and address the economic, social and environmental impacts of COVID-19 are being pursued with renewed urgency, especially given the surge in outbreak due to new variants. Leveraging on our expertise and resources, ASEAN is committed to safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of its people, in line with the theme of 'We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper' under Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2021.

In parallel with our COVID-19 response, ASEAN has continued to consolidate its community building endeavours to become more inclusive and resilient. Since June 2020, we have made progress in our work towards achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and its respective blueprints, which is encapsulated in this report. Results from the Mid-Term Review of the implementation of the three community blueprints also indicate that ASEAN is on track to meet our commitments for the future.

On the political-security front, regional cooperation is imperative to achieving long-term resilience in a post-pandemic world. Initiatives such as the *COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund* and the *ASEAN Travel Corridor Agreement Framework* have been launched to strengthen collaborations and accelerate affirmative actions. Efforts to address transnational crimes and cybersecurity threats, as well as mitigate vulnerabilities to preserve regional peace and

stability are also continuing with the support and cooperation of our external partners. The successful convening of the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on 24 April 2021 at the ASEAN Secretariat exemplified our constructive role in addressing important issues affecting the region and the wider world.

In the economic domain, we recognise that post-pandemic recovery must be inclusive and holistic. In this sense, the *ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan* outlines our strategies through various recovery stages and focuses on those most affected by the pandemic. ASEAN's commitment to boost economic sustainability is also demonstrated by several priority deliverables, most notably with the signing of the *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement*, as well as the launch of the *Report on Promoting Sustainable Finance in ASEAN* and the establishment of the *ASEAN Online Database for SDG Indicators*. Meanwhile, ASEAN's ongoing digital transformation efforts to foster the digital economy will inject new dynamism into, and redefine ASEAN integration and community building agenda in the years to come.

Similarly, the socio-cultural pillar continues to make great strides in realising inclusive and sustainable development in the region. The launch of the *ASEAN Development Outlook*, among others, provides a foresight approach to

achieve this objective. With the majority of work shifting online during the pandemic, ASEAN has also amplified efforts to ensure accessibility, affordability as well as quality of digital connectivity and technology by narrowing the digital divide in infrastructures, regulations and skills.

The ASEAN Secretariat has successfully utilised technology in sustaining its productivity, with hundreds of online meetings being convened since March 2020. This, along with ensuring the safety and welfare of our staff, is crucial in fulfilling the ASEAN Secretariat's role as a facilitator of regional like to express cooperation. In this regard, I would like express our gratitude to the Government of Indonesia for providing vaccines to our staff, enabling us to continue serving the peoples of Southeast Asia.

Fully cognisant of the cross-cutting and complex challenges that lie ahead, ASEAN stands ready to employ a whole-of-community approach. I am optimistic that ASEAN will turn current challenges into new opportunities by upholding multilateralism and forging closer partnerships with all stakeholders. Together, we can overcome our shared challenges and improve the lives of people in the region and beyond.

DATO LIM JOCK HOI  
Secretary-General of ASEAN

# ASEAN POLITICAL-SECURITY COMMUNITY

The theme of Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2021 – "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper" – is intended to inspire the ASEAN Community to flourish and develop sustainably to benefit present and future generations.

"We Care" highlights ASEAN's nurturing disposition in building a harmonious and resilient Community with the peoples of ASEAN at its centre. "We Prepare" focuses on responsiveness and adaptation to ensure that ASEAN remains relevant and resilient in overcoming current and emerging challenges. "We Prosper" means creating opportunities through initiatives to benefit the peoples of ASEAN.



WE CARE, WE PREPARE, WE PROSPER



The ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on 24 April 2021 exemplifies ASEAN's constructive role in addressing issues affecting the region and the wider world.

"We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper" highlights the cross-sectoral and cross-pillar nature of many, if not all, of the issues that ASEAN faces today and in the foreseeable future. The ASEAN SHIELD (Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters) – a key deliverable for 2021 – exemplify ASEAN's innate caring nature. The initiative requires ASEAN to respond to emergencies and disasters holistically and seamlessly to prepare for the future and prosper.

ASEAN SHIELD covers regional emergencies and disasters, natural disasters, public health emergencies, economic and financial crises, nuclear and radiological emergencies, energy and food shortages, cyber security, and environmental issues that might threaten the safety and well-being of the peoples of ASEAN.

Meant to continue beyond the tenure of the current ASEAN chairmanship, ASEAN SHIELD will be enhanced and expanded to cover

emerging and future contingencies. The Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration on the ASEAN Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters, to be issued by ASEAN Leaders at the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits in October 2021, is expected to manifest ASEAN's political commitment to the initiative at the highest level.

## WE CARE

Considering the region-wide effect of COVID-19, ASEAN's caring disposition toward its peoples has been demonstrated by its work to mitigate the pandemic's health and economic effects. Work has been anchored in its support for and participation in initiatives such as the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for

Public Health Emergencies (RRMS), the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan, the ASEAN Strategic Framework on Public Health Emergencies (ASF-PHE), the ASEAN Regional Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED), and the ASEAN Travel Corridor Agreement Framework (ATCAF).

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has seen an increase in transnational crime, as evident in the rise of criminal activities across the borders of ASEAN Member States (AMS), such as the trafficking of illicit drugs and contraband items, trafficking in persons (TIP), and cybercrime. Meanwhile, the capacity of law enforcement agencies has been stretched while maintaining public security and assisting the public health sector.

# "KAMPUNG ASEAN"



"We Care" means that ASEAN will address transnational crimes that undermine the well-being or threaten the personal security of its peoples. At the national level, new approaches and counter-measures have been taken, including tightening border security, increasing the number of multi-agency operations, installing surveillance technologies at national entry points, providing tele-counselling and home visits as a part of drug prevention and rehabilitation

programmes, promoting public awareness using virtual platforms and social media, and building partnerships with the private sector.

Through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters (AMMD) and their subsidiary mechanisms, recommendations to revitalise regional programmes and capacity-building initiatives were crafted, intelligence and best practices were exchanged, innovative ways to conduct trainings were explored, and ways to improve law enforcement's capability in cyberspace were discussed. Meanwhile, operationalising the Guidelines on Consular Assistance by ASEAN Missions in Third Countries to Nationals of ASEAN Member States is progressing, with the adoption of its focal point templates.

The pandemic has underscored the vulnerabilities of certain groups. Along this line, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) has advocated upholding the rights of the vulnerable. AICHR has pledged to focus on fundamental rights in the digital age, advocate for rights-inclusive measures in disaster management and humanitarian assistance, and work to address environmental pollution and climate-related challenges. To support an inclusive economic community, "The Essentials of Human Rights Due Diligence in Business: A Training for ASEAN Institutions" programme was conducted by AICHR.

Another area where ASEAN's caring nature was manifested pertains to Rakhine State. Despite COVID-19 and recent developments in Myanmar, efforts continue to be undertaken to implement

the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA), as coordinated by the Secretary-General of ASEAN and the Ad Hoc Support Team of the ASEAN Secretariat (AHAST). ASEAN continues its collective effort to support and facilitate repatriation to Rakhine State.

## WE PREPARE

"We Prepare" entails looking beyond the horizon. Following the adoption of the Ha Noi Declaration on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision by the 37th ASEAN Summit, Brunei Darussalam, as ASEAN Chair, with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat, developed the Terms of Reference (TOR) for a High-Level Task Force (HLTF) and a roadmap for developing the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision. Comprised of eminent persons and experts

nominated by AMS, the HLTF will spearhead a visioning exercise to devise the vision, including supporting documents. Work on this important initiative will be commencing in 2022.

Meanwhile, Sectoral Bodies under the APSC Pillar have contributed to ASEAN's capacity to prepare. For example, within the defence sector, crisis response mechanisms have been activated, particularly in the areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), as well as counterterrorism. The ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on HADR now aims to reach full operational capability upon adoption of its Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) by the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in December 2020. Similarly, the SOPs for ASEAN Our Eyes, adopted in 2020, launched strategic information exchanges on potential threats from violent extremism, radicalisation and terrorism.

To counter increasing cyber security threats, the ADMM will be expanding cooperation by establishing an ASEAN Cyber Defence Network and an ADMM Cyber Security and Information Centre of Excellence. Meanwhile, the ADMM-Plus is strengthening partnerships through strategic dialogues and practical cooperation, as reflected in the Joint Declaration by the ADMM-Plus Defence Ministers on Strategic Security Vision of the ADMM-Plus, which was adopted to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of the ADMM-Plus. The seven Expert Working Groups (EWG) under the ADMM-Plus have also resumed work after a hiatus because of COVID-19.

