

At the 15th ASEAN Summit in 2009, Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand, the Leaders agreed with Thailand's proposal for the enhancement of ASEAN Connectivity to strengthen the region in moving towards the ASEAN Community in 2015. They established the High Level Task Force on ASEAN Connectivity (HLTF-AC) to complete the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) and submit the MPAC for consideration and adoption at the 17th ASEAN Summit in 2010.

To realize the ASEAN Community and continued economic growth, the MPAC aims to enhance physical, institutional and people-to-people linkages at the national and regional levels.

To facilitate the implementation of projects under the MPAC, ASEAN established the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) to discuss ways to accelerate the full implementation of the MPAC.

ASEAN also established the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to finance infrastructure projects in conjunction with other sources, such as funding from individual ASEAN Member States, Dialogue Partners and international development agencies. Initially, the Fund's priority is given to viable projects in the areas of transport, energy and water management.

While progress has been made on physical connectivity, ASEAN still needs to harmonize the laws and regulations to facilitate transport between each other. Furthermore, ASEAN also seeks to promote connectivity beyond ASEAN, particularly between ASEAN and other regions including East Asia. A successor MPAC is envisaged for the post-2015 period.

ASEAN has cultivated close cooperation with countries and organizations outside the region in numerous fields such as trade, investment, human resource development, science and technology, education, drug trafficking and anti-terrorism. These are done through the frameworks of ASEAN+1 (with its 10 Dialogue Partners -- Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, the United States and the European Union, as well as with the United Nations), ASEAN Plus Three (APT) and the East Asia Summit (EAS).



- ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations established in 1974
- ASEAN-New Zealand Dialogue Relations established in 1975
- ASEAN-Canada Dialogue Relations established in 1977
- ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations established in 1977
- ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Relations established in 1977
- ASEAN-UNDP Dialogue Relations were established in 1977 and has since been succeeded by the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership
- ASEAN-US Dialogue Relations established in 1977
- ASEAN-the Republic of Korea Dialogue Relations established in 1991
- ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations established in 1995
- ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations established in 1996
- ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Relations established in 1996

The APT seeks to promote greater cooperation in economic and many functional areas amongst the ten ASEAN Member States and its three partners, namely, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, thus contributing to greater stability and prosperity in the East Asian region. The EAS serves as a forum for strategic dialogue amongst the ten ASEAN Member States and its key partners, namely, Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and the United States, and seeks to reinforce an ASEAN-centered regional architecture for the wider Asia-Pacific region.

ASEAN also has sectoral dialogue relations with Pakistan and Norway. Papua New Guinea is a Special Observer to ASEAN. In addition, ASEAN has cultivated ties with a number of regional groupings such as the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Southern Common Market or MERCOSUR, the Rio Group and its successor the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Pacific Alliance.

ASEAN also seeks to play a more proactive role in the global community of nations by contributing to addressing the key regional and global challenges to humanity. In so doing, ASEAN will continue to promote a common "ASEAN voice" in multilateral fora and to engage actively with global partners to promote shared goals.



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ASEAN'S JOURNEY



"One Vision, One Identity, One Community"



1 The Birth of ASEAN

Before ASEAN, the countries of Southeast Asia had tried to establish a number of regional organizations to promote regional integration. These included, among others, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) in 1961 and MAPHILINDO, a group comprising Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia in 1963. All of them set out to strengthen relations between countries in the region and to promote cooperation in areas such as economics, science and culture.

Despite such efforts, these integrative processes yielded few results as they consisted of only the 2-3 countries from the region. It was this need for a more inclusive and effective process that inspired Dr. Thanat Khoman, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, to envision an association which would more broadly represent the countries of Southeast Asia.

In 1967, Dr. Thanat invited his counterparts from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore for informal talks in the seaside resort town of Bang Saen. It was these talks that led to an agreement to establish the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration on 8 August 1967.

