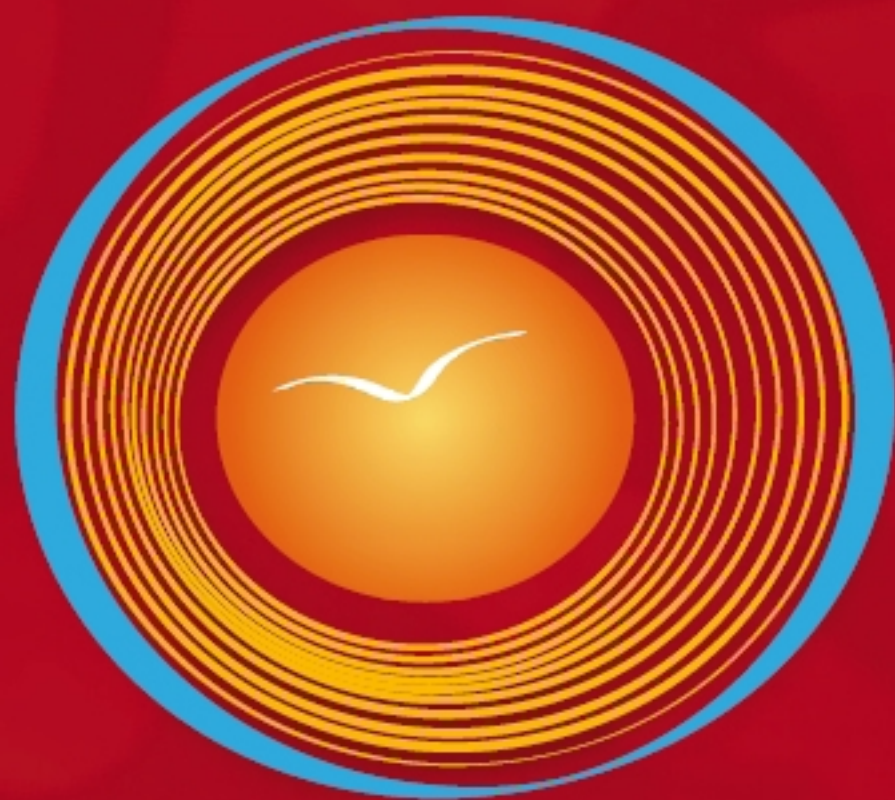


STRIVING TOGETHER

ASEAN & THE UN





STRIVING TOGETHER

ASEAN & THE UN

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional arm of the United Nations, playing a unique role as the only intergovernmental forum for all countries and territories of the Asian and Pacific region. Established in 1947, ESCAP today has 53 members and nine associate members covering over 60 per cent of the world's population, or 4.1 billion people. ESCAP's mission is to serve as the regional hub promoting cooperation among member States to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP provides the strategic regional link between global, subregional and country-level programmes and concerns. ESCAP is headquartered in Bangkok and has a Pacific office in Suva; it also has regional institutions in Beijing; Bogor, Indonesia; Incheon, Republic of Korea; New Delhi; and Tokyo. For more information, please visit our website at <<http://www.unescap.org>>.



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The United Nations and ASEAN have long shared a determination to build a more stable and prosperous world. Over the years, our organizations have worked together on many important economic and social development programmes across South-East Asia, from controlling communicable diseases to building extensive networks for international transport. In May 2008, in joining forces to respond quickly and effectively to the devastation left by Cyclone Nargis, we also demonstrated that we can work closely together at a time of crisis to save many lives in a complex and difficult environment.

I therefore welcome the publication of *Striving Together: ASEAN & the UN*. This study details the many ways in which the United Nations and ASEAN are trying to strengthen and deepen our partnership. I am strongly committed to building on our achievements and exploring new areas of cooperation, and in that spirit commend this study to a wide readership.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ki-moon Ban". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations

MESSAGE FROM THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
ASEAN



For ASEAN, the year 2008 marks a turning point. On 15 December 2008, the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter was welcomed in a ceremony held at the ASEAN Secretariat. With this Charter, ASEAN will not only be able to operate more effectively as a regional organization, but also to engage more closely with the rest of the world.