"We Prepare" also entails proactively dealing with issues that might undermine the well-being of the peoples of ASEAN, such as nuclear-

related threats. The ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM), a network for enhancing cooperation among nuclear regulatory bodies to strengthen nuclear safety, security, and safeguards, has continued its work to develop an ASEAN Protocol for Emergency Response and Preparedness to a Nuclear or Radiological Emergency. When finalised, the protocol will be an important tool for regional cooperation on nuclear and radiological emergencies. There has also been progress in implementing the Practical Arrangements between the International Atomic Energy Agency and ASEAN on Cooperation in the Areas of Nuclear Science and Technology and Applications, Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards (PA), which was signed in September 2019. There have been exchanges and consultations between the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and ASEAN to promote a regional approach to the former's activities in the region. Several project proposals are in various stages of discussion.

## WE PROSPER

Peace and stability underpin ASEAN's prosperity as a Community. Focusing on how ASEAN could play a constructive role in the current situation in Myanmar, the ASEAN Leaders Meeting, held in April 2021 at the



ASEAN's strong commitment to reduce disaster losses in the region and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies is manifested through The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

ASEAN Secretariat, resulted in a Five-Point Consensus that stipulated (1) there shall be an immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and all parties shall exercise utmost restraint, (2) a constructive dialogue among all parties shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people, (3) a Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair shall facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary-General of ASEAN, (4) ASEAN shall provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre, and (5) the Special Envoy and a delegation shall visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned.

To ensure continued peace and prosperity, AMS have committed to the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and an early conclusion of an effective Code of Conduct (COC). In anticipation of the resumption of textual negotiations for a COC which was halted due to COVID-19, momentum on discussions has been maintained virtually through various mechanisms, such as the Ad Hoc Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the DOC (JWG-DOC) and the Sub-Working Group of the Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the DOC (SWG-DOC).



Brunei Darussalam assumes ASEAN 2021 Chairmanship under the theme “We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper”.

Similarly, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) continues to implement various work plans in the areas of preventive diplomacy, non-proliferation and disarmament, counterterrorism and transnational crime, disaster relief, maritime security, and the secure use of information and communication technologies. To further enhance confidence-building efforts in the ARF’s priority areas in the next five years, the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) and the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices, and Protocol were adopted in 2020.

## EXTERNAL PARTNERS

In its work to care for the peoples of ASEAN, prepare for emerging issues, and promote the prosperity of the ASEAN Community, ASEAN has worked closely with its Dialogue, Sectoral Dialogue and Development Partners. In 2020, collaborations with External Partners were targeted toward a swift, comprehensive, and sustainable regional recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

ASEAN welcomed contributions of several of its partners to ASEAN initiatives, such as the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund and implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive



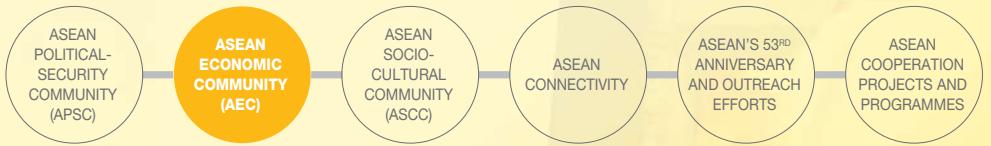
The 15<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit is convened via video conference on 14 November 2020.

Recovery Framework. Successor Plans of Action for the next five years (2021-2025) were adopted in 2020 with several Dialogue Partners, namely Canada, China, India, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, and the United States, as well as the United Nations to guide the partnerships.

In engaging its External Partners, ASEAN underscores the importance of maintaining ASEAN Centrality and unity to build mutual trust and confidence, as well as to reinforce an open, transparent, inclusive, and rules-based regional architecture with ASEAN at its core. This includes strengthening ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM)-Plus frameworks. In 2020, ASEAN commemorated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EAS (2005-2020) by issuing the Hanoi Declaration, renewing its commitment to strengthening the EAS process and mechanisms,

and to advancing practical cooperation and responses to emerging issues and challenges.

Complementing deepening relations with its External Partners, ASEAN continues to see increasing interest from other countries to either accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) or to become formal partners. In 2020, Colombia, Cuba, and South Africa formally acceded to the TAC, bringing to 43 the number of High Contracting Parties (HCPs) to the Treaty. In 2020, France and Italy were welcomed as ASEAN Development Partners, bringing ASEAN’s total number of formal partners to 18. At their meeting in April 2021, ASEAN Leaders agreed to accept the UK’s application to be a Dialogue Partner. Non-ASEAN Ambassadors accredited to ASEAN (95 in total, including those from ASEAN’s formal partners) and the 54 ASEAN Committees in the Third Countries and International Organisations continue to play an instrumental role in promoting ASEAN’s interests and connecting ASEAN to the world by forging mutually beneficial relations. ●



# ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

After a very difficult 2020, the region's economy is taking tentative steps toward recovery. Growth was estimated at 3.3% in 2020, bringing the region's GDP to USD 3.0 trillion, down from USD 3.2 trillion in 2019. Preliminary ASEAN statistics indicate that total merchandise trade declined by 5.5% in 2020 year-on-year (yoY) to US\$ 2.7 trillion, while foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows were significantly affected, dropping 24.6% YoY to USD137.2 billion. While the recovery outlook is positive, it remains uncertain and will depend on vaccination and containment success, as well as continued macroeconomic and political stability. Several risks remain, including an uneven or differentiated recovery, continued trade and technology competition, and concerns over debt and fiscal sustainability. Despite these challenges, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is embarking on the second five-year phase of the AEC Blueprint 2025, determined to work for a sustainable recovery and to develop long-term resilience.





Despite COVID-19, progress continued to be made by the AEC. In 2020, a number of priority economic deliverables were completed, including signing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement; adopting the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation (APAEC) Phase 2: 2021-2025; endorsing the Roadmap on Combating IUU Fishing in the ASEAN Region (2020-2025) and the Framework and Strategic Action Plan on ASEAN Food Security (2021-2025); and completing the Report on Promoting Sustainable Finance, the ASEAN SDG Indicators Baseline Report 2020, and the Online Database for ASEAN SDG Indicators. The ASEAN Digital Master Plan 2025 was adopted in January 2021. The preliminary report of the Mid-Term Review of the AEC Blueprint 2025 was completed in November 2020 and launched in April 2021. Work is underway to achieve the priority economic deliverables defined by

Brunei Darussalam, as ASEAN Chair for 2021, under the three strategic thrusts of recovery, digitalisation, and sustainability.

ASEAN's efforts to create a highly integrated and cohesive economy continue. After achieving a high level of tariff liberalisation under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), ASEAN has directed priority attention to trade facilitation. Among its latest major accomplishments are the live operation of the ASEAN Customs Transit (ACTS) by six ASEAN Member States (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam); live exchange of the ASEAN Customs Declaration Document (ACDD) through the ASEAN Single Window (ASW) by Cambodia, Myanmar, and Singapore; and implementation of the ASEAN-Wide Self-Certification Scheme (AWSC), which permits certified traders in the region to cut trade transaction costs by self-certifying the origin

of their products. AWSC implementation complements other trade facilitation mechanisms (e.g., ASW and the ACTS) as well as ongoing efforts to address non-trade barriers and contribute to regional trade competitiveness.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Implementation of Non-Tariff Measures on Essential Goods under the Ha Noi Plan of Action Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic is another demonstration of ASEAN's work to strengthen supply chain connectivity.

By refraining from imposing restrictive trade measures on essential goods and supplies, ASEAN Member States (AMS) are ensuring the smooth flow of essential goods while preventing supply-side disruptions during the pandemic. A list of 152 essential goods annexed to the MoU will be expanded to cover essential food and agricultural products.

The ASEAN MRA on Type Approval for Automotive Products (APMRA) was signed on 16 January 2021 and will enter into force in January 2022. Under the APMRA, 19 regulated automotive components and systems that are traded within



ASEAN and that are inspected or tested by listed technical services can be accepted by importing AMS. This will save time, money, and resources for consumers, government regulatory agencies, and the industry in ensuring the availability of safe and reliable automotive products.

