

ASEAN NEWSLETTER

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ASEAN News Updates

- ◆ **The 19th ASEAN-European Union Ministerial Meeting (AEMM)**
(Bandar Seri Begawan, April 26, 2012)
Foreign Ministers, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN met in Bandar Seri Begawan on 26-27 April 2012, to review current relations and how they could best work together to secure a more prosperous future for the people of both regions. The Ministers looked forward to the EU's early accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), once all High Contracting Parties have ratified the Third Protocol Amending the TAC.
- ◆ **ASEAN Welcomes EU Suspension of Sanctions on Myanmar**
(Jakarta April 25, 2012)
The 27 Foreign Ministers of the EU made the announcement in Luxembourg on Monday, 23 April, 'suspending restrictive measure imposed on the Government, with the exception of the arms embargo, which it will retain'. ASEAN Chief Dr Surin Pitsuwan said that, "All ASEAN Member States welcome the suspension of sanctions on Myanmar. We have called for this soon after the country's general elections in 2010, and we reiterated our call immediately after the by-elections in early April."
- ◆ **ASEAN Road Show in Japan to Boost Economic Ties**
(Jakarta, April 25, 2012)
Economic ministers from ASEAN member states and the ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan participated in an ASEAN road show in Japan from April 25-28. The road show aimed to further promote and enhance investment and trade for East Asia as well to further strengthened the economic relationship between Japan and ASEAN's public and private sectors.
- ◆ **ASEAN Secretary-General Joins Calls by International Community for North Korea**
(Jakarta April 12, 2012)
Asean Secretary-General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan encouraged North Korea to heed the concerns of the International Community about the planned satellite launch saying "As a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), North Korea must pay attention to the concerns of the other members that are de-stabilised by such a move," stated Dr. Surin.
- ◆ **More Effective Disaster Monitoring and Response System for ASEAN Through Collaborative Effort of AHA Centre and the USA**
(Jakarta April 12, 2012)The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) is working with a team of international specialists, supported by the U.S. Government to develop an ASEAN Disaster Monitoring and Response System (DMRS). The development of the system was initiated following an offer made by U.S. President Barak Obama at the First ASEAN-U.S. Leaders' Meeting held in Singapore in November 2009. The system will allow the Jakarta –based Centre to visually monitor, geographically detect and synthesize multiple streams of data on hazardous events or disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, cyclones, floods and other natural disasters.

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Completing the ASEAN Economic Community 2015

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Most policy actions happen for a reason. Often, inaction does as well. Reasons are most usually based on interests and interests, in turn, dictate motivations. The stronger the interests are, the greater the motivations and, presumably, the more effort going into formulating and implementing outcomes. The first question we can consider today therefore is how strong are the interests behind completing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015? Asked in another way, what are the expected costs and consequences if it were to be partially achieved and incomplete?

Failure of the Doha Development Agenda round of multilateral trade negotiations in Cancun in the autumn of 2003 set the context for the vision casting that resulted in the AEC. With still-fresh memories of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, and combined with the rising threat of a super-competitor in the People's Republic of China, these gave urgency to the adoption of the Bali Concord II, which had, as one of its three pillars, the AEC.

The AEC was given further momentum in early 2007 when, at the 12th ASEAN Summit in Cebu, leaders shortened the timeframe for achieving a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and freer flow of capital to 2015. Why did they do this if they did not consider the completion of the AEC to be pressing? They could have dragged their feet and quibbled over detail endlessly as they had done in the past.

And if further proof were needed of their red-blooded commitment, they adopted the AEC Blueprint in Singapore the following year. The Blueprint further underscores the seriousness at turning the region into a single market, production base and highly competitive region by 2015. To top it off, ASEAN adopted a scorecard system to monitor progress. The AEC Scorecard progress report is to be presented to the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) in four biennial phases from 2008 to 2015.

By all accounts, the nature of the actions taken indicates the very substantial interests and motivations underlying the completion of the AEC. It is difficult to fault the leaders and senior officials, who have shown nothing but strong political will in embarking on the AEC project. They— and we— could have opted to live quiet lives instead.

