

SPECIAL DISCUSSION:
AN UPDATE ON ASEAN'S EFFORTS IN MYANMAR
21 July 2022
Opening Remarks

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Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to all.

On behalf of the ASEAN Studies Centre of the ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, I warmly welcome you to the Special Discussion on ASEAN's Efforts in Myanmar.

This morning, we are honoured to have H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation as well as ASEAN Special Envoy to deliver the keynote speech on ASEAN's response to the recent developments in Myanmar and the way forward for ASEAN.

We are also privileged to have with us an expert panel of five speakers namely, Mr Min Zin, the Executive Director of the Institute for Strategy and Policy (Myanmar); Ambassador Dr Kobsak Chutikul, Adviser to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee of Thailand; Dr Marzuki Darusman, an active member of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentarians on Myanmar Caucus for Indonesia and parliamentarian for Global Actions; Ms Adelina Kamal, Associate Senior Fellow at ISEAS and Former Executive Director of the AHA Centre; and Ms Wu Ye-Min, Regional Director at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

The problem of Myanmar has bedevilled ASEAN since the military coup there in February last year. While ASEAN has had some difficult spells in the past dealing with Myanmar both before and after it became a member state, the current problems are by far the most serious that it has come up against. Some believe that it is so serious a challenge that it would break ASEAN, if ASEAN does not find a way to make progress on the problem. With an inadequate toolkit and lack of cooperation on the ground, progress has thus far been elusive, but that does not mean that we should stop trying to find new and innovative ways to do so. As the ASEAN Chair, Cambodia has been in the hot seat and plays a critical role to engage with all stakeholders in Myanmar and achieve consensus on ASEAN's response to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

Today's webinar will be useful for us to take stock of ASEAN's efforts in Myanmar, in particular, to hear Minister Prak Sokhonn's updates on his recent second official visit to Myanmar as the Special Envoy. I also look forward to the discussion on the lessons learnt in past engagements with Myanmar and to explore ASEAN's options in facilitating constructive dialogue with all parties concerned as well as finding ways to distribute humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Through our candid discussion, I hope we will be able to identify ways to overcome the seemingly intractable challenges to implementing the Five-Point Consensus, and to ensure that lessons learnt in ASEAN's work thus far are internalised when the baton is passed to the next Special Envoy.

On that hopeful note, I look forward to hearing from Minister Prak Sokhonn.