Signing of the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA) and the 4<sup>th</sup> Protocol to Amend the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA) elevated regional economic integration in investment and trade in services. ATISA paves the way for AMS to transition from a negative-list approach for scheduling specific commitments in services to a more open and

transparent regime. The ACIA was also amended to include additional reservations on prohibiting performance requirements. Other important milestones include conclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Package of Commitments for Financial Services under the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS).

Financial integration is a vital component of market integration. Contributing to this goal are initiatives, such as the Annex on the Use Case of the ASEAN Payments Policy Framework's Implementation Policy Guidelines, which was updated to further promote payment linkages to facilitate trade, business, and financial inclusion; an agreement to develop an ASEAN taxonomy on sustainable finance; and engagement with the ADB's ASEAN Infrastructure Fund to support sustainable infrastructure and green recovery.

The AEC's relevance also depends on its ability to remain competitive, dynamic, and innovative. While much progress has been achieved in intellectual property (IP), divergence among AMS in areas such as the ratification of trade mark-related international treaties, substantive

and procedural trademark law, fee structures, and trademark application numbers continue to be challenging. Recognising the need for a common trademark registration system for ASEAN to facilitate convergence and harmonisation, a feasibility study to develop an ASEAN trademark Registration System in 2021 was completed. When implemented, it will enable ASEAN users, particularly the micro-, small-, and medium-enterprises (MSMEs) that form the backbone of the economy in ASEAN, to have the option of filing a single application and obtaining a single trademark registration, resulting in lower fees.

The increasing global and regional footprint of enterprises might give rise to cross-border or regional competition issues requiring greater cooperation between AMS. A Study on Recommended Procedures for Cooperation for Cross-Border Competition Cases has been undertaken to facilitate implementing regional cooperation initiatives in the prevention, investigation, and enforcement of cross-border competition cases, including hardcore cartels and transnational mergers. These initiatives will be undertaken while respecting the rights of AMS to legislate and implement existing national legislation.

Consumer protection is another essential aspect of the AEC. Confident and well-informed consumers must be empowered to make rational decisions to avoid harmful business conduct as they drive innovation and productivity. In this regard, the ASEAN Regional Information Campaign for Consumer Protection was launched in 2020 to educate and empower ASEAN consumers as they shift to online and ecommerce transactions—a process that has been expedited by the pandemic.

COVID-19 has also accelerated multidisciplinary research collaborations, bringing together researchers from biomedical sciences, bioinformatics, and engineering to share their research on applying high-performance computing to address the pandemic. Supporting the use of technology for sustainable development was initiated at a regional conference with the World Intellectual Property Office and the Global Solutions Summit, as well as by projects on plastic waste and sustainable manufacturing. The capacity of AMS to leverage foresight as a strategic planning tool was initiated through a long-term plan to create a career track for professionals able to work in the interface of policy, business, and research.

ASEAN has also strengthened cooperation across sectors and continued to enhance connectivity. On digital connectivity, AMS have scaled up implementation of the ASEAN Framework for Next Generation Universal Service Obligation (USO2.0) to narrow digital divides by launching



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initiatives to reduce the cost of mobile internet subscriptions while providing underserved communities with digital skills through education to use the mobile internet productively. The ASEAN Model Contractual Clause (MCC) mechanism for Cross-Border Data Flow (CBDF) provides businesses in ASEAN with a robust mechanism to legally assure the protection of data transferred across borders. The ASEAN Online Sale Day, launched on 8 August 2020, underscores ASEAN's commitment to promote e-commerce, a new driver for growth that has seen its uptake boosted by the pandemic.

Improving transportation safety remains a high priority for ASEAN. On aviation, ASEAN adopted the Implementing Protocol-2 (IP2): Aviation Training Organisations (ATOs) of the Mutual

Recognition Arrangement on Flight Crew Licensing (MRA on FCL) to recognise common baseline requirements for ATO by each AMS. On road transport, the issuance of the Brunei Declaration on Road Safety 2020 represented ASEAN's strong commitment to reducing road fatalities by at least 50% from 2020 to 2030. On maritime safety, ASEAN adopted the Guidelines for Maintenance of Navigation Channels and Guidelines on Safety Measures with Ships' Routeing to enhance the safety of maritime navigation, particularly in ensuring smooth vessel traffic in port and heavily congested areas. In addition, to support the safe resumption and sustainable transport operations in the region, ASEAN has put in place the first set of ASEAN-wide COVID-19 operational guidelines for the protection and safety of passengers and operational aircrew, as well as



the cleaning and disinfection of aircraft, and the COVID-19 Recovery Guidelines for Resilient and Sustainable International Road Freight Transport Connectivity in ASEAN.

The region's energy transition to a low-carbon economy was intensified by adoption of the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation (APAEC) Phase 2: 2021-2025 in November 2020 and by the preparation of supporting work plans and programmes with Dialogue Partners and international organisations. The new APAEC focuses on accelerating energy transitions and strengthening energy resilience through greater innovation and cooperation. This aligns with new regional targets to reduce energy intensity and increase the share of renewables in power generation by 2025. On minerals, initial work to enable ASEAN to respond to the opportunities and challenges of a minerals-intensive, low-carbon, and digital future is underway. A forum, titled "The Future of Mining-Critical Minerals and Sustainability: Driving Investment with Innovation and Mineral Supply to Meet the Demands of High-Tech and Low Carbon Economies", was conducted with the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals, and Sustainable Development (IGF).



There has also been progress in implementing the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture, and Forestry. The Guidelines are an initiative to ensure that investment in agriculture meets global standards and promotes responsible and sustainable growth. In addition, the Concept Note on Promoting the Network for ASEAN Rural Product Development on One Village, One Product Model has been adopted to promote cooperation and partnerships to stimulate the potential of rural areas, improve rural income, and contribute to the region's socio-economic development.

The tourism industry was significantly affected by COVID-19, and AMS have collectively undertaken bold measures to mitigate its impact, especially on MSMEs, tourism workers, and vulnerable communities, while prioritising the health and safety of travellers. The ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025 was updated to accommodate the latest trends and dynamics affecting the pandemic-ravaged landscape. In 2020, ASEAN endorsed a new ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy (ATMS). With the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration



on Digital Tourism by the ASEAN Leaders in November 2020, ASEAN is committed to embracing digital transformation to grow and develop the Tourism Sector. Finally, adoption of the Phnom Penh Declaration on a More Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient ASEAN Tourism in February 2021 charted the path for development of a tourism recovery plan.

To be relevant and meaningful, the AEC must be geared toward an inclusive, resilient, people-centred, and people-oriented ASEAN.

Efforts have been focused on documents and implementing programmes and projects related to COVID-19, while recognising that MSMEs are among those affected hardest by the pandemic. A policy insight, titled *Enterprise Policy Responses to COVID-19 in ASEAN: Measures to Boost MSME Resilience*, tracked and analysed measures by AMS to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19, and proposed possible ways forward, drawing lessons from the OECD and partner countries. The ASEAN Guidelines on Fostering a Vibrant Ecosystem for Start-Ups across Southeast Asia, which was endorsed in October 2020, identified key factors and actors in the start-up ecosystem, highlighted priority intervention areas, and advocated for continued policy support for start-ups to manage COVID-19 fallout. Initiatives to promote Inclusive

Business (IB) models in the region continued through development of Guidelines for the Promotion of Inclusive Business in ASEAN, organisation of the Third ASEAN Inclusive Business Summit, and the involvement of inclusive businesses at the ASEAN Business Awards 2020. Go Digital ASEAN, a collaboration between the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on MSME and the Asia Foundation that has been supported by Google.org, was launched in June 2020 with the aim of equipping underserved communities with critical ICT skills, targeting 200,000 beneficiaries in ASEAN.

Public-Private Sector engagement (PPE) activities continue to be implemented based on a framework of inform, consult, and involve, including publication of the bimonthly ASEAN

for Business bulletin; the convention of the ASEAN Economic Community Dialogue on the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework; and continuing the ongoing ASEAN Business Sentiment Study, to gather insights from indigenous ASEAN enterprises, both large and SMEs, about their sentiments for the AEC and in particular on the impact of AFAS and related initiatives slated for completion in August 2021.

The AEC also aspires to become more global, as evinced by the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement on 15 November 2020 by AMS and FTA partners Australia, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand. RCEP validated the ability of ASEAN to lead and drive





negotiations for a huge trade deals and one of the world's largest FTAs. It is expected to contribute to developing stronger and more resilient supply chains, and to the COVID-19 recovery.

