



ASC Bulletin

An update from the ASEAN Studies Centre on ASEAN events and issues

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New Year Greetings from ASC



2011: A New Look for ASC

The ASEAN Studies Centre (ASC) will turn 3 in 2011!

To mark our third anniversary of operations and to reflect the dynamic, evolving and growing nature of ASC's work, we are now working on improving the content, look and feel of the ASC website and e-newsletter.

As the ASC started operations in March 2011, we will launch the new website in that month. The new website will be more interactive and provide easier

navigation for both our existing online community and first-time visitors. Some additional features of the new website are: a search bar, RSS feed, links to the ASC's Facebook and Twitter pages, and an ASC blog.

The ASC newsletter will undergo a complete revamp, to better showcase the richness of information and analysis on ASEAN and Southeast Asia. The revised newsletter will carry the analytical work of

scholars and experts from within and outside the region, on issues of regional cooperation. The inaugural issue of the revamped newsletter is targeted for February 2011. It will be available in electronic format, on the ASC website.

ASEAN progress towards the AEC



ASEAN Leaders signed the ASEAN Master Plan on Regional Connectivity at the 17th ASEAN Summit



2010 also saw more positive developments between ASEAN members and East Asian countries

In 2010, ASEAN took its place as one of the key players among emerging Asian economies. After two turbulent years in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, ASEAN's economy grew by 7.4 percent y/y in 2010, on good domestic fundamentals, compared to a fragile 1.3 percent expansion in 2009. There are signs that this economic expansion, which began in mid-2009, will continue, although the rate of growth will moderate to 5.4 percent in 2011.

ASEAN's progress towards ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015 is also reflected in its achievements in 2010. The year got off to a good start. ASEAN-6 countries applied zero tariffs on 99 percent of goods and Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) also committed to trade 98.6 percent of goods at 0-5 percent of tariff rate. The ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement came into effect on 17 May 2010.

The 16th ASEAN Summit in April 2010 saw the ASEAN Leaders inking the ASEAN Master Plan on Regional Connectivity to speed up physical and people-to-people connectivity in and beyond the region. ASEAN Leaders also viewed for the first time a scorecard tracking AEC implementation. The AEC Scorecard is available on the ASEAN Secretariat website. According to the Scorecard, ASEAN has a 75.5 percent achievement in implementing agreements.

The 17th ASEAN Summit in October 2010 saw the completion of the seventh package of commitments under the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services and an eighth package introduced. The implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement has also been stepped up, helping in free movement of investment capital in the region.

2010 also saw positive developments of interactions between ASEAN members and East Asian countries. On 1 January 2010, ASEAN witnessed the realization of the ASEAN-China and ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), and the entry into force of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA and the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement. Thus ASEAN, besides its role in promoting cooperation and dialogue in the region, became a 'bridge-builder' among countries in Asia.

On the finance front ASEAN Plus Three Finance Ministers enlarged to US\$120 billion the swap arrangement under the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM) on 24 March 2010. This multilateral swap facility is expected to assist the ASEAN Plus Three countries with short-term liquidity difficulties to strengthen regional defensive capabilities against risks emerging from the global economy. In May 2010, the region also established the Credit Guarantee Investment Facility (CGIF) of US\$700 million, which is expected to support the issuance of local currency-denominated corporate bonds in Asia.

Still, the implementation of ASEAN agreements has to be speeded up to manage the integration process and achieve the targets within the timeframe set in the AEC blueprint. As the deadline for achieving AEC is only four years from now, ASEAN member states urgently need to incorporate regional commitments into their domestic reform processes. The countries should actively address the issue of capacity building to tackle any shortcomings in im-

plementing the commitments.

In the next four years, measures for trade facilitation should be given priority, as non-tariff barriers (NTBs) lower the potential benefits under FTAs. It is also advisable to review the progress and effectiveness of ASEAN's central database system for NTBs.

Financing ASEAN integration will continue to be a challenge. ASEAN members need to encourage public-private partnership models, and look into new ways of raising funds.

Finally, ASEAN private sector involvement should be a keystone of the region's economic integration strategy. This is because the decisions and actions of businessmen in ASEAN affect regional economic integration. Calls have been made for the AEC scorecard to be made available in fuller detail for private sector use. Also, regular dialogue with the business community is recommended so that ASEAN can create a more facilitative environment for doing business in the region.

The writer is Lead Researcher for Economic Affairs at the ASEAN Studies Centre, ISEAS. These are her personal views.

ASEAN's Socio-Cultural Pillar: a child with special needs?

The most prominent “achievement” “for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) in 2010 seems to be the inauguration of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) at the 16th ASEAN Summit in April 2010 at Hanoi. The Commission was hailed as a turning point for the ASEAN region at its launch in Hanoi. ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan sees this as the starting point for the creation of a “compassionate community, a sharing and caring community”. With the ACWC’s launch, there is now a shared platform to discuss and address pivotal issues of human trafficking, gender discrimination, child labour, and migration.

However, not many are aware of a separate mechanism – the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers – which had been established under the labour cooperation framework of the socio-cultural community. A more legally-binding instrument on migrant worker protection is being developed.

There is fading memory of the ASEAN-led coordination mechanism that brokered a breakthrough on humanitarian assistance and cooperation in ASEAN, and opened up more venues of strategic cooperation in disaster management and emergency response. The adoption of the UN-ASEAN Strategic Plan on Disaster Management (at the 3rd ASEAN-UN Summit held in October 2010 in Hanoi) could be cited as another “boasting point” for the ASCC. This, following the entry into force of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in December 2009 and the operationalisation of the ASEAN Coor-

minating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) in 2011, will establish ASEAN’s mark in tackling disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

For every headline, the many areas of ASEAN socio-cultural cooperation can list several quiet accomplishments in their ongoing work.

