

Workshop on Urbanisation in Southeast Asian Countries: Cities as Engines of Development

Policy planners, NGO representatives and academicians from diverse disciplines gathered at ISEAS on 18-19 March 2010 for a workshop on urbanisation in Southeast Asian countries. The second of its kind to be jointly organised by the ASC and CLC (Centre for Liveable Cities), the workshop focused on cities as engines for sustainable development.

The main aim of the workshop was to identify and discuss key urbanisation challenges facing the region and come up with recommendations for ASEAN policymakers' consideration. Discussions revolved around five main themes: a) cities as engines of development; b) urban and regional connectivity; c) inclusive cities; d) cities and the environment; and e) governance, decentralisation and urbanisation. There was a lively exchange of contrasting views and experiences.

Key takeaways from the workshop include:

- Cities as important centres of development are growing larger and more complex.
- Economic growth is a cause and consequence of urbanisation.
- Whether rapid urbanisation is a challenge or an opportunity, Southeast Asia has to act now to get ahead of the major urban challenges confronting cities.
- Urbanisation has political, economic, social-cultural and security implications. It is a national issue with regional implications. It is cross-sectoral and cross-border, requiring coordinated responses.
- However, there is a paucity of data on urbanisation in the region.
- To assist in policy-making, ASEAN should establish a database of urban statistics for research and policy analyses.
- A regional network of think-tanks and individuals looking collectively at urbanisation in the region can help generate ideas and recommendations for policy.
- City officials should also network among themselves.

The ASC and CLC will work together to establish a network of the workshop participants. In the interim, the two Centres will coordinate the network's communications and discussions online. More information on follow-up will be posted on the ASC and CLC websites. ASC and CLC are now working on a publication of the workshop discussions and papers, as an input to high-level ASEAN meets and a resource for policymakers.



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