With the signing of the RCEP, priority will be given to upgrading ASEAN's free trade agreements with its trading partners. Negotiations for upgrading the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) are underway. Potential FTA partners have also been pursued, including Canada. Both sides are on track to

finalise a reference paper as basis for a decision to launch negotiations for the ASEAN-Canada FTA within the year.

On integration monitoring and statistical cooperation, key milestones were achieved, including completion of the Mid-Term Review of the AEC Blueprint 2025, the first exercise of its kind to be undertaken by ASEC, with support from the ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE) Plus. A new publication, *ASEAN Policy Brief*, was launched in 2020, with its first three issues focusing on COVID-19's impact on ASEAN's economy and the region's response. This supplemented the AEC's other regular publications, such as the biannual *ASEAN Economic Integration Brief*. On statistical cooperation, the launch of the ASEAN SDG Indicators Baseline Report and

an online database tracking SDG indicators will contribute to monitoring of ASEAN's progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV (2021-2025) was adopted at the 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in November 2020. The Work Plan, which entered force on 1 January 2021, creates opportunities to address the emerging challenges and priorities brought about by global and regional developments and trends, such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), environmental sustainability, and the COVID-19 pandemic. As of March 2021, 133 projects valued at USD 42.87 million were approved under the IAI Work Plan III, addressing 23 out of 26 actions (or 88.5%) across five strategic areas and six enabling actions as defined by the Work Plan. An additional 17 projects, valued at USD 1.36

million, are on-going. These projects support implementation of nine of 24 (37.5%) of the actions under the Work Plan's five strategic areas and three of four enabling actions.

Among the projects implemented was the Pre-Project Phase on Developing a Digital Approach to Ensure Inclusive Education Delivery, which recognises the efforts by CLMV governments (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam) to ensure that mechanisms are in place to continue education delivery during the pandemic. In addition, the Singapore Cooperation Centres in CLMV capitals continued to provide online delivery of training courses on topics such as food security, e-commerce, entrepreneurship, and the English language. In September 2020, the ASEC held a graduation ceremony for 12 CLMV attachment officers who completed one-year attachment programmes at the ASEAN Secretariat. ●





# ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) has been working to enhance regional response mechanisms, strengthen partnerships, forge new cooperations, and prepare for a strong emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. ASCC has developed an improved framework to ensure resilience and preparedness, so that its programmes can ensure that outcomes are dynamic, engaging, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

To foster policies that are adapted to shifting socio-cultural trends, ASCC carried out in the reporting period studies to better understand ASEAN labour productivity, explore the readiness of human resources for the future of work, examine the development outlook for a post-2025 ASEAN, evaluate how technology has changed the labour/employer relationship, and investigate the sustainability of old-age pensions.





Other activities investigated how to prevent the exploitation of children, especially in remote rural areas; how to protect children from online abuse; how to protect children during migration; how to better deliver service to citizens in the digital era; how to narrow the poverty and rural development gap in ASEAN Member States (AMS); and how sports contributes to socio-economic development outcomes.

The Mid-Term Review of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 (MTR) was conducted in 2020. Despite pandemic disruptions, the overall progress of

the ASCC's Sectoral bodies in implementing their work plans is in line with the Blueprint's Key Performance Indicators. The MTR recommended that the ASCC should align its work for the Blueprint's second five-year period with ASEAN's COVID-19 exit strategy.

## PANDEMIC RESPONSES AND COOPERATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives and well-being of ASEAN's peoples, particularly the most vulnerable. The ASEAN Health Sector was quick to launch regional collective actions and mobilise existing mechanisms to detect or prevent outbreaks, and to respond to the pandemic. These actions involved the ASEAN Emergency Operation Centre for Public Health Emergencies, the ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network and Regional Public Health Laboratories, the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre, the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre, and technical exchanges with health experts, senior officials, and health ministers. Multi-Sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination on health-related regional initiatives have been scaled-up and synergized since January 2020.

ASEAN Member State (AMS) participation in the COVAX Vaccine Facility, led by WHO, UNICEF,

and the GAVI Alliance, was prioritised under the Regional Strategic and Action Plan on ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self Reliance (AVSSR). A series of webinars, titled "Strengthening ASEAN's Capacities on Crises and Health-related Communication" and supported by GIZ, facilitated vaccine roll-out updates and experience sharing on new applied technologies, preparations for a new normal, and comprehensive discussions on recovery plans.

ASEAN's COVID-19 health response actions and initiatives were made possible in part by financial and technical support from ASEAN's Dialogue Partners. Canada collaborated with the ASEAN Health Sector in the Mitigation of Biological Threats Programme to enhance AMS capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to threats such as COVID-19. Japan continued to support establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases to strengthen ASEAN's regional capabilities during public health emergencies.

Technical teleconferences to exchange critical information on COVID-19 were conducted with China's National Health Commission, while exchanges with Australia, the EU, the Republic of Korea, and the US were also held. The ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) and AMS received medical supplies and equipment from Canada, China, and the Republic of Korea. AMS also received diagnostic kits, equipment, and in-country trainings under the "Enhancing the Detection Capacity for COVID-19 in ASEAN Countries" project supported by the Republic of Korea.

**“Timely and equitable access to affordable and quality-assured vaccines will be the focus of the first phase for the urgent implementation of the AVSSR Plan.”**

*Dr. Wisit Tangkeansirisin  
of Thailand's National Vaccine Institute, during an AVSSR webinar*



## LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

The pandemic has threatened to derail educational gains and hurt livelihoods across AMS. ASEAN has responded to the pandemic by developing various instruments and activities to help AMS and affected sectors recover from the crisis without leaving anyone behind.

ASEAN's Labour, Education, and Social Welfare sectors have sought to understand the magnitude of the pandemic's impact on the workforce, students, and vulnerable groups through the study "ASEAN Rapid Assessment: The Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihoods across ASEAN". The report was made possible through the efforts of ASEC and the Asia Foundation and the support of the Australian government and the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Labour sector has taken steps to mitigate the pandemic's impact on the region's most vulnerable workers. Guidelines were developed to ensure that migrant workers received support for their safe return and reintegration, while

workers for small and medium enterprises were provided with adequate health and safety protection. Studies were undertaken on the management of migrant workers at the national level on facilitating the cross-border transferability of social security benefits. Forums and workshops were held to address discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS in the workplace and how to improve safety during the pandemic.

ASEAN and UN Women launched the "ASEAN Gender Outlook: Achieving the SDGs for All and Leaving No Woman and Girl Behind in March 2021". The report found that there was a need

The annual Underwriters Laboratories-ASEAN-U.S. Science Prize for Women emphasises the role of female scientists who have used their work to improve the society.

for policies promoting shared responsibilities between men and women, supporting a work-life balance for gender equality, and building more inclusive and resilient communities. The ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021-2025 was endorsed in March 2021.

On higher education, the ASEAN Region (EU SHARE) Programme was extended until the end of 2022 with EUR 5 million in EU additional funding. Dialogue Partners also supported

students across ASEAN through scholarships programmes, such as the ASEAN-China Young Leaders Scholarship for Post Graduate Program (ACYLS-Graduate Program) and the Higher Education for ASEAN Talents (ROK).

The ASEAN Agenda for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council was established in June 2020 to coordinate and share resources between stakeholders. A webinar, titled "Preparing ASEAN Workforce for Post COVID-19", was



**"Despite this crisis, education cannot wait. Education simply cannot stop, particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may fall even further behind."**

Secretary-General of ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi, at the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting in November 2020



**“I am delighted to be able to jointly announce the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases. Japan will spare no effort in helping the Centre develop into an institution that, as a hub for the region’s fight against infectious diseases, will protect ASEAN’s people from the threat these diseases pose. Japan hopes to work hand in hand with ASEAN countries and continue cooperating with them on an ongoing basis.”**

Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide at the ASEAN-Japan Summit in November 2021



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held in April 2021, co-hosted by ASEC, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and the Philippines’ Department of Education. The event discussed TVET’s role in ASEAN’s post-pandemic recovery.

### HARNESSING YOUTH’S VITAL ROLE FOR RECOVERY

To keep youth engaged, ASEC—in collaboration with the ASEAN Foundation, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)—held a four-part interactive webinar series on ASEAN Youth and COVID-19, titled “Success Stories and the Way Forward”, from July to November 2020.

Young people from across ASEAN exchanged experiences and concerns, offered insights, and generated recommendations to leverage youth participation in addressing underlying socio-environmental causes, respond to COVID-19, and recover from the pandemic.

