



JOINT STATEMENT OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY (ASCC) COUNCIL

29 September 2021, Video Conference

1. The 26th ASCC Council Meeting was held on 29 September 2021, via video conference under the ASEAN Chairmanship of Brunei Darussalam.
2. Guided by the theme of “We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper”, the Meeting commended the significant development and progress in the region despite the uncertain outlook with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in realising the three (3) priorities of Brunei Darussalam’s Chairmanship: (i) harnessing the caring nature of ASEAN to build a harmonious and resilient community with the people at its centre (A Caring Community); (ii) preparing and adapting for the future to ensure that ASEAN remains relevant and resilient to overcome existing and future challenges and threats (A Prepared Community); and (iii) creating opportunities for people to benefit through initiatives that enhance the sustainable prosperity of the region (A Prosperous Community). Such priorities contributed towards building on and promoting continuity to the region’s efforts to responding and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The Meeting further commended the inclusive and holistic actions by the ASCC Sectoral Bodies to address the gaps and challenges affecting the region, in areas such as public health, social protection, structural inequalities, fake news and misinformation, environmental degradation, and the climate crisis, among others. To this end, the recommendations as listed in the Mid-Term Review of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 help advance our community building efforts through incorporating and aligning the Blueprint’s implementation into the respective post-2020 ASCC Sectoral Work Plans and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan (ACRF).
4. The Meeting emphasised the need for ASCC to innovate the existing institutional work and strengthen cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination, especially towards realising the ASEAN Community’s Post-2025 vision while maintaining ASEAN Centrality through ASEAN-led mechanisms. The Meeting also welcomed the ASCC sectoral bodies’ efforts in expanding collaboration with Dialogue Partners to strengthen and enhance socio-cultural cooperation.
5. The Meeting looked forward to the implementation of the ASEAN Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD) which equips ASEAN to be better prepared holistically in response to future regional emergencies and disasters, and thereby protecting its people from the crises’ adverse impact. The Meeting noted the Matrix on the Mapping of ASEAN SHIELD included existing regional initiatives to address disasters and emergencies and the set of recommendations to harmonise the various cross-pillar and cross-sectoral efforts in ASEAN into a regional approach.

6. The Meeting endorsed the Strategic Policy Framework on Promoting an Adaptive ASEAN Community of Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a sense of Regional Agendas Among the Peoples of ASEAN, which will lend greater coherence in the ASCC efforts to foster greater understanding, tolerance and regional solidarity. To optimally move forward, the Meeting encouraged relevant ASCC Sectoral Bodies to identify the nexus which includes promoting cultural and creative peacebuilding through the inter-sectoral lenses of youth, education, health, information, and media. Towards this end, the Meeting also looked forward to the completion of the ASEAN Sculptures in the ASEAN Square in Brunei Darussalam, and the publication of ASEAN Diversity, symbolizing how diversity can promote intercultural understanding, unity, peace and harmony in ASEAN.
7. The Meeting reaffirmed support and commitment on the elevation of the role of youth in realising sustainable development, ensuring that they are prepared and future-ready in responding to the complex global challenges, through initiatives amongst others, the ASEAN Youth Academy Programme, ASEAN Youth on Climate Change, and ASEAN Walk 2022. The Meeting congratulated Brunei Darussalam in convening the First Innovation Platform Dialogue with the theme of Youth Employment and Digitalisation in ASCC Perspectives on 27 September 2021. Recognising the valuable interface with the participants of the dialogue, the Meeting expressed hope that the success of the 1st Innovation Dialogue will inspire its continuation by subsequent ASCC Chair in the coming years, as a platform for relevant ASEAN's stakeholders to discuss issues of interest and concerns in ASEAN and globally and be able to provide recommendations, through sharing of knowledge, best practices and lessons learned.
8. The Meeting recognised the importance of care work during the pandemic and the need to identify new ways to balance new social and economic dynamics with family responsibilities. The Meeting supported the development and finalisation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy as a timely initiative that will steer the region and guide policy makers in addressing the growing challenge of sustaining investment in care, and for the whole spectrum of care work, to become an indispensable part of our inclusive socio-economic growth. The Meeting noted the six (6) broad strategies that are expected to support and develop the ASEAN care economy, as well as to complement the ACRF and the ASEAN Community Post-2025 Vision.
9. The Meeting appreciated the progress of key collective initiatives on COVID-19 to prepare towards the region for future public health emergencies. These initiatives included the development of the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination Systems, and the launching of the ASEAN Portal for Public Health Emergencies. The Meeting looked forward to the setting up and subsequent operationalisation of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) and a decision on the host country. The Meeting also recognised the importance of strengthening cooperation in addressing the pandemic's impact on mental health.
10. The Meeting commended the successful conveying of the Pledging Conference to Support ASEAN's Humanitarian Assistance in Myanmar hosted by the Secretary-General of ASEAN on 18 August 2021 which had received good

