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Promoting Complementarities
between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025
and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Progress Report
September 2021

ASEAN-Thailand

PROGRESS REPORT

PROMOTING COMPLEMENTARITIES
BETWEEN THE ASEAN COMMUNITY VISION 2025 AND
THE UN 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SEPTEMBER 2021

ASEAN-THAILAND

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PROGRESS REPORT
PROMOTING COMPLEMENTARITIES
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I. INTRODUCTION

The “Progress Report on Promoting Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”¹ is an annual publication which has been produced since 2017 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand in Thailand’s capacity as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation. The Report is intended to track progress made over the year and suggest potential ways forward in promoting complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the so-called *Complementarities Initiative*.

This fifth edition of the Progress Report covers the period from October 2020 to September 2021. During this period, COVID-19 has continued to pose multi-dimensional challenges to Southeast Asia, including on the implementation of the SDGs in the region. The pandemic has also prompted the region to build back better and stronger as enhancing sustainability and resilience is an overriding priority of ASEAN as specified in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. As a result, efforts on post-COVID-19 recovery and the attainment of the SDGs should be undertaken simultaneously and coherently in order to help realise a more sustainable and resilient future of ASEAN.

In moving forward, fostering partnership for sustainability is key to achieving the above objectives. Given the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 including on ASEAN’s progress towards achieving SDG targets by 2030, enhanced regional and international cooperation and coordination is more critical than ever. A focus should also be placed on not only strengthening partnerships among all stakeholders but also promoting synergy among all relevant existing regional mechanisms and platforms, including the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue that has played an important supporting role in the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025). Thailand will continue to work closely with all ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat and other interested partners towards this end.

II. THE FIFTH HIGH-LEVEL BRAINSTORMING DIALOGUE ON ENHANCING COMPLEMENTARITIES BETWEEN THE ASEAN COMMUNITY VISION 2025 AND THE UN 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (HLBD)

Thailand and ESCAP jointly organised the 5th HLBD on 31 March 2021 in a hybrid format at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok and via videoconference. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP. Participants included Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN, as well as high-level representatives from ASEAN Member States, UN agencies, and other external partners, including China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the EU, Switzerland, Norway, France, Italy, the

¹ All editions of the Progress Report on Promoting Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/de93s6ms>.

World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Asia Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.

The annual HLBD continues to serve as an important platform in promoting sustainable development cooperation in ASEAN. This year's HLBD was also aimed to enhance efforts in attaining the SDGs and robust post-COVID-19 recovery in a synergised and complementary manner. The Co-Chairs' Summary of the 5th HLBD appears in [Appendix 1](#). Key points of the Meeting are as follows:

a. OPENING REMARKS BY CO-CHAIRS

As the COVID-19 pandemic has affected ASEAN's progress on the implementation of the SDGs, the Co-Chairs suggested specific policies that ASEAN should undertake to build back better post-pandemic and attain the SDGs, including: (a) Changing people's mindset and ways of life to become more sustainable; (b) Finding a balance between human activity and every aspect of their lives (the "Balance of Things") by pursuing sustainable and inclusive development strategies, including the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model; (c) Leveraging on innovation and digitalisation to address global challenges; and (d) Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships, promoting innovative resource mobilisation and green financing as well as turning competition to collaboration in order to create a peaceful environment conducive to sustainable economic recovery and shared prosperity.

b. PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS UNDER THE COMPLEMENTARITIES INITIATIVE

Based on the 2021 Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report by ESCAP, ASEAN was not on track to meet SDG targets. With respect to progress in the 5 priority areas of the Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025)² – namely, poverty eradication, infrastructure and connectivity, sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable consumption and production, and resilience, ASEAN was lagged behind especially on promoting sustainable consumption and production and building resilience to climate-induced disasters. Hence, ASEAN must enhance cooperation with all partners in the implementation of the SDGs in the region. The work of the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD) was recognised in contributing towards this end, including on research and studies, networking, capacity-building and policy dialogue, as well as coordinating the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap among relevant stakeholders.

c. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPLEMENTARITIES ROADMAP IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 CHALLENGES

The Meeting underlined the significant role of sustainable development in mitigating the multi-dimensional impacts of COVID-19 as well as the importance of fostering international, multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral, and cross-society SDG partnerships. Concrete actions and approaches to implement the Complementarities Roadmap were also discussed, including through presentations by Brunei Darussalam, as the ASEAN Chair in 2021, China, Japan, Norway, the EU, Italy, Switzerland, UNDP, the World Bank, UNEP, UNDRR and UN Women on initiatives to support the implementation of the Roadmap across the 5 priority areas of cooperation as well as capacity-building.

² The Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025) can be accessed at shorturl.at/ltACR.

III. ASEAN CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND DIALOGUE

Despite the COVID-19 challenges, the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD) has continued to carry out its work in all important areas in its second year of operations in accordance with its work plan for 2021 as follows:

a) Research and Studies

- Research work and opportunities: In January 2021, the ACSDSD published its first publication titled *Research on Sustainable Development and COVID-19 Pandemic in ASEAN*³ to examine the impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture and industry which are the two major sectors in ASEAN and suggest potential recovery responses and sustainability policy implications for ASEAN. Moreover, in September 2021, the ACSDSD awarded a research grant to Assistant Professor Jirawat Jaroensathapornkul from Faculty of Economics, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand, who will work with Associate Professor Jangkung Handoyo Mulyo from Faculty of Agriculture, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, to conduct a 10-month study on the topic of *Household Food Waste Management during COVID-19 Pandemic in Thailand and Indonesia*.

- Ph.D. scholarships: In 2020, the ACSDSD provided Ph.D. scholarships to three students from Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam to pursue their studies concerning sustainable development in the ASEAN context at the College of Management, Mahidol University, Thailand. In September 2021, the ACSDSD granted additional three Ph.D. scholarships to two students from Thailand and one student from Myanmar, who will focus their research on climate finance, circular economy and sustainable healthcare delivery.

b) Dialogue and Related Activities

- Korea-ASEAN Partnership for Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia: Innovation for Gender Equality in the COVID-19 Era: On 9 December 2020, the ACSDSD in collaboration with the KDI School of Public Policy Management and the Asia Foundation organised a dialogue to exchange views and best practices between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea to promote innovation in support of gender equality and the achievement of the SDGs as well as mitigate risks from COVID-19 in the region. The dialogue brought together participants from government agencies, the private sector, think tanks and civil society organisations from both ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea.

- Online Roll-out of the ASEAN Gender Outlook and Dialogue to Enhance the Complementarities Initiative through the Gender Lens in COVID-19 Recovery: On 25 May 2021, the ACSDSD in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and UN Women organised this activity with over 200 participants from diplomatic corps and international organisations in Thailand as well as Thai government agencies, the private sector, academic institutions, civil society organisations and the interested public in Thailand. The event's objectives were to further disseminate the ASEAN Gender Outlook⁴ which was a joint publication by the ASEAN Committee on Women, the ASEAN Secretariat and UN Women and officially launched on 1 March 2021 as well as to promote dialogue on this topic in the context of Thailand and ASEAN with invited speakers from various sectors in Thailand. The report of this event appears as Appendix 2.

³ This publication can be accessed at www.cm.mahidol.ac.th/acsdspd/index.php/resources/research-and-studies.

⁴ The ASEAN Gender Outlook can be found at <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/asean-gender-outlook>.

- Forum on SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and Business & Human Rights – An ASEAN-Swiss Peer-Learning Event: On 31 May 2021, the ACSDDSD together with Switzerland organised this activity in order to exchange experiences between ASEAN and Switzerland and enhance capacity of ASEAN Member States on responsible consumption and production in the context of business and human rights, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and relevant OECD guidance, with the focus on agro-industry and food production. The event was also aimed to build networks and partnerships among relevant stakeholders including the private sector. The policy brief of this event appears as Appendix 3.

- ASEAN-Norway Marine Environmental Protection Partnership: The ACSDDSD is collaborating with the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bangkok to organise this project, which has been rescheduled from September 2021 to the end of the year. The project will comprise three activities, namely (1) a policy-level dialogue on ocean sustainability, (2) coordinated World Cleanup Day activities in Thailand and other ASEAN Member States, and (3) a brainstorming dialogue on solutions and practical actions with engagement of the private sector, academic and civil society organisations.

- ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform: The EU has been in consultation with the ACSDDSD to establish the ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform at the ACSDDSD with the support of Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI). The establishment of the Platform is in line with the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan in building a more sustainable and resilient future for ASEAN. The Platform will also help raise awareness about circular economy in ASEAN and promote exchange of experiences and lessons learned among ASEAN Member States and the EU. Potential key activities under this Platform include organisation of an annual conference, utilisation of an information and knowledge portal to exchange and disseminate knowledge and know-how, and undertaking relevant collaborative projects.

- ASEAN Networking Symposium on the Implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap in Support of COVID-19 Recovery: The ACSDDSD, the Asia Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation will jointly organise this event, which has been rescheduled to the end of 2021 or early 2022. The objective of this event is to provide a platform for relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, centres and institutes to network and enhance collaboration on their efforts to promote sustainable development, particularly in the context of COVID-19 recovery.

IV. CONCRETISING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP: HIGHLIGHTS OF OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

A key approach that contributes to the advancement of sustainable development agenda in ASEAN is the development and implementation of cooperation projects and activities that generate concrete results for the benefits of the peoples of ASEAN. This also requires strong support from and sustained partnerships among all ASEAN Member States and interested external partners. Highlighted initiatives and activities are as follows:

a. THE 2ND ASEAN FORUM ON SDGS WITH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AGENCIES

Following the inaugural Forum held in 2019, the ASEAN Secretariat in collaboration with Switzerland organised this 2nd Forum on 12 October 2020 via videoconference. Its objective was to provide an avenue for national development planning agencies to review SDGs implementation and identify ways forward to strengthen cooperation on SDGs implementation among ASEAN Member States, in light of the challenges brought

about by COVID-19 pandemic. A key outcome included the recognition of the importance of enhanced cooperation on SDGs data and statistics as well as the role of the Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (WGSDGI) of the ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS). This Forum was also aimed not only to promote synergy among various SDGs platforms and efforts by ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat but also to explore ways to provide a platform for regular discussions and exchange of knowledge and information among national development and planning agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

Thanks to the success of the Forum in 2019 and 2020, this Forum was elevated this year to the ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Accelerating Actions to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals via videoconference. It was held on 20 September 2021 and jointly led by National Development Planning Agencies of Indonesia, Cambodia and the Philippines.

b. VIRTUAL SEMINAR ON CONNECTING THE CONNECTIVITIES: SYNERGY THROUGH ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, in partnership with the World Bank and ASEAN Secretariat, organised this seminar on 22 January 2021. This seminar brought together policymakers, experts, academia, and private sector representatives from ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners to exchange views on promoting synergies between the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and other connectivity initiatives in the region. The seminar also focused on strategic areas of connectivity and important issues for economic recovery from COVID-19, namely, global supply chain connectivity, green and digital connectivity, and smart and sustainable connectivity. The outcome of the seminar included a set of recommendations on how to deepen cooperation on connectivity while highlighting the common areas among connectivity strategies through “Connecting the Connectivities” approach. The summary of this seminar appears as [Appendix 4](#).

c. THE 5TH ASEAN-CHINA-UNDP SYMPOSIUM: ENHANCING THE ROLES OF YOUTH IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS

The ASEAN Secretariat, China and UNDP co-organised this symposium on 8 April 2021 via videoconference, which was previously postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19. This symposium was centred on reinforcing the relationship between the SDGs and youth through enhanced collaboration with youth on addressing SDG targets that the region is still lagging behind, youth empowerment, including vulnerable and marginalised ones, as well as promoting youth volunteerism for sustainable development and ASEAN Community-building. This event also encouraged the presentations by youth leaders from ASEAN Member States and China as well as discussions on how to further promote digital skills, employment opportunities and entrepreneurship for sustainable development for ASEAN youth.

d. 2021-2022 AS YEARS OF ASEAN-CHINA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Initially, 2021 was designated as the year of ASEAN-China Sustainable Development Cooperation, which was subsequently extended to 2022. In this regard, China has proposed several activities to promote cooperation on this matter, including policy dialogue and capacity-building on various fields related to sustainable development and COVID-19 recovery such as public health, digital economy, sustainable cities, clean energy, climate change and biodiversity, as well as other key events such as the ASEAN-China High-Level Forum on Green and Sustainable Development and ASEAN-China Environment Forum. To contribute to this occasion, during the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Chongqing in June 2021, Thailand as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation submitted a List of ASEAN-China Cooperation Projects for Sustainable Future

where Thailand plans to organise ASEAN-China seminars on such topics as poverty eradication, food security and climate change as well as a capacity-building programme on green finance in 2021 and 2022.

e. THE 3RD ASEAN-EU DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Following the 2nd ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development in Brussels in February 2020, Thailand, in collaboration with the EU, will host the 3rd edition of this Dialogue in November 2021 via videoconference. The goal of this event is to further promote ASEAN-EU cooperation on sustainable development and post-COVID-19 recovery, including through the pursuit of the BCG Model. Representatives from ASEAN and EU Member States, relevant Directorates-General of the European Commission, relevant ASEAN Centres and other pertinent stakeholders will be invited to participate.

f. BIO-CIRCULAR-GREEN ECONOMY MODEL (BCG MODEL)

At the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat in January 2021, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand introduced the BCG Model, which is Thailand's national economic development approach, as a potential alternative strategy for ASEAN's post-COVID-19 recovery and sustainable future growth. Applying a whole-of-society approach, the BCG Model involves integrating bioeconomy, circular economy, and green economy with advanced technologies and innovations throughout the supply chains to boost competitiveness, enhance resource efficiency, transform waste into wealth, regenerate biodiversity, and mitigate impacts on the environment. To build on this, Thailand, in partnership with the ACSDS and the ASEAN Network on BCG Economy under the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology, plans to organise an ASEAN BCG Knowledge Sharing Series in 2022 where experts from ASEAN's external partners will be invited to share their expertise and best practices with ASEAN Member States on thematic areas related to BCG. This undertaking will complement other relevant efforts of ASEAN, including the development of a Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN Economic Community which is one of the priority economic deliverables of Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2021 as well as the establishment of the ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform at the ACSDS.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. PROMOTING SYNERGY ON ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POST-COVID-19 RECOVERY

Given its multi-dimensional impacts and adverse effects on socio-economic development, the COVID-19 pandemic reiterates the need for enhanced cooperation to build back better and stronger. Promoting sustainability and resilience is critical in ASEAN's post-COVID-19 recovery strategy. Hence, achieving robust regional recovery and attaining sustainable development are inter-related agendas and should be pursued together in a complementary manner. Towards this end, synergy should be enhanced not only in the pursuit of these agendas, but also in the works of all relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and pertinent ASEAN Centres and mechanisms. Fostering partnerships with all stakeholders, including external partners, and promoting innovative approaches and means of implementation should also be sought.

B. LEVERAGING THE BCG MODEL TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND RECOVERY IN THE REGION

The BCG Model is not an entirely new concept. Its essence is indeed in line with the core of green policies and strategies of individual ASEAN Member States and several external partners of ASEAN. The BCG Model aims to promote 'balanced growth' where

economic activities and progress will not come at the expense of nature and environment and, thus, can contribute to ASEAN's robust recovery and sustainable development. BCG cooperation may cover relevant thematic areas that are of ASEAN's interest such as food and agriculture; medical services and wellness; bioenergy, biomaterials and biochemical; and sustainable economy and creative economy. In this regard, the BCG Model should be further examined for possible cooperation in ASEAN as it can support the ongoing work and priorities of relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and ASEAN mechanisms.

C. REDOUBLING EFFORTS TO ACCELERATE THE SDGS IMPLEMENTATION IN ASEAN

As the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021 by ESCAP suggests, ASEAN is currently not on track to meet SDG targets by 2030 and instead experiencing a reverse trend in certain SDGs such as Goal 13, 14 and 16. Compounded with the challenging impacts of COVID-19 on sustainable development, it is imperative for ASEAN to enhance closer cooperation within the region and with external partners to accelerate the SDGs implementation in ASEAN in this Decade of Action. As the years 2022-2023 will mark the midpoint of the SDGs implementation, it will be timely for Southeast Asia to take a closer look at and conduct a systematic and rigorous review of ASEAN's experiences in implementing the SDGs. This exercise will help determine the future course of individual and collective actions towards achieving the SDGs in the region by 2030. Gaps, barriers and opportunities as well as extra resources, know-how and institutional support with regards to the SDGs implementation should be carefully assessed and identified for more effective and targeted interventions. Relevant ASEAN's work plans and undertakings should also be evaluated to ensure their coherence and effectiveness.

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Appendix 1:

Co-Chairs' Summary of the 5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

**Co-Chairs' Summary
of the 5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing
Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and
the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

31 March 2021

1. Thailand and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) jointly organised the 5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLBD) on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 in a hybrid format with speakers and participants present at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok and joining via videoconference.

2. The Meeting served as a platform for ASEAN, UN agencies, and other external partners of ASEAN to further advance cooperation in promoting complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Complementarities Initiative). This year's HLBD also aimed to enhance efforts in attaining the SDGs and robust post-COVID-19 recovery in a synergised and complementary manner.

3. The Meeting was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation, and Her Excellency Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP. His Excellency Dato' Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN, also participated in the Meeting as did high-level representatives and development experts of ASEAN Member States, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Program (UNEP), UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), UN Women, and the World Bank. Representatives of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the European Union (EU), as ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, Switzerland and Norway, as ASEAN's Sectoral Development Partners, as well as France and Italy, as ASEAN's Development Partners, were present as guests of the Co-Chairs. Representatives of the Asia Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation also attended as Observers.

