

Concept Note
Directors-General Forum of ASEAN Countries on Development Cooperation
22-23 August 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

1. Background

As the ASEAN Chair in 2019 and the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development, Thailand is committed to working with ASEAN Member States on development cooperation in the region, seeing it as one of the essential mechanisms contributing to the overall process of ASEAN Integration and Connectivity. It also helps ASEAN Member States address global challenges, such as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

At present, there exists a number of development cooperation programmes operated at bilateral, trilateral, regional and ASEAN-wide levels, based on various models such as South-South, South-South for South, North-South, and North-South for South cooperation. External partners have also shown growing interests in engaging with ASEAN on development cooperation. It is thus expected to see an increase in numbers in development cooperation programmes both in scopes and approaches in the region.

At the global and regional level, the recent Buenos Aires Outcome Document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40) recognized the role of regional mechanisms in supporting and enhancing subregional, regional and interregional South-South and triangular cooperation and, thus, contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNGA resolution 73/291, 15 April 2019). The Asia-Pacific region has also recently reaffirmed this commitment by calling for the convening of regional forums in which developing countries can exchange experiences and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives (ESCAP resolution 75/3, 31 May 2019).

Furthermore, studies from the publications *Mapping South-South Cooperation in ASEAN (UNOSSC, 2018)* and *ASEAN as the Architect for Regional Development Cooperation (Asia Foundation, 2018)* have reiterated how ASEAN has already shown good examples of South-South and triangular cooperation and argued that a better coordination among ASEAN countries can help enhance opportunities deriving from development cooperation.

In this regard, under the Chairmanship's theme 'Advancing Partnership for Sustainability', Thailand offers to host the first **Directors-General Forum of ASEAN Countries on Development Cooperation on 22-23 August 2019 in Bangkok**, with an aim to bring development cooperation agencies in ASEAN together, in an informal setting, to share their development cooperation experiences including South-South and triangular cooperation within and outside the region, and to discuss respective opportunities and challenges. This ASEAN forum could utilise similar discussions of the first and the second Asia-Pacific Directors-General Forum for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, jointly organised in 2018 by ESCAP, UNOSSC, with Thailand (in Bangkok) and Indonesia (in New York), respectively.

It is hoped that this informal Forum will be a starting point for further dialogue among ASEAN counterparts, leading the way for development cooperation that complements ASEAN integration process, priorities, and 2025 Vision while maintaining ASEAN Centrality, including ASEAN Complementarities Initiative between ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. Objectives

2.1 To serve as an *informal platform for dialogue* for development cooperation agencies of ASEAN countries to share experiences, exchange information and good practices on institutional arrangements and the implementation of development cooperation of each ASEAN countries at bilateral, trilateral, regional and ASEAN level.

2.2 To discuss how ASEAN can further enhance benefits from information exchanges, as guided by, but not exclusive of, the ‘3C’ benchmarks i.e.

- *Coherence* between development policy, strategy, work plan, and targeted outcome in responding to each country’s national plan and policy.

- *Coordination* between relevant actors and stakeholders at all levels, i.e. local, national and regional, global level

- *Complementarities* between various bilateral, trilateral and multilateral platforms and areas of expertise, including networking among existing ASEAN centres of excellence, in order to add value and complement each other.

2.3 To discuss practical ideas such as;

- (1) How to improve coordination and build capacity among development cooperation agencies in ASEAN,

- (2) How to strengthen and benefit from ASEAN engagement with external partners as well as other development cooperation frameworks at regional level such as ACMECS, GMS, the Asia-Pacific Directors-General Forum on South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and other regional and global conferences, and

- (3) How to create synergies between development cooperation approaches and practices and existing ASEAN initiatives to promote sustainable development in ASEAN countries.

3. Tentative Programme Structure

To serve the objectives, this informal Forum is organised in two days, including a field visit. The first session would focus on setting the scene with a panel discussion comprising experts from relevant UN agencies, subregional and regional institutions or cooperation frameworks that play a key role on development cooperation in the region. The second session would invite development cooperation agencies of ASEAN countries to share their experiences and provide inputs to address above-mentioned and other relevant issues. The field visit on the second day aims to offer participants the opportunity to see development cooperation projects in action.

22-23 August 2019

Day 1	Session 1 –	Panel discussion with relevant UN agencies, ASEAN Secretariat, and subregional and regional institutions/frameworks
	Session 2 –	Discussions and exchanges among development cooperation agencies of ASEAN countries
	Session 3 –	Way forward
Day 2	Field visit	

4. Expected Participants

Expected participants are heads of development cooperation agencies of ASEAN Member States responsible for technical cooperation and South-South and triangular cooperation. In the case of Thailand, the focal point for the organisation of the Forum is Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

5. Expected Outcomes

1. Closer partnership among ASEAN development cooperation agencies.
2. Exchanges of ideas, experiences and good practices on past and ongoing relevant national strategies and policies on development cooperation among ASEAN countries.
3. Recommendations on how to strengthen coordination among development cooperation agencies in ASEAN and potentially with those of external partners.
4. Way forward to maintain the momentum of the discussion, which may lead to future concrete deliverables such as capacity building opportunities for officials of ASEAN countries on development cooperation.

6. Contact Points

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