

36TH ASEAN ROUNDTABLE

BRAVING THE STORMS: ASEAN IN CRISIS MODE

12 - 13 October 2021

ABOUT THE 36TH ASEAN ROUNDTABLE

Nearly twenty months into the Covid-19 pandemic, Southeast Asia is still in the throes of managing the spread of the new delta variant, the economic fallout from the pandemic and quickly evolving geo-political considerations. The political landscape in the region has quickly changed from one of relative stability to one where deep questions about the relevance of ASEAN as a grouping to its own members, the strength of its unity and the meaning of its centrality to its partners are being asked. On top of the public health and economic crises, ASEAN found itself having to deal with Myanmar when a military coup effectively removed the incumbent government from power. The US' attention to the region, tied to the concept of the Indo-Pacific and the activities of the Quad, the new trilateral security arrangement AUKUS, and China's application to the CPTPP promises to deliver a paradigm shift to this region's political-security consideration. The theme of this year's Roundtable is: *Braving the Storms: ASEAN in Crisis Mode*. The objective is to examine some of these pertinent issues in as holistic a manner as possible with a focus on equitable and inclusive recovery for the region.

The annual ASEAN Roundtable is a platform for leading scholars and commentators to examine key issues and challenges affecting ASEAN as a region and as an institution. The event is supported by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Supported by

DAY 1 — TUESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2021

9.00 am – 9.15 am

OPENING REMARKS

Mr CHOI Shing Kwok
Director and Chief Executive Officer
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Mr Christian ECHLE
Director, Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

9.15 am – 9.30 am

KEYNOTE MESSAGE

Mr Alvin TAN
Minister of State
Ministry of Trade and Industry & Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth
Singapore

9.30 am – 10.45 am

SESSION I: PROMOTING A MORE INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN ASEAN

This session explores the possibility for promoting more inclusive and equitable economic recovery from Covid-19 pandemic in ASEAN. The pandemic has severely affected all ASEAN economies and caused a surge in the use of online platforms by businesses. The bottom for ASEAN's economic slowdown appears to have been reached sometime during the second quarter of 2020, but the turnaround has been uneven across countries, sectors, and firm sizes. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) suffered greater losses in sales than large firms. Achieving more inclusive economic recovery in ASEAN requires deeper regional economic integration through seamless intra-regional flows of people, goods, and capital as well as greater participation of SMEs in digital trade.

Moderator: Dr Cassey LEE
Senior Fellow and Coordinator, Regional Economic Studies Programme,
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Panellists: [ASEAN's Regional Economic Outlook Post-Pandemic](#)

Dr CHUA Hak Bin
Senior Economist
Maybank Kim Eng

[A Regional Economic Integration Approach to Strengthen
ASEAN's Economic Recovery](#)

Dr Sanchita Basu DAS
Associate Fellow, Regional Economic Studies Programme,
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

[The Rise of Digital Trade and SME Development in ASEAN](#)

Mr Sebastian CORTES-SANCHEZ
Deputy Director, Asian Trade Centre

10.45 am – 12.00 pm

SESSION II: LEVERAGING THE COVID-19 CRISIS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The Covid-19 containment and mitigation measures had put ASEAN into an economic crisis. But the crisis has provided a window of opportunity for ASEAN to overhaul its economy to be more durable and resilient. Going back to its old playbook of environmentally destructive stimulus packages to drive new hard infrastructure and aid spending must be avoided. Instead, recovery policies must generate new strategies, tools and policy reforms that will ameliorate the impacts of future shocks, cushion unexpected business reversals, and empower just and inclusive societies in the event of future crises. The impetus to re-examine current spending, develop comprehensive policies for reskilling and upskilling of ASEAN's workforce and circular economy's role in a green recovery must be initiated. This session will explore three critical areas for ASEAN's sustainable transformation: green recovery, reskilling of the workforce and circular economy. Catalysing the shifts in these areas is vital for ASEAN to transition to a more inclusive and resilient society.

