

5. คำถาม-คำตอบ (FAQs)

ASEAN

1. To what extent do you feel that internal division within ASEAN is limiting its effectiveness?

Differences among ASEAN Member States are to be expected, given the vast diversity among us. National interests, or the perceptions of them, may diverge from time to time. But the ASEAN spirit is unity in diversity. We do not let our differences affect the common cause.

It has been agreed that for ASEAN to realize the ASEAN Community by 2015 and beyond and to stay relevant in the shifting regional geo-strategic landscape, ASEAN Member States must remain united, cohesive and resilient. Although internal and external pressures may challenge our unity, I believe that our shared beliefs and values, our mutual interests, our connectivity and our interdependence will be the glue that keeps us together.

2. Does ASEAN have a mechanism if there is conflict between its members?

All ASEAN Member States are bound by the ASEAN Charter's principle of shared commitment and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity. We also commit ourselves to enhanced consultations on matters seriously affecting the common interest of ASEAN. This principle shall also apply as and when there is conflict among Member States that affects ASEAN's common interest as a whole.

Challenges/ Opportunities

1. What are the region's biggest challenges?

While ASEAN is on track towards the realization of ASEAN Community by 31 December 2015, challenges still abound, both at regional and national levels, especially the need to transpose regional commitments to national implementation. This should be a top priority in the ASEAN agenda by pushing through ratification of ASEAN agreements, alignment of domestic laws and regulations to regional commitments, and setting-up of the requisite institutions and infrastructures to support the implementation of ASEAN agreements at national level.

Community-building is a financially demanding work. Various ASEAN programs, work plans and agreements will just remain on paper unless their implementation is guaranteed with sufficient resources. To address these financial constraints, it is imperative to map out all the available resources and optimize their use for ASEAN's goals and objectives. Such resources must come first and foremost from steady contributions from ASEAN Member States.

ASEAN also needs to balance itself between securing support from Dialogue Partners and external partners for its community-building efforts and the concerns from maintaining ASEAN centrality and avoiding over-resilience on external resources.

ASEAN's success will ultimately be measured by the impact of its integration and community building efforts to the lives of its 625 million citizens. There remains a perception of a seeming disconnect between ASEAN's efforts and its relevance to the ASEAN peoples, which may result in misunderstanding, criticism or undue expectations.

A key challenge is to bring the ASEAN Community closer to the peoples of ASEAN by highlighting the concrete benefits that it can bring to them, while addressing any identified obstacles in the process. Increasing ASEAN citizens'

knowledge and understanding of the ASEAN Community is therefore a key to increasing their interest and participation. Therefore, communicating effectively with all stakeholders and managing their expectations will be a key priority to secure wide-ranging support for the ASEAN Community.

The recent adoption of ASEAN Communication Master Plan will help ASEAN in providing fact-based and compelling communications that clearly demonstrate the relevance and benefits of the ASEAN Community to audiences inside and outside ASEAN Member States, and recognize that the ASEAN Community is unique and different from other country integration models.

2. To what extent might protectionist measures and nationalistic sentiments affect ASEAN integration?

The ASEAN Economic Community agenda is built on four mutually-reinforcing pillars, under which ASEAN Member States undertake commitments to implement measures toward meaningful regional economic integration. The first goal of the AEC is the establishment of a single market and production base, the key elements of which include free flow of goods, services, investment, skilled labour and freer flow of capital. Commitments to regional openness is integral to the success of the AEC agenda.

Amid global recovery and rebalancing of power, and riding on the momentum of the AEC agenda, ASEAN is well placed to seize the moment to embrace gainful and strategic participation in global value chains. The key challenge will be to ensure continued relevance of the region to the rest of the world.

In embracing regional openness, ASEAN also recognizes that legitimate public policy objectives and alignment between regional and national strategies are integral to sustainable community-building efforts. The AEC agenda also takes into consideration the different levels of development among members, and the need for a community that is inclusive and equitable; where benefits are shared among members and collective regional strength complements rather than competes with national development priorities.