4. The Co-Chairs recognised that progress on the implementation of SDGs in ASEAN has been affected by the pandemic, making sustainable development and sustainability all the more essential in mitigating the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and building a better and more resilient future as reflected in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025. In this regard, the Co-Chairs emphasised that ASEAN and its partners must strengthen their cooperation to turn this crisis into an opportunity to promote a sustainable development path in ASEAN and enhance regional resilience against future disruptions. Towards this end, the priorities identified in the Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025) must be effectively implemented to take forward the Complementarities Initiative and support robust recovery of ASEAN.

5. The Co-Chairs also suggested specific policies that ASEAN should undertake in order to build back better from the multi-dimensional impacts of COVID-19 and attain the SDGs, including (a) Changing people's mindset and ways of life to become more

sustainable (b) Finding a balance between human activity and every aspect of their lives (the “Balance of Things”) by pursuing sustainable and inclusive development strategies, including the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model (c) Leveraging on innovation and digitalisation to address global challenges and (d) Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships, promoting innovative resource mobilisation and green financing as well as turning competition to collaboration in order to create a peaceful environment conducive to sustainable economic recovery and shared prosperity.

6. In his remarks, His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi highlighted that ASEAN has accorded high importance to post-pandemic recovery strategies as well as aimed to take stock on lessons learned, restore ASEAN’s connectivity, prevent potential economic downturns and foster human security and resilience of ASEAN people. The ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders in November 2020 with the aim of holistically articulating ASEAN recovery from COVID-19 and serving as guidance for ASEAN sectoral bodies with respect to pursuing their strategic priorities and enhancing partnerships. The ACRF and its Implementation Plan, in essence, contribute to the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and support the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap, with the focus on a people-centered and whole-of-Community approach.

7. The Meeting had wide-ranging and in-depth discussions on how to better concretise cooperation under the Complementarities Initiative and Complementarities Roadmap to ensure that SDG progress in ASEAN would continue to advance and the region would recover stronger from COVID-19 and be well-prepared for future uncertainties.

(A) Progress on implementing actions under the Complementarities Initiative

8. Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Meeting noted the progress made on the Complementarities Initiative presented by ESCAP, the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD) and underlined the importance of obtaining quality SDGs-related statistics for monitoring the SDGs implementation in the region.

9. *Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP* updated the Meeting on the progress of the Complementarities Initiative including in the context of the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025. Based on the 2021 Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report, ASEAN achieved significant progress on some SDGs such as achieving building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation (Goal 9), obtaining clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), and providing quality education (Goal 4). Much progress remains to be seen on reducing inequalities (Goal 10), addressing climate change (Goal 13), protecting life below water (Goal 14) and promoting peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16). With respect to progress in the five priority areas of the Complementarities Roadmap, ASEAN is not fully on track especially on promoting sustainable consumption and production and building resilience to climate-induced disasters. He stated that many of the flagship initiatives have become a reality with the help of partners. ESCAP has also worked closely with ASEAN and will continue to engage its member countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

10. *Mr. Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community* updated the Meeting on ASEAN’s undertakings to promote sustainable development, even as the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the region’s ability to keep on track their efforts towards achieving the SDGs. Dialogue and partnerships play an important part in the member countries’ efforts in ensuring that ASEAN maintains its course. He stated that

forums such as the High-level Brainstorming Dialogues afford ASEAN and its partners to share ideas on innovative solutions to the region's SDG challenges and to contribute to the five priority areas of the Complementarities Roadmap. Other important SDG platforms include the ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium, the ASEAN Forum on SDGs with National Development Planning Agencies, and the recently initiated ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Partnership Conference. He also mentioned the newly launched publications of the ASEAN Development Outlook and the ASEAN Gender Outlook, both of which study the progress towards sustainable human development and gender equality in the ASEAN region and identify key challenges while noting examples of best practices for the future. He underlined the importance for ASEAN to work across its community pillars to further advance the work on the SDGs.

11. The Meeting also welcomed the work of the ACSDDSD in contributing to the SDGs implementation such as research and studies, networking, capacity-building and policy dialogue, as well as coordinating the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap among relevant stakeholders. *Mr. Narong Sasitorn, Executive Director of the ACSDDSD* updated the Meeting on the overall implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap (2020 -2025) and the work of the ACSDDSD. He outlined the Centre's priorities and work plans for 2021, which include a networking symposium with the Asia Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, a peer-learning forum on Business and Human Rights and SDG 12 with Switzerland, the ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform with the EU and marine environment protection with Norway. He underlined that these projects were aimed at accelerating ongoing sustainable development efforts in the region. He also stressed the need for all ASEAN SDG players and actors to streamline efforts for effective implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap.

12. The Meeting looked forward to further cooperation among ASEAN Member States and external partners and collaboration with UN agencies in the implementation of the Roadmap and underlined the need for effective monitoring and evaluation of such implementation.

(B) Effective implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025) in light of COVID-19 challenges

13. The Meeting also discussed further concrete actions and approaches to implement the Complementarities Roadmap. The Meeting took note of presentations by Brunei Darussalam, as the ASEAN Chair in 2021, China, Japan, Norway, the EU, Italy, Switzerland, UNDP, the World Bank, UNEP, UNDRR and UN Women on initiatives to support the implementation of the Roadmap across the 5+1 priority areas of cooperation, namely poverty eradication, infrastructure and connectivity, sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable consumption and production, resilience, as well as capacity-building.

14. *Mr. Garry Ibrahim, Director-General of the Department of ASEAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam* provided an overview of advancing sustainable development cooperation under the current ASEAN Chairmanship theme "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper," by promoting a strategic, holistic and coordinated approach to address emergencies, economic crises, disasters and disruptions that may face the ASEAN Community. He also emphasised that ASEAN Member States have continued to address the broad impacts of COVID-19 and stepped up efforts for a comprehensive and sustainable recovery. He recognised the importance of multilateralism and a rules-based regional architecture, while appreciating the strong ASEAN-UN comprehensive partnership to implement the SDGs under the new ASEAN-UN Plan of Action and the Complementarities

Roadmap. He mentioned initiatives to address the challenges towards reaching the SDGs which include working towards a green recovery under the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, developing an ASEAN Framework on Circular Economy, addressing the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on the peoples' well-being and the cross-border freight transport operations in ASEAN during the COVID 19 pandemic in collaboration with ESCAP, among others. He also informed of other ASEAN initiatives such as the ASEAN Workshop on Blue Economy, the ASEAN Agreement on Electronic Commerce and the ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to COP26. To conclude, he emphasised that education and inclusivity of youth remains to be a priority in the region's work to achieve the SDGs.

Poverty Eradication: Improving the standard of living and well-being of peoples through sustainable job creation and human capital development

15. *Mr. Ke Yousheng, Permanent Representative of China to ESCAP* highlighted efforts the country has undertaken to alleviate poverty as set out in the 2030 Agenda. He underscored the strong cooperation ties between ASEAN and China in addressing the issue of sustainable development through joint collaboration, such as the China-ASEAN Forum on Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation. 2021 also marks the 30th Anniversary of the China-ASEAN Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation, a cooperation that has played an important part in building the capacity of ASEAN Member States, particularly Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam, in areas such as agriculture, environment, and disaster management.

16. *Mr. Jaco Cilliers, Manager of UNDP's Bangkok Regional Hub* informed of the upcoming 5th ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium: Enhancing the Roles of Youth in Achieving the SDGs on 8 April 2021. The event would bring together stakeholders and partners to discuss the reinforcing relationship between SDGs and youth and aim to empower youth to participate in policy discourse on the sustainable development agenda. He highlighted three main issues surrounding the issue on poverty. First, poverty eradication requires a modern social protection system that takes care of everyone in a country. UNDP as the UN technical lead on socio-economic impact and recovery has seen through many socio-economic impact assessments across the world that countries with a robust social protection system in place have fared better in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, addressing poverty is a multi-dimensional concern where monetary based poverty measures are insufficient and that economic growth does not always reduce poverty or deprivation. His last point is the pledge that no one is left behind, particularly women and excluded communities, both in urban and rural surroundings.

Infrastructure and Connectivity: Promoting sustainable socio-economic development through quality infrastructure and connectivity

17. *Mr. Hiroshi Kawamura, Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission of Embassy of Japan* underlined the importance of enhancing connectivity to realise regional integration as well as cooperation among countries. Digitalisation and green growth can be the engine of growth in the region and contribute to a sustainable development. He continued to describe Japan's approach to improving connectivity under the concept of quality infrastructure, which relies heavily on infrastructure investment that is of international standards. He maintained that it is through "quality growth" can ASEAN and its partners manage to achieve growth that is sustainable, inclusive and resilient. He also added that the Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative was launched to support ASEAN connectivity efforts

through project initiatives in land, air, and sea connectivity, including promoting digital and green connectivity.

18. *Ms. Birgit Hansl, Country Manager for Thailand, the World Bank* stressed the importance of promoting connectivity among countries to help maintain economic growth and build resilience in the region, as COVID-19 had exposed the vulnerability of supply chains significantly impacting trade and economic activities. She urged trade agreements to include policies that help enhance the efficiency of cross-border trade facilitation. Furthermore, promoting digital connectivity will vastly improve regional trade through enhanced trade facilitation and efficient and transparent procedures. Building connectivity infrastructure will require development projects that are multi-sectoral, with adequate financing and technical oversight from government.

Sustainable Management of Natural Resources: Combatting marine debris and plastic waste as well as ensuring ocean sustainability

19. *Mr. Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway* emphasised that issues relating to plastic pollution, environmental protection and oceans are given high priority in Norwegian foreign policy. The current President of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Norwegian Minister for Climate and Environment, Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, stated at the Assembly's February session that it is imperative to get back on track to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He stated that Norway greatly values its sectoral dialogue partnership with ASEAN. Ocean affairs, marine environmental protection and marine plastic litter are important elements of the new 5-year cooperation agreement that was recently concluded. Norway also welcomed the recently initiated project with the ACSDD on these issues. He reiterated Norway's suggestion at the UNEA to further discuss global actions to prevent plastic pollution, with a focus on achieving a new global agreement. Also, he underlined that advancing the development of a global agreement on marine litter is a key step in strengthening global governance of plastic pollution, and that the participation of the ASEAN countries will add further momentum to this initiative.

20. *Mr. Jerker Tamelander, Coordinator, Secretariat of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), UN Environment Programme* provided an overview of the production and use of plastic for the period 1950 to 2017. He briefed the Meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on plastic use, and the challenges and issues exposed by the pandemic. He presented activities that addressed these environmental problems in ASEAN leveraging on the mandates of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Plastic Debris and the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

Sustainable Consumption and Production: Promoting dialogue on sustainable consumption and production as well as circular economy

21. *Mr. Jean-Louis Ville, Director for Middle East, Asia and Pacific, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Commission* described the very substantive development cooperation between ASEAN and the EU. He presented their cooperation on green transition, especially on the circular economy and sustainable production and consumption. The Green Deal Agenda, which includes the Circular Economy Action Plan, supports the EU's shift to a resilient, sustainable, inclusive, and climate neutral economy. He stated that in the efforts "to build back better and greener" from the pandemic, ASEAN and the EU are seeking a lasting, sustainable and resilient transformation of both the economies and societies. The EU will support ASEAN in

transferring these global ambitions into actions through bilateral and regional cooperation, and through regional programmes like the SWITCH-Asia Programme, the ASEAN-EU High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change supported by the E-READI programme as well as collaboration with the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue. A concrete outcome of ASEAN-EU partnership will be the ASEAN Platform on the Circular Economy supported by E-READI.

Resilience: Enhancing regional resilience and tackling climate change in view of the upcoming COP 26

22. *Ms. Tosca Barucco, Minister and Italy's Special Envoy for COP26* acknowledged Southeast Asia as one of the world's most vulnerable areas to climate change. As a Development Partner of ASEAN, she stated that Italy is fully committed to working together with ASEAN Member States through UN Agencies, including ESCAP, on disaster prevention and management to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in ASEAN. She informed of Italy's agenda as Chair of the G20 that is based on a three-pronged interconnected strategy, focusing on people, planet and prosperity. She added that recovering from the pandemic offers a unique opportunity to build back better and greener. As Co-chair of the COP26, Italy will host the Pre-COP as well as the Youth4Climate Driving Ambition event, to give young people from all around the world the opportunity to discuss concrete proposals with Ministers. Mainstreaming resilience, particularly unlocking its strong synergy with climate change mitigation and sustainable development in megacities, is a strategic priority for Italy's Development Partnership with ASEAN.

23. *Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction* raised concerns on the slow pace of achieving SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 12 (Climate Action) based on the lack of progress in the indicators. He urged countries to learn from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic for disaster risk management and the need to better understand the interrelated nature of risks. He also noted that the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) allows ASEAN bodies and UN agencies to implement their priority programmes both at the regional and national levels. ASEAN and the UN are also developing the Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management for the period 2021-2025.

24. *Mr. Johannes Matyassy, Deputy State Secretary, Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs* highlighted the importance of building resilience to reduce the impact of disasters, while informing of the cooperation with ASEAN on high-level policy dialogue and training of ASEAN decision makers in disaster management and with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre on simulation exercises and the stocking of non-food relief items in Chainat regional warehouse to serve continental ASEAN Member States in case of disasters. He also informed of important projects under Swiss-ASEAN cooperation include the forum on Business and Human Rights and SDG 12 organised with the ACSDSD and further cooperation with ASEAN for the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021-2025. Switzerland also signed the agreement of cooperation with ESCAP to contribute to the Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness.

Cross Cutting Area: Capacity Building: Empowering women and gender equality in ASEAN

25. *Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director of UN Women for Asia and the Pacific* informed of the gender mainstreaming activities across all pillars of ASEAN, particularly on the priorities in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025 as well as in implementing the ASEAN-UN Women Joint programme. He also informed of the ASEAN Gender Outlook that was recently launched by ASEAN and UN Women for monitoring progress towards SDGs in the Complementarities Roadmap. He looked forward to working with partners like Thailand and the ACSDS in building cross-sectoral collaboration with relevant stakeholders and in advancing women's economic empowerment in ASEAN.

26. The Meeting viewed that these projects and activities can directly and indirectly help reinforce regional resilience, including through the exchange of best practices and knowledge sharing, which contribute to a better and sustainable future for ASEAN.

27. *Mr. Latsamy Keomany, Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR* updated the Meeting on the country's achievements in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He encouraged partners like the UN to continue supporting Laos' efforts in implementing the SDGs as well as promoting awareness among relevant national stakeholders. The country is also conducting its second Voluntary National Review for presentation at the upcoming UN High-level Political Forum in July 2021. The review aligns with the national development plan which also takes into account the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. He reiterated the importance of digital transformation in harnessing the power of ICT, especially for the benefit of MSMEs which have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

28. *Mr. Foster Gultom, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia* informed the Meeting of the country's efforts to achieve the SDGs, particularly those related to poverty alleviation and natural disasters. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the livelihood and social well-being of the population, prompting the government to launch an economic stimulus policy and social protection programmes. The aim of these strategies is to reduce the number of the poor resulting from the pandemic, by integrating affirmative policies for poverty reduction programmes, beneficiary data collection schemes, and graduation system for social assistance programmes. He emphasized the government's push towards building the necessary infrastructure and connectivity to provide equal access for everyone and ensuring sustainable development. Indonesia is also undergoing a digital transformation to build inclusive, smart, and sustainable cities as part of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network. The government is prioritising a sustainable recovery from the pandemic to help create a more resilient economy and more equitable development.

29. *Mr. Shivakumar Nair, Deputy Director, ASEAN Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* noted the recently launched Singapore Green Plan 2030, which strengthened Singapore's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. To further the effective implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Singapore encouraged ASEAN Member States to boost SDG implementation by closely aligning the Complementarities Roadmap with the 2030 Agenda, and leveraging on the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action (2021-2025). Singapore highlighted the ASEAN Smart Cities Network as a collaborative platform to accelerate sustainable urban development and build resilient smart cities. In addition, the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) was cited as a means to share best practices and upgrade skills to mitigate the long-term effects of climate change and promote sustainable development.

30. *Mr. Sébastien De Vaujany, First Secretary, Alternate Deputy Representative to ESCAP of France* highlighted the importance of biodiversity which will be at the top of the international agenda at the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) scheduled in September 2021 in Marseille, France, and at the COP15 on biodiversity next October in Kunming, China. France, among others, is contributing to the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility (ACGF), a multi-donor initiative in favour of green infrastructure and sustainable connectivity. He looked forward to seeing how the discussions on biodiversity that would take place in the COP15 context could be linked to and integrated into the ACGF's work.

31. The Meeting underlined that sustainable development efforts must remain people-centred and leave no one behind. The importance of fostering the spirit of multilateralism and forging international, multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral, and cross-society SDG partnerships was also emphasised.

32. The Meeting commended the efforts and leadership of Thailand, as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation, and ESCAP in promoting the Complementarities Initiative. The Meeting recognised the importance of potential cooperation between ASEAN, UN and other international organisations and stakeholders in achieving sustainable development in the region.

33. The participants expressed their appreciation to the Royal Thai Government and ESCAP for hosting this High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue and looked forward to the 6th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue next year.

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Appendix 2:
Event Report of the Online Roll-out of the
ASEAN Gender Outlook

ONLINE ROLL-OUT OF THE ASEAN GENDER OUTLOOK:

Enhancing the complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development through a gender lens in the context of COVID-19 recovery

EVENT REPORT, 25 MAY 2021

The Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), in partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) co-organized an online event to roll out the ASEAN Gender Outlook in Thailand. The event also featured a dialogue in support of the “Complementarities Initiative” to explore how the ASEAN Gender Outlook supports the complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a gender lens, including in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The event took place online on Tuesday, 25 May 2021, and it was broadcasted via the MFA Facebook account.