Among our most important partners in international cooperation is the United Nations. Our first two ASEAN-UN Summits have helped in forging a strong relationship with the UN, and we look forward to exploring further ways of working together even more productively, building on the principles of the ASEAN Charter.

I appreciate the support of the United Nations for the ASEAN region and welcome its spirit of cooperation. With the forthcoming ratification of the ASEAN Charter, I look forward to a new phase of strengthened partnership with the United Nations family through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism to achieve concrete action for continued ASEAN advancement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Surin Pitsuwan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Surin Pitsuwan
Secretary-General of ASEAN

FOREWORD



Over the past four decades, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has helped preserve peace across the region, and created opportunities for economic and social cooperation. Now ASEAN is on the brink of a new era and seeking to reinvent itself – to become a more collective, rules-based organization.

We live in a tightly interdependent world, in which economic, social and political risks can be transmitted suddenly and unpredictably – as the current global financial shocks have demonstrated all too vividly. Now more than ever, the nations of South-East Asia need a regional organization that can respond rapidly and cohesively.

For this reason, I am heartened that ASEAN has embraced a new Charter. Just as the United Nations has ground its mission on the ideals of its Charter, so ASEAN is now on the path to strengthening itself around an agreed set of principles and understandings. It is both a major challenge and a necessity. The 10 nations that make up ASEAN are a strikingly varied group, with very diverse interests, experiences and capacities. In the years ahead, they will face new pressures, both internal and external, that will require concerted action.

In this endeavour, ASEAN can be sure of support from the United Nations family, especially ESCAP, as its Asia-Pacific arm, and the members of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism that are working together, to enhance regional-level coherence of policies and programmes to benefit Member States. We are ready to increase dialogue and partnership with ASEAN, including by complementing and supporting the efforts of its Secretariat, on addressing concrete issues, as indicated in this publication and as exemplified by the recent response to Cyclone Nargis.

As a contribution to furthering efforts to take the ASEAN-UN partnership to a new level, ESCAP has prepared this study, *Striving Together: ASEAN & the UN*, which reflects on more than 40 years of ASEAN experiences, and anticipates future ASEAN-UN cooperation. I hope that it will prove useful to ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat, the United Nations system, and to all those who recognize the importance of working together for peace, progress and stability in the region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noeleen Heyzer'.

Noeleen Heyzer

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Chairperson, Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism

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ACRONYMS

ABMI	ASEAN+3 Bond Markets Initiative
ASEAN-BAC	ASEAN Business Advisory Council
ASEAN-BIS	ASEAN Business and Investment Summit
ACD	Asia Cooperation Dialogue
ACDM	ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management
ACE	ASEAN Centre for Energy
ACSC	ASEAN Civil Society Conference
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADF	ASEAN Development Fund
AECB	ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint
AFAS	ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services
AFFA	ASEAN Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AMAF	ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry
APA	ASEAN People's Assembly
APAEC	ASEAN Plan of Action on Energy Cooperation
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASA	ASEAN Swap Arrangement
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN+1	ASEAN + a Dialogue Partner country
ASEAN+3	ASEAN + China, Japan and the Republic of Korea
ASEAN-6	Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand
ASEAN-10	Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam
ASEAN-CCI	ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ATFOA	ASEAN Task Force on AIDS
ATIGA	ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement
BSA	bilateral swap arrangements
CEB	(United Nations system) Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPT	Common effective preferential tariff
CFA	Comprehensive framework for action
CIMB	Malaysian financial services company
CLMV	Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam
CMI	Chiang Mai Initiative
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
COMTRADE	Commodity trade database of the United Nations Statistics Division
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific
CSO	Civil society organization
DCM	Developed country markets
DOTS	Directly observed treatment, short course
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EFA	Education for All
EPG	Eminent persons group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