This logically suggests that an incomplete AEC by 2015 would be quite costly both for ASEAN as a whole and its ten member states. This then brings us to the second question: how far have each of the four elements of the AEC Blueprint, that is, (1) a single market and production base, (2) competitive economic region; (3) equitable economic development; and (4) integration into the global economy been achieved? The intent may be there but are the results?

Thus far two AEC Scorecards have been produced (2009-10, 2010-11), with another two to come before 2015. Without entering into philosophical questions about whether “the glass is half empty or half full” or wading into too much the technical details, we can probably do no better than to draw on the results of the Scorecards.

On the face of it, as of October 2011, ASEAN countries were said to have achieved 75.7 per cent of the targeted measures for Phases 1 and 2. Implementation rates are calculated as a ratio of measures that are fully implemented to a total of measures targeted. This is a pretty high figure and would seem very respectable given that ASEAN still has a little less than halfway to go. To be sure, some have voiced concerns at the lower rate of completion between the two phases, i.e. 83.8 (Phase I) versus 68.6 (Phase II). But there have been achievements and that is not something to decry.

Straight-line reasoning, however, does not always work. In the first place, is the ratio of implemented to targeted completion of measures an overly simplistic measure? Second, inability to fully achieve targets can have consequential cumulative effects down the line. Any unfinished business not only has to be carried forward but can impede other targets from being achieved. Third, there is the issue of quality, i.e. whether the targets themselves are as demanding as they need to be, especially given the ambitious end goals that have been set. Have the targets been set too low so that failure is difficult?

Issues about measuring the progress in completing the AEC by 2015 can certainly be debated. However even by the existing methodology, warning bells have been sounded and the tasks ahead made urgent. In Scorecard II, for example, the ASEAN Secretariat had this to say: “...*(W)hile recognising the achievement to date, some measures due for implementation have not been fully implemented (Annex 1). This short fall mainly results from the delays in ratification of signed ASEAN-wide agreements and their alignment into national domestic laws as well as delays in implementation of specific initiatives.*”

The Scorecard points to delays in ratification of ASEAN agreements and adoption into national laws and regulations as being significant obstacles to implementation. Certainly, this is an area requiring renewed action. However, some of the outstanding actions would suggest that there is a low probability of completion given the context and conditions of member states and the tasks that need to be undertaken (e.g. on connectivity). This may not be due to any lack of will *per se* but of a lack of technical capacity and sheer human and financial resources. The 41st ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting in Bangkok requested the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to study the scorecard monitoring process and provide substantive analyses and independent reviews of the AEC Blueprint implementation. ERIA’s scorecard is more analytical as compared to ASEAN Secretariat’s straightforward compliance-type/accomplishment based scorecard. One recommendation emerging is that ASEAN member states need to establish national-level coordinating committees to implement the AEC.

So what can we conclude? It seems clear that on the present trajectory, there will be elements of the AEC that could well remain unfinished business by 2015. It is also clear that the reason will have much to do with national technical capacities to implement “behind-the-border” measures but also some of the usual foot-dragging by countries with respect to opening up. It is further clear that the quality of the AEC completion will continue to be taken to task, with allegedly “loosely defined” targets and implementation measures.

This may be nothing more than to say that the AEC will continue to be a work-in-progress. The conundrum is that the less seriously member states take the 2015 target date, the less effort they will put into the project. For pure administrative and managerial reasons, therefore, they will want to maintain a hard deadline, in which case there should be a renewed and concerted push to the finishing line right about now.

From this writer’s perspective, however, there will need to be a deepening programme post-2015 if the word “community” is to have any real meaning as the leaders intended. The payoffs of success and the costs of failure to urgently complete a genuine AEC will have to be constantly brought to mind if momentum is not to cease and we are left with an incomplete and unusable product.