ASEAN Community

1. To what extent do you see all ASEAN Member States ready to face the ASEAN Community?

ASEAN Member States have displayed strong commitments to ASEAN and have actively participated in ASEAN's efforts to maintain peace and stability; promote economic development, regional integration and expand ASEAN's cooperation with external partners.

On a pragmatic level, our member States understand that we have more to gain as a collective group than operating individually. It is in every country's interest to rally together.

2. To realize the ASEAN Community, is there any idea to form one single currency or language?

In the first place we have to recognize that we are different from the EU in terms of approach and aspirations to economic integration. Unlike the politically motivated EU, the AEC is a market-driven process. We are not talking of a single currency, but deeper and more integrated financial markets instead. We have also observed and learnt from the EU experience. It is apparent that without full political union, a single currency may pose more issues than benefits.

As for a single language, we have opted for English as our Working Language. This does not affect the status of the individual national languages, as we understand the very important roles which our national languages have in our nation-building effort. Opting for English as a working language helps our Member States to better connect with the world and facilitate commerce.

- 3. ASEAN is scheduled to be launched as a community by the end of 2015. However, there are views that preparations are not going as planned. Do you expect a successful launch? Preparations for the launch of the ASEAN Community are known to be about 80% complete. What does ASEAN plan to do in the event that preparations are not 100% complete?**

As reported at the recent ASEAN Summit in Malaysia, more than 90% of the deliverables under the three Community Blueprints have been achieved. We are confident that ASEAN is on track to meet the 31st December 2015 target for the realization of the ASEAN Community. This is also not just a completion date but another marker along the road which we will continue to develop as part of our Post-2015 Vision for ASEAN.

On the economic front, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is a milestone in ASEAN's journey to achieve higher levels of economic dynamism, sustained prosperity, inclusive growth and integrated development in the region. AEC will transform ASEAN into a single market and production base, a highly competitive economic region, a region of equitable economic development, and a region fully integrated into the global economy. AEC is the foundation where ASEAN pursues a future of a vibrant and growing region, leveraging from the diversity and creativity of its people and sharing the opportunities in a market of 625 million people and a combined output of nearly US\$2.5 trillion.

The launch of the ASEAN Community is very significant as it signals to the rest of the world how far and how well the ASEAN Member States have achieved in coming together as one community. On the one hand, it will showcase significant milestones in achieving this important task and, on the other, it will further encourage ASEAN Member States to step up efforts to sustain the gains achieved thus far.

For the Socio-Cultural Community, the launch of the ASEAN Community will draw attention to gains in building an ASEAN identity through various cultural events. It will also highlight achievements arising from regional efforts in protecting and promoting the rights of children and youth, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, labourers and migrant workers. While much

attention is afforded to economic integration by the international community, the socio-cultural community will demonstrate that the region is as much invested in ensuring no one is left behind, through regional instruments that promote and protect the rights of vulnerable groups, projects that advance the welfare and well-being of ASEAN peoples and build capacities of ASEAN Member States in responding to emerging challenges brought forth by the integration.

The launch of the ASEAN Community will be a historic milestone for the region, and a culmination of ASEAN's resilience and dynamism throughout a journey that spans nearly half a century. The launch would be a good opportunity to demonstrate and convey the contribution and benefit of ASEAN's integration and community-building efforts to our own peoples and the international community, thereby fostering a stronger sense of ownership and support among the public. It would also herald a new chapter in ASEAN with the introduction of the ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision at the end of the year.

The launch of the ASEAN Community in 2015 will be accompanied by a series of celebratory activities which aim to reach out to ASEAN citizens from all sectors of society, in line with the vision of a people-centered and people-oriented ASEAN. The celebratory activities will be undertaken at both the ASEAN and national levels, respectively.

4. Do you find that ASEAN peoples understand what ASEAN is all about and why or why not? How might the shaping of the ASEAN Community change this?

From our survey findings, the majority of our people know ASEAN but they are not clear or familiar with what ASEAN does, and what the relevance of ASEAN is to their day-to-day lives. We are taking several measures to address this gap, particularly through the ASEAN Communication Master Plan (ACMP).