The ASEAN Gender Outlook, a regional flagship publication, was jointly produced by the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW),

the ASEAN Secretariat and UN Women, and the regional launch took place on 1 March 2021. The publication provides a unique perspective on progress in ASEAN towards realizing each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender lens, including by showcasing the gendered impact of COVID-19 on sustainable development across the region.

At the online roll-out event in Thailand, prominent Thai female panellists shared their views and practical suggestions on mainstreaming gender to support the attainment of the SDGs and post-COVID-19 recovery. More than 200 people joined the meeting to represent diplomatic corps and international organizations in Thailand, government agencies, the private sector, academic institutions and civil society organizations. The public broadcast of the meeting also reached a wide audience among the general public.

Opening session

Mr. Thani Thongphakdi, Permanent Secretary of the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commended the ASEAN Gender Outlook and underlined the need to develop more targeted policies at both national and regional levels to empower women and girls and build their resilience, especially in response to COVID-19. A cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnership is needed to advance gender equality and its linkages with sustainable and inclusive development. As Thailand served as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation and was elected to UN Women's Executive Board for 2022–2024, he reaffirmed Thailand's commitment to work with all partners to create a future with equal opportunities for all.

Ms. Patcharee Arayakul, Permanent Secretary of the Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, stressed that gender equality is a priority for ASEAN and Thailand. The findings of the ASEAN Gender Outlook showed that gender inequalities persist in the ASEAN region and a collective response is needed to address this issue. Thailand is contributing to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in ASEAN by, for instance, taking the lead on promoting the elimination of gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices in the education system. At the national level, it is important to use gender-responsive budgeting practices and provide targeted support and

services for women and vulnerable population groups, especially during the COVID-19 crisis.

Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director of UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, reiterated that gender equality is at the heart of the Complementarities Initiative and that gender statistics are a critical building block for mainstreaming gender throughout the Initiative. As a regional flagship publication, the ASEAN Gender Outlook is the first of its kind, because it is owned and led by ASEAN. It calls for a specific focus on "reaching the furthest behind", particularly women living in the poorest rural households and ethnic minority women in the region. The ASEAN Gender Outlook identified key opportunities to overcome challenges, with particular attention to investing in the production and use of gender data to inform policymaking. In particular, much of the gender data needed to monitor environment-related SDG indicators is missing. Mr. Naciri reaffirmed UN Women's commitment to support ASEAN in gender mainstreaming and the production and use of gender data to track progress towards the SDGs through South-South cooperation. This can be done by facilitating the exchange of good statistical practices and expertise that already exist in the ASEAN region.

A snapshot of the ASEAN Gender Outlook is annexed to this publication, and the full text is available [here](#).

Panel discussion on Promoting Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality towards Achieving the SDGs: Innovative Approaches and Practical Recommendations in the context of COVID-19 Recovery

Moderated by Mr. Narong Sasitorn, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue

Gender Actions in Thailand and ASEAN by Ms. Ratchada Jayagupta, Representative of Thailand to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute of Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University

In the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, Thailand implemented strategies to respond to violence

against women, enacted special measures to support women and girls to cope with the crisis and promoted women's leadership role. For instance, Thailand has a one-stop crisis centre that provides survivors of violence with medical support (physical and mental) as well as legal assistance. The centre also manages a 24-hour hotline for victims of domestic violence. Special measures to support women during the COVID-19 pandemic include the provision of shelter, food and medical care as well as debt suspension to assist women facing economic hardship. She highlighted the important role played by women in Thailand in responding to the crisis, as primary frontline community health personnel for COVID-19 prevention and response. The ASEAN Gender Outlook revealed some of the gendered effects of the pandemic, thus the data

may be particularly useful to inform future actions to promote women in leadership roles, including for crisis recovery.

Thailand's role in ACWC has also been important to advance gender equality at the regional level, including by influencing the mid-term review of the Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women as well as leading the ASEAN campaign on the elimination of violence against women. Thailand is also piloting the implementation of the ACWC Gender Sensitive Guideline for Handling Women Victims of Trafficking in Persons, by organizing trainings for frontline workers. In addition, the country has contributed to the development of the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework, led by ACW and ACWC, which will provide guidance for gender mainstreaming in project planning and implementation.

The draft five-year work plan of ACWC (2021–2025) has a strong focus on women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women, ensuring access to legal identity for women and children, as well as support to women of marginalized groups, an area of need particularly highlighted in the ASEAN Gender Outlook. In line with the Outlook's recommendation to enhance the availability and use of gender data across the region, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, adopted in November 2020, has a strong emphasis on the production of gender data.

Role of the Private Sector in Women's Economic Empowerment for COVID-19 Response and Recovery by Ms. Nusra Chankaew, Regional Procurement Director for South-East Asia, Australia and New Zealand at Unilever, Bangkok

COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on women and girls, especially through the increased burden of unpaid care and domestic work, which was highlighted prominently in the ASEAN Gender Outlook. As a private sector corporation, Unilever promotes gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and society at large by utilizing gender-sensitive recruitment policies, offering paternity leave, equal pay, as well as support for women to take leadership roles in the organization. In the marketplace, Unilever works with several partners, including UN Women, to promote gender equality and women's economic opportunities. For instance, through its RISE Academy, Unilever builds the capacity of retailers to grow their businesses and compete in the digital economy. The organization also promotes gender-responsive distribution models and supports women-owned micro- and small suppliers. This demonstrates the important role the private sector can play in promoting inclusivity and diversity, along with ending discrimination. The private sector can also

be an important contributor to the production of gender data, which could be used to complement official statistics or to fill gaps in new and emerging areas.

Encouraging Positive Change in Addressing Social Issues by Ms. Aliza Napartivaumnay, Co-Founder of Socialgiver

Socialgiver is an award-winning social enterprise that collaborates with more than 400 businesses. Its profits have been used to fund over 40 social projects across the region, many of which are in line with commitments made through the 2030 Agenda. During the pandemic, it provided psychological support to women through an application, in partnership with the Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. Promoting gender equality and women's well-being is essential for creating a just and peaceful society, including addressing gender-based violence and providing economic opportunities for women. Thus, the importance of individuals taking action to create meaningful change cannot be overstated. As noted in the ASEAN Gender Outlook, substantial progress has been made in producing data on women's economic empowerment across the region, but some data gaps remain. Civil society organizations can play an important role in filling these gaps, both by partnering with national governments and international partners to produce gender data and by using available data and advocating for better gender statistics.

Mainstreaming Gender in Disaster Response and Humanitarian Action in the COVID-19 Pandemic by Ms. Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk, Director of the Sustainable Development Foundation

Gender equality is a pre-condition for reducing poverty and ensuring dignity and respect for all. As a result of climate change, Thailand has seen a rise in the frequency of natural hazards and greater magnitude of drought and flood episodes over the past decades. As noted in the ASEAN Gender Outlook, women in the ASEAN region depend largely on natural resources and are significantly employed in agriculture: 64 per cent of employed women in the Lao People's Democratic Republic are engaged in agriculture. This figure amounts to 39 per cent in Viet Nam, and 34 per cent in Cambodia. An estimated 28 per cent of women in ASEAN live in households that primarily use wood as cooking fuel. Climate-related hazards have a disproportionate impact on these women, and these impacts are particularly noticeable in rural areas. Building women's resilience to climate-related shocks and promoting their participation to prevent climate-related disasters are crucial steps to mitigate and reduce risks and vulnerabilities. Gender must be mainstreamed across

all areas of disaster risk reduction – from gender-responsive disaster preparedness, to prevention, mitigation, response and recovery. Environment-related gender data is essential to inform these policies and perform gender-responsive budgeting and effective monitoring. As data availability is lowest for statistics that capture the gender-environment nexus in ASEAN, adequate human and financial resources must be made available for this purpose.

Increasing Women's Participation in Peace and Decision-Making Processes to Ensure a More Peaceful, Stable and Sustainable Society by Ms. Suphatmet Yunyasit, Lecturer at the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University

In the southern border provinces of Thailand women, regardless of their religion or ethnic or social backgrounds, have suffered from unrest in the area. For instance, widowed women may have to provide for their family and, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are encountering more barriers to accessing health care and job opportunities, as noted in the ASEAN Gender Outlook.

The United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Periodic Review process and the SDGs have served as important means to promote women's roles in peace and security. As the ASEAN Gender Outlook highlighted, women's engagement in peacekeeping and decision-making in peacebuilding processes is essential, but in the southern border provinces women have only engaged in track 1.5, 2 and 3 forums. Track 1 dialogue has not included female representation so far. State and non-State actors can also play an important part in supporting women's participation by empowering women and building their skills, as well as by

creating platforms for meaningful interactions between women and other stakeholders. Many data gaps persist in the area of women, peace and security for the ASEAN region. Although the ASEAN Gender Outlook presents an important picture of progress, greater efforts are needed to fill data gaps related to women, peace and security.

Women's Leadership in Diplomacy and International Law by Ms. Vilawan Mangklatanakul, Director-General of the Treaties and Legal Affairs Department, MFA

According to the ASEAN Gender Outlook, although ASEAN has made progress in gender equality, women still have less access to education, health care, decent work and benefits. It also showed that women's participation in politics is increasing, but no data is available to assess how much decision-making power women hold in other administrative positions. Similarly, the ASEAN Gender Outlook notes that women are increasingly joining the labour market but a glass ceiling remains. This can be found in several government agencies and legal institutions in Thailand. It reflects the need to achieve gender parity in decision-making – which could contribute to enhancing overall performance and establishing more gender-responsive policies.

An immediate change in social policy to meet women's unique needs is required. Such a change would include the provision of a longer period of paid maternity leave, free child care, flexible working hours and tele-working arrangements for parents. It is also important to facilitate reintegration to the workplace after workers take long-term family leave and career breaks. To achieve this, related regulations and incentives could be put into practice.

Questions and answers

On additional gender data needed in the ASEAN region, Ms. Prasertcharoensuk highlighted the need for more gender data on natural disasters and climate change, including to measure the impacts on informal women workers, small-scale fishers and farmers. Ms. Chankaew added that more establishment data on female suppliers would also be helpful for private sector entities to better understand and promote women's roles in supply and value chains. Ms. Yunyasit noted that, in addition to the data on female peacekeepers presented in the ASEAN Gender Outlook, more granular data is needed to fully understand women's engagement in peacemaking and

peacebuilding processes, to create a more complete picture of women's participation in overall peace operations.

On the role of the patriarchy in limiting opportunities for women in achieving the SDGs in ASEAN, Ms. Prasertcharoensuk believed that this is a structural issue. Resolving it requires the full understanding and commitment of policymakers. She reiterated the importance of using gender data for gender-responsive budgeting and effective monitoring, in order to ensure that gender equality is promoted across all policy areas. Ms. Napartivaumnuay added that transparency on

budgeting is also crucial for accountability and progress monitoring.

On the desired contributions of women to leadership, Ms. Mangklatanakul remarked that having more women in

decision-making could contribute to better policies and rule-making. Gender-responsive policy could, in turn, strengthen adherence to principles of social justice and decent work. Concerted efforts are still necessary to create gender-sensitive laws, regulations, policies and data.

Closing remarks

Ms. Usana Berananda, Director-General of the ASEAN Affairs Department, MFA, expressed appreciation to all speakers, panellists and participants and highlighted key points from this event. First, “there is nothing that men can do and women cannot” as evidenced in the growing number of successful women in leadership positions. Evidence-based policies that promote gender equality must be further encouraged and implemented. Second, “women are key and equal contributors towards the attainment of the SDGs” as clearly seen from the evidence showcased in the ASEAN Gender Outlook and the contributions of the female

panellists. Third, the “disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women” means efforts must be strengthened towards an inclusive post-pandemic recovery, by ensuring that evidence-based policies are put in place to provide equal social protection, employment opportunities, capacity-building and access to finance. Lastly, it is essential to enhance partnerships and raise public awareness for promoting gender mainstreaming, including in the area of statistics. She encouraged all the participants to share these key points as widely as possible and take them forward in order to make positive change in society.

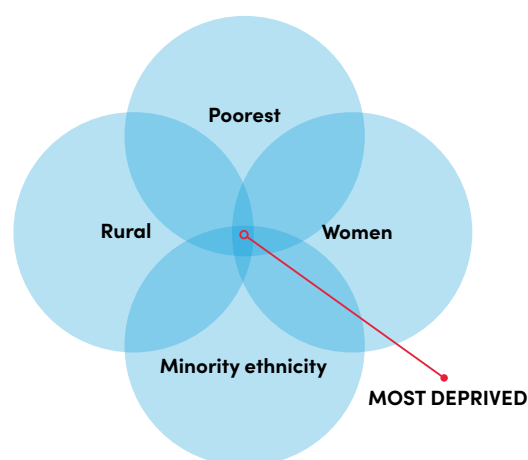
ANNEX:

Snapshot of the ASEAN Gender Outlook

The promise to leave no one behind can only be realized if the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are achieved for all women, girls, men and boys. However, data for the ASEAN region shows that select groups of women are disadvantaged.

When different forms of discrimination overlap, the barriers these women face may increase.

The ASEAN Gender Outlook tracks progress towards each of the Sustainable Development Goals through this multiple-deprivation lens.

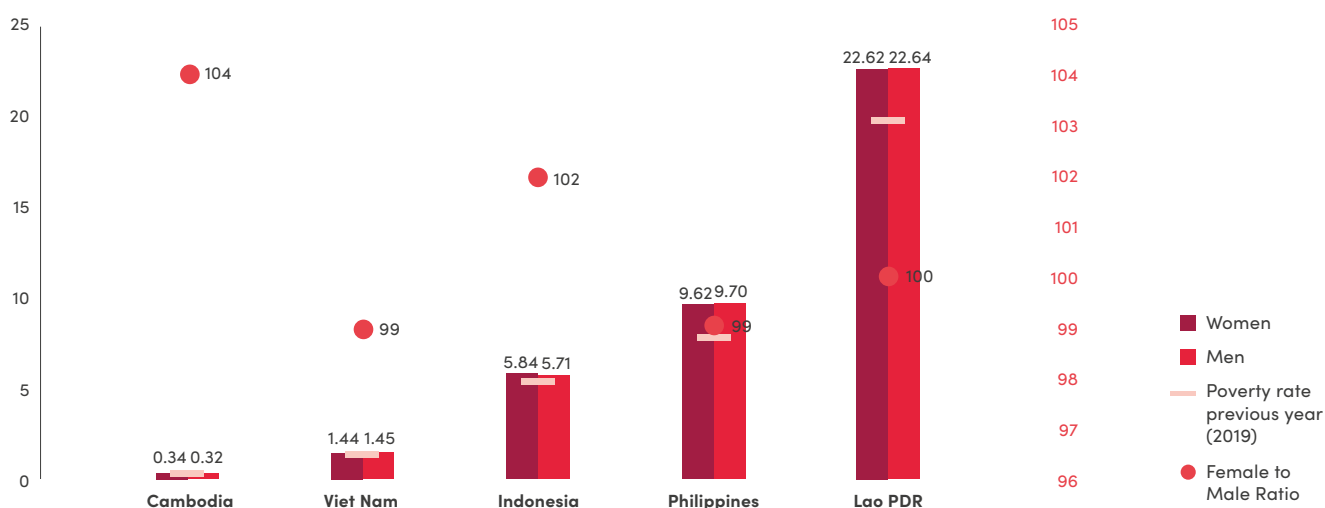




Poverty rates have increased over the past year in several ASEAN Member States, and in places such as Cambodia and Indonesia, women are more likely than men to live below the poverty line. For every 100 men who now live in poverty in Cambodia, there are 104 women living in poverty. In Indonesia, there are 102 women living in poverty for every 100 men living in poverty.

FIGURE 1

Proportion of people living in extreme poverty, by sex, 2020 projections (percentage)



Source: From Insight to Action: Gender Equality in the wake of COVID-19. Available from: <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/insights-action-gender-equality-wake-covid-19>

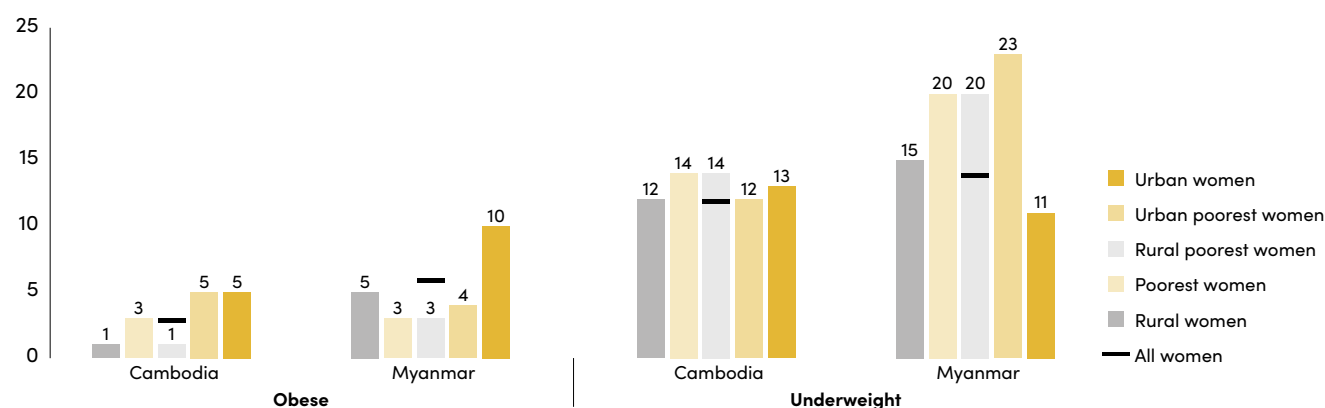
Note: Poverty estimates for women and men have been rounded off to two decimal places. In some cases, this may explain why the female to male ratio appears different.



