



## INFORMATION PAPER

# ASEAN DECLARATION ON CULTURE OF PREVENTION FOR A PEACEFUL, INCLUSIVE, RESILIENT, HEALTHY AND HARMONIOUS SOCIETY

### Introduction

1. We live in an uncertain world where we are constantly reacting to challenges arising from human, social and sustainable development, socio-economic inequalities, discriminations, and social exclusion that may lead to various forms of vulnerabilities, violent extremism and other forms of violence, impacting the lives and livelihoods of the peoples of ASEAN. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has further accentuated these vulnerabilities by exposing and amplifying persisting issues of inequality, including the rise of social stigmatisation and discriminations. It has therefore become important to ask ourselves if there is a better way to do things in preparing ourselves for future crisis.
2. The ASEAN initiative on Culture of Prevention (CoP) represents a paradigm shift in mindset on how we seek to address the different forms of vulnerabilities and challenges to human, social and sustainable development. It aims to shift the vantage point by going upstream where preventive approaches are adopted to address root causes of socio-cultural issues. Since the adoption of the Declaration on ASEAN Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society by the ASEAN Leaders at the 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summit in 2017, it remains relevant and pertinent to advance the implementation of the ASEAN CoP.

### Why do we adopt an upstream approach?

3. We recognise that to address different forms of vulnerabilities and challenges to human, social and sustainable development, it has to start from prevention. As opposed to downstream initiatives (such as law enforcement and rehabilitation) which seek to manage

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and mitigate the consequences of social problems, upstream measures (such as values-based education and media literacy) are aimed to prevent the harms of different forms of violence and vulnerabilities, and challenges to human, social and sustainable developments from taking root in the first place.

4. Prevention may be less costly and more sustainable when compared with managing the consequences downstream which more often than not, are more costly and also less sustainable when trapped in a reactive cycle of fire-fighting the situations with limiting or depleting resources.

### **What are we preventing?**

5. The CoP enables ASEAN to comprehensively respond to challenges that hamper human, social and sustainable development by assessing underlying causes and developing evidence-based preventive practices in the design of programmes and policies to address various forms of vulnerabilities including for example violence against women and children (including human trafficking), drug use and trafficking, youth and urban crime, hate crime/speech, intolerance, fake news, digital hate and misinterpretation of culture. Furthermore, displacements of populace from their homes as a result of human-induced, natural disasters and environmental degradation, as well as the deprivation of physical and mental well-being (including lack of access to basic medical care) could also potentially result in other forms of vulnerabilities that may undermine social cohesiveness.
6. Through 6 strategic thrusts, we seek to address these social issues commonly seen as the underlying causes of vulnerabilities including poverty, inequality, disparity, marginalisation, social exclusion, youth unemployment, youth disenfranchisement, racial and religious discriminations, corruption, sense of social injustices, lack of access to education, health care, environmental goods and other basic government services, as well as lack of economic/employment opportunities.
7. Given our shared responsibility, enshrined in ASEAN Community Vision 2025, is “to realise a common vision for an inclusive, sustainable, resilient, dynamic and harmonious ASEAN Community”, it is therefore paramount to develop and foster a Culture of Prevention, that promotes our shared values of tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for life, as well as to ingrain this Culture of Prevention mindset in the consciousness of our peoples, particularly the children and youths so that it becomes part of our socio-cultural DNA.

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## What is the impetus of the ASEAN’s Culture of Prevention?

8. At the heart of prevention is to develop evidence-based upstream approaches by way of the utilisation of data and trend analysis, risk assessment, forecasting, early warning and other evidence-based methods. Such initiatives seek to address the root causes of systemic challenges so as to better mitigate social harms and lead to more cost-effective policies and programmes.
9. Dissemination of information on inculcating prevention and preventive mindset is a key plank of the ASEAN CoP. We encourage greater value-based education and lifelong learning to instil respect for life, diversity and tolerance. Equally important is to promote the Culture of Prevention through the new and social media. To counter the prevalence of prurient forms of exploitation, abuse and violence (such as videos of child/women pornography) online, it is pivotal that we seek to embed values-based messaging, raise media and digital literacy amongst the peoples particularly the youths in the region. It is also critical that we customise the CoP messages to reach out to both captive (i.e. those who are receptive and are inclined to the idea of CoP) and non-captive audiences (i.e. those who lack an understanding or resisting the idea of CoP).
10. As CoP aims to address issues that are interwoven, multidimensional, and cross-cutting in its nature, CoP should seek to promote greater cross-sectoral and inter-pillar collaborations. Raising awareness on the Culture of Prevention would also require relevant stakeholder engagement and participation, including at the grassroots level, where communities are actively involved in the conversations against any forms of vulnerabilities. In addition to the ASEAN Community Pillars, ASEAN centres and affiliated organisations could also play a critical role in promoting CoP. Furthermore, we need to actively expand the CoP mindshare among the professionals (e.g. educators, justice and health professionals etc) who being at the frontline of engaging people at risks are well-positioned to embed CoP into their work practices. In so doing, the professionals serve as an important intermediary of CoP’s strategic outreach to and engagement with the public at large. In addition, we would also like to emphasise the important roles of family, community organisations and religious groups to support and promote CoP.