The Bangkok Declaration provided that the aims and purposes of ASEAN shall be to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, agriculture and industries, scientific and transport spheres and to raise the living standards of their peoples.

2 Expansion of ASEAN's Membership

After the five countries signed the Bangkok Declaration in 1967, five other countries in Southeast Asia joined the Association: Brunei Darussalam became a member on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997 and Cambodia on 30 April 1999. As a precursor to the expansion of ASEAN to include the current ten Member States, the first ever Summit of these ten Southeast Asian countries or the SEA-10 Summit was held in Bangkok in 1995, signifying the coming together of Southeast Asian countries. ASEAN is currently considering the application of Timor-Leste to become a member.



“What we have decided today is only a small beginning of what we hope will be a long and continuous sequence of accomplishments of which we ourselves, those who will join us later and the generations to come, can be proud.”

Dr. Thanat Khoman
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
8 August 1967

3 Evolution of ASEAN

Over the past four decades, ASEAN has grown stronger through integration. It has set its sights on achieving a “people-centered” community and narrowing the development gaps between its Member States. It has also given importance to developing closer ties with countries outside the region, to promoting ASEAN's centrality in shaping the regional architecture and to contributing to the global community of nations.

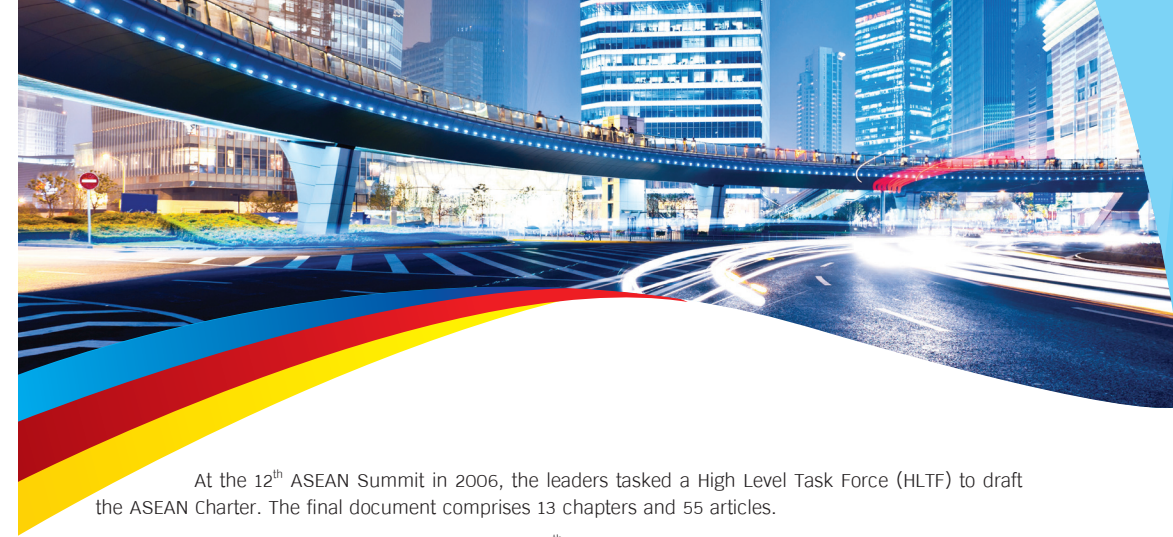
ASEAN has always been committed to strengthening political-security cooperation to ensure peace and stability in the region. This is reflected in the signing of important Treaties and Declarations, such as the Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 1976 and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) or also known as the Bangkok Treaty in 1995. It also formed the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to promote confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy to reduce tensions and prevent conflict between countries in the wider Asia-Pacific region. The ARF was launched in Thailand in 1994.

ASEAN has worked continuously to improve the region's competitiveness and sustain its economic growth. In 1992, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was created to reduce import tariffs to boost trade between Member States. Economic integration was further deepened through the implementation of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA) and ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS), leading ASEAN a highly integrated and cohesive economy.