Under the leadership of National Committee on Youth of Viet Nam, and in light of Viet Nam’s 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship, ASEAN Youth Ministers issued the Joint Statement of ASEAN Youth Ministers on Enhancing Youth Cooperation for a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community. The statement declared the Youth Ministers’ commitment to work with ASEAN’s young people to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

The active engagement of youth in sustainable development has also been a central theme of the ASCC’s work. To commemorate ASEAN Youth in Climate Action and Disaster

Resilience Day on 25 November 2020, the ASEAN Youth Sector, under the leadership of the Philippines and through ASEC, disseminated a toolkit and materials to encourage ASEAN youth to lead climate actions in their respective communities.

The critical role of youth in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was discussed at the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium, titled “Enhancing the Roles of Youth in Achieving the SDGs”, on 8 April 2021. The symposium elaborated strategies to strengthen youth participation and provided an opportunity for youth leaders to dialogue with policy makers.

### SHARED TRUTHS AND IDENTITY FOR A COHESIVE COMMUNITY

The Information Sector issued a joint statement, titled “ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information to Minimise the Negative Effects of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”, calling to fight fake news and misinformation during the pandemic. Also adopted was the Framework for Promoting Accessibility for All in ASEAN Digital Broadcasting and the Framework for Developing Digital Readiness among ASEAN

Citizens, to ensure the creation of safe and inclusive digital spaces. Initiatives were also developed to implement the second five-year period of the ASEAN Communication Master Plan 2018-2025 (ACMP II).

ASCC also launched *The ASEAN* magazine as a source of accurate and up-to-date information about the work of the ASCC. The magazine aims to create a greater public awareness in AMS of their shared heritage and experiences, and foster an increased sense of an ASEAN identity.

Tackling the pandemic demands solidarity and action at every level. The Culture Sector celebrated the 2020 as the Year of ASEAN Identity by adopting the Narrative of ASEAN Identity by the ASEAN Leaders at the 37<sup>th</sup>





The ASEAN region is a major contributor to global biodiversity.

ASEAN Summit. The Narrative articulated a common set of values to bind ASEAN's people together, such as values forged through a long history of exchanges, passed from generation to generation, and espoused by ASEAN through institutional consensus and practice.

To further increase awareness of ASEAN, the Culture Sector launched the ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive, so ASEAN's people can appreciate online the rich cultural artefacts from AMS. To foster understanding, tolerance, and a sense of ASEAN's agenda among the peoples of individual AMS, the Culture Sector is leading the development of a Regional Policy Framework to guide ASCC efforts.

## BUILDING DISASTER RESILIENCE

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme for 2021-2025, adopted on 27 November 2020, focused on five priority programmes: risk assessment and monitoring, prevention and mitigation, preparedness and response, resilient recovery, and global leadership in disaster management.

Several AMS faced multiple disasters in 2020 and early 2021. The Secretary-General of ASEAN and the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator, with support from the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre), rendered immediate assistance to affected countries.

The Disaster Management sector has strengthened local capacities and rebuilt

communities. The second phase of the ASEAN Standards and Certification for Experts in Disaster Management (ASCEND) project, with funding from the Republic of Korea, has been implemented to produce a pool of well-trained and competent disaster specialists in the region. The first ASEAN Village, built to house survivors of the 2018 Central Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami, turned over 75 housing units in April 2020 and 25 units and public facilities in April 2021.

The ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster Responsive Social Protection were published to help AMS design social protection programmes and improve their population's capacity to prepare for and recover from disaster. The second edition of *Ready for the Dry Years: Building Resilience to Drought in South-East Asia* was finalised in cooperation with UNESCAP.

**“Mentari Pratiwi, who lost her parents in the Central Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami, said she was grateful to receive an ASEAN Village housing unit, and wants to give back to the community by working in the village’s health centre. ‘I’m so happy because I don’t have to be worried anymore about where to live.’”**

*The ASEAN (Issue 2, June 2020)*



WE CARE, WE PREPARE, WE PROSPER

## CLIMATE ACTION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Under the leadership of Thailand, the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Combating Marine Debris (RAP) was adopted at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment (AMME) and launched on 28 May 2021. The Action Plan is an important step to developing a clean and green ASEAN environment to benefit communities, foster their well-being, and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

A regional webinar titled “Reducing Marine Plastic Pollution during the COVID-19 Pandemic in ASEAN Countries” raised public awareness on the unwelcome surge in waste during the pandemic and the need for concerted effort to protect human health and the environment across ASEAN. A feasibility study on establishing an ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and development of the ASEAN Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Framework are ongoing.

Integrating biodiversity and conservation into decision making across all Sectors is a priority for preventing future pandemics and tackling climate change. In addition to the designation of Khao Sok National Park in Thailand as the 50<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP), the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) organised webinars promoting ecosystem-based adaptation strategies and nature-based solutions to health crises.

ASEAN continues to engage its Dialogue Partners, Development Partners, and stakeholders to strengthen partnerships, enhance coordination, and promote synergy in climate action, environmental protection, and conservation. In pursuing low-carbon and climate-resilient cities, ASEAN and the EU signed an agreement in December 2020 to implement the EUR 5 million Smart Green Cities Project. ASEAN also cooperated with Germany to strengthen urban resilience through multi-Sectoral and multi-level approaches.

ASEAN and China adopted the Framework of China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025), and designated 2021 as the ASEAN-China Year of Sustainable

Development Cooperation. ASEAN has also enjoyed constructive dialogues with partners at the ASEAN-EU High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change, the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue on Environmental Cooperation, and the ASEAN Plus Three senior officials and ministerial meetings on environment.

AMS have also committed implementing two parallel, interrelated processes: the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The ASEAN Resource Panel (ARP) will bring together leading experts to accelerate the use of science-based policy across AMS. Its Terms of Reference were adopted in November 2020.

Under the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), implementation of the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation toward Transboundary Haze Pollution Control, and the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy are progressing through projects and programmes supported by the EU, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature. However, challenges to ensuring a haze-free region persist, hence a large amount of financing is needed to expedite ASEAN's efforts to combat the issue. ●

# ASEAN CONNECTIVITY

Work to enhance ASEAN Connectivity has proceeded from strength to strength, both inside and outside the region, during the reporting period. Connectivity has been the linchpin for ASEAN, as it pursues development and supports the COVID-19 recovery.

Via its Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, ASEAN has been addressing the pandemic's short-term impact while building long-term resilience and improving preparedness for future crises. As of May 2021, 13 of the Master Plan's 15 initiatives have been implemented to enhance regional connectivity and benefit ASEAN's peoples. The ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC), National Coordinators, National Focal Points, Lead Implementing Bodies, and relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies will continue to work with their partners to deliver MPAC 2025.



To strengthen implementation at the regional and national levels, the ACCC undertook a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of MPAC 2025 that was endorsed by the 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in November 2020. The MTR assessed progress in realising the Master Plan's objectives and offered recommendations (see *infographic*) to augment the value-add and relevance of MPAC 2025, enhancing its contribution to the work of ASEAN under a coherent and targeted approach.

## CARING FOR OUR PEOPLES, PREPARING FOR A PROSPEROUS FUTURE

Connectivity aims to improve the lives of ASEAN's peoples by delivering sustainable infrastructure, promoting digital innovation, enhancing supply chains, strengthening regulatory excellence, and increasing investment in education. To address these challenges, ASEAN is undertaking an Assessment of Future Sustainable Infrastructure Trends and Priorities in a Post-Pandemic ASEAN.

To showcase sustainable infrastructure opportunities, the ASEAN Infrastructure Discussion Series on Digital Connectivity was held in August 2020, when government and private sector representatives explored potential opportunities for cooperation. In October 2020, ASEAN adopted the Framework for Improving ASEAN Infrastructure Productivity, aiming to strengthen AMS capacity for future infrastructure planning, delivery, and operations. A socialisation forum for the Framework was held on 24 and 27 May 2021, allowing stakeholders to learn more and explore ways to support its implementation.

ASEAN Connectivity continues to make significant progress in advancing sustainable urbanisation. ASEAN assisted eight cities<sup>1</sup> in developing and completing action concepts to engage partners to support implementation. In collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), ASEAN worked with another eight cities<sup>2</sup> to undertake diagnostic exercises to develop technical proposals, began to prepare for the ASEAN



<sup>1)</sup> Luang Prabang and Xam Neua (Lao PDR); Bagan Nyaung Oo (Myanmar); Hang Tuah Jaya, Kota Kinabalu, and Seberang Perai (Malaysia); and Can Tho and Da Lat (Viet Nam).

