

Co-Chairs' Summary
of the 5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing
Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and
the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

31 March 2021

1. Thailand and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) jointly organised the 5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLBD) on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 in a hybrid format with speakers and participants present at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok and joining via videoconference.

2. The Meeting served as a platform for ASEAN, UN agencies, and other external partners of ASEAN to further advance cooperation in promoting complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Complementarities Initiative). This year's HLBD also aimed to enhance efforts in attaining the SDGs and robust post-COVID-19 recovery in a synergised and complementary manner.

3. The Meeting was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation, and Her Excellency Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP. His Excellency Dato' Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN, also participated in the Meeting as did high-level representatives and development experts of ASEAN Member States, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Program (UNEP), UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), UN Women, and the World Bank. Representatives of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the European Union (EU), as ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, Switzerland and Norway, as ASEAN's Sectoral Development Partners, as well as France and Italy, as ASEAN's Development Partners, were present as guests of the Co-Chairs. Representatives of the Asia Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation also attended as Observers.

4. The Co-Chairs recognised that progress on the implementation of SDGs in ASEAN has been affected by the pandemic, making sustainable development and sustainability all the more essential in mitigating the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and building a better and more resilient future as reflected in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025. In this regard, the Co-Chairs emphasised that ASEAN and its partners must strengthen their cooperation to turn this crisis into an opportunity to promote a sustainable development path in ASEAN and enhance regional resilience against future disruptions. Towards this end, the priorities identified in the Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025) must be effectively implemented to take forward the Complementarities Initiative and support robust recovery of ASEAN.

5. The Co-Chairs also suggested specific policies that ASEAN should undertake in order to build back better from the multi-dimensional impacts of COVID-19 and attain the SDGs, including (a) Changing people's mindset and ways of life to become more

sustainable (b) Finding a balance between human activity and every aspect of their lives (the “Balance of Things”) by pursuing sustainable and inclusive development strategies, including the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model (c) Leveraging on innovation and digitalisation to address global challenges and (d) Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships, promoting innovative resource mobilisation and green financing as well as turning competition to collaboration in order to create a peaceful environment conducive to sustainable economic recovery and shared prosperity.

6. In his remarks, His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi highlighted that ASEAN has accorded high importance to post-pandemic recovery strategies as well as aimed to take stock on lessons learned, restore ASEAN’s connectivity, prevent potential economic downturns and foster human security and resilience of ASEAN people. The ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders in November 2020 with the aim of holistically articulating ASEAN recovery from COVID-19 and serving as guidance for ASEAN sectoral bodies with respect to pursuing their strategic priorities and enhancing partnerships. The ACRF and its Implementation Plan, in essence, contribute to the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and support the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap, with the focus on a people-centered and whole-of-Community approach.

7. The Meeting had wide-ranging and in-depth discussions on how to better concretise cooperation under the Complementarities Initiative and Complementarities Roadmap to ensure that SDG progress in ASEAN would continue to advance and the region would recover stronger from COVID-19 and be well-prepared for future uncertainties.

(A) Progress on implementing actions under the Complementarities Initiative

8. Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Meeting noted the progress made on the Complementarities Initiative presented by ESCAP, the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDDSD) and underlined the importance of obtaining quality SDGs-related statistics for monitoring the SDGs implementation in the region.

9. *Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP* updated the Meeting on the progress of the Complementarities Initiative including in the context of the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025. Based on the 2021 Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report, ASEAN achieved significant progress on some SDGs such as achieving building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation (Goal 9), obtaining clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), and providing quality education (Goal 4). Much progress remains to be seen on reducing inequalities (Goal 10), addressing climate change (Goal 13), protecting life below water (Goal 14) and promoting peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16). With respect to progress in the five priority areas of the Complementarities Roadmap, ASEAN is not fully on track especially on promoting sustainable consumption and production and building resilience to climate-induced disasters. He stated that many of the flagship initiatives have become a reality with the help of partners. ESCAP has also worked closely with ASEAN and will continue to engage its member countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

10. *Mr. Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community* updated the Meeting on ASEAN’s undertakings to promote sustainable development, even as the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the region’s ability to keep on track their efforts towards achieving the SDGs. Dialogue and partnerships play an important part in the member countries’ efforts in ensuring that ASEAN maintains its course. He stated that

forums such as the High-level Brainstorming Dialogues afford ASEAN and its partners to share ideas on innovative solutions to the region's SDG challenges and to contribute to the five priority areas of the Complementarities Roadmap. Other important SDG platforms include the ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium, the ASEAN Forum on SDGs with National Development Planning Agencies, and the recently initiated ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Partnership Conference. He also mentioned the newly launched publications of the ASEAN Development Outlook and the ASEAN Gender Outlook, both of which study the progress towards sustainable human development and gender equality in the ASEAN region and identify key challenges while noting examples of best practices for the future. He underlined the importance for ASEAN to work across its community pillars to further advance the work on the SDGs.

