JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

**The Tenth Session of
the ASEAN Community Statistical System Committee (ACSS10)
8-9 December 2020, Virtual Meeting Coordinated from Hanoi, Viet Nam**

1. The Tenth Session of the ASEAN Community Statistical System Committee (ACSS10), hosted by the General Statistics Office (GSO) of Viet Nam, was held virtually on 8 to 9 December 2020. The Session was chaired by Dr. Nguyen Thi Huong, Director General of the General Statistics Office (GSO) of Viet Nam, with Ms. Hajah Mariah Haji Yahya, Director General, Department of Economic Planning and Statistics of Brunei Darussalam as the Co-chairperson.

2. In 2020, the ACSS celebrates another decade of ASEAN statistical cooperation. This builds on the strong foundation in statistical cooperation established since 1997.

The Tenth Anniversary of ACSS

3. Since its establishment in 2011, the ACSS has been continuing its efforts to provide relevant, timely, and comparable ASEAN statistics in support of ASEAN integration monitoring and evidence-based policy and decision making. The ACSS has also been consistently strengthening its cooperation to enhance statistical capacities of the ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat.

4. With the support of the Sub-Committee on Planning and Coordination (SCPC) and the technical working groups, the ACSS has been able to improve data provision in various statistical areas, including economic and social statistics. The ACSS disseminates over 700 statistical indicators via the ASEANstats website.

5. Despite achieving significant improvements at the national and regional levels, the ACSS continues to face challenges that require strong collaborative efforts of ASEAN Member States. Statistical capacity gap among members and limited national and regional resources are among the key challenges for the ACSS to improve data availability and quality. Improving coordination among national data producers is also crucial to respond to the greater data needs, including in furthering global initiatives such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

6. The 10th Anniversary of ACSS is a historic occasion that highlights our success in building an ASEAN Statistical Community. We appreciated GSO Viet Nam's organisation of the High-Level Advocacy Forum, in conjunction with the celebration of a decade of ASEAN statistical cooperation, to further enhance the visibility of ASEAN statistics.

7. Aligned with the overall theme of Viet Nam's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2020 of "*Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN*", and as part of our continuous commitment to further enhance regional statistical cooperation and respond proactively to emerging statistical requirements, we implemented the ACSS work programme 2020 as follows:

Key Deliverables of the ACSS Work Programme 2020

8. In meeting the increasing data needs of ASEAN integration monitoring, we continued our statistical programmes to provide timely and comparable statistics on international merchandise trade, foreign direct investment, international trade in services, SDGs, National Accounts, and other macroeconomic and social indicators. We also implemented dissemination and communication work programmes to promote greater use of ASEAN statistics, including videos to celebrate a decade of statistical cooperation.

9. We endorsed the results of Mid-Term Review of the ACSS Strategic Plan 2016-2025 and the revised ACSS Strategic Plan for the period of 2021-2025.

10. We published the "*ASEAN SDG Indicators Baseline Report 2020*", which provides a statistical report and the agreed ASEAN priority SDG indicators covering 67 indicators collected by ASEAN Member States. In complementing the report, we launched the "*ASEAN Online Database for SDG Indicators*" as a tool for data submission, processing, and dissemination of ASEAN SDG Indicators. We expressed our appreciation to the Working Group on SDG Indicators and ASEANstats for the timely release of the publication and the online portal on ASEANstats website, together with infographics on SDG indicators.

11. In recognition of the potential use of Big Data in official statistics as new sources of data, we endorsed the Concept Note on the Use of Big Data for Enhancement of ACSS Official Statistics. This would strengthen our cooperation in enabling the utilization of Big Data, which could play a significant role in improving the timeliness and relevance of official statistics, as well as reducing the costs of statistics compilation.

12. We adopted the ASEAN-Help-ASEAN Framework for ACSS Capacity Building in sustaining our capacity building programmes as well as to facilitate greater knowledge and experience sharing among ASEAN Member States to speed up the development of statistics at national and regional levels.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic to the Provision of Official Statistics

13. The COVID-19 pandemic has given a huge hit to national statistical authorities in ASEAN, especially considering that 2020 is the year when most ASEAN Member States are conducting population census. Many other statistical activities had been affected as well, particularly those that require field enumeration. Therefore, it presented serious and crucial challenges for the timely provision of official statistics.

14. However, despite all the difficulties and restrictions, ASEAN Member States have continued to provide reliable official statistics with changes to our business process, developed/enhanced methodological aspects, and increased the utilization of technologies to minimize the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Achievements at the National Level in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

15. We commended ASEAN Member States' efforts in producing and disseminating official statistics with enhanced data quality despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic:

    i) Brunei Darussalam's (1) preparation of Population and Housing Census 2021 with the introduction of online submission or e-Census; (2) data collection for Consumer Price Index via alternative methods such as e-mail, telephone and drop box; (3) new releases on value indices for Retail Sales and Food & Beverages Services to show impact of COVID-19; and (4) continuous review of data availability for its inaugural participation in Open Data Inventory to improve statistical visibility.

    ii) Cambodia's (1) conduct of General Population Census 2019 and Socio-Economic Survey 2019; (2) release of Inter-Census Agriculture Survey 2019 preliminary results, (3) questionnaire design of Cambodia Agriculture Survey 2020; (4) preparation of final report of Cambodia Labour Force Survey 2019; (5) release of Cambodia National Statistical Yearbook 2020 and National Account 2019; and (6) development and implementation of National Indicators Reporting Platform (CamStat).