Anaemia and underweight, both measures of malnutrition, are highest among people age 15–19. Women are more likely to be underweight if they live in a poor household.

FIGURE 2

Proportion of women age 18–49 who are underweight (low Body Mass Index) and obese (BMI ≥ 30), by location and wealth (percentage)

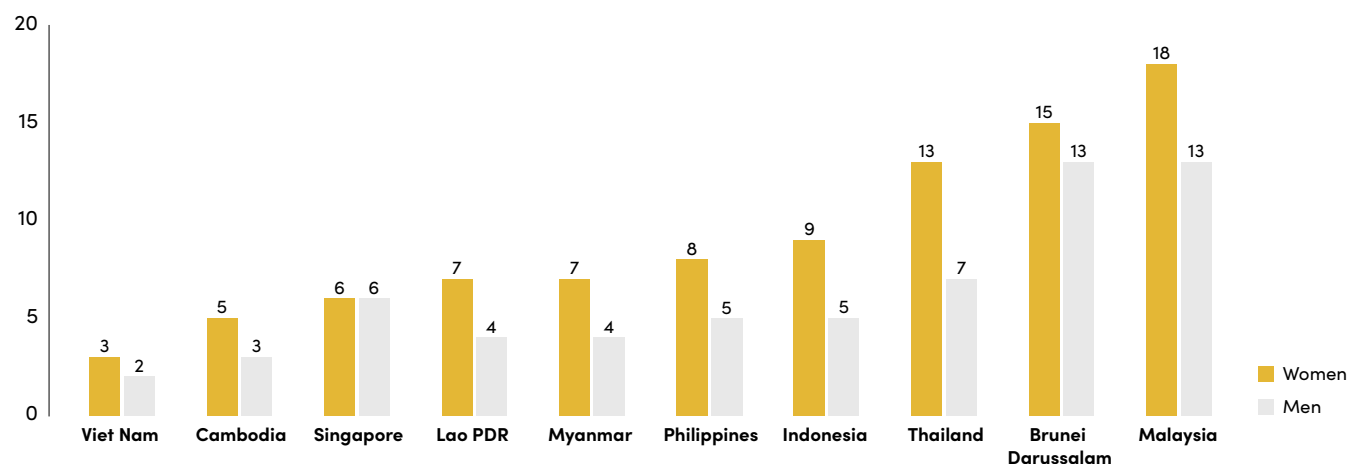


Source: UN Women calculations based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). Only countries with available data have been considered for this analysis.

The story of malnutrition in the region would be incomplete without considering the situation of the urban population. As urban diets increasingly rely on cheap and convenient processed foods rich in fats, sugar and salt but low in nutrients, population segments are increasingly overweight but malnourished. In all countries, women are worse off than men.

FIGURE 3

Proportion of adult population (18+) who are obese (BMI ≥ 30 , age-standardized), 2016 (percentage)



Source: Global SDG Indicators database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>.

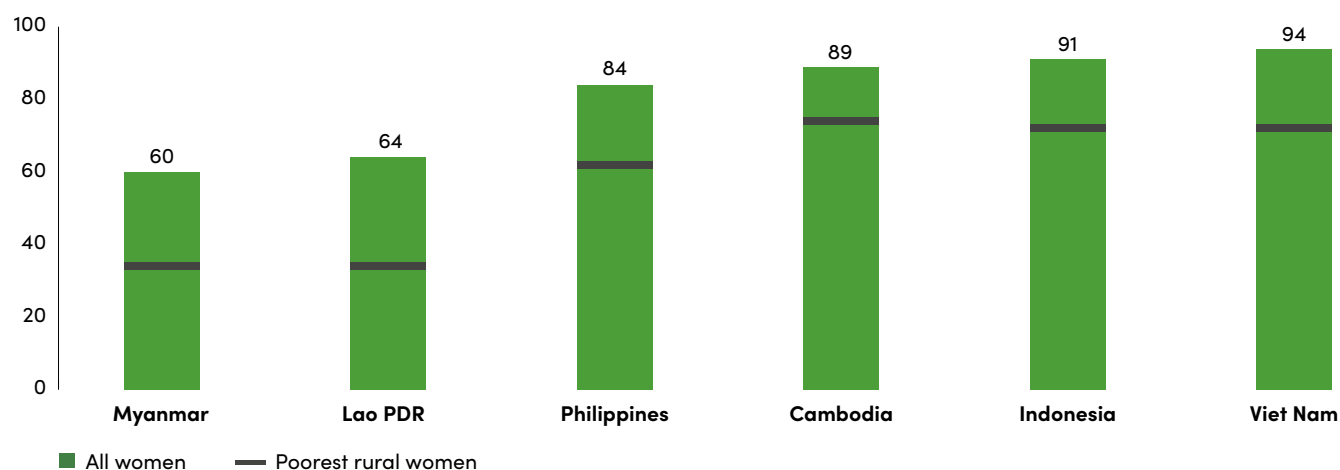
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Maternal mortality in the ASEAN region has dropped from 214 to 137 per 100,000 live births in the past two decades, partly due to increased access to health care, including professional obstetric and gynaecological care. About 90 per cent of deliveries in the region are now attended by skilled professionals, but for women living in rural areas and the poorest households, this figure is much lower. An estimated 33 per cent of births to these women take place unattended by skilled health personnel.

FIGURE 4

Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, latest available year (percentage)



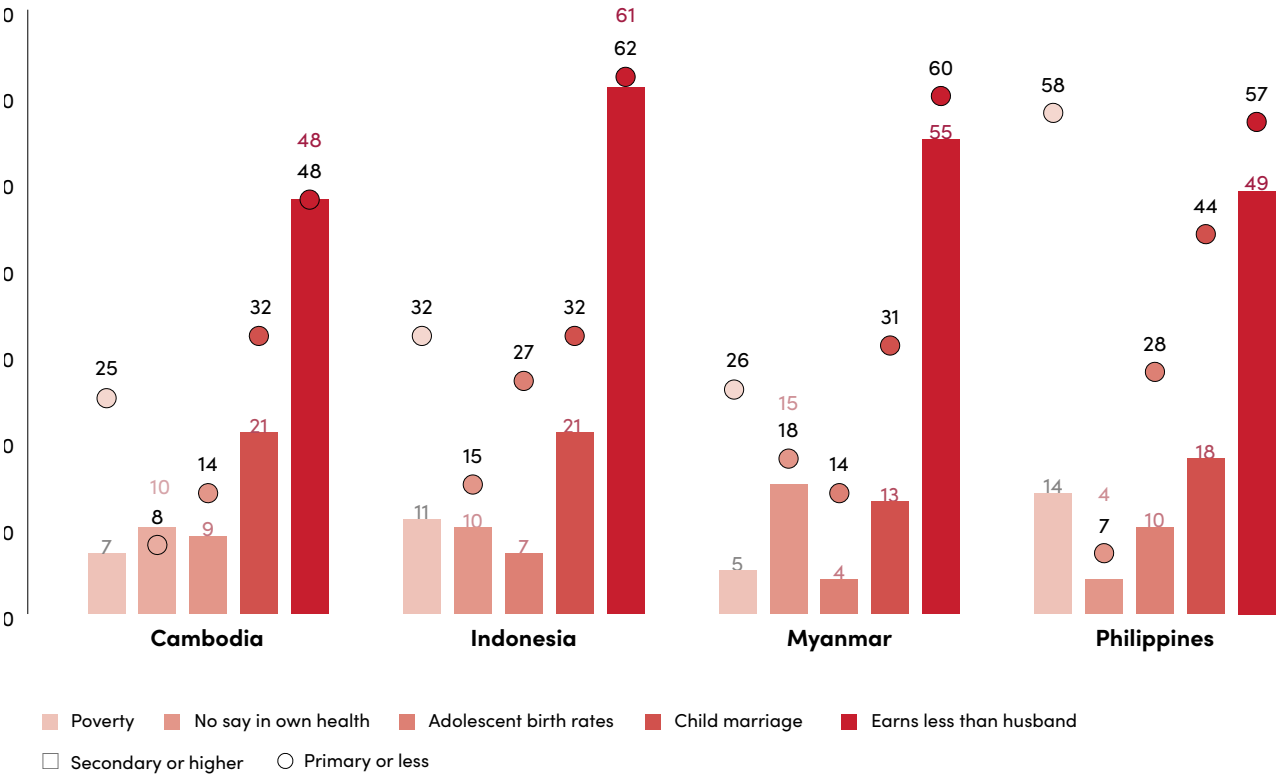
Note: Data refers to births in the past five years, except for the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, where only births in the past two years were considered. Data for national aggregates has been drawn from the Global SDG Database.



In all ASEAN Member States with available data, less educated women are more likely to marry early and become adolescent mothers. Early marriage often keeps women out of paid jobs and reduces their decision-making power at home, including in matters regarding their own health.

ASEAN's younger generations are completing higher levels of schooling and gender gaps are slowly closing, but to truly achieve universal education the region must ensure access to education for ethnic minorities and women in remote areas. For instance, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, where roughly half of the female population completes education beyond primary, almost none of the poorest women of Chinese-Tibetan ethnicity living in rural areas without roads completed education beyond the primary level.

FIGURE 5 Socio-economic outcomes for women age 15-49, by educational attainment, latest available year (percentage)



Source: UN Women calculations based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS). Note: Only countries with publicly available microdata for all five indicators are considered. Women living in households in the lowest wealth quintile have been classified as having higher chance of “poverty”. This classification is based on the DHS wealth index, which is a composite measure of a household’s cumulative living standard. The wealth index is calculated using data on household’s ownership of selected assets, such as televisions and bicycles; materials used for housing construction; and types of water access and sanitation facilities. Therefore, this poverty measure differs from the international poverty line measure.

5 GENDER
EQUALITY

Some ASEAN Member States are making great progress on some areas of gender equality. For instance, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines and Viet Nam have the region's highest female representation rates in parliament – even higher than the global average. Lao and Filipino women are also the most likely in the ASEAN region to be represented in local government and to be managers at work. However, a glass ceiling is still in place. Although there is parity among lower managers in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines, very few women hold higher level positions.

FIGURE 6

Proportion of women in middle and senior managerial positions, latest available year (percentage)

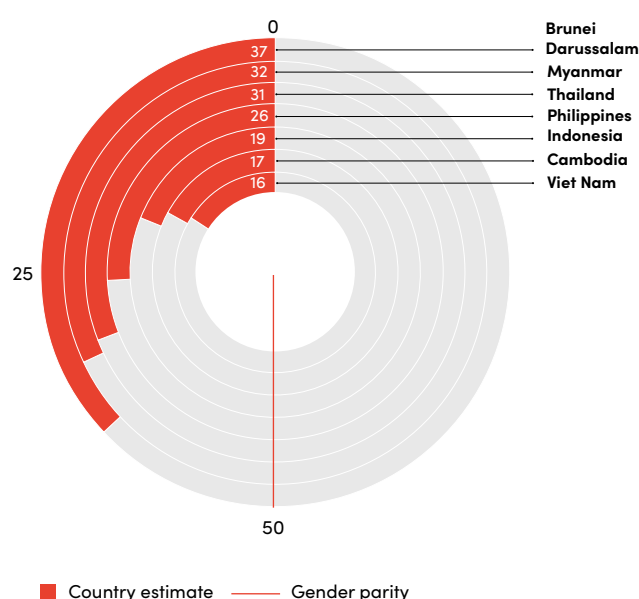
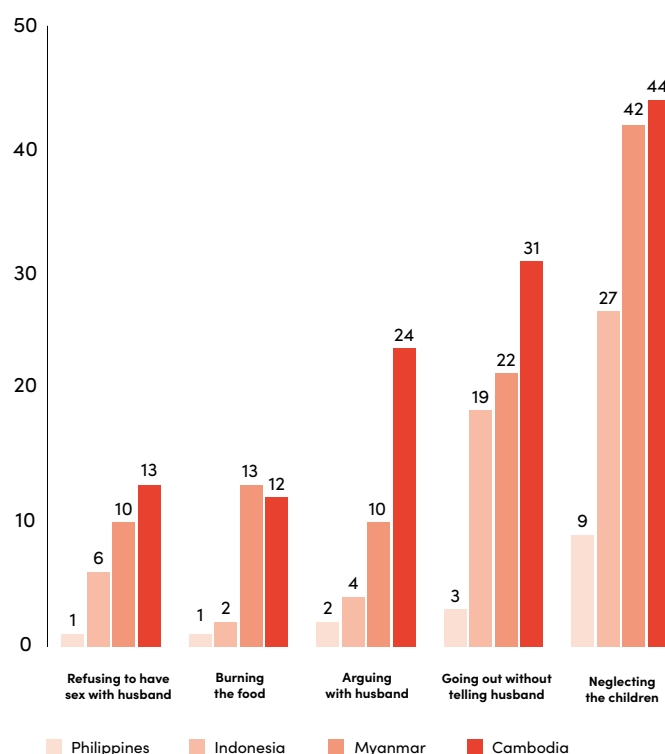


FIGURE 7

Proportion of women age 15–49 who agree that wife beating is justified, by reason, latest available year (percentage)



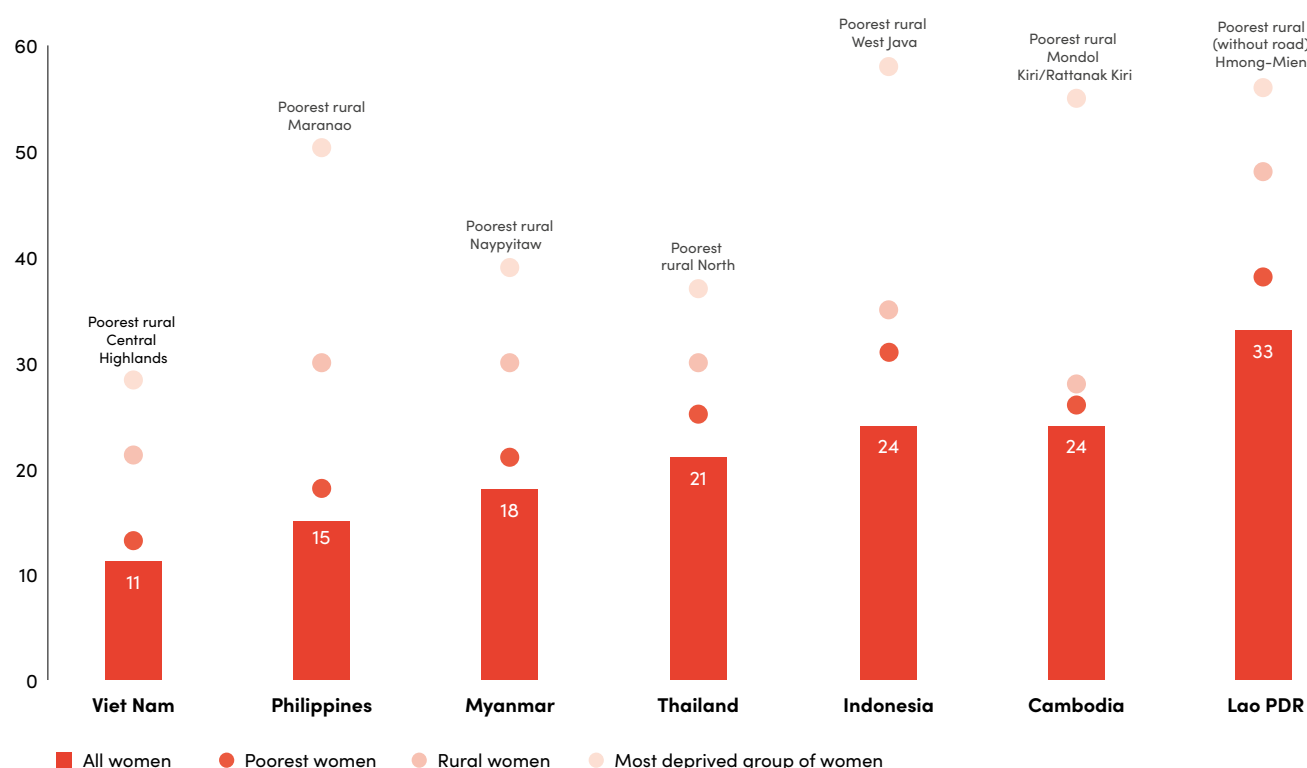
Source: Global SDG Indicators database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>.

Source: DHS STATCompiler. Only countries with available data are considered. Available at: <https://www.statcompiler.com/en/>.

Data for South-East Asia shows low prevalence of violence against women by an intimate partner compared to other regions of the world. But still, between 6 and 11 per cent of women in ASEAN Member States report experiencing violence at the hands of their partner in the past 12 months. Eliminating violence against women will require changes in social norms. An estimated 25 per cent of women still think it is justified for a man to beat his wife if she neglects the children.

FIGURE 8

Proportion of women age 18–49 who were married before 18 years of age, latest available year (percentage)



Source: UN Women calculations based on DHS and MICS. Only countries with available data are considered. Note: most deprived groups have been identified through DHS/MICS data for this indicator, although these groups may not be the most deprived for all indicators.

Living in rural areas or remote provinces increases girls' chances of becoming child brides. For instance, Viet Nam, which has one of the lowest child marriage rates in the ASEAN region at 11 per cent, also has rates of child marriage as high as 32 per cent for rural people living in the poorest households in the Central Highlands region.

