

**Can Southeast Asia Play Its Part For the Climate?
Southeast Asia Climate Outlook 2023 Survey Report Launch**

**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR CHOI SHING KWOK
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Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. Welcome to the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute and to our seminar entitled "Can Southeast Asia Play Its Part For the Climate?". We are honoured to have H.E. Nik Nazmi, Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change of Malaysia as our Keynote speaker this morning, delivered over video. The Minister really wanted to be here to deliver his speech personally, but he had to change his schedule at the last minute to host a very important VVIP visit at one of the establishments under his ministry's jurisdiction. We are grateful to have his address and look forward to having him back at ISEAS at a future date. I would also like to thank all panellists, both in person and online, for participating in the discussion later.

Whether triggered by the increasingly wild weather events that we have witnessed or by greater citizenry participation, climate action is seeing accelerating momentum both globally and regionally. In Southeast Asia, eight out of ten ASEAN countries have set net zero targets and governments are formulating the plans to make good on these promises.

Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand have officially submitted their Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategies, detailing plans to contribute to the global goal of net zero emissions by 2050. We also see signs of climate action being integrated into key economic sectors, especially in the power generation sector. For example, Vietnam's recently released Power Development Plan 8 sets out to increase its wind power capacity from 4.6 GW to 28 GW by 2030; and to convert or retire all coal-fired power plants by 2050. Another example is Malaysia, which unveiled its National Energy Transition Roadmap last month, encompassing six levers for reducing greenhouse gas emissions while maximising economic opportunities.

While these are encouraging milestones, the existential threats posed by the climate emergency are also becoming increasingly clear to ordinary citizens like you and I. The record breaking heat waves experienced all over the world this year, including in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Countries such as Laos that depend on hydro-electric power also face power shortages during such droughts. Exacerbating the climate impacts this year is the ongoing El Nino event, which may add further strain to the region in the form of agricultural disruptions and also the possibility of health threatening transboundary haze pollution. As countries seek to overhaul existing financial and economic systems to facilitate their transformation into low-carbon societies, they must also not forget the social dimension of these changes, especially the groups that are in danger of being left behind.

In formulating policies to make such trade-offs, it is critical to be aware of what public opinion on such issues are. For example, what do they think a green transition should look like in their own countries and in the region? Do they believe that their government and business leaders are doing enough? Who do they think can help them to make these changes?

The ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute has been conducting a Southeast Asia Climate Outlook Survey every year since 2020. It is a public perception survey created precisely to answer such questions and to bring these views to the attention of policy makers and also business leaders. Through this regular poll, we aim to keep our finger on the pulse of regional sentiment towards climate impacts and solutions, climate ambition, the expectations of different stakeholders, and the potential for regional leadership and cooperation. This year, our findings reveal a palpable sense of urgency and concern over the ongoing climate crisis. Many Southeast Asians are already feeling the negative impact on their livelihoods due to the increasingly severe weather extremes. That is why the loss and damage discussions that are taking place at the upcoming COP28 in Dubai will be critical for many developing countries that are struggling to bear the burdens of unavoidable and irreversible damage to their environment, economies and livelihoods as they play their part to mitigate climate change.

Many are bracing themselves for such impacts to worsen significantly in the future and have willingly adopted sustainable lifestyle changes to contribute to climate action while calling on businesses and local governments to do more. At the same time, Southeast Asians are wary of the practical implications that unmanaged energy transition will have, highlighting the need for equitable transitions that will not leave vulnerable groups behind, even as it brings the promise of a better life. You will hear much more about the survey findings later.

With the data gathered over the last 4 years, the survey has become a rich resource for the media, regional organisations and researchers hoping to gain a better understanding of public awareness and perceptions of climate issues in the context of our unique circumstances in our part of the world. As such, we believe that these findings can be a valuable guide for us in Southeast Asia to appreciate the challenges and opportunities as we race together to achieve global climate targets.

After the keynote speech by Minister Nik Nazmi, we are also privileged to have a panel of expert discussants who will share their reactions to the latest Survey results. I look forward to the insights that will emerge from this session and encourage all of us to participate actively in the Q&A that follows.

Thank you.