11. The Meeting also welcomed the work of the ACSDDSD in contributing to the SDGs implementation such as research and studies, networking, capacity-building and policy dialogue, as well as coordinating the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap among relevant stakeholders. *Mr. Narong Sasitorn, Executive Director of the ACSDDSD* updated the Meeting on the overall implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap (2020 -2025) and the work of the ACSDDSD. He outlined the Centre's priorities and work plans for 2021, which include a networking symposium with the Asia Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, a peer-learning forum on Business and Human Rights and SDG 12 with Switzerland, the ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform with the EU and marine environment protection with Norway. He underlined that these projects were aimed at accelerating ongoing sustainable development efforts in the region. He also stressed the need for all ASEAN SDG players and actors to streamline efforts for effective implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap.

12. The Meeting looked forward to further cooperation among ASEAN Member States and external partners and collaboration with UN agencies in the implementation of the Roadmap and underlined the need for effective monitoring and evaluation of such implementation.

(B) Effective implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap (2020-2025) in light of COVID-19 challenges

13. The Meeting also discussed further concrete actions and approaches to implement the Complementarities Roadmap. The Meeting took note of presentations by Brunei Darussalam, as the ASEAN Chair in 2021, China, Japan, Norway, the EU, Italy, Switzerland, UNDP, the World Bank, UNEP, UNDRR and UN Women on initiatives to support the implementation of the Roadmap across the 5+1 priority areas of cooperation, namely poverty eradication, infrastructure and connectivity, sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable consumption and production, resilience, as well as capacity-building.

14. *Mr. Garry Ibrahim, Director-General of the Department of ASEAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam* provided an overview of advancing sustainable development cooperation under the current ASEAN Chairmanship theme "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper," by promoting a strategic, holistic and coordinated approach to address emergencies, economic crises, disasters and disruptions that may face the ASEAN Community. He also emphasised that ASEAN Member States have continued to address the broad impacts of COVID-19 and stepped up efforts for a comprehensive and sustainable recovery. He recognised the importance of multilateralism and a rules-based regional architecture, while appreciating the strong ASEAN-UN comprehensive partnership to implement the SDGs under the new ASEAN-UN Plan of Action and the Complementarities

Roadmap. He mentioned initiatives to address the challenges towards reaching the SDGs which include working towards a green recovery under the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, developing an ASEAN Framework on Circular Economy, addressing the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on the peoples' well-being and the cross-border freight transport operations in ASEAN during the COVID 19 pandemic in collaboration with ESCAP, among others. He also informed of other ASEAN initiatives such as the ASEAN Workshop on Blue Economy, the ASEAN Agreement on Electronic Commerce and the ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to COP26. To conclude, he emphasised that education and inclusivity of youth remains to be a priority in the region's work to achieve the SDGs.

Poverty Eradication: Improving the standard of living and well-being of peoples through sustainable job creation and human capital development

15. *Mr. Ke Yousheng, Permanent Representative of China to ESCAP* highlighted efforts the country has undertaken to alleviate poverty as set out in the 2030 Agenda. He underscored the strong cooperation ties between ASEAN and China in addressing the issue of sustainable development through joint collaboration, such as the China-ASEAN Forum on Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation. 2021 also marks the 30th Anniversary of the China-ASEAN Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation, a cooperation that has played an important part in building the capacity of ASEAN Member States, particularly Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam, in areas such as agriculture, environment, and disaster management.

16. *Mr. Jaco Cilliers, Manager of UNDP's Bangkok Regional Hub* informed of the upcoming 5th ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium: Enhancing the Roles of Youth in Achieving the SDGs on 8 April 2021. The event would bring together stakeholders and partners to discuss the reinforcing relationship between SDGs and youth and aim to empower youth to participate in policy discourse on the sustainable development agenda. He highlighted three main issues surrounding the issue on poverty. First, poverty eradication requires a modern social protection system that takes care of everyone in a country. UNDP as the UN technical lead on socio-economic impact and recovery has seen through many socio-economic impact assessments across the world that countries with a robust social protection system in place have fared better in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, addressing poverty is a multi-dimensional concern where monetary based poverty measures are insufficient and that economic growth does not always reduce poverty or deprivation. His last point is the pledge that no one is left behind, particularly women and excluded communities, both in urban and rural surroundings.