With the theme of “ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities,” the ACMP guides ASEAN Member States and other stakeholders in communicating clearly the character, structure, and overall vision of ASEAN and the ASEAN Community to youths, women and children, governments, businesses, civil society organizations, influencers, media and global audiences. The peoples of ASEAN need to understand what it means to be part of an integrated region where there are shared, equitable opportunities for personal, business, and community growth.

Towards this end, ASEAN has been actively engaged in briefings, meetings, speaking engagements, seminars, and interviews by the media and many other organizations. We are trying our best to accommodate the numerous requests for information as media interest on the establishment of ASEAN Community heightens.

5. What are central elements of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 ?

The ASEAN Community Vision 2025 will promote Southeast Asia as a region of peace, stability and prosperity, as well as an inter-connected, and a caring and sharing community with unity in diversity. We will continue to consolidate the ASEAN Community and deepen ASEAN integration as the foundation for the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 will aim to build ASEAN as a rules-based community bound by shared principles, values and norms.

Another key element of the Vision is to transform ASEAN into a truly- people-oriented, people-centered community that is responsive to and inclusive of our

peoples and all relevant stakeholders. We also aspire to see the ASEAN Community by 2025 as a resilient community with enhanced capacity and capability to collectively respond to emerging trends and challenges. The ASEAN Community by 2025 will sustain equitable and inclusive growth with continued efforts to narrow the development gap and further promote shared prosperity. As far as external relations are concerned, ASEAN will continue to uphold its centrality in the evolving regional architecture with a proactive and outward-looking approach in our external relations. And last but not least, ASEAN will continue to be an active and credible global partner.

6. Will ASEAN really be a cohesive and integrated community once it becomes an ASEAN Community? What will its Member States do to overcome common challenges such as narrowing the development gap, addressing environmental and border issues?

Recognizing that the ASEAN integration and community building process would not be successful if the issues of development disparities between and within ASEAN Member States are not addressed properly and adequately, the issue of equitable development and narrowing development gaps has always been placed high in the agenda of ASEAN Community building.

However, development gaps – within countries and across countries – are still prevalent. The average income in the richest ASEAN Member State is more than 45 times that of the poorest, even adjusting for differences in purchasing power. Large disparities persist in access to electricity and the use of solid fuels, particularly between rural and urban areas in the poorest countries of ASEAN. In order to further narrow the development gaps, to facilitate full integration of the less developed Member States into the ASEAN Community and to bring the benefits of integration to all our people in the post-2015 period, ASEAN will continue to implement various integration initiatives and the ASEAN Framework for Equitable Economic Development with more intensified and focused efforts.

It cannot be denied that the region still faces enormous challenges on the road towards an environmentally sustainable ASEAN Community. This is even more so for many of the complex, multi-faceted and cross-sectoral issues of

sustainable development which require coordinated action beyond the national and regional levels.

The first and most important challenge is to narrow the socio-economic divide among and within countries of the region while ensuring a proper balance between economic development and environmental protection. Technical and development cooperation will be needed to address the development divide and accelerate the economic integration of the less developed countries in the region and of the less developed communities within some counties.

The second challenge is to prevent or reduce the occurrence of natural and manmade disasters and minimize the damage caused. The region is exposed to typhoons, floods, droughts, landslides, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, land and forest fires and the resulting smoke haze that may hamper economic development, social cohesion, and bring about enormous environmental damage. Unless communities and properties are made safer from disasters, the sustainable development of the region may be impeded.

The third and most crucial challenge is to further strengthen regional institutional arrangements to make them more effective in promoting environmental sustainability as the region moves toward an integrated, peaceful and caring ASEAN Community. A clean and green ASEAN Community will require the presence of institutions able to make binding decisions, mobilize resources and support worthwhile programs and projects, engage other international and regional partners in meaningful partnerships, and harness the support of civil society organizations and the private sector.

On challenges such as border issues generally, maintenance of peace and stability in the region is ASEAN's foremost priority and the prerequisite for regional economic growth and our community building efforts. Towards this goal, ASEAN has worked hard to provide the trusted platform for dialogue and cooperation among its Member States on issues affecting peace, stability and security in the region. This platform is grounded on the shared values and norms as enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and the ASEAN Charter, among others. The TAC has been widely recognized as a code of conduct to govern inter-state relations and a mechanism for peaceful settlement of disputes in the region. The ASEAN

Charter also contains the principle of shared commitment and collective responsibility of all ASEAN Member States in enhancing regional peace and security.