<sup>2)</sup> The other eight cities are Kep City (Cambodia), Tomohon (Indonesia), Kaysone (Lao PDR), Shah Alam (Malaysia), Mandalay (Myanmar), General Santos (the Philippines), Hat Yai (Thailand) and Sapa (Viet Nam).

## 17 recommendations in six areas have been developed to tackle the identified implementation challenges

KEY CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATION AREAS	SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>Sectoral Alignment:</b> Arise from priorities alignment with the sectoral body or identifying suitable LIB; how MPAC 2025 would add value.	Enhance sectoral-level alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Augment the existing value addition framework of MPAC 2025 for sectoral bodies through CORE framework: Coordination, Ownership, Resources and Emphasis</li> <li>Increase the frequency and quality of MPAC 2025's engagement with LIBs</li> <li>Elevate MPAC 2025 narrative to the highest possible level</li> </ul>
<b>National Level Implementation:</b> Arise from alignment with relevant agency priorities in AMS; roles obscurity and limited incentives among National Coordinators (NCs) and National Focal Points (NFPs); inability to pull necessary data at the national level; and limited linkages between support for connectivity and other external programmes.	Strengthen in-country implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly define roles and responsibilities, in particular of NCs and NFPs</li> <li>Obtain support from senior stakeholders to strengthen incentives for implementation by NCs and NFPs</li> <li>Develop handover mechanism for NFPs</li> <li>Develop a best practice guidebook for a coordination mechanism at the national level</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement with Other Connectivity-Related Initiatives and ASEAN Partners:</b> Arise from increased risk of duplication as the number of activities in the connectivity space are growing; and risk of missing collaboration opportunities.	Convene relevant connectivity efforts and engage ASEAN partners with a more structured approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene the connectivities</li> <li>Improve consultation with DPs and OEPs on ASEAN Connectivity</li> <li>Establish a Connectivity - DPs and OEPs Working Group</li> <li>Build projects together by leveraging DPs and OEPs' expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Need for Flexibility to Adjust to Changes in Regional Context:</b> Arise from initiatives implementation that changes from external events (e.g. COVID-19) and external priorities (e.g. sustainability and inclusiveness).	Adapt MPAC 2025 initiatives to changing regional context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct review of MPAC 2025 initiative concepts at least once in two years as part of the annual MPAC 2025 MRE process</li> <li>Develop a COVID-19 focused narrative for MPAC 2025</li> <li>Ensure environmental sustainability and inclusiveness within each initiative</li> </ul>
<b>Ownership Beyond 2025:</b> Arise from the maintenance of databases/platforms, technical support, and resources.	Ensure ownership of MPAC 2025 initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine clear ownership of on-going initiatives beyond 2025</li> <li>Strengthen internal capabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Private Sector Engagement:</b> Arise from lack of engagement with the private sector.	Deepen private sector engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen internal capabilities. Include private sector engagement in KIMs of each initiative</li> </ul>

Note: All recommendation areas are complementary in nature and should be considered in combination for optimal effect.

Sustainable Urbanisation Forum in the third quarter of 2021, and started work on the Report on the State of Urbanisation in ASEAN.

As open data holds great potential in creating economic and social value for people, ASEAN started development of an ASEAN Open Data Dictionary in November 2020. The project aims to support AMS in improving the efficiency of public service delivery, advancing innovation and research in the private sector and academia, and laying the foundation for regional open data networks.

Ensuring supply chain efficiency and resilience is crucial when preparing the region for future crises. Accordingly, ASEAN, in 2020, initiated development of the ASEAN Database on Priority Trade Routes and Product Groups and the Framework on Supply Chain Efficiency and Resilience. This will include supply chain analysis of ten product groups essential for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and stimulating a post-pandemic economic recovery. To complement this endeavour, ASEAN is developing methodologies to conduct ex-ante regulatory reviews of draft non-tariff measures



(NTMs) so as to increase transparency and improve assessments to achieve ASEAN's goal of reducing trade-distorting NTMs.

Recognising the pandemic's impact on the region's human capital and labour market, the ASEAN-ROK Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Mobility Programme seeks to support AMS in providing technical and vocational skills to TVET students and personnel. ASEAN identified five priority TVET Sectors<sup>3</sup> in December 2020 and is currently identifying ten additional priority programmes across those Sectors. The Programme will also feature mobility initiatives in the form of student internships and faculty exchanges to build the capacity of TVET personnel and policymakers. On higher education, ASEAN published the Study on Enhancing Intra-ASEAN University Student Mobility in October 2020. The

Study provided recommendations on improving data collection for intra-ASEAN university student mobility, facilitating student visa arrangements in ASEAN, and assessing the potential of establishing an ASEAN scholarship scheme.

### BUILDING PEOPLE-CENTRIC, SMART, AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Via the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN), ASEAN promoted the exchange of good practices and lessons learned, and forged partnerships to support the development of people-centric, smart, and sustainable cities in the region. Strengthening institutional mechanisms has been pivotal for creating connected communities. ASCN endorsed the ASCN Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework to monitor implementation of Smart City Action Plans (SCAPs) and

prioritise the development of potential partnerships. ASCN also established Guidelines for ASCN Engagement with External Partners as a reference.

In 2021, ASCN will develop proposals to implement an online portal and a smart city investment toolkit so ASCN members can update their priorities, showcase their projects and achievements, and bring together partners for collaboration. The toolkit will also offer ASEAN local governments information about funding and financing options for city projects and aid in developing strategies that best fit their local context.

### INTENSIFYING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

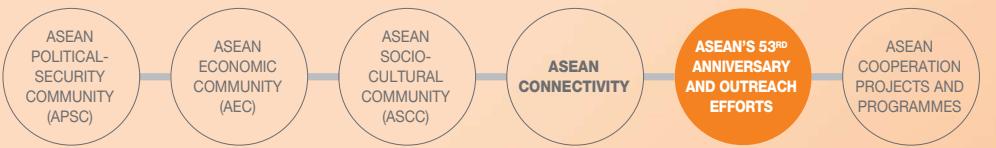
Five years into implementation of MPAC 2025, it is evident that cross-Sectoral consultations play a vital role in ensuring the sustainability and relevance of the Master Plan. The ACCC, lead implementing bodies, and the ASCN have promoted participatory cross-Sectoral consultations with ASEAN stakeholders at the regional, national, and city level, as well as with External Partners. ASEAN will continue to catalyse more collaborations through the joint creation and development of projects.

Consistent and targeted communications through the ASEAN Connectivity microsite (<https://connectivity.asean.org/>) and various media channels remain integral to implementing the Master Plan. As the microsite provides regular progress updates, stakeholders can reach out and discuss with ASEAN how they might contribute to enhancing ASEAN Connectivity. ●

<sup>3)</sup> The five priority TVET sectors are: i) electrical and electronics, ii) building construction, iii) automotive, iv) hospitality and tourism, and v) computers and information.

## HIGHLIGHTS (JUNE 2020-MAY 2021)

- Completed MPAC 2025 Mid-Term Review.
- Continued implementing the Initial Pipeline of ASEAN Infrastructure projects
- Adopted Framework for Improving ASEAN Infrastructure Productivity
- Supported implementation of ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy (ASUS)
- Commenced the development of ASEAN Open Data Dictionary
- Started the development of ASEAN Database on Priority Trade Routes and the Framework for Enhancing Supply Chain Efficiency
- Initiated the development of a set of methodologies to conduct ex-ante regulatory reviews of draft Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) before implementation by ASEAN Member States (AMS)
- Started ASEAN-Republic of Korea (ROK) Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Mobility Programme
- Completed Study on Enhancing Intra-ASEAN University Student Mobility



# ASEAN ANNIVERSARY AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

ASEAN, under Viet Nam as Chair, adapted quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 as it worked to mitigate the loss of lives and livelihoods, as well as disruptions to business, education, and health services. ASEAN Member States (AMS) have continued to demonstrate solidarity and unity, fighting the virus by supporting policies that helped maintain essential supplies and connectivity, while planning for the post-pandemic new normal.

Against this backdrop, the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) marked the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of ASEAN online, inviting people to join from home. The celebration, focusing on ASEAN's cohesive journey to resilience, featured remarks from then Secretary-General of



ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi, and speeches from Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and Viet Nam's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Bin Minh, in his capacity as Chairman of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers.