2nd ASEAN-EU BUSINESS SUMMIT: SAME SONG DIFFERENT TUNE

Ruben Hattari

Executive Director, ASEAN Business Advisory Council

As the two major regional integration initiatives in the world, ASEAN and the EU are natural partners with common goals; they both aim to foster peace, stability and prosperity amongst their respective citizens. Though relations between the two regions have been formalised since 1977, the emphasis of strengthening relations through trade and investment has become the focus of recent times.

With its burgeoning middle-class and relative stable Governments conducive for trade and investment, ASEAN continues to cement its place in the global economy with its economic growth. If ASEAN were a single country, it would be the 9th largest economy in the world, with close to 10 per cent of the world's population (590 million). The statistics speaks for itself; between 2000 – 2010 ASEAN's GDP has tripled from approximately US\$ 607 billion to US\$ 1.87 trillion. On average, the ASEAN economy grew by 5.2 percent annually. Robust domestic demand in parallel with buoyant trade and investment inflow were the major contributors. Similar with GDP, regional consumption expenditure tripled from US\$ 400 billion (2000) to US\$ 1.2 trillion (2010); trade balance has almost doubled from US\$ 51.75 billion (2000) to US\$ 100.262 billion (2010); while Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) tripled from US\$ 22.66 billion to US\$ 79.13 billion. Given such positive developments, the region purchasing power is expected to double within the next decade.

As a result, businesses in the region are catching on quickly to the tune of ASEAN. A recent survey conducted by the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy found that 36.5 per cent of businesses indicated an ASEAN country as offering the best prospects worldwide for their organisation's offshore direct investments over a three-year horizon (2011/12 – 2013/14). When compared to the Survey conducted in 2010, it was also found that there was an increase from 85 to 88 per cent for businesses wanting to invest in at least one ASEAN Member State. Additionally, the Survey also found that ASEAN's attractiveness was also rated higher than China's both as a market for the sale of goods and services and as a production location.

The overall achievements of ASEAN has not gone under the radar. The development and potential of the ASEAN market have successfully attracted the eyes of the world especially the European Union (EU). In the past two decades the EU's total trade with ASEAN has multiplied by more than five times from EUR 26.04 billion (1989) to EUR 142.17 Billion (2010). Exports for the same period increased from EUR 12.9 billion to EUR 78.9 billion, while imports increased from EUR 13.15 billion to EUR 63.3 billion. Such high trade figure positioned EU as one of ASEAN's top major trading partner. In addition, the EU is also ASEAN's top provider of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows since the 1990s. In 2010, the share of FDI inflows from EU accounted for nearly 23 percent of the overall FDI inflows to ASEAN.

In continuing to foster trade and investment relations between the two regions, the Kingdom of Cambodia has just recently hosted the second ASEAN-EU Business Summit (AEBS), which took place on 1 April in Phnom Penh. The event served as a platform to promote and discuss trade opportunities and challenges between the two blocs. It specifically looked into strengthening private-sector ties in the four core sectors namely agri-business (food processing and beverages), infrastructure/connectivity (logistics, trade facilitation), manufacturing (automobile and pharmaceuticals) and services (financial services, insurance and information and communication technology or ICT).

Some 500 companies participated in the event and delegates were honoured at the end of the Business Summit, when they were visited by all ten ASEAN Economic Ministers and Karel De Gucht, the EU Trade Commissioner. This particular interactive session provided an excellent and a very rare opportunity for the private sector in both regions to share their concerns and highlight the reality of what is happening on the ground directly to the policy makers.

The general perception of participants recognised and applauded EU's contribution in ASEAN. However, there is a growing concern that investment flows into ASEAN countries are distributed unevenly between sectors. This is especially true for technology-driven and research as well as development-based investments. And many ASEAN economies, including Indonesia, still experience less significant investment in manufacturing industries.