ETI	Enabling trade index
EU	European Union
EU-15	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (from 1995 to 2004).
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FASA	Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations
FASC	Federation of ASEAN Shippers' Councils
FDI	foreign direct investment
FTSE	Financial Times Stock Exchange company
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council also known as the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
GFDRR	(World Bank's) Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
GDP	Gross domestic product
G-20	Group of 20 developing countries
G-33	Group of 33 developing countries
GMS	Greater-Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IAI	Initiative for ASEAN Integration
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOC-UNESCO	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Institutes of Strategic and International Studies
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LCDP	low-carbon development path
LDC	Least developed country
LIBOR	London Inter-Bank Offered Rate
LPI	Logistics performance index
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
MERCOSUR	South American Common Market
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIE	Office International des Epizooties (World Organization for Animal Health)
PCF	peer consultation framework
PONJA	post-Nargis Joint Assessment
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
ROB	Southeast Asia Regional Office of OHCHR
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAPA	Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy network
SAR	Special administrative region of China
SARS	severe acute respiratory syndrome
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SKRL	Singapore-Kunming Rail Link
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia
TB	Tuberculosis
TCG	Tripartite Core Group of the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force (to assist Cyclone Nargis survivors in Myanmar)
TELMIN	ASEAN Telecommunications and IT Ministers' Meeting
TELSOM	ASEAN Telecommunications Senior Officials Meeting
TRAINS	Trade Analysis and Information System
TRIPS	trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights
UN/ISDR	Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCRD	United Nations Centre for Regional Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF-ROSA	UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAP	Vientiane Programme of Action
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WITS	World Integrated Trade Solution – World Bank software
WTO	World Trade Organization



Like all other international organizations, ASEAN has had to adjust to a rapidly changing global environment – which also involves realigning itself with other institutions and groupings of countries, including the United Nations. The purpose of this study is to reflect on these changes and more specifically on the development of ASEAN’s cooperation with the United Nations – to signpost the potential for future collaboration as ASEAN moves into a new phase.

Future ASEAN-UN cooperation will be determined primarily by the ways in which ASEAN itself continues to evolve. Thus far, rather than establishing common rules, the ASEAN Member States instead embarked on a series of informal, consensus-driven consultations, taking decisions and resolving disputes behind closed doors – resolutely maintaining the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference.

For several decades, this mode of governance served ASEAN well. Disparate member States found ways to cooperate on resolvable issues. They could, for example, take credit for maintaining peace in the region and, until 1997, generally achieving impressive economic growth.

This model was seriously weakened, however, by the Asian financial crisis of 1997, which in some countries broke the implicit pact that had involved sacrificing full democratic accountability for sound economic performance. Moreover the crisis showed that ASEAN did not have robust financial procedures or institutions.

Since then ASEAN has had to look afresh at how it should function in a new global environment. In response, over the years ASEAN has evolved what is referred to as a loose, ‘three-track’ framework. Governments relate to each other through Track 1, while non-governmental organizations are represented, in a more limited way, through Tracks 2 and 3.

The ASEAN achievement

The organization can point to a number of successes – in building what since 2003 have been referred to as the three pillars of an envisaged ‘ASEAN Community’ – the Security Community, the Economic Community, and the Socio-cultural Community.

The Security Community

ASEAN can be seen as a regional force for peace and stability. The opportunity for regular meetings has helped national leaders to establish a degree of mutual confidence. Since its founding, notwithstanding occasional border conflicts, no two ASEAN members have had a large-scale war. In the 1980s, ASEAN was instrumental

in resolving issues arising out of Viet Nam's incursion into Cambodia. ASEAN was instrumental in founding in 1994 the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and has also been instrumental in the establishment of other regional fora such as the ASEAN+3 process (ASEAN plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). Furthermore, ASEAN played an important role in the formation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and in its development.

