



**CHAIRMAN’S PRESS STATEMENT OF
THE ASEAN COORDINATING COUNCIL’S SPECIAL SESSION ON
SUB-REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

(Ha Noi, 09 September 2020)

1. The ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) held a Special Meeting on Sub-Regional Development on 9 September 2020 via video-conference to discuss sub-regional development across ASEAN and ASEAN’s role in promoting sub-regional development to achieve ASEAN Community building objectives.
2. The Ministers were briefed by the Secretary-General of ASEAN, President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the President of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) on their perspectives regarding ASEAN’s role in narrowing the development gap and enhancing ASEAN’s competitiveness as a region, promoting sustainable and equitable development in the region, and presenting the prospective role of sub-regional cooperation frameworks in regional integration efforts. The Ministers appreciated ADB’s long partnership with ASEAN in promoting sub-regional and regional development as well as its timely support for COVID-19 pandemic response. The Ministers commended efforts by ERIA as a regional think-tank in conducting quality research work to facilitate ASEAN’s regional integration process.
3. The Ministers recognised the relevance of sub-regional development to ASEAN’s regional integration and community-building process, especially in narrowing the development gap and enhancing ASEAN’s competitiveness as a region, enhancing regional connectivity and ensuring ASEAN’s sustainable and inclusive development. The Ministers also acknowledged the complementary role and contributions of sub-regional cooperation frameworks to realize ASEAN’s goal of a people-oriented, people-centered ASEAN Community that leaves no one behind, as well as serving as catalysts for economic growth, deepening regional economic integration and connectivity.
4. The Ministers underscored the importance of strengthening ASEAN Centrality and unity in community-building efforts, encouraging an active role of

ASEAN in ensuring that sub-regional development strategies aligned with the overall development strategies of ASEAN, particularly to narrow the development gap within ASEAN and enhance ASEAN's competitiveness as a region. The Ministers acknowledged the need for ASEAN to harmonise existing sub-regional cooperation efforts across the ASEAN region with ASEAN Community building objectives, and strengthening the mutually reinforcing complementarities between ASEAN-led mechanisms and sub-regional frameworks to promote synergy amongst existing sub-regional cooperation efforts, thereby promoting complementarities between the regional and sub-regional frameworks, including existing mechanisms.

5. The Ministers took note of the ASEAN Senior Officials' discussions on the outcome of the ASEAN Forum on Sub-Regional Development: Converging Mekong Sub-Regional Cooperation with ASEAN goals, held on 14 July 2020. The Ministers welcomed and encouraged efforts by sub-regional frameworks, such as the ACMECS and other Mekong cooperation frameworks as well as BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT, to promote equitable and sustainable development across the ASEAN Community by aligning sub-regional growth with the comprehensive development of ASEAN.
6. The Ministers discussed the way forward for the enhanced role of ASEAN in promoting sub-regional development and agreed to explore cooperation in:
 - (i) Harmonising sub-regional development strategies and ASEAN development strategies such as the ASEAN Community Vision Blueprints 2025, Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV and Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC 2025); and promoting sub-regional development in ASEAN's relevant cooperation agenda.
 - (ii) Enhancing ASEAN's strategic outlook towards sub-regional cooperation frameworks; Encouraging closer coordination between ASEAN and sub-regional cooperation frameworks, including through the ASEAN Secretariat, relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and relevant bodies of sub-regional cooperation frameworks.
 - (iii) Promoting dialogues and cooperation in ASEAN and with ASEAN's external partners on strengthening sub-regional development, including through existing mechanisms; Ensuring that sub-regional cooperation is complementary to ASEAN's efforts towards regional integration and narrowing the development gap within ASEAN and ASEAN community building; Encouraging coordination and exchange of information among sub-regional cooperation frameworks, with a view to promoting effective synergy among them.

7. The ASEAN Coordinating Council will report the outcome of discussions on ASEAN's role in promoting sub-regional development to the 37th ASEAN Summit.
8. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the special guests for their valued contribution to the Special Session, as well as to the Government of Viet Nam for its role as the ASEAN Chair in 2020, and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting./.