Secondly, ASEAN businesses still believe that the relationship between the two regions remains one-way to the benefit of EU businesses compared to its ASEAN counterpart. Non-tariff measures and other barriers to trade still exist in both markets, but is much more apparent in the EU and especially in industries where environmental regulations come into the equation. Many ASEAN businesses often feel discriminated when they have to send their produce to be tested for certification in Europe – a practice found to be expensive and impractical for many in the agri-food industry. Sadly, the outcome of recommendations for this particular hurdle was too predictable and produced no short-term remedy. EU businesses want customs harmonisation throughout ASEAN and their Governments to invest more in trade facilitation activities; whilst ASEAN businesses want the EU to jointly invest in testing and standardisation centres throughout ASEAN, so more commodities and more businesses can enter the EU market.

Lastly, participants at the Business Summit shared their views on the importance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in acting as the engine of economic growth. Almost 96 per cent of ASEAN enterprises are SMEs and account 50 – 85 per cent of domestic employment. Any economic cooperation between the two blocs cannot only cater larger sized corporations with unlimited access to resources, but will also need to acknowledge the existence and incorporate SMEs into its ecosystem. In this respect, the EU can serve as a model, equipped with a high level of transparency and availability of information.

In response, Karel De Gucht and the ASEAN Economic Ministers all agreed and are urging closer economic ties between the two blocs. De Gucht appealed that there is a need for a comprehensive, 21st-century free trade agreement between the two regions that should tackle the full range of barriers that obstruct flows of goods, services and investment. This means not only eliminating tariffs, but also tackling regulations that block trade in goods and services, improving the protection of intellectual property rights, and securing access to markets for government procurements, all within a legally binding framework.

It is no secret that the EU has been very aggressive in pursuing the establishment of an ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and is currently using numerous outreach programs such as the AEBS and other capacity building programs as stepping-stones to reach its final destination. ASEAN Governments and businesses are grateful for the efforts shown. But, as laid out above, there is still much groundwork to be done to further integrate the two regions. In the meantime, any FTA between ASEAN and the EU will be limited to the EU planning to conclude ongoing bilateral FTAs with Singapore and Malaysia, as well as to work towards the opening of new negotiations with other ASEAN Members.

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Reflections on the outcome of the 20th ASEAN Summit

By Dr. Chheang Vannarith

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The 20th ASEAN Summit took place in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, on April 3-4, in the context of fast changing global and regional political, strategic, and economic environment particularly the uncertain political development in the Middle East, the Eurozone financial instability, and democratization process in Myanmar, leadership change and nuclear program in North Korea, and the long lasting complicated South China Sea issue.

Although the atmosphere and expectations before the ASEAN Summit were mixed especially after the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao just two days before the summit, the Cambodian chairmanship has proved to be neutral, independent, and fruitful. The overarching outcome of the summit was a strong call for practical cooperation and implementation to be in place in order to fulfill the demands of achieving an ASEAN community by 2015.

Four documents were adopted at the Summit including the Phnom Penh Agenda of ASEAN Community Building, Phnom Penh Declaration on ASEAN, One Community: One Destiny, Drug-free ASEAN, and Global Dialogue of Moderates.

In his opening remarks, Cambodian Prime Minister, Samdech Hun Sen stressed that “ASEAN in 2012 highlights the joint determination and cooperation of the ASEAN people to work in chorus to build the ASEAN Community as a cohesive family, living in political security, economic and socio-cultural harmony, and which is rules-based, peaceful and economically strong”.

Under this year’s theme “ASEAN: One Community, One destiny”, Cambodia placed a higher emphasis on progressing the Economic Community agenda focusing on the 7 following key issues under the Phnom Penh Agenda:

- A strengthened mechanism for financial stability, such as the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM), and urged for a doubling of the resources of the mechanism from USD 120 billion to USD 240 billion;
- Timely implementation of the Road Map for ASEAN Community Building;
- Priority for the ASEAN Economic Community;
- Promotion of the speedy implementation of the Master Plan for Connectivity;
- Protection for migrant workers;
- Urgent priority for the effective functioning of regional disaster management mechanism;
- Promotion of cooperation in the agriculture sectors to ensure regional food security.

However through the Phnom Penh Declaration, Cambodia as chair has made headway to advance the achievement of achieving an ASEAN Community by 2015.