    iii) Indonesia's (1) implementation of flexi work, adjustment of statistics business process activities and optimization of the use of information technology; (2) implementation of health protocol for face-to-face interview and promotion alternative data collection methods; (3) utilization of Big Data to get prompt indicators; (4) conduct of online survey of Covid-19 impact on Socio-Demographics and Business; and (5) adjustment of the 2020 population census business process.

    iv) Lao PDR's (1) assessment of the CPI and Inflation as impact of COVID-19; (2) National SDGs Secretariat, where Lao Statistics Bureau is responsible for producing and monitoring the SDG indicators for the first and second voluntary national reviews; (3) completion of Economic Census III field work in September, with the final report to be finished by December 2020; (4) completion and launch of the 6th Lao Consumption and Expenditure Survey; and (5) ongoing field work of Agriculture Census III which will be completed by mid-December 2020.

v) Malaysia's (1) conduct of special online surveys to measure the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and companies; (2) conduct of Malaysia Population and Housing Census 2020; (3) release of Malaysian Economic Statistics Review and various of publications to reflect latest economic and social developments; (4) Virtual Press Conferences on latest statistics; (5) use of Videographic, Newsletters, Stats Alert, and Blog writing to raise public's and media's statistical awareness; and (6) development of special landing page displays interactive visualisation of COVID-19.

vi) Myanmar's conduct of surveys related to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 outbreak with the collaboration of development partners by using Computer-Assisted Phone Interviewing (CAPI) method. This is to respond to government policies in striving to control, prevent, and give treatment for all the people living within the country to be safe and to reduce suffering from the COVID-19 disease during the outbreak.

vii) The Philippines' (1) use of alternative modes of data collection for the 2020 Census of Population and Housing and Labor Force Surveys; (2) overall revision and rebasing to 2018 of the Philippine System of National Accounts; (3) estimate of the size of the digital economy; (4) Big Data initiatives such as web scraping to collect commodity prices for the Consumer Price Index and the enhancement of small area poverty estimates incorporating night time lights from satellite imagery.

viii) Singapore's (1) conduct of Census of Population 2020 with over half the responses via online, greater use of administrative data and machine learning in data coding; (2) release of more detailed Consumer Price Index data for deeper insights on inflation drivers; (3) release of more detailed retail and food & beverages services data to reflect growing prevalence of online transactions; and (4) transformation of the Singapore in Figures and eBook of Statistics into interactive digital publications.

ix) Thailand's (1) development of household and establishment surveys by utilizing the integration of inter-governmental administrative data; (2) development of multi-mode data collection, such as online survey, telephone interview, drop-off/pick-up, mail-out, mail-back to complement the face-to-face interview method in various surveys; and (3) online survey on the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak conducted in collaboration with partner states and international agencies.

x) Viet Nam's (1) conduct of online surveys for assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on enterprises; (2) inclusion of additional questions in the Labour Force Survey on impact of COVID-19 on workers; (3) Evaluation of impact and development of economic growth scenarios in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic for the Government's decision-making; (4) strong application of IT, i.e. email, web-form and administrative data, for monthly socio-economic assessment and surveys.

Appreciation for Development Partners and International Organisations

16.   We appreciated the contribution of the European Union through ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE) Plus Programme in providing Technical Assistance to support the ACSS in the strengthening of institutional framework and coordination, improving the availability and comparability of key statistics for ASEAN regional integration monitoring, and narrowing the gaps in statistical capacity among ASEAN Member States.

17.   We appreciated the continuation of ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP) in supporting capacity building on Statistics of Trade in Services. We welcomed Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) support for CLMV in the use of information technology for data collection.

18.   We thanked the International Organisations and development partners, namely Asian Development Bank (ADB), European Union (EU), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), UN WOMEN, and Statistics Bureau of Japan. We acknowledged with appreciation their support towards our goal of a more cohesive and responsive ACSS providing high quality statistics in support of the ASEAN integration.

Handover of the ACSS Chairmanship in 2021

19.   We expressed our sincere gratitude to the Government of Viet Nam, through the General Statistics Office, for its excellent chairmanship, good preparation and impeccable arrangements for the Tenth Session of the ACSS Committee and the High-Level Advocacy Forum.

20.   We welcomed the ACSS Chairmanship of Brunei Darussalam in 2021.

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ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Committee

1. BRUNEI DARUSSALAM: **Ms. Hjh. Mariah binti Hj. Yahya**

2. KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA: **Mdm. Hang Lina**

3. REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA: **Dr. Suhariyanto**

4. LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: **Mrs. Phonesaly Souksavath**

5. MALAYSIA: **Dr. Mohd Uzir Mahidin**

6. THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR: **Mr. Htun Zaw**

7. REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES: **Dr. Claire Dennis Mapa**

8. REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE: **Ms. Wong Wee Kim**

9. KINGDOM OF THAILAND: **Ms. Wanpen Poonwong**

10. THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM: **Dr. Nguyen Thi Huong**

11. ASEAN SECRETARIAT: **Dr. Julia Puspadewi Tijaja**

9 December 2020