The Governments of ASEAN have also given great importance to enhancing functional cooperation in the socio-cultural pillar, which covers various fields such as education, culture, health, labour, environment, social welfare, science and technology. Furthermore, efforts had continuously been made to promote public awareness of ASEAN and good relations and understanding between the peoples of the region.

4 The ASEAN Charter

In order to further institutionalize ASEAN and to give it legal status, the Leaders agreed at the 11th ASEAN Summit in December 2005, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on the drafting and implementation of an ASEAN Charter to establish an effective Association that is rules-based and people-centered. They established the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on the ASEAN Charter to propose a vision and direction for ASEAN integration under the Charter.



At the 12th ASEAN Summit in 2006, the leaders tasked a High Level Task Force (HLTF) to draft the ASEAN Charter. The final document comprises 13 chapters and 55 articles.

The ASEAN Charter was adopted at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 2007, and came into force on 15 December 2008 during Thailand's chairmanship of ASEAN.

5 The ASEAN Community

Since the inception of ASEAN, the evolving international order has presented ASEAN with many new challenges. These include emerging infectious diseases, terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, environmental issues, disasters as well as significant transformations in the geo-political landscape of the Asia-Pacific.

To consolidate the achievements of ASEAN and promote cooperation that can address the challenges of the day, the Leaders agreed at the 9th ASEAN Summit in 2003, Bali, Indonesia, to establish an ASEAN Community consisting of 3 pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

At the 14th ASEAN Summit in 2009, Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand, the Leaders adopted the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009-2015) which consisted of a declaration, the 3 pillars' respective Blueprints to realize their goals in 2015, and the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Strategic Framework and IAI Work Plan 2 (2009-2015).

5.1 ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC)

Unlike the European Union, ASEAN does not aspire towards forging common security and foreign policies for its Member States. The APSC does, however, encourage the development of common positions on the various issues that affect peace and stability in the region as well as important global and regional issues of common concern.

The Leaders of ASEAN envisaged the APSC as embodying the following characteristics:

- A rules-based community of shared values and norms;
- A cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security; and
- A dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world.

The APSC has also benefitted from international support for the TAC which, as of 2015, has 32 High Contracting Parties including all key countries that interact with Southeast Asia, including all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The TAC promotes the peaceful conduct of relations in Southeast Asia and is thus an important anchor for peace and stability in the region.

ASEAN has also established the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) which was launched in 2009 in Cha-am Hua Hin during Thailand's chairmanship of ASEAN. The promotion and protection of human rights in the region remains the key goal of the AICHR.

5.2 ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)

Ever since the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was established in 1992, economic integration within ASEAN has steadily gained momentum, strengthening cooperation in such areas as trade, services and investment. The ASEAN Investment Area (AIA) was set up in 1992, followed by the entry into force of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS), the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA) in 1995, 2010 and 2012 respectively.

To realize the AEC, the AEC Blueprint set goals for ASEAN to become:

- 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.

5.3 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)

To realize the ASEAN Community, a key theme agreed upon by the Member States was that the ASEAN Community should be truly people-centered. It is thus natural that the ASCC includes the promotion and strengthening of cooperation in areas that address the well-being of the people.

The ASCC seeks to establish an inclusive, people-centered community where the well-being, livelihood and welfare of the people are enhanced. In particular, the ASCC emphasizes close cooperation in the following areas:

- Human development;
- Social welfare and protection;
- Social justice and rights;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Building the ASEAN identity; and
- Narrowing the development gap.

5.4 ASEAN Community Vision 2025

As the ASEAN Community building is an evolving process, the ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together, a new vision for the next ten years, was adopted at the 27th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2015 to chart the path for a more rules-based and people-centered ASEAN Community where “no one will be left behind and everyone will have a stake”. New Blueprints in all three pillars are also envisaged for the period 2016-2025, building on the previous Blueprints. The peoples and stakeholders of ASEAN, including civil society organizations and the private sector, are expected to play a greater role in the development of the ASEAN Community.