Infrastructure and Connectivity: Promoting sustainable socio-economic development through quality infrastructure and connectivity

17. *Mr. Hiroshi Kawamura, Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission of Embassy of Japan* underlined the importance of enhancing connectivity to realise regional integration as well as cooperation among countries. Digitalisation and green growth can be the engine of growth in the region and contribute to a sustainable development. He continued to describe Japan's approach to improving connectivity under the concept of quality infrastructure, which relies heavily on infrastructure investment that is of international standards. He maintained that it is through "quality growth" can ASEAN and its partners manage to achieve growth that is sustainable, inclusive and resilient. He also added that the Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative was launched to support ASEAN connectivity efforts

through project initiatives in land, air, and sea connectivity, including promoting digital and green connectivity.

18. *Ms. Birgit Hansl, Country Manager for Thailand, the World Bank* stressed the importance of promoting connectivity among countries to help maintain economic growth and build resilience in the region, as COVID-19 had exposed the vulnerability of supply chains significantly impacting trade and economic activities. She urged trade agreements to include policies that help enhance the efficiency of cross-border trade facilitation. Furthermore, promoting digital connectivity will vastly improve regional trade through enhanced trade facilitation and efficient and transparent procedures. Building connectivity infrastructure will require development projects that are multi-sectoral, with adequate financing and technical oversight from government.

Sustainable Management of Natural Resources: Combatting marine debris and plastic waste as well as ensuring ocean sustainability

19. *Mr. Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway* emphasised that issues relating to plastic pollution, environmental protection and oceans are given high priority in Norwegian foreign policy. The current President of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and Norwegian Minister for Climate and Environment, Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, stated at the Assembly's February session that it is imperative to get back on track to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He stated that Norway greatly values its sectoral dialogue partnership with ASEAN. Ocean affairs, marine environmental protection and marine plastic litter are important elements of the new 5-year cooperation agreement that was recently concluded. Norway also welcomed the recently initiated project with the ACSDS on these issues. He reiterated Norway's suggestion at the UNEA to further discuss global actions to prevent plastic pollution, with a focus on achieving a new global agreement. Also, he underlined that advancing the development of a global agreement on marine litter is a key step in strengthening global governance of plastic pollution, and that the participation of the ASEAN countries will add further momentum to this initiative.

20. *Mr. Jerker Tamelander, Coordinator, Secretariat of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA), UN Environment Programme* provided an overview of the production and use of plastic for the period 1950 to 2017. He briefed the Meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on plastic use, and the challenges and issues exposed by the pandemic. He presented activities that addressed these environmental problems in ASEAN leveraging on the mandates of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Plastic Debris and the COBSEA Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

Sustainable Consumption and Production: Promoting dialogue on sustainable consumption and production as well as circular economy

21. *Mr. Jean-Louis Ville, Director for Middle East, Asia and Pacific, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, European Commission* described the very substantive development cooperation between ASEAN and the EU. He presented their cooperation on green transition, especially on the circular economy and sustainable production and consumption. The Green Deal Agenda, which includes the Circular Economy Action Plan, supports the EU's shift to a resilient, sustainable, inclusive, and climate neutral economy. He stated that in the efforts "to build back better and greener" from the pandemic, ASEAN and the EU are seeking a lasting, sustainable and resilient transformation of both the economies and societies. The EU will support ASEAN in

transferring these global ambitions into actions through bilateral and regional cooperation, and through regional programmes like the SWITCH-Asia Programme, the ASEAN-EU High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change supported by the E-READI programme as well as collaboration with the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue. A concrete outcome of ASEAN-EU partnership will be the ASEAN Platform on the Circular Economy supported by E-READI.

Resilience: Enhancing regional resilience and tackling climate change in view of the upcoming COP 26

22. *Ms. Tosca Barucco, Minister and Italy's Special Envoy for COP26* acknowledged Southeast Asia as one of the world's most vulnerable areas to climate change. As a Development Partner of ASEAN, she stated that Italy is fully committed to working together with ASEAN Member States through UN Agencies, including ESCAP, on disaster prevention and management to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in ASEAN. She informed of Italy's agenda as Chair of the G20 that is based on a three-pronged interconnected strategy, focusing on people, planet and prosperity. She added that recovering from the pandemic offers a unique opportunity to build back better and greener. As Co-chair of the COP26, Italy will host the Pre-COP as well as the Youth4Climate Driving Ambition event, to give young people from all around the world the opportunity to discuss concrete proposals with Ministers. Mainstreaming resilience, particularly unlocking its strong synergy with climate change mitigation and sustainable development in megacities, is a strategic priority for Italy's Development Partnership with ASEAN.