## What is the focus of the ASEAN’s Culture of Prevention?

11. The ASEAN Culture of Prevention emphasises:

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- i. understanding the root causes and consequences of social issues and deviant behaviours <sup>1</sup> at individual, organisational and institutional levels through risk assessment, research, forecast, early warning and other evidence-based methods;
- ii. adopting a mindset change from a reactive to a preventive approach;
- iii. inculcating shared values such as peace, harmony, intercultural understanding, the rule of law, good governance, respect, trust, tolerance, inclusiveness, moderation, social responsibility, and diversity;
- iv. developing effective evidence-based upstream preventive policies and initiatives such as transformative social protection, public information, responsible use of media, as well as strengthening the existing values-based education in schools and institutions.

**What are the six thrusts of the ASEAN’s Culture of Prevention?**

12. The Culture of Prevention will focus on the following 6 thrusts:

- i. Promoting a culture of peace and intercultural understanding;
- ii. Promoting a culture of respect for all;
- iii. Promoting a culture of good governance at all levels;
- iv. Promoting a culture of resilience and care for the environment;
- v. Promoting a culture of healthy lifestyle;
- vi. Promoting a culture supporting the values of moderation.

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<sup>1</sup> Deviant behaviours refer to an action or behaviour that violates social norms such as a formally enacted rule (e.g. crime) and informal violations of social norms such as societal mores, or customs.

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13. The 6 thrusts represent the broad spectrum of challenges that the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) seeks to address. ASCC sectoral bodies have conceptualised and are implementing initiatives to promote CoP by mainstreaming the culture of prevention in the work plans with 7 sectoral bodies under the ASCC pillar leading the implementation of the 6 thrusts.

### **How is ASEAN advancing the CoP thrusts?**

14. Following the ASEAN Leaders' adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society at the 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summit on 13 November 2017, ASEAN has put in place the Regional Plan of Action (PoA) that outlines 20 focal priorities across 6 strategic thrusts with 4 working group meetings held.
15. As a living document, the PoA on CoP will be continuously reviewed and updated as ASEAN sectoral bodies implement their respective policy and project initiatives. Co-opting inter-pillar activities under the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) may also be considered in future.
16. To date, a total of 131 initiatives is ongoing, upcoming or implemented. It represents a significant increase of 167% from 49 initiatives in 2019.
17. Thrust 2: A Culture of Respect for All has the highest number of initiatives, with 51 initiatives, followed by Thrust 4: A Culture of Resilience and Care for Environment with 31 initiatives. In terms of the number of activities under each focal priority, Focal Priority 2.3: Protect and promote the interests of women, children, youths, the elderly/older persons, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, ethnic minority groups, and vulnerable and marginalised groups has the most initiatives, with 29 initiatives. This is followed by Focal Priority 4.1: Raise awareness and enhance appreciation for the environment with 24 initiatives, and Focal Priority 2.1: Empower women and foster greater gender equality to enhance the capacity, participation and leadership of women in all aspects of life with 16 initiatives.
18. The unaddressed Focal Priority with no activity is Focal Priority 3.1: Promote anti-corruption literacy in schools to create a new generation of ASEAN youths who embrace values of good governance.

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19. The 4<sup>th</sup> Working Group on CoP in March 2021 agreed to engage external entities to deepen and broaden CoP work through a multi-stakeholder approach. The Partnership Conference on Advancing the Implementation of ASEAN CoP Focusing on Post Pandemic Recovery was held on 26 August 2021 to amplify CoP awareness among stakeholders and to encourage external entities to advance the implementation of CoP. 130 participants from governments, private sector, civil society organisations, think tank and academic institutions, ASEAN’s dialogue partners as well as UN agencies attended the Conference.
20. To amplify CoP awareness, a publication “In Conversations with ASEAN Citizens” was released that provided information on the background and developments of the ASEAN Culture of Prevention. It also featured 10 ASEAN citizens’ views and thoughts on the ASEAN Culture of Prevention.

**What are the next steps to advance CoP implementation?**

21. As ASEAN continues to solidify the work in advancing the implementation of the ASEAN Culture of Prevention, it is useful to leverage the Working Group on CoP as the platform to strengthen cross-sectoral collaborations and lay the grounds for partnerships with likeminded external entities.
22. As the next step to further concretise the CoP plan into actions, the ASEAN Secretariat will work with current and incoming WG-CoP chairs to: (i) develop substantive working papers to lend greater clarity and directions for CoP implementation; (ii) further develop narratives on CoP especially through the use of case studies with the view to socialise CoP awareness among the public.
23. Moving forward, a series of CoP webinars that address specific areas related to the 6 CoP thrusts will be organised. A CoP familiarisation dialogue shall also be convened to socialise ASEAN CoP with APSC and AEC sectoral bodies, with the view to lay the groundwork for inter-pillar, cross-sectoral coordination in future.
24. Promoting coordinated approach between the three pillars of the ASEAN Community in order to ensure effective implementation of the thrusts identified for the CoP.

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