

**ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership
2013-2015 Report
Jointly Submitted by the ASEAN and UN Secretariats
September 2015**

BACKGROUND

1. This Joint Report summarises the progress in the implementation of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership¹, including the 2015 ASEAN-UN Work Plan², covering review period 2013-2015. It highlights key challenges and proposes recommendations, where appropriate, to further strengthen the Partnership. It also reviews the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership as mandated by the 6th ASEAN-UN Summit on 12 November 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Following the endorsement of the ASEAN-UN Ministerial Meeting (AUMM) in September 2015 in New York, U.S.A., this Report will be submitted to the 7th ASEAN-UN Summit in November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

POLITICAL-SECURITY COOPERATION

Peace and security

2. Cooperation to promote regional and international peace and security is a key feature of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership. The UN continues to contribute to activities within ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). An emerging area of cooperation is conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy, as reflected in the ASEAN-UN Track 1.5 Workshops on Conflict Prevention on 19-21 June 2014 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and ASEAN-UN Collaboration to support the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 24-26 February 2015.
3. ASEAN-UN collaboration in peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building continues to be strengthened. This includes activities conducted through national focal points of ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network (APCN). As of 31 July 2015, the ASEAN Member States have contributed

¹ The Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations (UN) was adopted at the Fourth ASEAN-UN Summit on 19 November 2011, in Bali, Indonesia. The Joint Declaration, together with its Annex that maps out major action lines across the four pillars of cooperation, has served as an overall framework for both sides to strengthen their cooperation.

² The ASEAN-UN Work Plan for 2015 was adopted on 11 November 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Drawing on the Annex of the Joint Declaration, this Work Plan identifies priority areas of ASEAN-UN cooperation for the year 2015.

approximately 5,500 military and police personnel as well as technical expertise to UN peace-keeping missions. Both sides will continue to work together to enhance the peace-keeping capacities of the ASEAN Member States through training programs, and exchanges on policies and best practices, including humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

4. Cooperation has intensified on matters related to transnational crime and international terrorism. Representatives from ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat have participated in UN sponsored regional workshops and conferences on issues such as counter-terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters, cybercrime, environmental crime, illicit drugs, and human trafficking, while the UN has participated in various ASEAN meetings convened to address specific transnational crime issues such as Irregular Migration and drugs.

Promotion of Human Rights

5. Cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights has been strengthened through information sharing and capacity building. The UN has provided expertise and resource persons to various activities of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) including the elimination of violence against women and children.
6. Other ASEAN Bodies, such as the ASEAN Committee on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), have closely collaborated with the UN in thematic issues relevant to the region.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Connectivity and Integration

7. The UN, together with other external partners, has supported ASEAN in enhancing regional connectivity. A key cooperation framework is the Regional Action Programme on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific – Phase II (2012-2016), which has been aligned with the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, the 2011-2015 ASEAN Strategic Transport Plan, and the ASEAN ICT Masterplan 2015.

Economy and Development

8. The UN continues to support the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to facilitate ASEAN's participation into the global economy. The focus is on improving operational and regulatory frameworks, enhancing the competitiveness of enterprises, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and narrowing the development gap within and among ASEAN Member States.

9. Promoting inclusive and sustainable development, and economic empowerment of women and youth are also priorities of the ASEAN-UN partnership. An Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report, which includes proposals on how countries, including ASEAN Member States, can better integrate into global value chains and promote inclusive growth, will be published in November 2015.

Food and Energy Security

10. Food security remains a key agenda of ASEAN-UN cooperation, with special focus on the implementation of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework (AIFS) and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN Region (SPA-FS) 2015-2020. The UN has also provided technical expertise to the ASEAN Secretariat in drafting the Vision and Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture, and Forestry (2016-2025), which will be finalised by end-2015. Both sides are also collaborating to enhance competitiveness of food commodities and food safety standards in the ASEAN region through capacity building and implementation of international food safety standards.
11. On energy security, the ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE) and the UN have worked together to develop priority action areas for Southeast Asia, as a follow-up to the Asia-Pacific Energy Forum (APEF) 2013. The two-year ASEAN-FAO project on “Bio-energy and Food Security in ASEAN” (2012-2014), which aims to ensure sustainable development of the bio-energy sector in the ASEAN region, had been successfully implemented. Both sides are also collaborating in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a number of ASEAN Regional Workshops and capacity building activities.

Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Narrowing the Development Gap

12. The UN has provided technical support to the ASEAN Regional MDG Assessment, which resulted in a report that reviews regional MDG achievements, identifies remaining and emerging post-2015 development challenges, and recommends areas and modality of regional support. Apart from training and advisory services provided to the CLMV countries, the UN also assisted ASEAN Member States in data and statistics collection for the post-2015 development framework. The Executive Secretary of UN ESCAP, Ms. Akhtar, briefed the High Level Task Force on the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 on the progress in the development of the global post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in June 2015 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

SOCIO-CULTURAL COOPERATION

Human Development and Social Welfare

13. ASEAN and the UN have strengthened cooperation in providing equitable access to human development opportunities, especially in education, health, capacity building and entrepreneurship.
14. On social welfare, the UN is working closely with ASEAN to support the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection (2013) through tangible activities such as an on-going research on aging in ASEAN Member States and a report on Social Protection in ASEAN. ASEAN has worked with the UN to developing a Regional Framework and Action Plan on Strengthening Social Protection, which is expected to be endorsed by end-2015.
15. Cooperation in the promotion and protection of the rights of children has resulted in significant outcomes. Apart from the implementation of the ASEAN-UNICEF Framework Agreement for Cooperation (FAC), the UN is assisting in the development of an ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children (RPA on EVAC) and a Joint Regional Report on Nutrition Security in ASEAN.
16. Gender equality and the advancement of women has been promoted and streamlined across different sectors of ASEAN-UN cooperation. For instance, ASEAN has worked closely with the UN in developing an ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Elimination of Violence Against Women (RPA on EVAW). This RPA is expected to be finalised by end-2015.
17. Building on the gains achieved in the implementation of the 4th ASEAN Work Program on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS and the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS (ATFOA) are working together in developing the 5th ASEAN Work Program 2016-2020 focusing on strategies to fast track the AIDS response among ASEAN Member States.

Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management

18. The ASEAN-UN Post-2015 Environment and Climate Change Planning Meeting, which was held on 18 May 2015 Bangkok, Thailand, identified a number of areas for future cooperation in the post-2015 period, including Green Economy and support to ASEAN Action Plan on Joint Responses to Climate and Sustainable cities. The Meeting also agreed for the UN and ASEAN Secretariats to draft an ASEAN-UN Work Plan on Environment and Climate Change (2016-2020) that will be part of the of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership agreement framework.

19. The UN has continued to assist ASEAN Member States in accessing global environmental funds to support the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. In addition, knowledge sharing and capacity building activities have been intensified through the implementation of the “Strengthening the Capacity of Southeast Asian Countries for the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategic Plan 2011-2012 and Aichi Targets” project. Waste management and water management are also key areas of ASEAN-UN collaboration.
20. ASEAN and the UN have worked closely in addressing climate change and responding to its impacts on socio-economic development, health, environment, and water resources. The UN is supporting the ASEAN Member States in fulfilling their commitment under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), focusing on capacity building for national climate change focal points and professionals of ASEAN Member States. This support also complements ASEAN’s efforts in implementing the ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change, which was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders in November 2014.
21. On disaster management, both sides are implementing the joint strategic priorities and associated activities for 2015 under the revised ASEAN-UN Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management (2011-2015). The UN has also provided capacity and technical support to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), for instance in preparing for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Disaster Response Exercise (ARF DiREx) held in Malaysia in May 2015.

Culture and Education

22. ASEAN and the UN are working together to implement the FAC between ASEAN and UNESCO, which was signed in December 2013. In terms of culture cooperation, both sides will focus on activities such as awards of excellence, conventions, strategic initiatives, workshops, and promotional activities. The UN is also exploring with ASEAN Senior Officials on Culture and Arts (SOMCA) potential cooperation in other areas such as inter-cultural dialogue, promotion of community-based creative industries, and youth volunteer programmes.
23. Promoting access to education, particularly for those living in under-privileged and marginalised areas, remains a priority of ASEAN-UN cooperation. The Ten Collaborative Projects to Reach the Unreached in Southeast Asia have contributed to the ASEAN Member States’ attainment of the six Education for All (EFA) goals and MDG-related goals. In addition, the UN has provided inputs to the ASEAN five-year Work Plan on Education (2016-2020), which will be adopted in early 2016.

SECRETARIAT-TO-SECRETARIAT COOPERATION

24. The ASEAN Secretariat and the UN have worked closely in monitoring ASEAN-UN cooperation and reporting the progress to the AUMM and the ASEAN-UN Summit. The Secretariat-to-Secretariat Dialogue (S2S) has been held annually to review the implementation of the Comprehensive Partnership, identify challenges, and discuss practical modalities for the two Secretariats to effectively contribute to enhancing ASEAN-UN cooperation.
25. The UN's cooperation with ASEAN has been strengthened with the deployment to Jakarta of two UN Liaison Officers to ASEAN, focusing on political-security issues and humanitarian affairs, respectively. This has facilitated more effective coordination and collaboration between the UN and the ASEAN Secretariat as well as with various ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.
26. The UN is also sharing its expertise with ASEAN in administrative and institutional processes, including developing a Reference Document System and physical security system for the ASEAN Secretariat.