The Economic Community

Another of ASEAN's primary tasks has been to promote economic integration. It has, for example, introduced the ASEAN Free Trade Area, which has helped reduce tariffs and promote intra-ASEAN trade. It has also taken measure to promote regional financial security through the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) – a system of multilateral and bilateral currency swaps. In 2008, in response to the global financial crisis, ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and the Republic of Korea) has also been discussing ways in which the CMI could be further deepened or extended. Another important area of cooperation has been through transport agreements – as part of broader Asian agreements on highway and railway networks – not just by developing infrastructure but also by concluding important agreements on land transport facilitation and multimodal transport.

The Socio-cultural Community

ASEAN envisages a “community of cohesive, equitable and harmonious societies, bound together in solidarity for deeper understanding and cooperation”. In this respect ASEAN has achieved significant cooperation in some areas. For example, ASEAN leaders and heads of regional and international organizations agreed to establish a regional tsunami early-warning system, and in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis helped build trust and cooperation between the Government of Myanmar and the international community.

ASEAN has also enabled the countries of the region to work together on communicable diseases, particularly those with cross-border implications such as SARS, and on transboundary environmental challenges, such as haze pollution. ASEAN also aims to promote a regional identity through bodies such as the ASEAN Foundation.

ASEAN took one of its most significant steps in 2007 with the signing of the ASEAN Charter. To a large extent, this codifies existing ASEAN practice but also includes a set of qualitatively new norms, such as adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government, respect for fundamental freedoms, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the promotion of social justice.

Growing together

The 10 ASEAN nations can claim a degree of integration. But they still have some way to go. In many respects they remain far apart, not just in political systems but also in terms of economic progress or standards of human development.

Economic convergence

The extent of differences can be measured through the Gini index which is commonly used, for example, as a measure of income distribution within countries. In a corresponding way, this can be applied to express the disparities between countries.

Income

The ASEAN economies cover a very broad spectrum. In 2007, the GDP per capita of Singapore, in 1990 US dollars, was \$25,023 – twice that of the next richest country Brunei Darussalam, and close to 100 times the per capita GDPs of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Myanmar or Viet Nam. Because of these dramatic differences the Gini index for per capita GDP for ASEAN countries is very high at around 75 and has stayed more or less constant since 1990.

Monetary factors

The countries of ASEAN have little immediate prospect of introducing a common currency. Nevertheless there are some signs of convergence in monetary and related indicators. Central bank discount rates, for example, having diverged, have now moved closer together, and exchange rate fluctuations are also similar. There are still, however, significant differences in inflation.

Labour market

ASEAN also demonstrates striking differences in labour productivity. Taking productivity in Singapore in 2005 as the benchmark, the level in Malaysia and Thailand was around one-quarter of this; in Myanmar it was 10 per cent and in Cambodia only 7 per cent. If there has been any convergence it is very slight.

Basic infrastructure and information and communications technology

For basic physical infrastructure there does not seem to have been much convergence based on the proportion of roads that are paved. However, for the intra-regional Asian Highway that crosses ASEAN countries, road quality has improved considerably in recent years. There has been more rapid convergence in the availability of information and communications technology – especially in the use of cellular phones for which since 1990 the Gini index has halved.

Ease of doing business

In 2007-2008, Singapore was the easiest country in the world to do business. Thailand and Malaysia also ranked quite highly, but most other countries in ASEAN performed poorly.

Socio-cultural convergence

As with economic development, the countries of the region also have very different attainments in human development. Disparities in economic indicators are to a large extent mirrored in variations in selected social indicators.

Child mortality and malnutrition

The most striking contrasts are in health, particularly for children and mothers. The Gini index for under-five mortality is above 50, a reflection of disturbingly high rates in the Lao PDR (75 deaths per thousand live births), Cambodia (82) and Myanmar (104). Nor does there seem to have been any convergence. For child malnutrition, measured by the proportion of underweight children, the Gini index was somewhat lower, at around 30. In this case, however, the countries seem to be diverging.