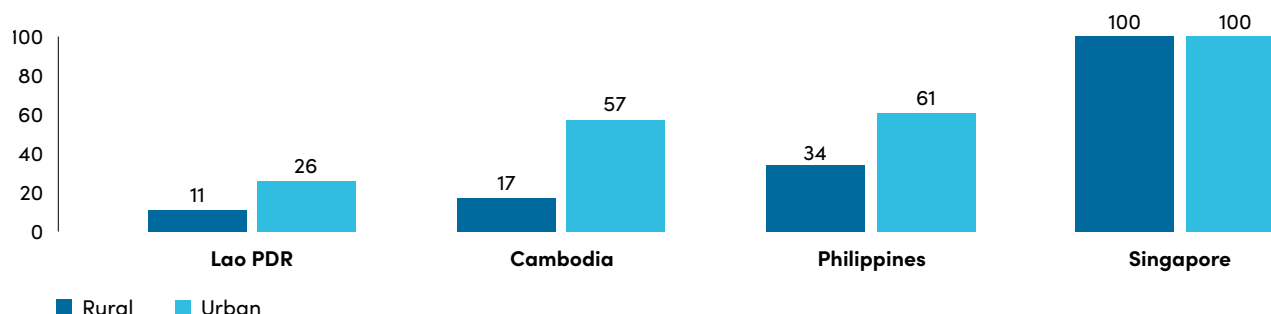
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



An estimated 92 million people in the ASEAN region have gained access to safe drinking water since the year 2000. This is a remarkable achievement, but climate change and pollution are intensifying stress on water sources. In households where basic drinking water is not available, residents must go and fetch it. The median time to collect water for those who do not have it at home ranges between 3 and 10 minutes in the region. However, for rural residents, these times are longer. In Thailand, for instance the median time to water collection is 10 minutes overall, but some rural households spend more than 3 hours. Women are often in charge of shouldering this burden. In Viet Nam, for instance, women are in charge of water collection in 67 per cent of the households.

FIGURE 9

Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water, by location, latest available year (percentage)



Source: SDG Database, available from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>.

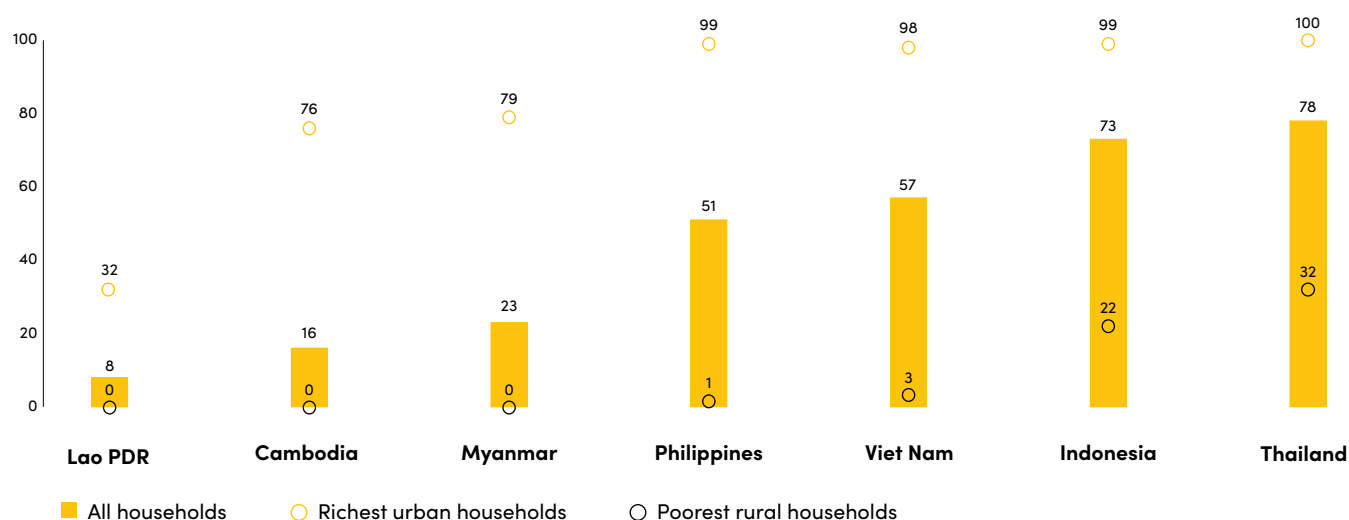
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Rapid economic development in the ASEAN region has raised energy needs. Insufficient investment in renewable energy has meant that the 80 per cent increase in demand since 2000 has been met by a doubling in fossil fuel use – and the women, men and children living in the ASEAN region are suffering the consequences. Air pollution is linked to heart and respiratory diseases. For pregnant women, it correlates with low birth weight, pre-term birth and small-gestational-age births. As women are often in charge of caring for those who are ill, these diseases affect their well-being both directly and indirectly. And yet, it is men who are seeing the bulk of the economic benefits from fossil fuel production: crude, petroleum and natural gas extraction falls almost completely in the hands of men in most ASEAN Member States.

FIGURE 10

Proportion of households using clean fuels for cooking, by wealth and location, latest available year (percentage)



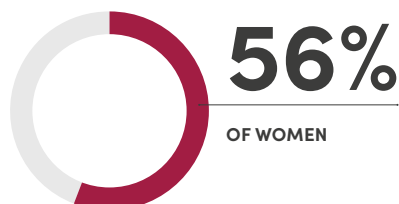
Source: UN Women calculations based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). Only countries with available data are considered.

In ASEAN households, the use of harmful fuels such as charcoal, wood or crop waste, is still widespread. Their effect on indoor air quality affects women disproportionately, since they are often in charge of cooking and spend more time at home. In rural areas, and particularly in the poorest households in these areas, the chances of using harmful fuels are much higher.

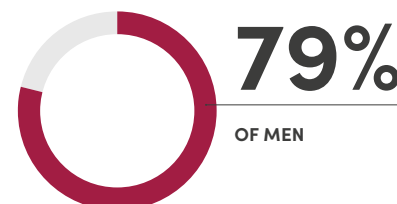
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



In the ASEAN region, 56 per cent of women participate in the labour force, compared with 79 per cent of men. Of those employed, an estimated 67 per cent are engaged in the informal sector and 3 per cent are employed but live in poverty. Initiatives to guarantee productive employment and decent work for all should target young women ages 15–24. In 2019, 24 per cent of them were out of school but had no jobs, compared to 13 per cent of young men. Attention should also be placed on women with children – who often leave the labour market to take on unpaid domestic and care responsibilities. Only 33 per cent of mothers with newborns have access to maternity benefits in the ASEAN region.



PARTICIPATE IN
THE LABOUR FORCE



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



In most countries in the region (with the exception of Malaysia and Myanmar), men hold the majority of research jobs. This may result in innovation that fails to meet women's needs. Gender gaps in the region are largest in the field of engineering and technology. Men are also more likely to be engaged in information-related jobs. Promoting women's involvement in information and communication jobs could help promote the development of innovation and infrastructure that better fits women's needs.

FIGURE 12

Share of female researchers, by field of research, latest available year (percentage)



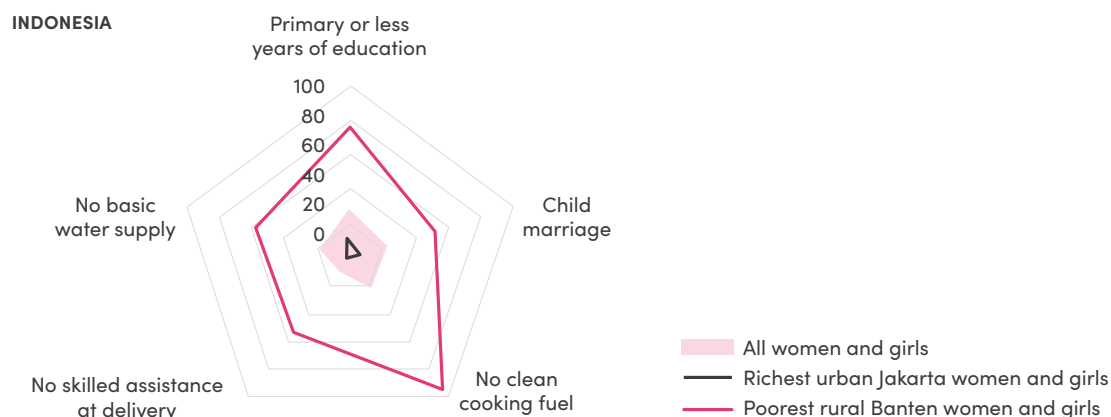
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>.



ASEAN Member States have progressed toward gender equality in recent years. But most of the SDGs are still far from being achieved for women and girls living in poor rural households. This goes back to the concept of multiple forms of discrimination clustering together. The poorest women living in remote provinces lag the furthest behind across multiple dimensions, from basic education to health care, clean energy and water.

FIGURE 13

Inequalities in SDG-related outcomes between different groups of women and girls, Indonesia, latest available year (percentage)



Note: The graphs show a comparison from “richest major city” “vs” “rural poorest deprived province”. The data shown with pink lines is for one of the most deprived groups. It does not mean that this population group was the most deprived for all the indicators considered, but rather for many of them. In some countries, several groups may have been equally deprived across multiple dimensions. In those cases, one of them was selected for illustrative purposes.

Refer to the ASEAN Gender Outlook publication to see graphs for all ASEAN countries with available data.

Source: UN Women calculations based on DHS and MICS depending on the country. Only Indonesia data is shown in this summary. Refer to the full report to view other countries.

In Indonesia, for instance, 23 per cent of women and girls lack access to clean cooking fuels, almost 24 per cent are child brides, and 29 per cent are education-poor – meaning they completed only primary schooling at most. The shaded area of figure 13 shows values for the totality of women in Indonesia.

An analysis of the same indicators for the poorest women and girls living in rural households in select provinces – such as Banten (the solid pink line) – shows that 93 per cent of them lack access to clean cooking fuels, 52 per cent marry as children and 77 per cent are education-poor. The gaps are even more striking when compared with the richest urban women and girls in Jakarta (the gray line). None of them lack access to clean fuels.

This example illustrates that it is the same group of women and girls (in this case the poorest rural women and girls in Banten Province) that lag the furthest behind across many aspects of sustainable development. The same finding was true for all of the ASEAN Member States where data was available for this type of analysis, as shown in the ASEAN Gender Outlook.

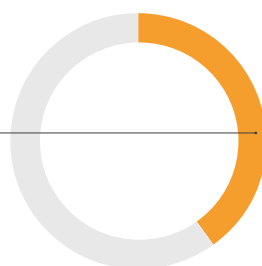
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



In many cities across the ASEAN region, large shares of residents live in slums – an estimated 40 per cent of the urban population. Female slum dwellers are particularly vulnerable as they often have to deal with water collection and cook with harmful fuels. For instance, 21 per cent of all female slum dwellers in the Philippines have to walk more than 30 minutes to fetch water, compared to 3.7 per cent of female urban non-slum residents. Similarly, 36 per cent of women slum residents cook with unclean fuels, compared with 15 per cent of their urban non-slum counterparts.

40%

OF URBAN RESIDENTS
live in slums



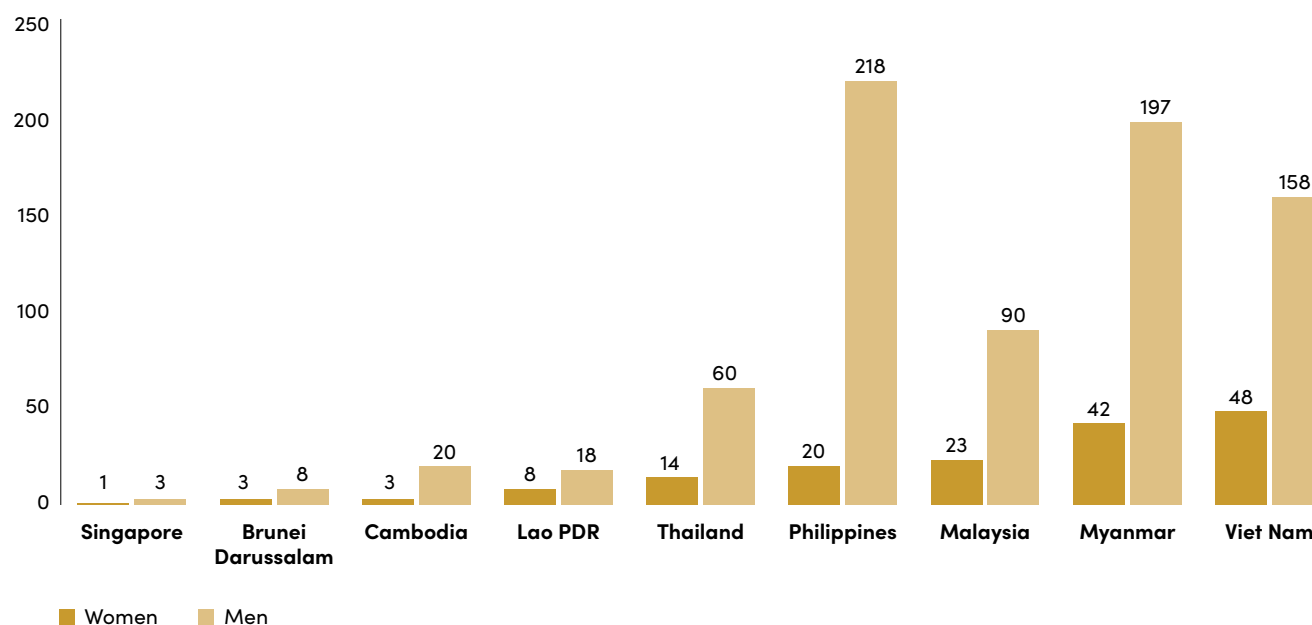
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Men in ASEAN Member States are notoriously overrepresented in highly polluting industrial activities, such as mining and manufacturing of plastics and chemical products.

FIGURE 14

Total number of individuals age 15+ engaged in mining and quarrying activities, by sex, 2020 (thousands)

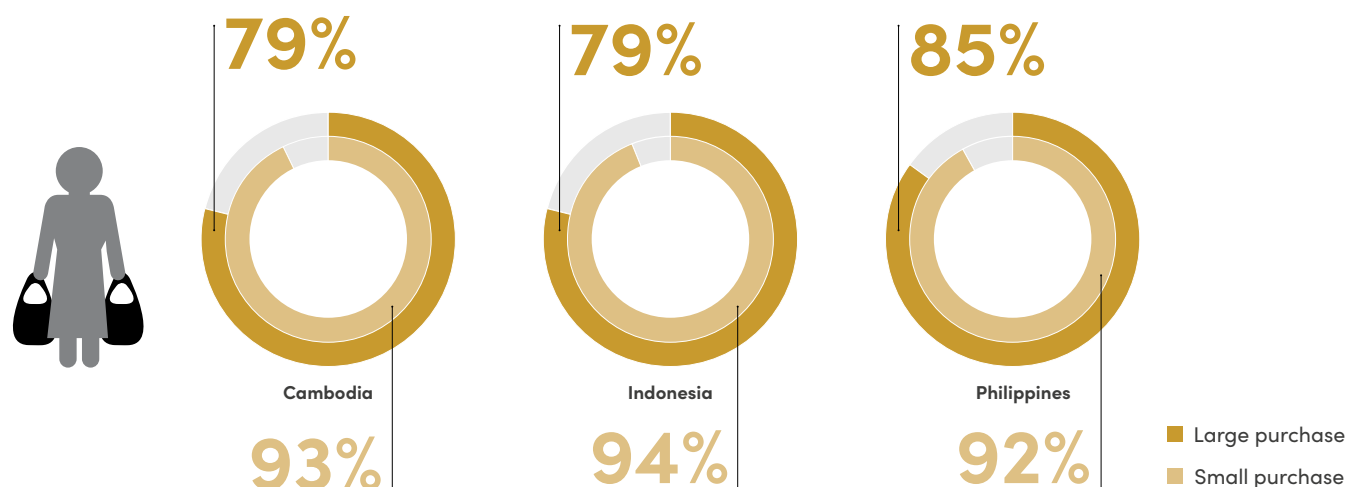


Source: ILOSTAT, available at: https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer1/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=EMP_2EMP_SEX_ECO_NB_A

Women, on the other hand, have a bigger say in household consumption. More than 90 per cent of women have the final say on smaller household purchases. To preserve the region's remarkable biodiversity and the health and quality of life of its people, it is important that both men and women play a part by making sustainable production and consumption choices.

FIGURE 15

Proportion of women who alone or jointly (with partner/husband) have the final say in household purchases, by type of purchase, latest available year (percentage)



Source: DHS STATCompiler, available at: <https://www.statcompiler.com/en/>

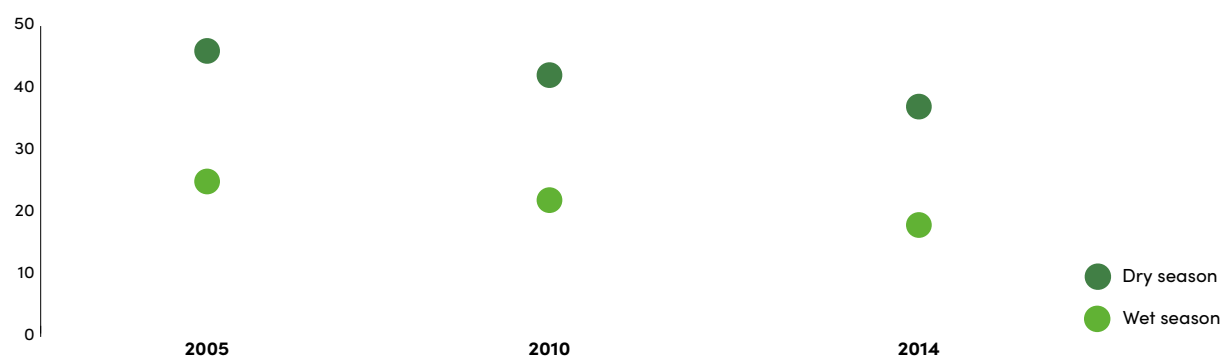
13 CLIMATE ACTION



ASEAN Member States have seen an increase in the frequency and magnitude of drought and flood episodes over the past decades as a result of climate change. For women who depend disproportionately on natural resources for their livelihoods, this has important consequences. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for instance, as many as 64 per cent of employed women are engaged in agriculture. Their livelihoods are at stake. In addition, environmental changes, such as increased aridity, will increase their time burden. In Cambodia, the only ASEAN Member State where seasonal data is available, the proportion of people who lack basic water services more than doubles during the dry season. As climate change intensifies aridification, these burdens may increase further.