Moderator: Ms LEE Sue-Ann
Senior Fellow, Regional Social and Cultural Studies Programme,
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Panellists: [Is A Green Transformation after Covid-19 Possible?](#)

Ms Jukhee HONG
Executive Director, CARI ASEAN Research and Advocacy

[Exploring the Circular Economy for Future Growth](#)

Dr Venkatachalam ANBUMOZHI
Senior Economist, Director of Research Strategy and Innovation,
Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

[Preparing the Workforce of the Future](#)

Mr Seow Hiong GOH
Executive Director, Global Policy & Government Affairs, Asia Pacific,
Cisco Systems

DAY 2 — WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2021

9.00 am – 11.00 am

SESSION III: REGIONAL POLITICAL AND SECURITY LANDSCAPE

This session examines key events and developments that have shaken and reshaped the region's political-security landscape in 2021. The February military coup d'état in Myanmar and ASEAN's ongoing struggle to nudge the country back to stability and democracy have posed serious challenges to ASEAN's unity and centrality in its own neighbourhood. Is a reform of the ASEAN Way overdue and how should ASEAN reinvent itself in light of the Myanmar crisis? On the external relations front, 2021 heralded a sense of hope that ASEAN-US relations will turn a new chapter with the Biden administration after four years of Trump's lacklustre engagement. Yet, as "America is back" and "the era of US engagement with China is over", what would it mean for ASEAN's strategic positioning among the two great powers going forward? What does US commitment to Indo-Pacific mean for ASEAN?

FIRST PANEL: The Myanmar Challenge to ASEAN Unity and Centrality

Moderator: Dr Michael MONTESANO
Visiting Senior Fellow and Coordinator, Myanmar Studies Programme,
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Panellists: **ASEAN and the Thorny Myanmar Problem**

Dr Michael VATIKIOTIS
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Myanmar, Disillusioned?

Mr Min ZIN
Executive Director, Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP)-Myanmar

SECOND PANEL: ASEAN's Standing in The Regional Order

Moderator: Dr William CHOONG
Senior Fellow, Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme,
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Panellists: **Ensuring ASEAN's Survival in the Changing Multilateral world**

Prof Alice BA
Professor of Political Science and International Relations,
University of Delaware

ASEAN's Strategic Positioning in US-China Relations

Dr TAN See Seng
Research Adviser, The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies,
Nanyang Technological University

11.00 am – 11.15 am

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ms Sharon SEAH
Senior Fellow, Coordinator, ASEAN Studies Centre
ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

OPENING REMARKS



Mr Choi Shing Kwok is Director and Chief Executive Officer of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute and Head of the ASEAN Studies Centre at the Institute. Previously, he was Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources from 2012 to 2017, and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Transport from 2005 to 2012. Prior to that, he was Director, Security and Intelligence Division, Ministry of Defence. Mr Choi was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) (Military) in 1993 and the Meritorious Service Medal in 2000 for his significant contributions to the Singapore Public Service.



Mr Christian Echle is the Director of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung’s Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia, based in Singapore. In addition to political cooperation, the program focuses on the dialogue between Europe and Asia in the areas of security, multilateralism and digitization. Prior to that, Mr Echle was responsible for the foundation’s Media Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa (2012-2017). Mr Echle was awarded Konrad Adenauer Stiftung’s scholarship for young journalists (2002-2007), and worked for the German public broadcaster ZDF, and newspapers Badische Neueste Nachrichten and Badische Zeitung during this time.

KEYNOTE MESSAGE



Mr Alvin Tan was appointed as Singapore’s Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Culture, Community and Youth on 1 September 2020. He was first elected as a Member of Parliament in July 2020. Mr Tan has worked in the private, public and non-profit sectors. Before joining the government as Minister of State, he served as LinkedIn’s Head of Public Policy and Economics for the Asia Pacific, where he and his team helped economies prepare for the rapidly changing nature of work using analytics and data solutions. Before LinkedIn, Mr Tan was Head of Public Policy and Trust and Safety at Facebook (as well as Instagram and WhatsApp) where he was responsible for strategic investments, helping small and medium businesses digitise, authenticity, cybersecurity and online safety. Between 2010 to 2015, Mr Tan worked in investment banking at Goldman Sachs in Hong Kong and Singapore. Before that, he worked as a speech writer and on technology projects at the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General in New York. Mr Tan has also served in the Ministry of Defence in diplomacy, research and counter-terrorism roles, and at Oxfam in Australia.