More specifically, the border and territorial issues in the South China Sea is a host to many complex issues which involve various countries, contain various dimensions and are being addressed through various mechanisms.

ASEAN has important interests and a significant role to play in this undertaking and we will continue to provide trusted platforms for dialogue, consultation and cooperation between ASEAN and China on the South China Sea through relevant regional mechanisms and instruments, especially the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) as well as the ongoing efforts towards a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).

7. Our peoples hope that the ASEAN integration towards a competitive production base and single market can effectively bring benefits to all its members. Will the benefits really be visible right after the launch of the ASEAN Community?

The economic integration process has already started, and benefits from the process have been evident early on.

One of the early wins of the AEC Blueprint is the adoption of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) in 2010 which provided for the elimination of tariffs and addressing non-tariff barriers and the barrier elements of non-tariff measures in the region. As of 2015, ASEAN has eliminated duties on 90.86% of all goods. This number will increase to 98.67% in 2018 when CLMV countries eliminate duties on more goods.

In services trade, through packages of liberalization commitments under the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS), ASEAN Member States have eased restrictions to cross-border trade in at least 80 subsectors, with a majority of these subsectors allowing for majority foreign ownership.

On investments, the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA), which entered into force in 2012, contains commitments to liberalize and

protect cross-border investment activities while embracing international best practices in the treatment of foreign investors and investment. Sectors covered are agriculture, fisheries, forestry, manufacturing, minerals and related services.

Furthermore, ASEAN is undertaking efforts to eliminate technical barriers to trade and improve product quality and safety standards, mainly through the harmonization, development, and implementation of regulatory schemes for electrical and electronic equipment, medical devices, pharmaceutical products, automotive and auto parts, prepared foodstuff, building and construction materials.

To promote the free flow of skilled labour, the ASEAN Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons was signed in November 2012 to provide the legal framework that will facilitate temporary cross- border movement of people engaged in the conduct of trade in goods, services and investment.

To facilitate the movement of professionals, the ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (AQRf) was endorsed in August 2014 to provide a standard for voluntary cross-referencing among the different National Qualification Frameworks of ASEAN Member States.

It is expected that these agreements, among other AEC initiatives and legal instruments that support the formation of ASEAN as a single market and production base, will either bring about more visible benefits as they are implemented in the coming years or will be updated as necessary to cope with the developments in the region.

Ways Forward

1. What will happen after the establishment of ASEAN Community? The 10 year framework for post ASEAN Community?

The ASEAN Community Vision 2025 will continue to promote Southeast Asia as a caring and sharing community with unity in diversity.

As community-building is an on-going process, ASEAN shall further consolidate the ASEAN Community as the foundation for its post-2015 vision. We will continue to build upon and deepen regional integration towards a more inclusive, cohesive and resilient ASEAN Community, with close coordination and coherence among the three ASEAN Community pillars. ASEAN's institutional capacity and its working methods will also be enhanced to realize the goals of the Vision.

As far as external relations are concerned, ASEAN will continue to uphold its centrality in the evolving regional architecture with a proactive and outward-looking approach in our external relations. And last but not least, ASEAN will continue its efforts to be an active and credible global partner.

2. The envisaged establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) at the end of 2015 will mark an important milestone on ASEAN's way towards deeper regional economic integration and community-building. What are the new targets and regional plan of action on competition for the period 2016-2025? What are the measures needed for its eventual achievement?

The post-2015 scenario is expected to see the continued emergence of ASEAN as a major regional grouping and an important part of the global economic community. Competition policy and law is seen to be a significant component of a competitive ASEAN in its role as an enabler for the efficient provision of goods and services through fair competition for both the domestic and foreign companies.

Building upon its current work and in the post-2015 framework, ASEAN will continue to strengthen its commitment towards fostering a competition-aware region and strengthening its legal frameworks as well as its core competencies in the areas of institution-building and enforcement.