FIGURE 16

Proportion of people aged 15–49 that lack access to basic drinking water in Cambodia, by season and year (percentage)



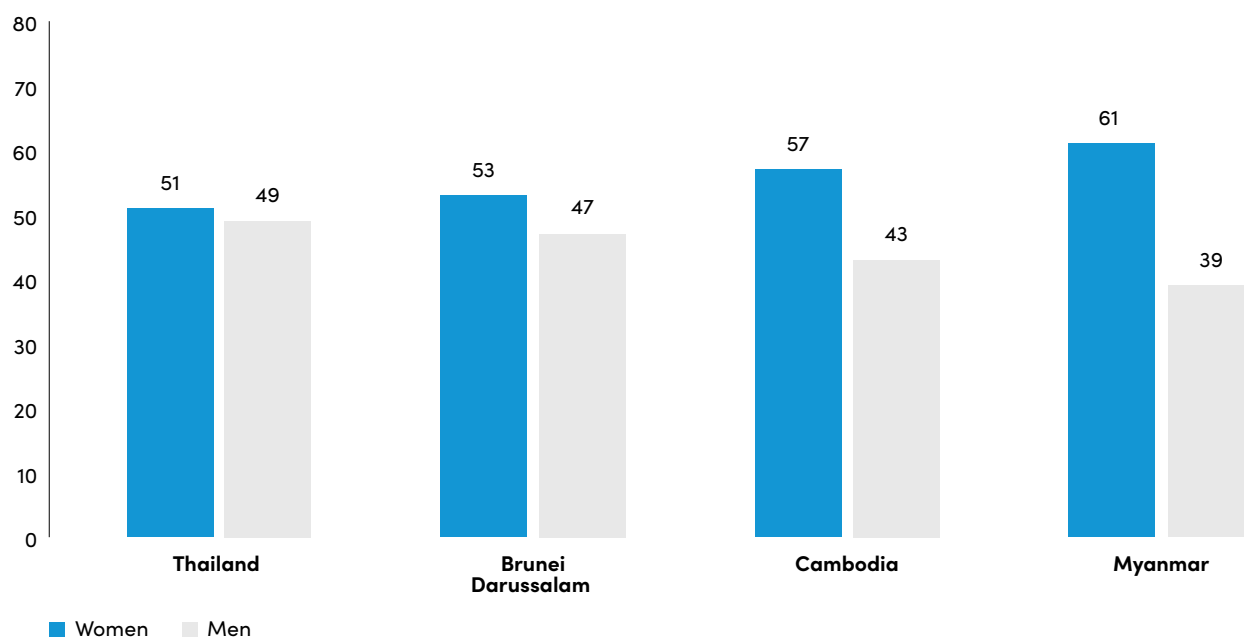
Source: UN Women calculations based on DHS Cambodia, years 2005, 2010, and 2014



In Cambodia and Malaysia, for instance, women make up as many as 57 per cent of those involved in fish harvest and post-harvest operations. Post-processing, in particular, is largely concentrated in women's hands, with more than half of all processing and preserving of fish carried out by women.

FIGURE 17

Employment in the fish processing sector, by sex, latest available year (percentage)



Source: OECD STAT, available at https://stats.oecd.org/In dex.aspx?D ataSetCode=FISH_EMPL#; Brunei Labor Force Survey 2019; World Bank, (2012), available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/515701468152718292/pdf/664690ESW0P1210120HiddenHarvest0web.pdf>; Myanmar, Labor Force Survey.

Furthermore, coastal tourism drives much of the tourism revenue in many ASEAN Member States, which represents 18 per cent of all exports in Thailand and 9 per cent in the Philippines. Women are also more likely than men to engage in tourism-related jobs. As many women dependent on the ocean for their livelihood, it is important that ASEAN Member States place marine conservation at the centre of their development priorities.

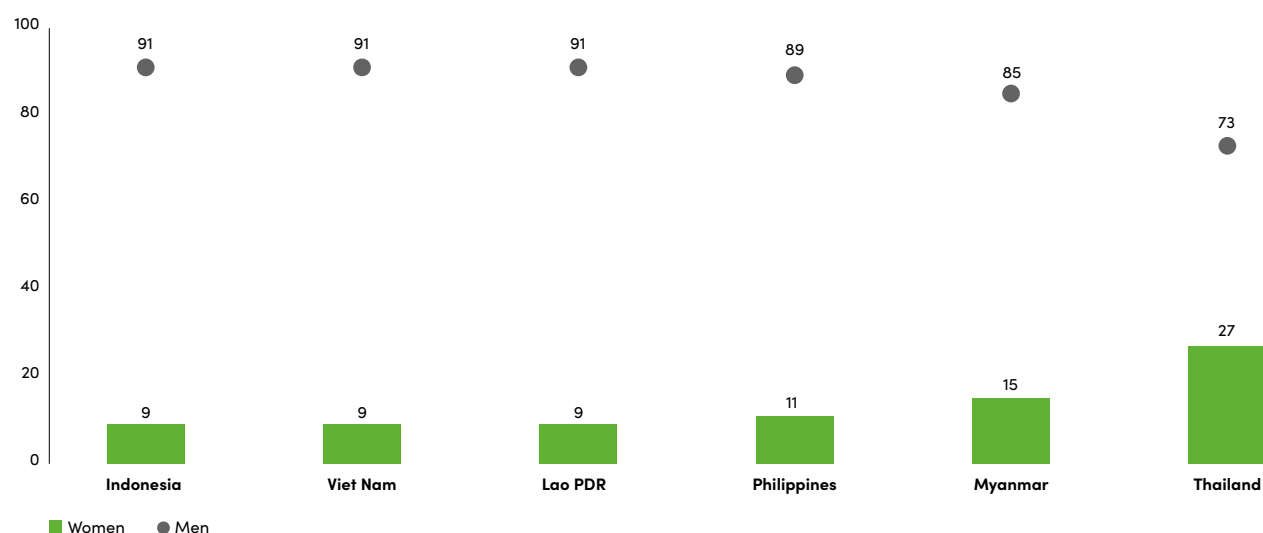


The ASEAN region is home to 15 per cent of the world's tropical forests, but it also has the most alarming deforestation rates in the world. Due to industrialization, logging and damaging agricultural practices in the region, such as monoculture of palm oil and rubber, the proportion of total land area occupied by forest has dropped from 52 to 48 per cent in the past 20 years. As a result, the share of degraded land in the region currently stands at 24 per cent. Over the past decades, men have abandoned many of these degraded lands and migrated to urban areas to find jobs, leaving women in charge of repurposing it.

While women are often the users of agricultural land, holdings are still concentrated in the hands of men. In Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines an estimated 90 per cent of agricultural holders are men. This often means men make decisions on crop selection, pesticide use and resource use – decisions which have significant consequences for biodiversity loss and land degradation.

FIGURE 18

Distribution of agricultural holders, by sex, latest available year (percentage)



Source: FAO Gender and Land Rights Database, available at: <http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/data-map/statistics/en/>

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



In 2020, Indonesia alone sent more than 2,600 troops and other personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions. In almost every ASEAN Member State, however, more male than female officers are being deployed. Promoting women's participation in national security institutions and among personnel deployed to peacekeeping operations can help enhance the safety of women across the region and beyond, as female survivors of crime and conflict may be better able to seek help from fellow women in security forces.

FIGURE 19

Total number of troops contributed by ASEAN Member States to peacekeeping missions, by sex (bars) and proportion of women in peacekeeping, by type of function (donuts), August 2020 (percentage)

(first part)

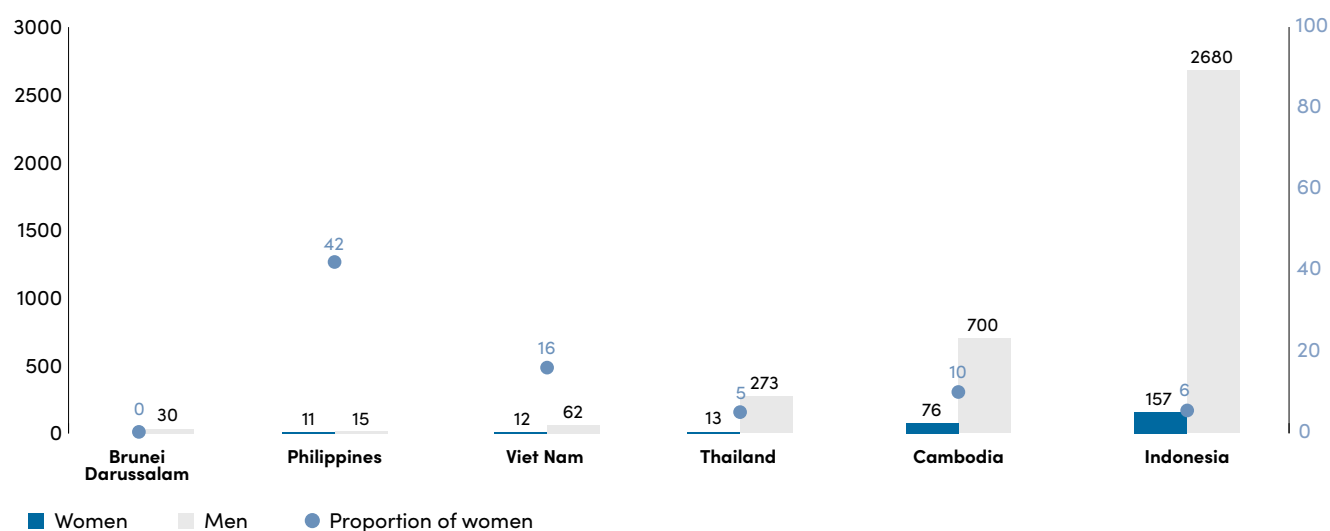
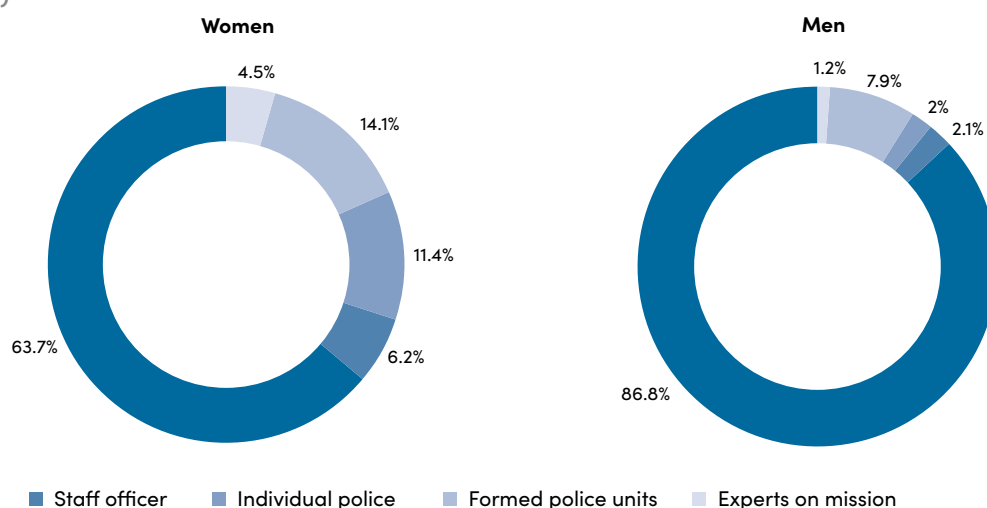


FIGURE 19
(second part)



Source: United Nations Peacekeeping, last accessed October 2020. Available from: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data-troop-and-police-contributions>

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



ASEAN Member States have made substantial progress when it comes to data availability to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective. Across sectors, gender data is increasingly available for socioeconomic indicators, but it is largely missing for environmental indicators. In a region where women depend heavily on natural resources and where natural disasters occur with high frequency, the need for this data cannot be overstated. It is also essential that all ASEAN Member States prioritize the production of gender data disaggregated at multiple levels, to ensure the achievement of the promise to “leave no one behind”.

To promote its availability, key steps could include:

- National development strategies that put this issue at their centre;
- Adequate availability of human and financial resources for gender data production;
- Capacity-building for producing gender estimates;
- Enhancing the use of such data by decision-makers and advocates.

More data about gender-related SDG progress in the ASEAN region and how COVID-19 may be affecting SDG progress it is available in the ASEAN Gender Outlook:

<https://data.unwomen.org/publications/asean-gender-outlook>.



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Appendix 3:
Policy Brief on
Business and Human Rights: ASEAN Perspectives

Business & Human Rights: The ASEAN Perspectives



ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue

November 2021

POLICY BRIEF

Business & Human Rights

The 2021 ASEAN-Swiss Peer Learning Forum

The relationship between business and Human rights in Southeast Asia has long been an ongoing issue that requires deeper understanding. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (BHR) – which is the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights mandated by the UN Human Rights Council to promote – is a framework for discussion at this event. It is commonly agreed that it is important for members of ASEAN to comprehend and recognize the framework for State duties and business responsibilities in preventing and addressing adverse business-related human rights impacts in our region

More importantly, when we aim to synchronize the achievement of the UN sustainable development goals within the regional framework, the concept of sustainable development has been increasingly connected to the conciliation of business practices and human rights activities, policies, and engagement.

Indeed, international companies operating in Southeast Asia have been a force for positive change in societies through innovation, access to products and services, the creation of jobs, as well as empowering those who are vulnerable in the common business conditions.



Having established that, human rights abuses continue to be a serious issue in their value chains. This mixed picture has prompted increased attention to the way in which internationally operating enterprises contribute to a more just and sustainable world.

Against this background, the United Nations Human Rights Council unanimously adopted in 2011 the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. It persists that members of ASEAN must abide by the three pillars in order to achieve sustainable development goals through the business and human rights' lens.

They include:

1. States' duty to **protect** against human rights abuses by third parties, including business;
2. Corporate responsibility to **respect** human rights; and
3. Access by victims to effective **remedy**, both judicial and non-judicial.



Current Issues & Policy Recommendations

The forum serves as a platform for and by ASEAN. There are important issues for all nations in ASEAN that are strongly related to the achievement of SDGs. Participants and speakers at the forum identified various issues and the highlights for potential policy implementation include (1) Covid-19 and BHR, and (2) the future of ASEAN and UNGP on BHR.

Covid-19 and BHR in ASEAN

The impacts of Covid-19 on business and other commercial activities in Southeast Asia are tremendous. Indeed, Covid-19 presents various dimensions of problems, such as lack of jobs and income, mobility, and poor access to health support.

In Southeast Asia, the impact of the lockdowns adopted to mitigate the pandemic influences growth in regional trade. Regional and national services and production were directly affected by the lockdowns, which led among other things, to a reduction in the number of hours worked, and to job loss.

Members of ASEAN with greater dependence on the service sector, informal economy, and weak safeguards against the termination of employment have experienced much higher initial job losses.

These issues are the focal concerns among all participants at the forum.

Freedom of movement: While many businesses have taken measures to ensure worker's health and safety, they must also ensure that COVID-19 responses do not encroach on workers' rights, such as freedom of movement.

Issues related to the migrant workers (i.e from CLMV countries) were discussed. It is recommended that emergency responses among ASEAN members should ensure that human rights are respected by adopting a human-rights based approach in alignment with internationally accepted best practices set out by ASEAN, WHO or ILO.

Access to Finance and Job: Regional funding aiming at promoting skills among non-skilled Workers should be made available. Such policies can ensure that the necessary investments in workers' skills are made to facilitate relocation or re-employment. Regional and national support can also be used to create, and provide job-search assistance and intermediation support to workers and employers, ensuring that workers can be recruited rapidly in the sectors that are expanding as a result of the pandemic (e.g. health, food, ICT).

Promotions of Right to Good Health, and Employment: Regional mechanisms are required to channel resources that can potentially create jobs and employment, as well as access to vaccines and other health-related services for workers, in particular women, people with special needs, and with disabilities.

Business sector can also play a role in this matter. This can include e-system for health monitoring, effective digital market platforms for investment, inputs, final products and technologies, emergency funds for entrepreneurs, regional transfer of technology and expertise.

It is recommended that ASEAN members need to make it easier for new enterprises to be established, and for existing enterprises to alter their business model in response to the pandemic.

“ASEAN must ensure that all persons at risk or infected by COVID-19, including women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and vulnerable & marginalized groups” can access essential healthcare services...” (AICHR)

The Future of UNGP-BHR and ASEAN

Key issues regarding responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and the importance of the national action plans (NAPs) on BHR were discussed. ASEAN Member States have started to develop NAPs on Business and Human Rights.