Maternal mortality

This remains a persistent problem though data are too scarce to permit any conclusions on convergence. Even in Singapore and Brunei Darussalam maternal mortality ratios, though relatively low, are still twice as high as in Australia and Japan. In the poorest countries, the estimated ratios in 2005 were disturbingly high: 660 per 100,000 live births in the Lao PDR, 540 in Cambodia, 420 in Indonesia, and 380 in Myanmar.

HIV/AIDS and TB

HIV continues to threaten the ASEAN population. Nevertheless there has been significant progress across the region, particularly in Thailand and Cambodia, with some evidence of convergence. Another major concern is TB. Prevalence rates have been coming down across the region and treatment is now more widely available.

Water and sanitation access

In the ASEAN region on average, 87 per cent of freshwater is used for agricultural practices. Eco-efficient water use is needed to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods to changing meteorological and climate patterns, ensure food production and reduce food security challenges. With rapid urbanization, ASEAN cities are facing soaring demand for equitable access to water. Yet, there is good news in that ASEAN countries are moving towards full

access to safe water supplies, with a median access of 84 per cent in rural areas and 96 per cent in urban areas – and both proportions are converging. Levels of access to safe sanitation are lower – 87 per cent in urban areas and 64 per cent in rural areas – but in this case too the numbers are converging.

Environmental sustainability

The ASEAN contribution to global emissions is relatively small. However, some ASEAN countries exceed the world average per capita CO₂ emissions and there is evidence of convergence as the least polluter countries are gradually increasing their emissions. Convergence is more welcome in terms of energy use and ASEAN countries seem to be converging on this indicator. Even so, energy consumption remains exceptionally high in Myanmar, as well as in Viet Nam and Indonesia.

Towards the ASEAN Community

The principal document guiding the process of economic integration is the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint – which aims at a single market that will offer producers the opportunity to tap common sources of supply and serve larger markets, while providing consumers with a greater variety of goods at lower prices.

The draft Blueprint for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) (2008-2015), expected to be completed by the 14th ASEAN Summit to be held in Thailand in December 2008, will provide further impetus to socio-cultural integration. Key components of the draft ASCC Blueprint include human development, social welfare and development, social justice and rights, environmental sustainability, building the ASEAN identity and narrowing the development gap. ASEAN's Vision of an ASEAN Socio-cultural Community recognizes that social inequity can undermine economic development.

Trade integration

It does not appear that ASEAN has been particularly successful at intensifying trade between its own members. Among the ASEAN-10, intra-regional trade, although growing, represents only around one-quarter of total trade. However a notable feature of the ASEAN nations is that they trade extensively with other developing countries, particularly in Asia. In these circumstances, while greater intra-ASEAN trade might be desirable it should not be pursued at the expense of trade with other Asian markets. The key instrument for trade integration has been the 1992 ASEAN Free Trade Area. By 2007, weighted tariffs for intra-ASEAN trade were less than two per cent, though tariffs for the rest of the world were also low at less than three per cent. Indeed ASEAN has now reached the stage where obstacles to greater integration are related more to non-tariff barriers such as customs formalities, administrative procedures and various standards. Of particular concern are wide variations in the cost of trading. Import and export costs per container, for example, are four to five times greater in the Lao PDR than in Singapore.

Due to lack of bilateral data, it is not possible to analyze trends in intra-ASEAN services trade. However, some indication of liberalization may be gauged from commitments to the General Agreement on Trade in Services at the World Trade Organization. On the basis of the World Bank's 'GATS commitments index', ASEAN commitments to liberalize at the multilateral level appear to be low, though the higher-income countries seem to be slightly more open than the others.