ASEAN Political Security Community

Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone

Nuclear security and safety have attracted attention from ASEAN especially after the Fukushima nuclear crisis in Japan in early 2011. Cambodia as chair of ASEAN has actively engaged with five nuclear weapon states in order to convince them to accede to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). In addition, ASEAN also calls for the development a coordinated approach that would contribute to global undertakings to improve nuclear safety, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other relevant partners, as well as promote and uphold IAEA standards of safety and security in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful use.

Maritime Security

The ASEAN leaders reaffirmed the importance of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), the universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the willingness to move forward for the eventual realization of a regional code of conduct (COC). The ASEAN leaders supported the convening of the ASEAN-China Joint Workshop to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the DOC, in Cambodia, in

the fourth quarter of 2012. They also looked forward to the holding of the 5th ASEAN-China Senior Officials on DOC and the 8th Meeting of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group. Moreover, ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and other existing ASEAN mechanisms are encouraged and believed to contribute to regional maritime security co-operation.

ASEAN Leaders shared common views that the existing ASEAN-China Mechanisms on the DOC should be the way forward to ensure peace and stability with regards to the South China Sea dispute. They also voiced concern that interference from the outside parties would create complications for ASEAN in addressing the issue on South China Sea. However, there is no consensus within ASEAN regarding whether China should be included in the process of discussion on the key elements of COC.

Myanmar Issue

The ASEAN leaders welcomed the positive developments in Myanmar and supported the results of the by-election held 1st April with the hope that the on-going efforts of democratization, national reconsolidation and socio-economic reforms will bear fruits for the people of Myanmar and ASEAN. The leaders called for the lifting of all sanctions on Myanmar in order to contribute positively to the democratic process and economic development and reaffirmed their position and commitment to support Myanmar's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2014.

The Korean Peninsula

The ASEAN leaders shared the views on the need to closely follow-up on the developments in the Korean Peninsula, particularly the development of political trends in the DPRK. The Leaders reaffirmed their strong stand to support a peaceful solution to the Korean Peninsula issue, and urged all parties concerned to abide by the UN Security Council's Resolution No 1718 in 2006 and the Resolution No. 1874 in 2009, and called for the resumption of the six parties talk as soon as possible.

Cambodia has shown its political willingness and commitment to work towards the peaceful solution of the Korean Peninsula issue by offering Cambodia as a consultation venue between the FMs of ROK and DPRK during the ARF in July 2012; and offering to hold consultations between the foreign ministers of the two Koreas and other parties concerned.

Mekong River

Continue to reinforce all efforts to promote sustainable management of water resources to ensure the interests of all the peoples of ASEAN, including those living along the Mekong river and riparian countries. The Cambodian Prime Minister emphasized that cooperation among the lower Mekong countries is very important to commonly manage the Mekong River. The Vietnamese Prime Minister proposed to consider a declaration on water resource security.

Non-Traditional Security Issues

Strengthen close coordination and cooperation among ASEAN Member States and with Dialogue Partners in addressing the non-traditional challenges faced by the region as well as the international community, through the promotion of closer and more effective collaboration and cooperation in the relevant areas of cooperation, inter alia, disaster risk reduction and management, peace-keeping operations, counter-terrorism activities, combating transnational crimes, maritime security and cooperation, trafficking in persons and other regional challenges.

Continue to enhance effective coordination and cooperation among ASEAN Member States and between ASEAN and external parties to ensure that the region is free from all forms of threats, including terrorism and to eradicate transnational crimes.

Strengthen cooperation among ASEAN Member States and external partners to ensure food security and energy security particularly to reduce food and energy price volatility. Work to ensure that ASEAN Member States are safe from disasters through enhancing cooperation, and promote the use of technology in the area of disaster management at both regional and international levels in order to achieve a disaster resilient ASEAN Community. ASEAN will continue to utilize the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) to cope with disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

ASEAN Economic Community

Implementation

The leaders committed to implementing AEC blueprint measures toward full economic integration under the ASEAN single market and production base, by deepening and broadening ASEAN's internal economic opportunities, fostering effective cross-border facilitation to provide greater market size and bigger economies of scale, and by nurturing dynamic linkages with the global supply chain and the world economy by increasing competitiveness through both hard and soft connectivity, and by attaining regional integration through effective implementation of various ASEAN initiatives and Action Plans.