It is important for ASEAN that Thailand becomes the first Asian country to launch a *National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights*, focusing on labour; community, land, natural resources; human rights defenders; cross-border activities, and investments by multinational enterprises. At present, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar have also progressed on this important issue.

It is recommended that members of ASEAN must focus on human rights due diligence, regional policies and practices regarding BHR, and future innovation to improve social, and economic impacts of business on human rights.



**“... THE ROLE OF BUSINESS ENTERPRISES AS SPECIALIZED
ORGANS OF SOCIETY PERFORMING SPECIALIZED FUNCTIONS,
REQUIRED TO COMPLY WITH ALL APPLICABLE LAWS AND TO
RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS**

Source: UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights, 2011

Public-Private-Academic: It is strongly recommended that engagement between public and private sectors in Southeast Asia can and should be facilitated by research from academic institution. Engage in dialogues and consultation with relevant government and research agencies, ASEAN bodies, and other entities associated with ASEAN in developing common approaches and strategies in addressing corporate-related human rights impacts, and capacity building for stakeholders such as company, civil society and community to prevent, identify and remedy human rights impacts in business sector.

Promotion of Responsible Investment: It is pivotal to design and offer financial institutions a framework to guide their own behaviors toward human rights and labor practices, and prepare for policy changes in the region. ASEAN Member States should aim to increase responsible investments, take serious actions on investment and human rights due diligence, and enable the promotion of labor and human rights compliant practices in the region through the adoption and uptake of the Guidelines by policymakers, providing clear guidance to banks and investors in the region.

Responsible Value Chain: Some members of ASEAN, i.e. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, lead the concept of responsible value chain that also emphasizes responsible consumption and production. The region has often been mired with challenges, given its heavy reliance on complex value chains that are strongly linked with the region's marginalized communities, particularly women, farmers with no land entitlement, and remoted community.



These challenges represent significant reputational and financial risk to Southeast Asia. Policies focusing on responsible approaches to labour and human rights compliant practices must be executed. In so doing, it is recommended that ASEAN must develop regional policies supporting financial institutions and investors to take critical financial tools into account, and leverage at their disposal to accelerate positive change in the region.



*ACSDSD and CMMU acknowledge financial and technical supports from the Government of Switzerland and the Embassy of Switzerland in Bangkok.

**The forum can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etEeBBdh3gs>

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



College of Management
Mahidol University

Appendix 4:

Summary of the Seminar on Connecting the Connectivities: Synergy through Enhanced Partnership

Seminar on **Connecting the Connectivities: Synergy through Enhanced Partnership**



22 JANUARY 2021



WORLD BANK GROUP



DOWNLOAD

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ABOUT THE SEMINAR

Enhanced connectivity has been considered a key driver for ASEAN in achieving competitive growth, facilitating economies of scale and integrated production networks, enhancing intra-regional trade, attracting investments, and promoting deeper ties among ASEAN peoples.

For ASEAN to truly benefit from enhanced connectivity, ASEAN connectivity must also link with other connectivity strategies in the region through “Connecting the Connectivities”.

The virtual Seminar on “Connecting the Connectivities: Synergy through Enhanced Partnership” was organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand in partnership with the World Bank and the ASEAN Secretariat. The seminar provided a platform for policymakers, experts, academia, and the private sector from ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners to exchange views on promoting synergies between the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and other connectivity initiatives in the region. It was also an opportunity for ASEAN Member States to engage with Dialogue Partners, including China, Japan, ROK, the United States (U.S.), the European Union (EU), Australia, and India, on how to deepen collaborations to enhance connectivity in the region.

The seminar focused on strategic areas of connectivity and important issues for economic recovery from COVID-19, namely, global supply chain connectivity, green and digital connectivity, and smart and sustainable connectivity, and brought together experts, scholars, and participants who have worked on relevant issues in those areas. The expected outcome of the seminar included a set of recommendations on how to deepen cooperation on connectivity while highlighting the common areas between connectivity strategies through “Connecting the Connectivities” approach.

OPENING SESSION



In his opening remarks, H.E. Chutintorn Gongsakdi, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, highlighted the importance of enhanced partnership on connectivity within ASEAN and beyond and suggested the 3Es approach to maximize the potential of connectivity in the post-pandemic recovery, namely:

- **Ensuring resilient and sustainable regional supply chain** through enhanced seamless logistics and the early implementation of the RCEP Agreement;

- **Empowering digital ASEAN** through the development of digital infrastructure and digital integration, including digital trade platform; and

- **Enhancing sustainability** through the promotion of green infrastructure, sustainable urbanization, the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, SDGs, and Bio-Circular-Green or BCG Model.

H.E. Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, suggested how to connect and harness greater synergies between connectivity initiatives in the region, including:

- **Taking a whole-of-ASEAN** approach by engaging sectoral bodies, sub-regional frameworks, and Dialogue Partners;

- **Taking a pragmatic approach** by learning from pilot projects and initiatives, such as the Initial Rolling Priority Pipeline of ASEAN Infrastructure Projects, the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy, and the ASEAN Smart Cities Network; and

- **Promoting synergy and pooling resources** from external partners to support ASEAN connectivity efforts.

Mr. Ranjit Lamech, Regional Director (East Asia & Pacific), Infrastructure Department, World Bank, emphasized the need to work on three areas, namely:

- **Enhancing regional supply chain;**

- **Promoting digital connectivity**, including digitalization of system and procedures; and

- **Improving critical connectivity infrastructure** through advancing financing aspect.

“Connectivity is endless, should be universal, and could only be fully achieved through synergised efforts within ASEAN and Beyond.”

*H.E. Chutintorn Gongsakdi,
Deputy Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand*



SESSION 1 :

GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN CONNECTIVITY

Moderated by Ambassador Sihasak Phunagketkeow, Special Advisor Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC)

The objective of this session was to discuss the current dynamics of global supply chains in the regional and sub-regional context – the outlook of global trade trends, the potential of sub- and cross-regional collaboration, and ASEAN's supply chain network that is resilient to pandemic events.

Dr. Aaditya Mattoo, Chief Economist, World Bank Group, gave an overview of the current global trade situation as the world is going through the COVID-19 pandemic. After two decades of hyper-globalization, the **COVID-19 shock is affecting five prior trends in trade:** (i) contraction of trade due to supply and demand shock; (ii) regionalization due to faster recovery in East Asia; (iii) relocation of manufacturing from China due to “dependence aversion;” (iv) servicification due to the sunk costs in digitization; and, (v) protectionism due to inequality, insecurity, and international rivalry.

There is contraction in trade relative to GDP, but much less than expected. In contrast to the 2008 economic crisis, the 2020 contraction in trade is relatively less than the contraction in GDP. The global GDP contracts relatively less than trade's contraction in 2008, while trade in 2020 contracted less than GDP.

The faster recovery in East Asia means countries in the region are trading more with each other. Exports of ASEAN Member States recover faster in Vietnam and Malaysia, which have similar export structures with electronic goods.

Services trade is changing, and the region needs to change. The pandemic has been restricting trade in goods but not in services. In fact, the services trade has been growing due to the digitalization and data usage during the travel restrictions.



Mr. Nguyen Tuong, Deputy Secretary-General of the Vietnam Logistics Business Association, emphasized that COVID-19 has also accelerated the need for collaboration on regional supply chains. With the global supply chains disrupted by the pandemic, it is an opportunity for ASEAN to promote regional supply chains through digital transformation, logistics infrastructure development, and regulatory cooperation.

Regional synergies and looking beyond trade to keep trade open and beneficial will be key. Services reform is crucial to regional connectivity. Bundling infrastructure investment for synergies will improve efficiency. Regulatory cooperation, with leadership from larger countries, can help move forward the regional integration agenda in a sustainable manner.

Dr. Nakgyoon Choi of the Korea Institute of International Economic Policy presented the impact of COVID-19 on the global economy, which is in line with what Dr. Matoo presented earlier. He also added that **ASEAN Member States can build resilient production networks through various programs to reshare and diversify the offshore production facility.**

“But even more important than deepening traditional cooperation, I believe is to look beyond trade and to keep trade open and beneficial.”

*Dr. Aaditya Mattoo,
Chief Economist,
World Bank Group*

An efficient system of supply chain management could be coordinated among ASEAN Member States as well as participation from regional enterprises. Creating a conducive regulatory environment and removal of non-tariff barriers can further enhance the Global Value Chain (GVC) trade flows for East Asian economies.

Dr. Luxamon Attapich, Deputy Secretary-General of Thailand’s Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), stated that ASEAN should promote a multi-modal transportation system to keep the supply chain connected. Cooperation between economic corridors in ASEAN Member States can link domestic development with regional connectivity.



(i) bringing experience from the U.S. to support trade partners; (ii) advancing the shared priorities; and (iii) finding innovative solutions to the joint challenges. Besides the engagement in the aviation sector, economic corridor development is one of the ongoing areas of engagement. And, USTDA commits to high resilient infrastructure development with partners.

Digital technology and SMEs are the key elements that drive regional trade. Mr. Sami Farhad, Senior Director of the Globalization Office of Alibaba Group, indicated that Alibaba considers itself as a part of ASEAN's economic environment. The platform supports exports from ASEAN to China and ASEAN's imports from China, connecting local SMEs to the regional market. The Electronic World Trade Platform (EWTP), set up in Thailand and Malaysia, does not only help facilitate trade with China, but also help with the domestic trades and distribution.

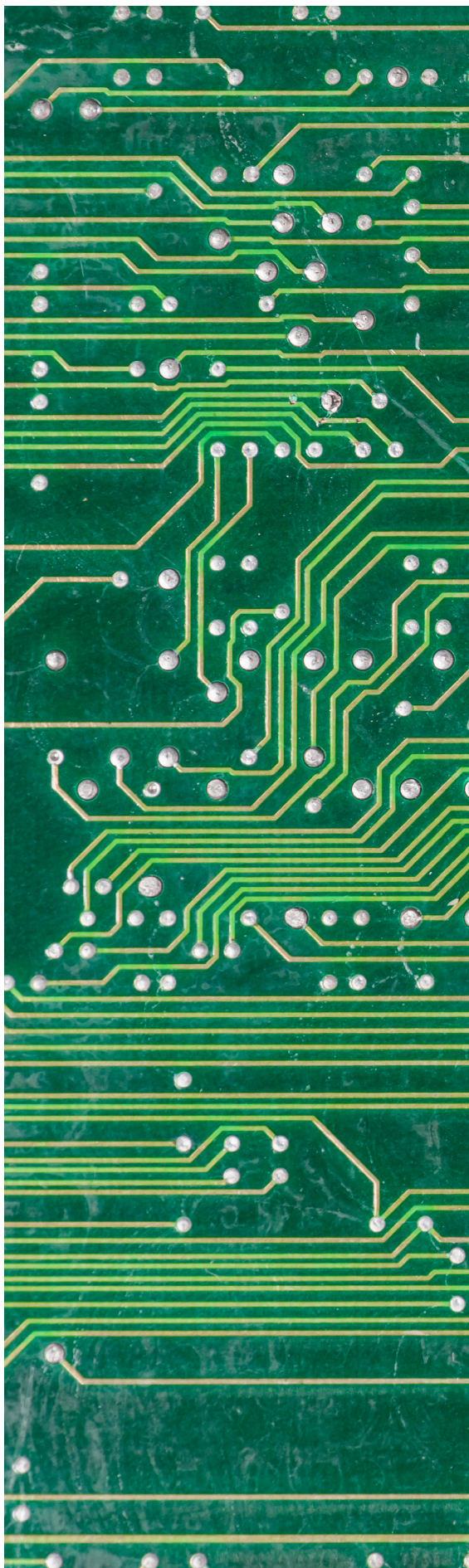
The human capital development is very important to take advantage of digital technology. Training of entrepreneurs, especially small and medium business owners, on digital literacy will help them participate in the modern-world trading markets and platform – which is not only with the bigger economies but also within domestic and sub-regional markets.

Moderator's Summary: *In spite of the pandemic and supply chain disruption, strengthening connectivity collaboration and building resilience will move ASEAN forward.*

For example, Thailand's EEC aims to provide infrastructure that can support regional trade. Digital infrastructure is also one of the key focuses—the EEC links with GMS economic corridors, BRI, and other economic corridors between neighboring countries. **GVC participation increases vulnerability to foreign shocks but reduces vulnerability to domestic shocks.**

From the U.S. perspective, Mr. Thomas Hardy from the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) indicated that a closer U.S.-ASEAN collaboration will bring partnership effectiveness – providing access to top technical experts from the U.S. – with three very clear objectives:





SESSION 2:

GREEN AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Moderated by Mr. Lim Chze Cheen, Director of ASEAN Connectivity Division, ASEAN Secretariat

This session aimed to identify possible concrete areas of cooperation and synergies between MPAC 2025 and other connectivity initiatives, such as BRI, Partnership for Quality Infrastructure and its expanded version, and New Southern Policy, in the green and digital connectivity area.

Professor Fukunari Kimura, Chief Economist, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), kicked start the second session with a remark on the implication and potential of digital connectivity for East Asian countries. Digital connectivity carries a profound implication on economic development of ASEAN and East Asia in at least three different aspects: (i) widening and deepening task-wise division of labor and further strengthening Asia's production base ("Factory Asia"); (ii) stepping into a new form of division of labor in terms of individuals; and (iii) enhancing people's welfare by delivering information, communication, matching and digitized services.

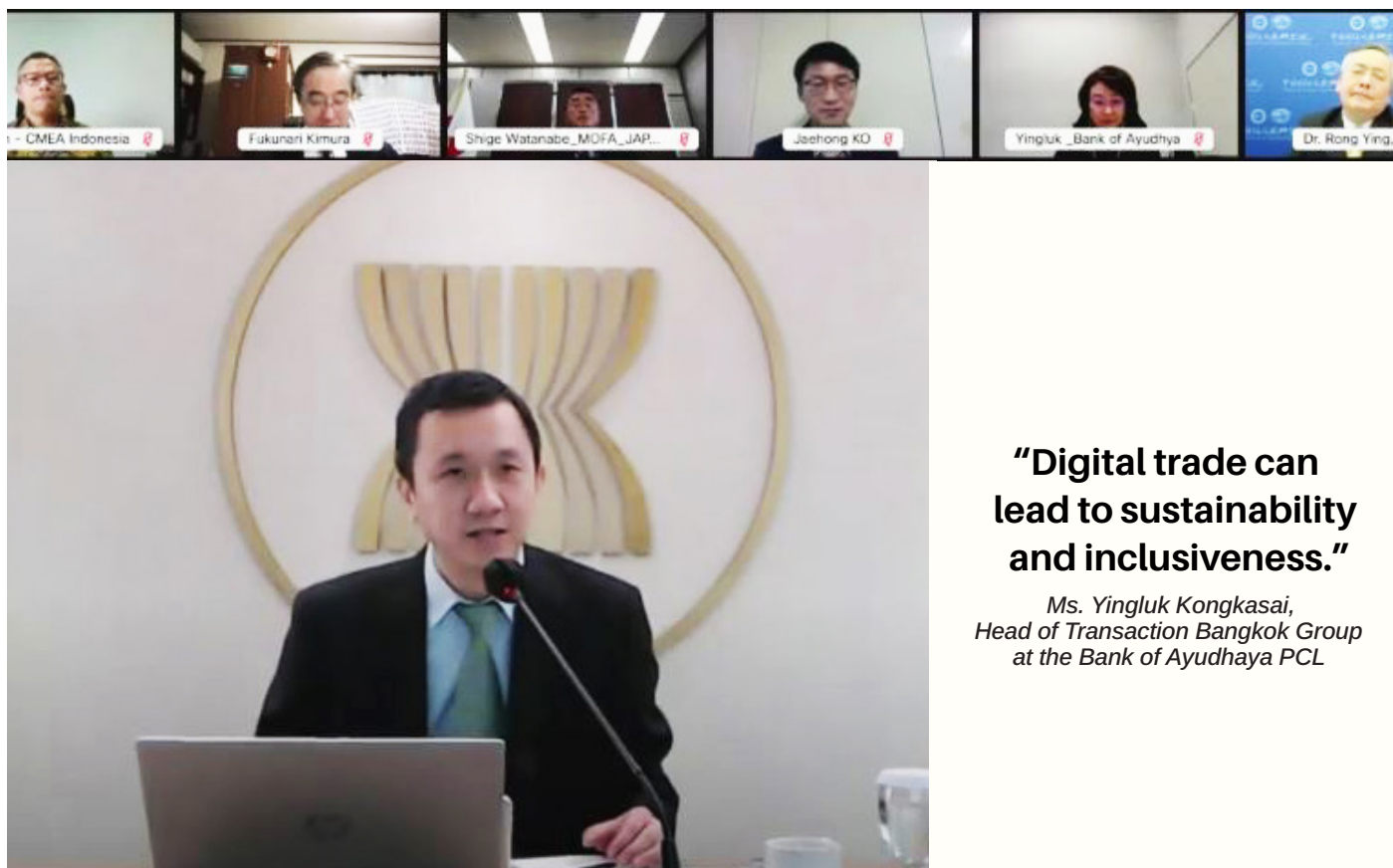
Digital economy in ASEAN still has room to grow.

The contribution of digital economy to GDP in ASEAN was about 7 per cent in 2018, which is relatively low compared to that of China (16 per cent), the EU (27 per cent), and the U.S. (35 per cent). The challenges of digital adoption include the need for a skilled workforce, knowledge of entrepreneurship, and data openness through accommodating policies and regulations.

COVID-19 accelerates the utilization of communication technology, which reduces service link costs and discourages "reshoring." Cross-border service outsourcing, such as online English courses across countries, is a result of technology utilization.

Green technology can be a result of better connectivity.