Investment integration

Integration could also be accelerated by greater flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) and capital. At present, intra-ASEAN FDI flows are relatively low – \$8.2 billion in 2007. Most of this comes from Singapore and Malaysia,

and the main destinations are the same two countries plus Indonesia and Thailand. However, there have also been intra-ASEAN investments in lower-income countries – encouraged by their preferential access to ASEAN markets. The apparel industry, for example, has migrated to lower-cost bases in Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Viet Nam to produce garments for export to other countries. In the case of intra-ASEAN capital flows, integration is hampered by the relative underdevelopment of domestic equity and bond markets. Equity markets are often quite shallow and bond markets are relatively small and face legal and regulatory hurdles.

Development assistance

Economic integration within ASEAN can also be encouraged by flows of development assistance from the more developed to the poorer economies. For this ASEAN has established a number of instruments. One is the Initiative for ASEAN Integration for which around 60 per cent of the funds come from ASEAN-6 and the rest from Dialogue Partners and development agencies. Another is the ASEAN Development Fund which is intended to leverage funding from other partners and has contributions from Australia, China, India, Malaysia and Singapore, among others. On the whole, aid via ASEAN has been for ‘soft infrastructure’ in capacity building and technical assistance projects, while most of the finance for ‘hard infrastructure’ has come from outside the region.

Transport and logistics

ASEAN has a Transport Action Plan 2005-2010 that aims to ensure that the region’s multimodal transport infrastructure works efficiently, on land on water and in the air – with seamless movement of people and goods. Infrastructure has been developed within the framework of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway networks. Important projects include the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link and highways and bridges on the ASEAN North-South and

East-West Economic Corridors. As well as building physical infrastructure, ASEAN has also been attempting to make services run more efficiently across borders. This will also mean building capacities and skills in transport operators, greater collaboration between government ministries, agencies, and policy makers – to arrive, for example, at common standards and codes of conduct.

Energy

The ASEAN Plan of Action on Energy Cooperation has six programme areas: the ASEAN power grid; trans-ASEAN gas pipelines; coal; energy efficiency and conservation; renewable energy, and regional energy policy and planning. Some programme areas are very active, with the involvement of various stakeholders, including the private sector; while others are making slow progress since they lack the necessary finance. ASEAN’s energy development goals need to be based not just on economic but also on social and environmental considerations – particularly those relating to climate change and need to involve constructive public participation.

International migration

One of the most evident forms of integration between ASEAN economies is the growing flow of migrant labour. The main sources of ASEAN labour migrants are Indonesia and Myanmar, followed by Cambodia and Viet Nam, while the main destinations are Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Migrants typically move for employment at higher wages. There are also strong demographic factors: while destination countries, such as Singapore, have an ageing population and a shortage of younger workers, the source countries typically have younger populations and suffer from high levels of youth unemployment. Even when a legal option is available, most unskilled migrants still prefer irregular channels, since these are quicker and cheaper. An increasing number of migrants are women, who are particularly

vulnerable to exploitation. ASEAN has already committed itself to an ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers and envisages a free flow of skilled workers, but for this will need to ensure mutual recognition of qualifications.

Gender equality

In spite of progress in primary school enrolment, disparities still exist within and across countries, such as in secondary and tertiary enrolment or in women's participation in paid employment or politics, and in their wages as compared to that of men. With the 1988 "Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region" ASEAN recognized "the importance of active participation and integration of women in the region in sharing the future development and progress of ASEAN and the necessity of meeting the needs and aspiration of women in the ASEAN Member Countries". ASEAN has been monitoring the implementation of the 1988 Declaration and has published three reports on the advancement of women. In 2004 and for the first time, all 10 ASEAN Foreign Ministers adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

The situation of persons with disabilities is an indicator of the level of social inclusion and progress. Data from nine ASEAN Member States show wide disparities in the proportion of persons with disabilities, partly due to different definitions and data collection methods. Over the past two decades, there have been efforts in ASEAN countries to improve opportunities for the participation of persons with disabilities in the development process. These have yielded advancements in entitlements and in access for persons with disabilities to the physical environment, transportation and information and communications.