CHALLENGES

27. While acknowledging the progress made in all pillars of cooperation, there are several issues that need to be addressed to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the ASEAN – UN Partnership:
 - i. **Modality of Cooperation:** There is a need to re-examine arrangements in relation to cooperation. An example of this is the recent proliferation of Framework Agreements for Cooperation (FAC) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ASEAN and UN Agencies in specific thematic areas³. While welcoming the interest of UN Agencies to forge closer cooperation with ASEAN and its Sectoral Bodies, there is also a need to re-evaluate the merits of concluding specific agreements with each UN Agency, given that:
 - a) the existing Joint Declaration on the Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN and its Annex already serves as the umbrella Framework Agreement for ASEAN-UN cooperation across all sectors; and
 - b) the conclusion of such MOU/FAC requires considerable time and resources from both sides. The practicality of concluding FACs/MOUs

³ ASEAN-UNESCO FAC, ASEAN-UNICEF FAC, and ASEAN-WHO MOU have been concluded. Other proposed frameworks include ASEAN-UNFPA MOU, ASEAN-UNAIDS MOU, and ASEAN-UN Women FAC.

with each specialised UN Agency with ASEAN and ASEAN Sectoral Bodies has to be re-assessed.

- ii. **Funding:** The ASEAN-UN Work Plan for 2015 suggested that ASEAN and the UN explore the possibility of dedicated funding sources for the implementation of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership. However, this action line is yet to be realised. The limitations of dedicated funding have caused difficulties for both sides in planning and monitoring joint activities/projects.
- iii. **Cooperation Planning:** Many of the current ASEAN-UN activities are conducted on an *ad-hoc* basis, without long-term impact and sustainability. In addition, the Annex to the Joint Declaration on the Comprehensive Partnership, which was adopted in 2011, has not been updated to reflect the current context of ASEAN-UN cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

28. ASEAN-UN cooperation will soon enter a new phase with the formal establishment of the ASEAN Community, the adoption of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). This two-year review exercise will provide a good opportunity for both sides to identify forward-looking measures and areas of future cooperation to further deepen the Partnership.

- i. **The need for better coordination:** The “One UN” approach to ASEAN-UN cooperation should be consistently pursued within the UN system in its engagement with ASEAN. A coordinated and systematic approach should also be adopted by ASEAN in its collaboration with the UN. There is a need for better coordination on issues that cut across different pillars of cooperation, such as environment or human rights.
- ii. **Regular engagements:** In addition to regular Secretariat-to-Secretariat meetings held annually in New York, both sides should consider regular meetings at senior and working levels between the UN system and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) as well as the ASEAN Secretariat in the region. Regional meetings would enable increased participation from UN Agencies to reflect the size and scope of development cooperation with ASEAN. Both sides should also explore the possibility of more frequent engagements between ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and the UN system, including through relevant UN regional meetings.
- iii. **MOUs/FACs:** It is recommended that ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and the UN system consider pursuing technical cooperation through the development of joint work plans or plans of action under the framework of the Joint

Declaration on the Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN, rather than through individual MOUs/FACs. This approach would help both sides to maximise their respective strengths, while also providing the flexibility to make adjustments as required during implementation. The development of such work plans and plans of action should involve all the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and the UN system to ensure that all the related areas of technical cooperation are integrated into the planning process. The ASEAN-UN Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management (2011-2015) is a suitable model as a guide to developing these plans of action.

iv. **Sustainable Funding:** In order to work towards committed funding for activities to implement the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership, it is recommended that both sides seek to identify dedicated funding sources for ASEAN-UN activities. Given that most of the joint activities are funded by the UN and its external partners, both sides could look into the possibility of securing dedicated funding for long-term ASEAN-UN activities, especially in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

v. **Long-term Planning of Cooperation:** As ASEAN and the UN continue to strengthen their Comprehensive Partnership, it is important that both sides start long-term planning for future cooperation. A five-year plan of action to implement the Joint Declaration on the Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN, with committed funding for implementation, should be developed to formulate the vision and identify the cooperation priorities for the post-2015 period, which should take into account the key elements of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda.

29. ASEAN is committed to realising Community that is politically cohesive, economically competitive, responsive to regional and global challenges, and truly representative of the people. The emerging central themes of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, namely people-oriented and people-centred, inclusive and sustainable development, resilience, and peace and security, resonate well with the visions of the 2030 Agenda. It is, therefore, crucial that ASEAN and the UN work closely together to achieve the ASEAN Community Vision and the universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as to address new challenges to global and regional peace and security. A coordinated approach and robust monitoring system will be key to the success of these efforts, and to the further advancement of ASEAN-UN cooperation in the post-2015 period.

THE END