The anniversary festivities were broadcast on ASEAN's website and social media platforms on 8 August 2020 and reached over 210,000 people. Highlights included congratulatory wishes from ASEAN citizens, ASEAN's External Partners, and special musical performances by the region's youth and "C asean Consonant", ASEAN's traditional music ensemble, supported by ThaiBev.

ASEC and AMS also hosted an ASEAN Online Sale Day to connect 150 e-marketplace companies with regional consumers, as part of efforts to rebuild consumer confidence, by leveraging digital technologies to foster a more robust recovery.

## MEDIA

While the prominence of new media and citizen journalists in the region continues to grow; traditional media, including print, television, and radio, remain prominent in AMS.

Since its debut in 2017, the ASEAN Media Forum (AMF) has become an effective platform for ASEAN to communicate key messages about its goals, achievements, and challenges to ASEAN's citizens through the region's key media leaders. The pandemic saw the forum's fourth iteration shift online, with ASEC as the hub, coordinating 26 senior media leaders and digital practitioners, who joined the forum remotely. The annual flagship programme further deepened the partnership between the ASEC and its Development Partner, Germany.

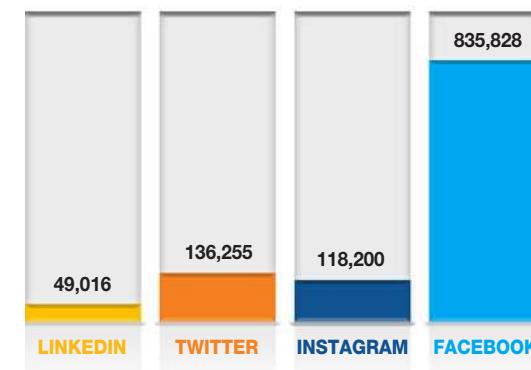


ASEC also designed and produced a Crisis Communication Manual to provide staff with technical and policy guidance when responding to unanticipated regional crises. The manual was developed with support from the German government through GIZ.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

ASEC continues to use, develop, and expand its digital platforms to offer information to users in the region and beyond, while facilitating

### ASEAN'S DIGITAL CHANNELS (as of May 2021)



WEBSITE: [WWW.ASEAN.ORG](http://WWW.ASEAN.ORG)  
9.7 MILLION UNIQUE VISITORS (JUNE 2020-MAY 2021)

discussions on issues they find important. ASEAN's social media platforms have a total of 1,139,299 subscribers, up by 11% from the last reporting period. The number of followers of ASEAN's Instagram and LinkedIn accounts grew steadily, while visitors to ASEAN's website increased from 9.1 million in 2020 to 9.7 million in 2021. ASEC is in the final process of revamping its website to enhance the user experience to better raise awareness of ASEAN.

## OUTREACH EFFORTS

In response to the pandemic, ASEC adapted and upgraded its outreach programme, making it accessible online to ensure continued public engagement. The ASEC tour is now available online for interested visitors, covering the history of ASEAN, ASEC, and its development over the past five decades. ASEC continues to welcome more students to the programme. More than 450 students from six schools and higher educational institutions have participated as of this report, and more than 1,000 students are expected to participate by the end of 2021.

In collaboration with the EU, ASEC held a book launch to present *ASEAN-EU Partnership: The Untold Story*, by Professor Tommy Koh and Dr. Yeo Lay Hwee, on 25 November 2020. The event was streamed on ASEAN's YouTube channel, demonstrating the channel's effectiveness for similar events in the future.

ASEC has continued its preparations to join the World Expo 2020 Dubai. In the spirit of inclusivity, ASEC has worked with stakeholders, including ASEAN Centres and accredited entities on programming and content creation, to showcase an inclusive ASEAN Community at the World Expo.

## ASEAN GALLERY

While the pandemic prompted a suspension of the ASEAN Artist Residency Programme (AARP), ASEC has worked with appointed artists to promote an appreciation of the diverse arts and cultures of AMS. The ASEAN Gallery



continues to expand its collection, thanks to generous contributions from various dignitaries. In anticipation of the 54<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Day and the ASEAN Gallery's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a coffee table book will be developed to showcase the Gallery's collection of artwork. An electronic version will be made available on the ASEAN website.

## ENTITY ENGAGEMENT

The 4<sup>th</sup> Forum of Entities Associated with ASEAN, convened online due to the pandemic, gathered 150 participants, including ASEAN parliamentarians, judicial officials, young people, civil society organizations, women, and representatives of business and professional associations. As in previous forums, the event provided a platform for ASEAN-accredited entities



to bolster cooperation with ASEAN, Sectoral Bodies, ASEAN Centres, and among themselves.

The forum also offered an overview of COVID-19's effects on ASEAN and a discussion of plans to develop ASEAN's post-pandemic recovery framework. Participants were introduced to the ongoing Mid-Term Review exercises conducted for the three ASEAN Community Blueprints. Participants shared on-the-ground views on the progress toward realizing the ASEAN Vision 2025 and noted possible areas for improvement. ASEAN entities acknowledged that recovery from COVID-19 will require closer cooperation between partners and stakeholders.

To elevate its level of engagement, ASEC is creating a digital platform for accredited entities to publish information about events, resources, and engage in discussions and collaboration. The platform is due to be launched during the 5<sup>th</sup> Forum of Entities, slated for the second quarter of 2021.

## ASEAN PRIZE

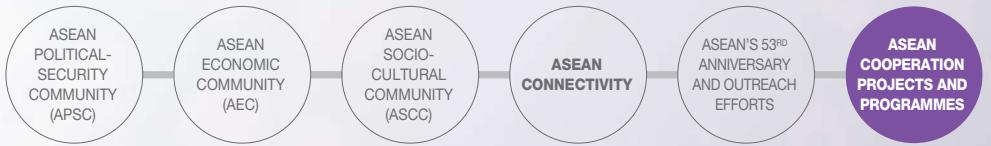
The ASEAN Prize continues to be an effective vehicle to highlight ASEAN Community building efforts. The ASEAN Studies Centre of the

ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute was awarded the Prize in 2020, making it the first ASEAN-based institution to receive the prestigious award.

The call for nominations for the ASEAN Prize 2021 started in February 2021. The award ceremony is expected to take place during the 54<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in August 2021, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam.

To promote the ASEAN Prize, ASEC will feature ASEAN Prize Recipients in a series of podcasts, videos, and webinars, with a view to instilling a sense of ASEAN identity and pride in the public. ●





# ASEAN COOPERATION PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

The cumulative value of submitted ASEAN cooperation projects and programmes from 2009 to February 2021 totals USD 1,586,558,900, comprising USD 1,517,976,320 that have been utilised for on-going, implemented, or completed items and USD 68,582,578 for items in process. The utilised portion comprises 1,170 projects (USD 729,667,250.44) and 107 programmes (USD 788,309,069). The ASCC accounted for 43.69% of the total (USD 663,216,258), supporting in part initiatives related to education and youth exchanges, culture, disaster management, COVID-19 related initiatives, labour migration, environment, climate change, health, and capacity development. The AEC accounted for 38.56% of the total (USD 585,286,871), supporting in part initiatives on science and technology, the transport sector, MSMEs, trade, information and communication technology, cyber security, food and agriculture, tourism, and energy. The APSC accounted for 11.38% of the total (USD 172,783,046), for development cooperation programmes, victim assistance programmes, cyber





capacity development, combating crimes, and human rights. Of the remaining funds, 0.55% (USD 8,408,014) were allocated for IAI/NDG and used to support education programmes in CLMV, attachment programmes for CLMV officers, and capacity-building programmes for CLMV on e-commerce, science and technology, and MSME; while 5.82% (USD 88,282,129) went to general and cross-Pillar projects that supported ASEAN promotional activities, ASEAN Connectivity, ASEAN project development training, and strengthening of the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC).

Implementation was made possible by financial and technical support from ASEAN Dialogue Partners, including Canada, China, India, the Republic of Korea, Japan, New Zealand, and Russia, as well as Sectoral Dialogue Partners, including Norway, Pakistan, Switzerland, and Turkey.

In 2020, 58 ASEAN cooperation projects were approved for implementation, implemented, or completed with a total value of USD 29,444,603. ASCC accounted for 61.05% (USD 17,975,433) of expenditures for projects addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education scholarships, youth exchange programmes, disaster management, climate change, and culture. AEC accounted for 29.05% (USD 8,553,269) of expenditures, supporting initiatives on food and agriculture, energy efficiency, transportation, and risk management. APSC accounted for 5.89% (USD 1,735,667) of expenditures, supporting peace and reconciliation initiatives, development cooperation, cyber capacity development, ASEAN diplomatic training, and enhancing the role of women. Meanwhile, IAI/NDG accounted for 2.03% (USD 598,502) of funds, supporting capacity-building programmes for CLMV in various fields, while general and cross-Pillar projects accounted for 1.98% (USD 581,732) of expenditures, supporting cooperation on ASEAN Smart Cities.