ASEAN & the UN

Almost from its inception, ASEAN has worked with the United Nations. In 1977 it welcomed the United Nations Development Programme as a 'dialogue partner'. At that time UNDP was the only multilateral aid organization to be accorded that status. In the 1980s and early 1990s, ASEAN also worked very closely with the UN on Cambodia and the related issue of Indo-Chinese asylum seekers – cooperation that was to prove critical in the resolution of these issues. And from the 1990s into the early years of the 21st century, ASEAN and the United Nations have worked together on conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.

Now ASEAN is looking to strengthen regional cooperation by adopting a new Charter which looks beyond mutual security, aiming to build a solid ASEAN Community that has stronger economic and socio-cultural ties. This will not be easy. The 10 countries that make up ASEAN operate under very different socio-economic and political conditions. Some have the resilient and outward-looking economic and social structures that should serve them well as the global economy enters a new and more turbulent era. Others are in a much weaker position and will rely on the support of other member countries if they are to engage constructively in a more testing environment.

ASEAN has the opportunity to fulfil its potential as a strong and productive community of nations. This will mean exploring new routes and channels that fit its distinctive regional circumstances. In this, it should also be able to draw on other valuable resources, particularly those of the United Nations, with its practical experience in many of the difficult issues that ASEAN has to address.

ASEAN and the UN held joint summits in 2000 and 2005. Following these summits, the UN General Assembly invited ASEAN to participate in its sessions and work in an observer capacity. Then the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in 2007 accorded the United Nations full ‘dialogue partner’ status. Accordingly, in 2007, the Secretaries-General of ASEAN and the United Nations signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) – committing their organizations to working together to promote regional peace and stability and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The third ASEAN-UN Summit in 2008 thus presents an opportunity not just to reflect on the road traversed thus far, but also to inject new energy into the partnership.

As ASEAN moves to a new phase in its development, it is looking for different ways of engaging all its Member States in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community. This is where closer cooperation with the United Nations could be of particular value – combining ASEAN’s capacity to build trust between neighbours with the United Nations experience in promoting economic and social development that is firmly grounded in universal principles and values.

The benefits from such a partnership were amply demonstrated in the channelling of international assistance following Cyclone Nargis which hit Myanmar in May 2008. The UN and ASEAN were able to rise to the challenge with a joint response to the Government of Myanmar that led to the formation of an unprecedented tripartite partnership, to expedite the flow of aid to people in desperate need and to move on quickly to begin reconstruction. This eased the entry of relief supplies and aid workers, helped prevent the spread of starvation and disease, and saved many lives. The partnership also created a new window of opportunity for the international community to work with ASEAN and the Government of Myanmar.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism

Future cooperation between the UN and ASEAN can capitalize on the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM). The RCM was established by the UN Economic and Social Council to improve coordination among the work programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system, towards regional-level system-wide coherence and “delivering as one”.

The Executive Secretary of ESCAP and RCM members have identified three broad areas in which the RCM can work effectively: first, joint advocacy, including on the MDGs; second, convening power in areas of high-level policy concerns, as well as cross-cutting or transboundary issues, such as climate change or water access; third, joint reporting, based on the analytical capacity of ESCAP and individual RCM entities. Cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations already covers a broad range of activities.

The ESCAP secretariat, on its part, proposes to consult with the ASEAN Secretariat on specific areas of collaboration for inclusion in a more focused and revised MOU to mark the new phase of partnership, which would supersede the MOU that had been signed in January 2002.