SESSION I



Dr Cassey Lee has held academic appointments at the University of Wollongong, Nottingham University Business School (Malaysia) and University of Malaya. Dr Lee received his PhD (Economics) from University of California, Irvine. His current research focuses on algorithmic economics, competition policy, structural change and political economy. He has published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*, *Kyklos*, *Journal of Economic Surveys*, *Computational Economics*, *Journal of Asian Economics*, and *Economic Modelling*. He is currently the co-managing editor of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies* and associate editor of the *Journal of Economic Surveys*, *Asian Economic Journal* and *Asian Economic Policy Review*.



Dr Chua Hak Bin is Regional Co-Head of Macro Research at Maybank. He was formerly a Consultant at GIC, and Head of Emerging Asia and ASEAN Economics at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Dr Chua has also worked as a Strategist and Economist at Citigroup, Deutsche Private Wealth Management, DBS Bank and RHB Bank. Prior to joining the private sector, Dr Chua was with the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) for about six years, heading the external economies, financial surveillance and planning, policy and communications divisions. Dr Chua holds a PhD in Economics from Harvard University, and a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Brown University. He was a Visiting Lecturer in International Economics at Yale University for a year after completing his PhD.



Dr Sanchita Basu Das is a development economist and public policy expert with over 15 years of work experience in Southeast Asia. She has worked extensively on regional economic integration and development initiatives in areas of trade, infrastructure, logistics, services sector, digital economy, tourism, institutions and others. Sanchita was the Lead Researcher for economic affairs at the ASEAN Studies Centre of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, and a Fellow with the Regional Economic Studies Program of the same institute from 2005 to 2018. Prior to joining ISEAS, she had worked in the private sector for five years looking at macro-economic and development issues in South Asia. She earned her Master's degree in Economics from the University of Delhi, India and a PhD in International Political Economy from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She has contributed as an editor and reviewer of peer-reviewed journals, authored journal papers and book chapters, and has written for print and online media, including the Straits Times, the Business Times, East Asia Forum and others.



Mr Sebastian Cortes-Sanchez is Deputy Director at the Asian Trade Centre (ATC). He leads and manages trade policy, trade facilitation, digital trade, and supply chain related projects for public and private sector stakeholders. As part of his work at the ATC, Sebastian assists governments across the region in the design and implementation of national and regional trade agendas. He specialises in the development of MSME friendly trade agendas within e-commerce and trade facilitation agenda. Recently he led research projects on payments, logistics and taxation challenges to cross-border MSME trade and designed a one-year mentorship programme to strengthen the e-commerce opportunities of women exporters in Asia.

SESSION II



Ms Lee Sue-Ann is Senior Fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute and Editor at Fulcrum. She is also Co-coordinator of the Indonesia Studies Programme and leads the Media, Technology and Society programme at ISEAS.



Ms Jukhee Hong has been a policy advocate for ASEAN economic integration for over a decade. She is currently the Executive Director and Board Member of the CARI ASEAN Research and Advocacy, an independent think-tank dedicated to supporting the ASEAN economic integration through advocacy and research. She leads CARI's operations, outreach, research and advocacy efforts; as well as manages its research outputs, many of which have been socialised and presented to ASEAN senior officials including Ministers, Heads of States and Governments. Ms Hong is a frequent speaker on ASEAN integration policy at ASEAN ministerial level meetings and regional fora. She is also the Executive Director of the ASEAN Business Club, Deputy Executive Director of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) and the Lead for the ASEAN-BAC Green and Sustainable Economy Working Group.



Dr Venkatachalam Anbumozhi is the Director of Research Strategy and Innovation at the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Indonesia. His previous positions include Senior Capacity Building Specialist at Asian Development Bank Institute, Assistant Professor at the University of Tokyo, and Senior Policy Researcher at the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies. He has published several books, authored numerous research articles and produced many project reports on climate change actions, low-carbon infrastructure design, and private sector participation in Green Growth. Dr Anbumozhi was invited as a member of the G20 Task Force on Green Financing, APEC Resource Panel on Circular Economy, and the ASEAN Expert Committee on Climate Resilience. He has taught Climate Smart Development, International Cooperation and Financing for Sustainability at the University of Tokyo. He obtained his PhD from the University of Tokyo.