On the other hand, the implementation of programmes was supported by Dialogue Partners such as EU, Australia, and USA as well as Development Partner Germany. Programmes processed and signed by the ASEC in 2020 included the Regional Development Cooperation Agreement (RDCA), signed between ASEAN and the US on 10 September 2020, which made available USD 50 million to support new and ongoing programmes. The Smart Green ASEAN Cities Financing Agreement (EUR 5 million) was signed with the EU on 30 December 2020 to support ASEAN on a city, national, and regional

level in dealing with urban, environmental, climate change, and related governance issues, while focusing on smart solutions enabled by digitalization and the use of technologies. Similarly, the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle to Protect the Marine Environment and Coral Reefs programme (EUR 4 million) with Germany commenced in 2020, aiming to support ASEAN Member States (AMS) in improving implementation capacity to reduce land-based waste leakage to protect the seas.

The EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (EU SHARE) was extended on 27 December 2020. Meanwhile, the other cross-sectoral multi-year programmes are ongoing to provide support to ASEAN, covering priority areas of the three pillars as well the cross-pillar on ASEAN connectivity. They include Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI) and ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE Plus), ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program

Phase II (AADCP II), AANZFTA Economic Support Programme (AEISP), ASEAN-USAID Inclusive Growth in ASEAN through Innovation, Trade, and E-Commerce (IGNITE) and ASEAN-USAID Partnership for Regional Optimization with the Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (PROSPECT).

## STRENGTHENING THE ASEAN PROJECT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Strengthening the ASEAN Project Management Framework (PMF) is part of Programme Cooperation and Project Management Division's (PCPMD) Strategic Plan 2018-2025. The goal is to offer guidance to manage comprehensive, efficient, and reliable Results-Based Management (RBM) processes, procedures, and systems that will link project results to higher-level objectives. Existing and new PMF documents were updated





## ASEAN COOPERATION PROJECT PROPOSAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

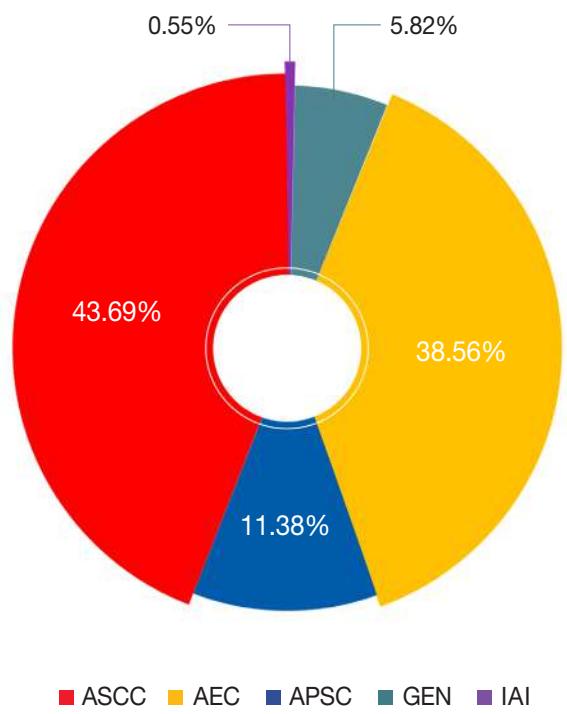
The Project Proposal Management System was developed as part of the Project Monitoring and Evaluation Framework-Phase 2 initiative under an ASEAN-Germany cooperation project titled “Post-2015 ASEAN Secretariat Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development”, which was implemented by ASEC and GIZ.

or developed in 2020, in consultation with AMS through the Sub-Committee on Development Cooperation (SCDC) and ASEC Desk Officers. The ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II (AADCP II) provided support by engaging consultant teams from the Management for Development Foundation (MDF).

The CPR has approved the following PMF documents:

- i. The new ASEAN Cooperation Projects Design and Management Manual, which offers a simplified and practical reference for ASEAN project stakeholders, covering every phase of an ASEAN cooperation project’s lifecycle.
- ii. A revised Standard Operating Procedure on Project Appraisal and Approval (SOP PAA) that incorporates new information.
- iii. New Guidelines on the Implementation and Monitoring of ASEAN Cooperation Projects that aim to explain the requirements and procedures needed to implement and monitor ASEAN Cooperation Projects, to provide advice on activities and mechanisms that can help Proponents and Implementing Agencies implement and monitor projects, and to address common questions, including proposed changes during project implementation.
- iv. Revised Guidelines on Closing ASEAN Cooperation Projects, to provide clarity on procedures to end such projects.

## CONTRIBUTION OF ASEAN PROJECTS & PROGRAMMES BY PILLAR (2009 – FEBRUARY 2021)



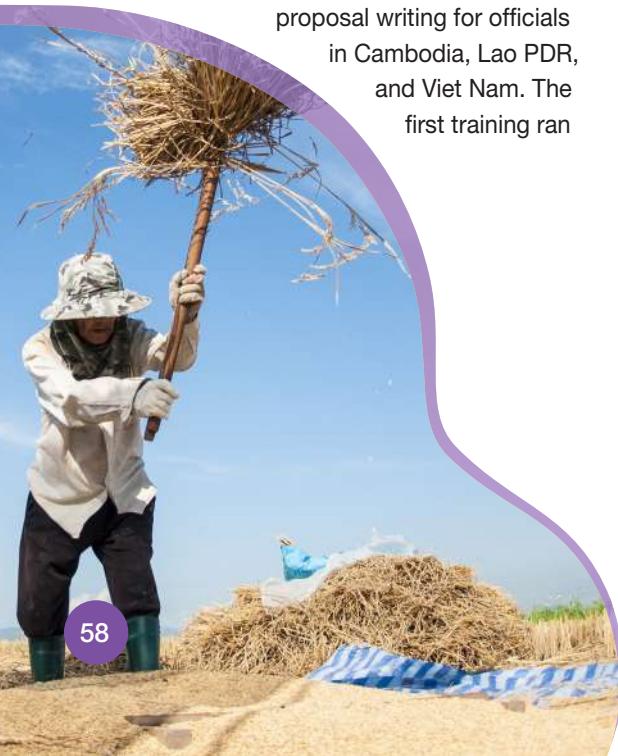
The system, developed by Deptech Digital Indonesia with GIZ support, is an online application that facilitates the appraisal and approval process for ASEAN Cooperation Projects and provides information on project status after approval. The system includes a proposal tracking system based on the SOPs for appraisals and approvals, a document filing and history management database for submitted and approved project proposals, and a data processing capability to aggregate information using a user-friendly dashboard interface. The system was launched on 12 April 2021, following the training of ASEC Desk Officers in November 2019, the development of the User Guide, and the system launch planned in 2020 which was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The system is currently available to all Desk Officers.

### IAI PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING COURSE FOR CLMV

Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported by the Republic Polytechnic of Singapore and ASEC, organised training on project proposal writing for officials in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. The first training ran

from 7-18 December 2020 for Cambodia, and was followed by trainings for Viet Nam and Lao PDR officials on 4-15 January and 15-26 March 2021 respectively. The trainings were attended by officials and experts from various ministries and universities, with the aim of enhancing participant understanding of the development and management of ASEAN Cooperation Projects. During the two-week trainings, participants engaged in exercises and group projects pertaining to general project management, proposal writing, and the ASEAN project cycle, including project proposal development, the appraisal and approval process, implementation and monitoring, and completion and reporting in an ASEAN context.

Trainings were facilitated in the first week by Republic Polytechnic while ASEC, represented by the PCPMD, facilitated the second week, with a focus on ASEAN Cooperation Projects. To enrich participants, ASEC invited ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II members to share their experience on project proposal development and monitoring and evaluation from an ASEAN Partner's perspective. ASEC's Finance and Budget Division was also invited to share the project budget formulation and project fund disbursements, as well as financial reporting. By the end of each training, participants developed various types of regional project proposals in agriculture, environment and disaster management, e-learning, education, e-taxation, small and medium enterprises, public transport, renewable energy, and public law and regulation. Upon completion, each participant received a certificate issued by Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ASEC. ●



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