attention and raised close to USD eight million in pledges to assist Myanmar in containing the spread of COVID-19. The first batch of immediate humanitarian assistance was handed over from the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) to the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) on 15 September 2021. This initial batch was made possible with the in-kind and cash contributions from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Temasek Foundation International. Subsequent batches of humanitarian assistance are in the pipeline, using contributions from other ASEAN Member States and partners. ASEAN's humanitarian assistance to Myanmar seeks to realise Point 4 of the Five-Point Consensus as agreed at the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting in April this year and underscored ASEAN's collective support for the people of Myanmar in the spirit of 'One ASEAN, One Response'.

11. The Meeting commended the ongoing work of the ASCC Sectoral Bodies in addressing climate change, among others through Brunei Darussalam's proposed initiative for establishment of an ASEAN Climate Change Centre in Brunei Darussalam, readiness for the future of work, civil service adaptability, children's rights, poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming, social work, protecting vulnerable population, sports and youth development, and information awareness. Follow-up actions to implement these activities are streamlined in their respective sectoral post-2020 work plans / programmes.
12. The Meeting noted the development of the assessment report of the ASCC pillar on Timor-Leste's membership application prepared by the ASEAN Secretariat. The report shall be developed based on information from the ASCC Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) questionnaire as well as from the virtual interfaces held on 8 and 10 September 2020. The report shall be enhanced based on the findings of the actual physical FFM to Timor-Leste, to be conducted when travel restrictions permit. The Meeting looked forward to the follow-up virtual interface between ASCC and Timor-Leste later this year.
13. The Meeting noted the engagement of the Expert Panel to undertake the feasibility study of the ASEAN Aid. The Meeting looked forward to the operationalisation of the ASEAN Aid which is expected to amplify ASEAN awareness and to imbue ASEAN citizens with a greater sense of regional ownership of ASEAN initiatives. The Meeting also noted that the Financial Rules for the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief (ADMER) Fund is being reviewed by the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) to determine a mechanism to allow the public to contribute to the ADMER Fund.
14. The Meeting looked forward to the endorsement of the following outcome documents, together with the outcome documents endorsed at the 25th ASCC Meeting, for consideration of ASEAN Leaders:

For adoption at the 38th ASEAN Summit:

- 1) ASEAN Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy
- 2) ASEAN Strategic Policy Framework on Promoting an Adaptive ASEAN Community of Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a Sense of Regional Agendas Among the Peoples of ASEAN

- 3) ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to the 26th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP-26)
- 4) Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration on the Importance of Family for Community Development and Nation Building
- 5) ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Competitiveness, Resilience, and Agility of Workers for the Future of Work
- 6) ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the Reformulation and Production of Healthier Food and Beverage Options
- 7) Declaration on the Elimination of Bullying of Children in ASEAN

For notation at the 38th ASEAN Summit:

- 1) ASEAN Declaration on Fostering the Civil Service's Adaptability to the New Challenges
- 2) ASEAN Road Map for the Implementation of the Hanoi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work for Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community
- 3) Regional Plan of Action on Implementing the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration
- 4) Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN
- 5) Regional Plan of Action on Implementing the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN
- 6) Report on the 5th Domain of ASEAN Youth Development Index: *Understanding how young people see ASEAN Awareness, Values and Identity*
- 7) ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for Adaptation to Drought
- 8) ASEAN Joint Statement on Chemicals and Waste to the 2021 Meetings of the Conference of Parties to Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention (BRS)
- 9) ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris
- 10) ASEAN State of Climate Change Report
- 11) ASEAN Joint Statement to the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-15)
- 12) ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025
- 13) ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025
- 14) Regional Strategic and Action Plan on ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self-Reliance (AVSSR) 2021-2025
- 15) M&E Framework of the Roadmap to Implement the ASEAN Declaration of the Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work
- 16) ASEAN TVET Council Work Plan 2021-2025
- 17) ASEAN TVET Council Rules of Procedure
- 18) Report on Follow Up to the Recommendations of Mid-Term Review of ASCC Blueprint 2025
- 19) Reports of the 25th and 26th ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council to the 38th ASEAN Summit

For adoption at the 24th ASEAN Plus Three Summit and 16th East Asia Summit:

- 1) ASEAN Plus Three Leaders' Statement on Cooperation on Mental Health Amongst Adolescents and Young Children
- 2) East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Mental Health Cooperation

15. The Meeting conveyed its deep appreciation to Brunei Darussalam for the effective Chairmanship and excellent arrangements for the 26th ASCC Council Meeting, and looked forward to the next ASCC Council Meetings in 2022 under the Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship.

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