

Are ASEAN Members ready for the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015?

ASC organised the ASEAN Roundtable 2010 on 29 April 2010 at Shangri-la Hotel in Singapore, in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). The Roundtable focused on the state of readiness and prospects for ASEAN member countries in achieving the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015. Discussions assessed the readiness of each ASEAN member in meeting their commitments for regional economic integration. Some highlights from the discussions:

- While most of the foundations to realise AEC have been laid in member countries, governments in ASEAN will now have to devote more attention to implementation of the commitments made for AEC accomplishment. Much of this is to be carried out nationally, especially in terms of coordination among different sectoral ministries and departments.

- Realising the AEC thus requires exertion of political will, achievement of national unity and the exercise of top leadership in several key areas including domestic reforms and bridging the development divide.

- The development divide compels ASEAN to consider the areas where some members are lagging behind, to identify windows for assistance by the more advanced ASEAN members as well as by ASEAN Dialogue Partners and other regional organisations such as the Asia Development Bank which have similar interests and aims for assisting regional development. Currently, many from within ASEAN and its partners are addressing the gaps in infrastructure, and the lack of human resources and adequate institutions in the newer ASEAN members. Most importantly, the newer members will need to step up the pace of their policy reforms, as a national responsibility. All ASEAN members will need to overcome lobbies fearful of regional competition.

Other priorities for AEC accomplishment include: labour mobility; liberalisation of trade in services and protectionism in the services sector; non-tariff and other behind-the-border barriers; coherent industrial policy; reduction of corruption; improvement in the investment climate; and more information to be shared in the AEC scorecard.

ASC researchers are now working on a preliminary report, summarising key points of discussion. A publication will follow, compiling the summary report and papers presented at the Roundtable.

The Roundtable 2010 discussions showed that a more realistic picture of ASEAN integration is emerging; reflecting the deeper integration processes ongoing in ASEAN today. The Roundtable discussions were grounded in reality, providing many practical suggestions for future steps. Constructive inputs from different sectors of society will assist governments in the region take more concrete steps for regional cooperation and integration.

Please click [here](#) for the Roundtable programme which contains links to the Keynote Address and powerpoint presentations (please click on each link).