23. *Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction* raised concerns on the slow pace of achieving SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 12 (Climate Action) based on the lack of progress in the indicators. He urged countries to learn from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic for disaster risk management and the need to better understand the interrelated nature of risks. He also noted that the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) allows ASEAN bodies and UN agencies to implement their priority programmes both at the regional and national levels. ASEAN and the UN are also developing the Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management for the period 2021-2025.

24. *Mr. Johannes Matyassy, Deputy State Secretary, Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs* highlighted the importance of building resilience to reduce the impact of disasters, while informing of the cooperation with ASEAN on high-level policy dialogue and training of ASEAN decision makers in disaster management and with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre on simulation exercises and the stocking of non-food relief items in Chainat regional warehouse to serve continental ASEAN Member States in case of disasters. He also informed of important projects under Swiss-ASEAN cooperation include the forum on Business and Human Rights and SDG 12 organised with the ACSDS and further cooperation with ASEAN for the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021-2025. Switzerland also signed the agreement of cooperation with ESCAP to contribute to the Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness.

Cross Cutting Area: Capacity Building: Empowering women and gender equality in ASEAN

25. *Mr. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director of UN Women for Asia and the Pacific* informed of the gender mainstreaming activities across all pillars of ASEAN, particularly on the priorities in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025 as well as in implementing the ASEAN-UN Women Joint programme. He also informed of the ASEAN Gender Outlook that was recently launched by ASEAN and UN Women for monitoring progress towards SDGs in the Complementarities Roadmap. He looked forward to working with partners like Thailand and the ACSDS in building cross-sectoral collaboration with relevant stakeholders and in advancing women's economic empowerment in ASEAN.

26. The Meeting viewed that these projects and activities can directly and indirectly help reinforce regional resilience, including through the exchange of best practices and knowledge sharing, which contribute to a better and sustainable future for ASEAN.

27. *Mr. Latsamy Keomany, Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR* updated the Meeting on the country's achievements in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He encouraged partners like the UN to continue supporting Laos' efforts in implementing the SDGs as well as promoting awareness among relevant national stakeholders. The country is also conducting its second Voluntary National Review for presentation at the upcoming UN High-level Political Forum in July 2021. The review aligns with the national development plan which also takes into account the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. He reiterated the importance of digital transformation in harnessing the power of ICT, especially for the benefit of MSMEs which have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

28. *Mr. Foster Gultom, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia* informed the Meeting of the country's efforts to achieve the SDGs, particularly those related to poverty alleviation and natural disasters. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the livelihood and social well-being of the population, prompting the government to launch an economic stimulus policy and social protection programmes. The aim of these strategies is to reduce the number of the poor resulting from the pandemic, by integrating affirmative policies for poverty reduction programmes, beneficiary data collection schemes, and graduation system for social assistance programmes. He emphasized the government's push towards building the necessary infrastructure and connectivity to provide equal access for everyone and ensuring sustainable development. Indonesia is also undergoing a digital transformation to build inclusive, smart, and sustainable cities as part of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network. The government is prioritising a sustainable recovery from the pandemic to help create a more resilient economy and more equitable development.

29. *Mr. Shivakumar Nair, Deputy Director, ASEAN Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* noted the recently launched Singapore Green Plan 2030, which strengthened Singapore's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. To further the effective implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Singapore encouraged ASEAN Member States to boost SDG implementation by closely aligning the Complementarities Roadmap with the 2030 Agenda, and leveraging on the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action (2021-2025). Singapore highlighted the ASEAN Smart Cities Network as a collaborative platform to accelerate sustainable urban development and build resilient smart cities. In addition, the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) was cited as a means to share best practices and upgrade skills to mitigate the long-term effects of climate change and promote sustainable development.

30. *Mr. Sébastien De Vaujany, First Secretary, Alternate Deputy Representative to ESCAP of France* highlighted the importance of biodiversity which will be at the top of the international agenda at the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) scheduled in September 2021 in Marseille, France, and at the COP15 on biodiversity next October in Kunming, China. France, among others, is contributing to the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility (ACGF), a multi-donor initiative in favour of green infrastructure and sustainable connectivity. He looked forward to seeing how the discussions on biodiversity that would take place in the COP15 context could be linked to and integrated into the ACGF's work.

31. The Meeting underlined that sustainable development efforts must remain people-centred and leave no one behind. The importance of fostering the spirit of multilateralism and forging international, multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral, and cross-society SDG partnerships was also emphasised.

32. The Meeting commended the efforts and leadership of Thailand, as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation, and ESCAP in promoting the Complementarities Initiative. The Meeting recognised the importance of potential cooperation between ASEAN, UN and other international organisations and stakeholders in achieving sustainable development in the region.

33. The participants expressed their appreciation to the Royal Thai Government and ESCAP for hosting this High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue and looked forward to the 6th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue next year.

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