Mr Seow Hiong Goh has been in the ICT industry for 30 years and is currently the Executive Director of Global Policy & Government Affairs, Asia Pacific, Cisco Systems. He had served in the Singapore public service for ten years, undertaking various responsibilities at the Infocomm Development Authority. Mr Goh possesses 20 years of experience in the private sector working on ICT policy issues with governments across the Asia Pacific region. At Cisco, he advises government officials and regulators on a range of ICT-related policy issues, and assists governments in adopting policies and regulations that foster investment, innovation, growth and adoption of advanced ICT technologies and services. Mr Goh earned his BA and MSc. degrees in Computer Science from the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University respectively. He also holds a Bachelor of Law with Honors from the University of London and a Postgraduate Diploma of Singapore Law with Merit from the National University of Singapore.

DAY 2 — WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2021

SESSION III - FIRST PANEL



Dr Michael Montesano is Coordinator of the Thailand and Myanmar Studies Programmes at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, where he has worked since 2008. With Htet Myet Min Tun and Moe Thuzar, he is co-author of three recent ISEAS Perspective pieces on Myanmar’s State Administration Council regime. He is also co-editor of *Praetorians, Profiteers or Professionals? Studies on the Militaries of Myanmar and Thailand* (2020) and of *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand* (2019). Montesano was educated at Yale, the University of the Philippines at Los Baños, and Cornell.



Dr Michael Vatikiotis left his role as the Editor of the Far Eastern Economic Review to join the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) in 2004. A writer and journalist in Asia for more than thirty years, he is fluent in both Thai and Indonesian. During his career, he has been based as a journalist in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Hong Kong. He set up HD’s first regional office in Asia in Singapore in 2006. He has a degree in History and Geography from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London and a doctorate from Oxford University. He is the author of three books on Southeast Asian politics and two novels set in Indonesia.



Mr Min Zin is the Executive Director of the Institute for Strategy and Policy (Myanmar), which is an independent, and nongovernmental think tank in Myanmar. He is a PhD candidate in Travers Department of Political Science at University of California, Berkeley. Min Zin studies comparative politics with a special focus on civil-military relations, democratization, and contentious politics. Min Zin’s writings appear in *Journal of Democracy*, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Asian Survey* and many edited books. Min Zin writes for The New York Times, and other media outlets.

DAY 2 — WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2021

SESSION III - SECOND PANEL



Dr William Choong is a Senior Fellow at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, and the managing editor of the institute’s Fulcrum commentary website, which publishes analyses on Southeast Asia and its wider environment. From 2013 to 2020, he was a Shangri-La Dialogue Senior Fellow for Asia-Pacific Security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, where he helped to organise the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. William had a lengthy career with The Straits Times, Singapore’s main English-language newspaper, where he worked most recently as Senior Writer responsible for opinion pieces and editorials focused on defence, diplomacy and US policy in Asia. He wrote his PhD at the Australian National University on US-China deterrence.



Dr Alice D. Ba is Professor of Political Science & International Relations at the University of Delaware. Her research interests include ASEAN, Southeast Asia’s relations with China and the United States, East Asian regional integration, and comparative regionalisms. A recipient of US Fulbright awards for work in Beijing and Singapore, she has also published on ASEAN, the South China Sea, Malacca Strait governance, multilateralism’s systemic effects in East Asia, the role of strategic narratives, and questions of institutional legitimacy. She served as the University of Delaware’s Director of Asian Studies (2009-2014) and is also a member of the Stimson Center Southeast Asia Forum Advisory Board.



Dr Tan See Seng is President and CEO of International Students Inc., a faith-based, non-profit organization in the United States. Formerly a tenured full professor at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), he is now Research Advisor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and, concurrently, Senior Associate at the Centre for Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) both at NTU.

CONCLUDING REMARKS



Ms Sharon Seah is Senior Fellow, and Coordinator of the ASEAN Studies Centre at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. She is concurrently Coordinator of the Climate Change in Southeast Asia Programme at the Institute. Prior to joining ISEAS, she was Associate Director of the Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore. Ms Seah served as Deputy Director for International Relations at the National Environment Agency from 2013-2015, and was part of the Singapore Foreign Service from 2001 - 2012. Ms Seah maintains a keen interest in ASEAN and climate change issues. She earned her LLM degree in Public and International Law from the University of Melbourne, Australia in 2018.