Competitiveness

The leaders agreed to maintain the momentum in ensuring ASEAN's competitiveness through trade facilitation measures, including non-tariff barriers, to realize effective free flow of goods, eliminating substantially all restrictions to trade in services and implementing existing ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangements on professional services, and removing the impediments to achieving a free and open investment regime, while understanding that domestic adjustments may be required. In addition, it needs to expedite the work on the realization of the ASEAN Power Grid (APG) and the Trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline (TAGP).

Connectivity

The leaders agreed to intensify their efforts to connect ASEAN through the effective and timely implementation of the MPAC to promote enhanced physical infrastructure development, effective institutional arrangements, and people empowerment. ASEAN will also continue to engage ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, regional forum such as the ASEAN Plus Three and the East Asia Summit, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the MPAC.

Narrowing Development Gap and Sub-Regional Integration

In order to reduce the development gap and promote inclusive growth in the region, sub-regional economic cooperation and integration is an important element. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to implement the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) as well as other sub-regional growth areas, such as Greater Mekong Sub-Region Economic Cooperation (GMS), Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT), Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Cambodia-Lao-Viet Nam (CLV) Development Triangle that would bridge the development gap within ASEAN.

ASEAN Infrastructure Fund

Infrastructure development remains the key area of ASEAN connectivity and poverty reduction. It is crucial to operationalize and utilize fully the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to further improve physical connectivity and narrow the infrastructure development gap in ASEAN.

ASEAN Regional Economic Partnership and Global Role

To link ASEAN's economies with the wider region and the world at large can contribute to the sustainable economic growth and resilience of ASEAN. ASEAN is trying to engage its FTA Partners through new initiatives such as the ASEAN Framework for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and adhering to the work plan, which will broaden and deepen ASEAN's economic relations with the global community.

ASEAN commits to advance its common interests and concerns at the global level and ensure ASEAN's increased role to contribute to the solution of common global challenges as well as establish ASEAN as a reliable regional player in the global community of nations through the implementation of the Bali Declaration on ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations (Bali Concord III).

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

People centered ASEAN with the core values of human rights and democratic participation is the foundation of the ASEAN socio-cultural community. Cambodia is trying to push for the adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. It also emphasizes people to people connectivity by encouraging greater intra-ASEAN people mobility including through the full realisation of a visa exemption regime for the ASEAN peoples as well as a single ASEAN visa for non-ASEAN nationals.

ASEAN needs to strengthen activities in promoting and developing social welfare and protection policies and programmes and the quality of life and well being of the elderly, persons with disabilities, youth, women and children living under poverty, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including exchanging best practices in all related fields such as accessibility to education, rehabilitation, protection and care including health care. In addition, it also calls for the promotion of regional cooperation in the development of programmes for skills development of women, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Regarding educational connectivity, it needs to increase education networking in various levels of educational institutions of ASEAN Member States and further enhance networking between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners to promote ASEAN identity, culture, values and a harmonious community.

ASEAN identity has also been emphasized with the commitment to seriously implement the Declaration on ASEAN Unity in Cultural Diversity: Towards Strengthening ASEAN Community in order to strengthen the ASEAN identity through better mutual awareness, solidarity and understanding among the ASEAN peoples by developing a plan of action to implement the Declaration. It is necessary to create a culture of engagement and partnership between states and CSOs and youth associations in ASEAN. Under the Cambodian chairmanship, representatives from ASEAN CSOs and youth had the opportunity to interface with their leaders in a constructive manner.

To conclude, Cambodia, the youngest and poorest member of ASEAN, has shown its commitment to contribute towards regional peace and development through active participation as an active and responsible member and chair of ASEAN this year. Success would boost Cambodia's image and role on the regional and global stage.