ASEAN and East Asia must catch up with enhancing global environmental awareness. Regional collaboration on cross-border electricity trade, development of renewable energy, and energy storage can be a starting point.



“Digital trade can lead to sustainability and inclusiveness.”

*Ms. Yingluk Kongkasai,
Head of Transaction Bangkok Group
at the Bank of Ayudhya PCL*

Dr. Rong Ying, the Vice President of China Institute of International Studies, mentioned that improving communication and dialogue platforms are the keys to working together within ASEAN. In addition, trade and development partners bring good influence on the green technology – e.g., BRI adopts green development principles.

ASEAN’s collaboration through MPAC 2025, BRI, and the RCEP Agreement bring in the momentum of a large economy like China to green and digital development. China’s latest social and economic development plan embraces new development philosophy and new paradigm toward a higher quality of development and profound reforms. The synergy between BRI and MPAC 2025 has made good progress in major transport infrastructure projects around the region.

Focusing on quality implementation of priority projects within the region will ensure inclusive growth. Many BRI projects in ASEAN are being implemented, in which digital-enable infrastructure investments that go in parallel with these investments can help with poverty reduction efforts.

Mr. Shige Watanabe, the Director of Information and Communications Division at Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, added that the “Quality Infrastructure” also aims to support sustainable, inclusive, and resilient growth. Japan has been supporting several green connectivity efforts in ASEAN Member States, such as green ports and connectivity through land, sea and air.

Mr. Jaehong Ko, Associate Director for Overseas Project Division, Korea Expressway Corporation, shared an experience on **Transit-Oriented Development(TOD)**– **an example of the development of green and digital connectivity.** TOD is observed in an urban setting where there is a volume of demand for the necessary investment, including to address traffic congestion challenge. TOD follows the principle of reducing (driving demand), shift (to public transport), and improve (efficiency with information technology system). ASEAN is the right platform for exchanging ideas and discussing how TOD could benefit its Member States.



Ms. Yingluk Kongkasai, Head of Transaction Bangkok Group at the Bank of Ayudhaya PCL, presented on how **digital trade and payment platforms can improve the efficiency of cross-border trade.** Digital trade platforms initiated by the private sector or government can reduce processing time, improve efficiency and competitiveness, and broaden SMEs inclusion. However, it requires two layers of implementation.

At the national level, a country should develop a national digital platform that connects all inter national business activities, national single window (NSW) of the government, and with similar platforms in other countries.

At the regional level, harmonizing standards, legal and regulatory, and commercial terms are crucial. Technology adoption is the easy part, while coming to an agreement on protocols, common practices, laws, regulations, security and privacy rules, and on commercial terms can be challenging and take time.

But ASEAN is not starting from zero. In 2019, the ASEAN Digital Trade Connect project under the ASEAN Business Advisory

Council (ASEAN-BAC) was recognized as an important reform for ASEAN. Even with COVID-19, progress has been made on the study on Digital Trade Connect which aims to integrate ASEAN with China's Bay Area Platform, Japan's Trad Wall, Republic of Korea's UTradeHub, Singapore's NTP, and Thailand's NDTP.

In line with **Ms. Kongkasai's remarks, Mr. Rizal Edwin, Assistant Deputy Minister for Digital Economy, Manpower, and SMEs, Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of Indonesia** indicated that ASEAN has many initiatives that can drive different aspects of digital development. The implementation of MPAC 2025 strategic area on digital innovation will support the adoption of technology by MSMEs, support financial access through digital technologies, and support enhanced data management and open data in ASEAN. And many other initiatives are driven through the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Electronic Commerce (ACCEC), ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (ACCMSME), ASEAN Digital Senior Officials' Meeting (ADGSOM), and the ASEAN Framework on Personal Data Protection.

Moderator's Summary: COVID-19 accelerates the preexisting trends and brings about new trends that require changes in policies and actions. It is important that ASEAN strengthens cooperation and policy coordination to leverage the current investment toward sustainability, resiliency, and inclusiveness.





SESSION 3:

SMART AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY

This session, moderated by Ms. Almud Weitz, Practice Manager for Transport for South East Asia and Pacific, World Bank.

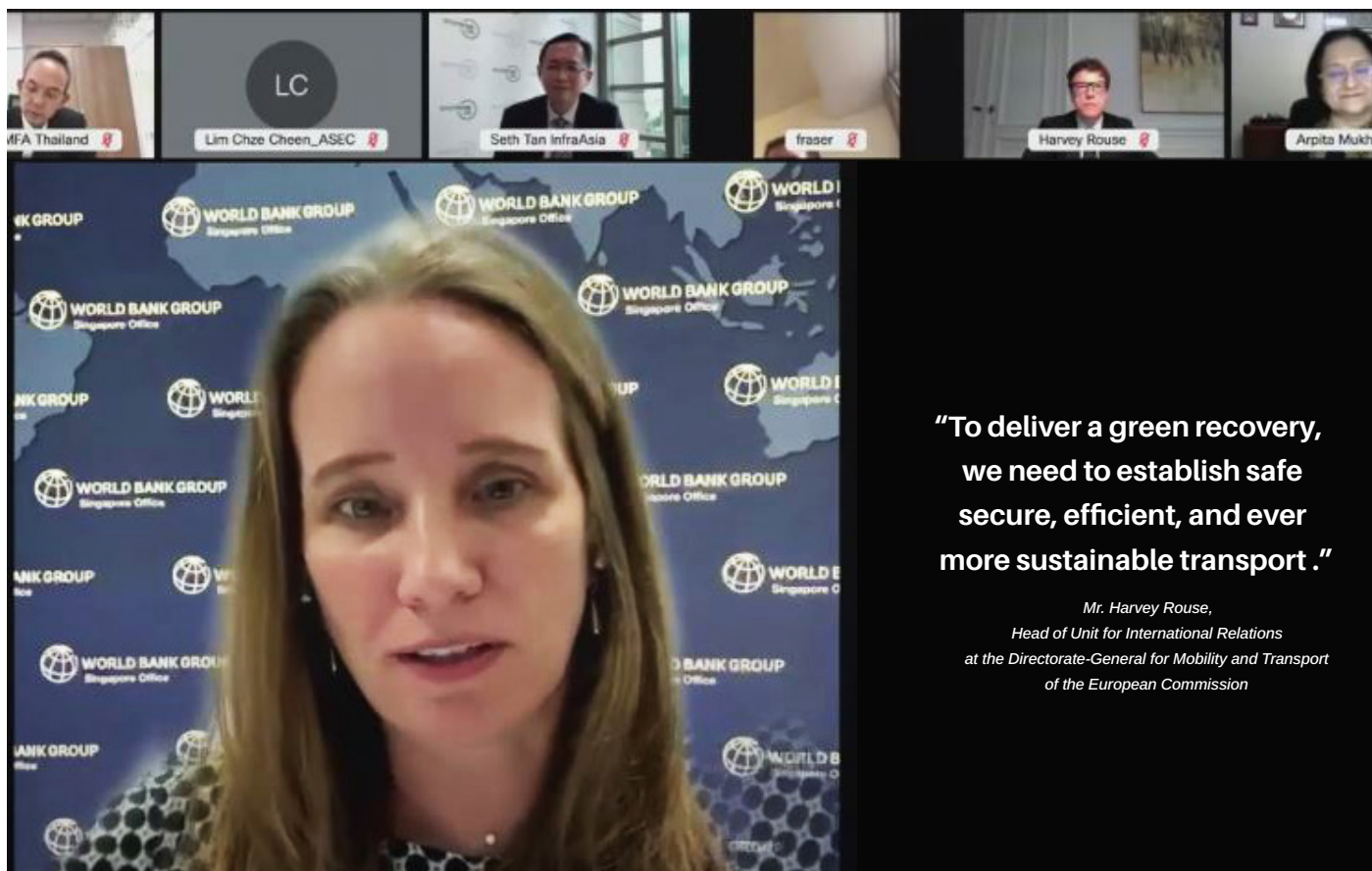
This session exchanged views on enhancing connectivity through inclusive, smart, and sustainable cooperation between ASEAN and dialogue partners and on synergy in areas of mutual benefits.

Dr. Fraser Thompson, Director of AlphaBeta Advisory from Australia, indicated that there are **rooms to expand dialogue among ASEAN Member States at the subregional level.** It appears that there are relatively more engagement activities at the global level compared with the sub-regional level. This could be done with more consultations and better support from development partners during their annual forums. Collaboration through specific working groups can also help increase the level of engagement.

Ambassador Nikorndej Balankura from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand also added that reinforcing the existing sub-regional initiatives, especially on policy synchronization,

without reinventing the wheel is key. From the experience of Ayeyawady–Chao Phraya – Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), the Master Plan focuses on three aspects of connectivity to achieve Seamless, Synchronized, Smart and Sustainable ACMECS namely: (i) hard infrastructure; (ii) policies, processes, and regulations; and (iii) human aspects. The objective is to create a cobweb of initiatives that cover member countries. CLMV countries also tried to ensure the consistency of their policies with other relevant sub-regional initiatives – such as GMS and ACMECS.

From the EU's perspective, **Mr. Harvey Rouse, Head of Unit for International Relations at the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport of the European Commission,** emphasized that the strategic partnership between the EU and ASEAN can be a platform for knowledge sharing on smart and sustainable connectivity development.



**"To deliver a green recovery,
we need to establish safe
secure, efficient, and ever
more sustainable transport."**

*Mr. Harvey Rouse,
Head of Unit for International Relations
at the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport
of the European Commission*

The EU has a three-decade-long history of regional integration and connectivity development. Connectivity is very important for trade and economic activities, jobs, and people-to-people interactions. And, the experience of its regional connectivity efforts can be shared with ASEAN.

The EU focuses on the quality of connectivity. Any connectivity project must have a strong economic justification, avoid financial and fiscal imbalances, and consider climate impact. Knowledge and experience sharing from the EU to ASEAN are not only limited to its railway development experience, but also air transport, urban and smart mobility, and digital innovation - which is very much in line with the direction of MPAC 2025.

In addition, Mr. Karel Vinck, Former European Coordinator for Railways of the European Commission, shared the EU's experience on railway network development. He emphasized that regional railway network integration takes time and efforts, but can benefit from a smart traffic management system. From the EU's experience, the development of the railway network required the standardization and harmonization of the signaling system – ERTMS (or European Railway Traffic Management System). Due to the size of the region, the harmonization was not done in one shot - but rather started corridor by corridor. But in time, a better traffic system has helped improve the efficiency of transport, and lower logistics costs for the region.

Professor Arpita Mukherjee from the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) indicated that there is a growing interest in India-ASEAN connectivity. And, digital connectivity is at the center of partnership. A broad framework for digital B2B platform has recently been developed for MSMEs to connect with ASEAN, but COVID-19 has delayed the implementation effort.



More opportunities for dialogue will contribute to the progress of connectivity initiatives. Such dialogue can bring clarity to the policies and regulations on foreign direct investment – which is an important part that drives economic collaboration. Other challenges are around platforms for vulnerable groups and lack of actional targets and plans.

Mr. Seth Tan, Executive Director of Infrastructure Asia from Singapore, shared his experience that **advancing digital connectivity agenda is not without its challenges.** Deployment of digital hardware and infrastructure is just a beginning. The readiness of businesses and residence is required for developing smart cities. E-commerce and digitized payment system play a key role in cross-border trade, which could spin-off to infrastructure investment.

In urban transport, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a good example of smart and sustainable connectivity. TOD brings efficiency to the overall system both on the operational and demand side, as well as the financing side. Cross-financing between public and private sectors could be achieved as shared risks and benefits.

Moderator's Summary: With a number of regional initiatives and ongoing efforts in ASEAN, it is time to synergize the implementation of these regional plans. “Connecting the Connectivities” is exactly the way forward – especially in collaboration with partners beyond ASEAN and with the private sector.





KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key takeaways presented by Mr. Lim Chze Cheen, Director of ASEAN Connectivity Division, ASEAN Secretariat, to summarise salient points from 3 sessions included:

- Partnership is key to the success of “Connecting the Connectivities”;
- Cooperation on enhancing connectivity should support the effective implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan;
- Early ratification and entry into force of the RCEP Agreement is crucial for furthering regional economic integration, achieving seamless logistics and ensuring resilient and sustainable supply chain connectivity in the region;
- ASEAN should continue its work on enhancing multi-modal transport linkages and inter-connectivity to build greater efficiency and resilience of the

regional supply chain;

- ASEAN should harness the opportunities of digital trade and explore cooperation in strengthening “digital trade platform” to enhance business competitiveness, particularly MSMEs digitalization and digital skills development;
- ASEAN should strengthen cooperation in developing robust regulations to enhance digital capability and enable digital connectivity;
- ASEAN should encourage more private sector participation to co-create and seize the opportunities from its growing economy and initiatives; and
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could be the guiding compass in advancing sustainable connectivity.

CLOSING SESSION



Ms. Usana Berananda, Director-General, Department of ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, underlined the “Connecting the Connectivities” approach as an important enabler for maximizing the potential of ASEAN connectivity. She also looked forward to the key recommendations, to be developed after the seminar and circulated to the relevant ASEAN Meetings, including the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) Meeting. The recommendations that were highlighted in her closing remarks included, among others:

- Taking a pragmatic and whole-of-ASEAN approach in enhancing regional connectivity while promoting synergy between MPAC 2025 and other connectivity strategies;

- Promoting multi-modal transport linkages and seamless logistics;

- Enhancing digital trade connectivity by building upon the existing mechanisms/tools, such as ASEAN Single Window and Electronic World Trade Platform (EWTP);

- Increasing digital skills for businesses, especially among MSMEs;

- Maximizing the benefits of FTAs, including the RCEP Agreement; and

- Promoting green and sustainable development models, such as Bio-Circular-Green or BCG Model.

Ms. Birgit Hansl, Country Manager for Thailand, the World Bank Group, stressed that trade facilitation and regional integration beyond tariff barriers will be at the core of partnership



on connectivity. Furthermore, she also highlighted the role of technology as an enabling tool that helps the region connect more efficiently.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is bringing forward the vulnerability of supply chains and trade worldwide, but the pandemic also brings us all closer together.”

*Ms. Birgit Hansl,
Country Manager for Thailand,
the World Bank Group*

ANNEX1: SEMINAR PROGRAM

Time (GMT+7) <i>Bangkok time</i>	Programme
10.00 - 10.15	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Chutintorn Gongsakdi, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand • H.E. Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community • Mr. Ranjit Lamech, Regional Director (East Asia & Pacific), Infrastructure Department, World Bank
10.15 - 11.30	<u>Session 1: Global Supply Chain Connectivity</u> To discuss the current dynamics of global supply chains in the regional and sub-regional context – the outlook of global trade trends, the potential of sub- and cross-regional collaboration, and ASEAN's supply chain network that is resilient to pandemic events. Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank - Dr. Aaditya Mattoo, Chief Economist, World Bank • U.S. - Mr. Thomas R. Hardy, Director for Programme Management, U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) • ROK - Dr. Nakgyoon Choi, Visiting Research Fellow, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) • China - Mr. Sami Farhad, Senior Director of the Globalization Office, Alibaba Group • Viet Nam - Mr. Nguyen Tuong, Deputy Secretary-General, Vietnam Logistics Business Association (VLA) • Thailand - Dr. Luxmon Attapich, Deputy Secretary-General, Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) Moderator: Ambassador Sihasak Phuanketkeow, Special Advisor, Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC)
11.30 - 13.00	Lunch break

Time (GMT+7) Bangkok time	Programme
13.00 - 14.15	<p>Session 2: Green and Digital Connectivity</p> <p>To identify possible concrete areas of cooperation and synergies between MPAC 2025 and other connectivity initiatives such as BRI, Partnership for Quality Infrastructure and its expanded version, and New Southern Policy in the Green and Digital Connectivity area.</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERIA - Prof. Fukunari Kimura, Chief Economist, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) • China - Dr. Rong Ying, Vice President, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) • Japan - Mr. Shige Watanabe, Director of Information and Communications Division, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan • ROK - Mr. Jaehong Ko, Associate Director for Overseas Project Division, Korea Expressway Corporation • Thailand - Ms. Yingluk Kongkasai, Head of Transaction Banking Group, Bank of Ayudhya Pcl. • Indonesia - Mr. Rizal Edwin, Assistant Deputy Minister for Digital Economy, Manpower, and SMEs, Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of Indonesia <p>Moderator: Mr. Lim Chze Cheen, Director of ASEAN Connectivity Division, ASEAN Secretariat</p>
14.15 - 14.30	Break
14.30 - 15.45	<p>Session 3: Smart and Sustainable Connectivity</p> <p>To discuss how to enhance connectivity through inclusive smart and sustainable cooperation between ASEAN and Dialogue Partners, and to synergize in areas of mutual benefits.</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia - Dr. Fraser Thompson, Director of AlphaBeta Advisory • EU - Mr. Harvey Rouse, Head of Unit for International Relations, Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, European Commission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Karel Vinck, Former European Coordinator for Railways, European Commission • Singapore - Mr. Seth Tan, Executive Director, Infrastructure Asia

Time (GMT+7) <i>Bangkok time</i>	Programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thailand - H.E. Nikorndej Balankura, Ambassador attached to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand • India - Prof. Arpita Mukherjee, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) <p>Moderator: Ms. Almud Weitz, Practice Manager for Transport for South East Asia and Pacific, World Bank</p>
15.45 - 16.00	<p>Key takeaways</p> <p>ASEAN Secretariat to suggest key takeaways</p>
16.00 - 16.10	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Usana Berananda, Director-General, Department of ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand • Ms. Birgit Hansl, Country Manager for Thailand, East Asia and Pacific, World Bank

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