Mechanisms and procedures on pandemic preparedness are now entrenched in the ASEAN health cooperation framework, building on the 2003 SARS outbreak and ongoing avian flu concerns in the region. Cooperation in science and technology are supporting ASEAN efforts on disaster risk reduction, climate change, energy and food security. The ASEAN Television News Exchange has extended beyond ASEAN borders to Eurovision. A regional database on poverty and well-being is being developed.



Socio-cultural priorities are spread across the three ASEAN community pillars. Stakeholders at whom the benefits of socio-cultural cooperation are aimed – i.e. the peoples of ASEAN – are at the core of every ASEAN process, be it security, economic or social. It has always been difficult to define and communicate the developments and achievements of ASEAN socio-cultural cooperation because of this diffuseness.

Perhaps this was what motivated the adoption of a Communication Plan for the ASCC to “enhance public awareness and shape their perceptions and generate greater participation of the public in building the ASCC” at the 16th ASEAN Summit in April 2010. The plan is a recognition of sorts of the shortcomings in ASEAN community-building. While communities of practice have been built

by bringing together experts and practitioners in the many areas of ASEAN cooperation, this has not yet been translated or expanded to generating a sense of community among the citizens of ASEAN member states. With 2015—the deadline for the ASEAN Community—looming, the ASCC has its work cut out in explaining what the ASCC can do for a people-centred, socially responsible ASEAN Community and in engendering ownership and support for the plan.

The ASCC has been likened in the past to an afterthought to the two other ASEAN community pillars – the ASEAN Political Security Community and the ASEAN Economic Community. Socio-cultural priorities have had to be justified as “linked inextricably with the economic and security pillars” on the grounds that “economic integration and security alone will not be sufficient” to achieve the ASEAN Community. In fact, echoes of these justifications can still be found in the list of priorities set by the latest meeting of the ASCC Council in October 2010. Human resource development for economic recovery is included as one of the priorities for community-building.

ASEAN’s focus on the “challenges” that ASCC has to tackle, and the recurring stress on the elusiveness of a shared ASEAN identity suggest that the ASCC is like a child with special needs. While this seems a rather tragic and extreme analogy, ASEAN is taking the right approach by planning for an uncertain future and adjusting milestones and expectations. Pessimists may mourn this incrementalism as lost potential but an optimist will try to find strengths in the weaknesses. Child development experts have said that parents with children of special needs are often more flexible, compassionate, stubborn and resilient than other parents. ASEAN will have to be such a parent if the ASCC is to triumph over its challenges one day.

The writer is Lead Researcher for Socio-Cultural Affairs at the ASEAN Studies Centre, ISEAS. These are her personal views.

The ASEAN Commission on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Women and Children is the starting point for creating a sharing and caring community..

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Recent and Upcoming Activities

September 2010: Brainstorming Session on Achieving the AEC 2015: Challenges for Member Countries and Businesses

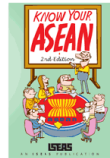
October 2010: Launch of World Bank's East Asia Economic Update 2010

16-17 February 2011: ASC-WIPO Conference on "Intellectual Property Challenges in Asia"

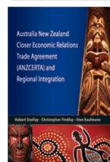
18 February 2011: Workshop (by invitation) "Entering Uncharted Waters? ASEAN and the South China Sea Disputes"

5 May 2011: ASEAN Roundtable 2011

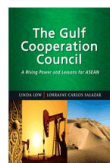
New Publications available for download at www.aseanstudiescentre.org



Know Your ASEAN 2nd edition



Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA) and Regional Integration



Gulf Cooperation Council: A Rising Power and Lessons for ASEAN

Plans for 2011

For 2011, the Centre's work will be on:

- ASEAN perspectives on achieving an integrated community by 2015
- Assessing the impediments to achieving the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 (in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank)
- Assessing comprehensive economic partnerships (CEPs) and comprehensive economic cooperation (CEC) and their impact on business decisions in ASEAN
- Examining intellectual property and economic development in ASEAN
- Examining the EU experience in regional cooperation and lessons for ASEAN
- Conference on key Dialogue Partners' views on ASEAN economic integration
- An ASEAN-Korea Forum
- Work-planning to support the thematic studies under the work plan of the ASEAN Intergovern-

mental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)



Check out events and reports at the ASEAN Studies Centre website at <http://www.aseanstudiescentre.org>. The website will have a new look in 2011!

- A conference on South China Sea disputes and tensions
- Addressing issues raised by some member states' plans to harness nuclear energy for power generation
- Looking at employment trends in Southeast Asia/ASEAN countries
- Gender and migration issues in

ASEAN and its member countries

- Developing a "climate change primer" for ASEAN countries
- Monitoring the status of ASEAN cooperation, focusing on compliance with key ASEAN agreements and commitments
- Continuing the ASEAN Ambassadors Lectures Series
- Collaborating with the World Bank to conduct policy discussions on food, energy and disaster management in ASEAN
- Continuing the on-line discussion forums on topical issues pertaining to ASEAN cooperation

The Centre's flagship event—**ASEAN Roundtable 2011**— will be organised in May 2011 addressing implementation of the ASEAN Master Plan on Regional Connectivity, particularly transportation, ICT, telecommunications and energy infrastructure.