Towards a common market

A number of UN and related agencies can work with ASEAN towards this objective. The *Asian Development Bank (ADB)*, for example, is working with ASEAN on such activities as the ASEAN+3 Economic Review and Policy Dialogue Process, the Chiang Mai Initiative and the Asian Bonds Market Initiative. *ESCAP* has an ongoing programme on benchmarking of regional trade agreements for the purpose of transforming them into drivers of dynamic regional cooperation which would be useful for tracking ASEAN progress. ESCAP could

cooperate with ASEAN in evolving a region-wide surveillance and early warning system on the financial sector, as well as capacity-building activities on monitoring regional financial vulnerability. The *International Labour Organization (ILO)* has a cooperation agreement for joint programmes with ASEAN to promote decent work. The *International Telecommunication Union (ITU)* has been cooperating with the ASEAN Secretariat in telecommunications development and the *World Bank-ASEAN* are conducting joint research and studies on a regional integration agenda and is also discussing an ASEAN Regional Infrastructure Finance Network.

International migration

A number of UN organizations are supporting ASEAN efforts to fulfil the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. In September 2008, *ESCAP* coorganized with the IOM the Asia-Pacific High-level Meeting on International Migration and Development in which six ASEAN Member States participated actively in discussing the protection of migrant workers. *ESCAP* could also support ASEAN in pursuing policy research and convening policy dialogues, towards facilitating ASEAN migration management. The *ILO*, for example, coorganized with the ASEAN Secretariat in April 2008 the 1st ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour – proposed as an annual event to build trust and confidence. Furthermore, the *ILO* is assisting ASEAN in the development of principles and guidelines for an ASEAN regional framework for managing labour migration. The *International Organization for Migration (IOM)* is jointly implementing with the ASEAN Secretariat ‘Standard Operating Procedures for the Return, Recovery and Reintegration of Trafficking Victims’.

Transportation networks

For transport issues ASEAN has worked closely with *ESCAP* on land transport infrastructure, transport facilitation and developing and professionalizing the freight forwarding, multimodal and logistics industries.

Disaster preparedness and early warning

The Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) is working with ASEAN on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. The ASEAN Secretariat, *ESCAP*, *UNISDR* and the World Bank are in discussion on a new MOU to mainstream disaster risk reduction into ASEAN development processes. *ESCAP* has established a Regional Tsunami Trust Fund that supports the development of multi-hazard early warning systems; the Fund is benefitting ASEAN Member States. *ESCAP*, through its programme on ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction, is ready to work with ASEAN in promoting regional mechanisms for information sharing and analysis and for disaster and emergency communications, as well as strengthening country capacities. Since the beginning of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) crisis in 2004 in Asia, the *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)* has been collaborating closely with the ASEAN HPAI Task Force to support efforts to control this serious animal and human health threat. *FAO* is contributing technical assistance to the ASEAN Secretariat concerning HPAI control and prevention. The *United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)* has been conducting an Emergency Management Training Programme as a cooperative endeavour with the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management. The *UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)* is working with ASEAN on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action under the guidance of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. *UNISDR* also cooperates with the ASEAN Sub-Committee on Public Awareness and Education regarding education on disaster risk reduction issues. The *ISDR Asia Partnership on Disaster Reduction (IAP)* could assist ASEAN Member States in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into their national development strategies. The *World Food Programme (WFP)* is in ongoing discussions with ASEAN regarding a portable, disaster simulation capability known as the Asia Emergency and Preparedness Response.

Environmental sustainability and climate change

The July 2008 ASEAN Declaration on Environmental Sustainability adopted by ASEAN Heads of State and Government at the 41st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting committed to achieving the “common goal of a clean and green ASEAN”. The elaboration of the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative will play an important role in the ASEAN response to climate change. *ADB* is working directly with most ASEAN Member States on assessing the economic costs of climate change. In line with the Green Growth approach, *ESCAP* would be ready to work with ASEAN on developing an evidence-based strategy for low-carbon development and climate-resilient ASEAN societies. Close *FAO*-ASEAN Secretariat collaboration led to endorsement by ASEAN Senior Officers on Forestry (and subsequently by ASEAN Ministers) of the Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Asia and the Pacific in 2001, followed by joint monitoring of ASEAN country-level implementation. With *FAO* support, the ASEAN Secretariat conducted a formal assessment of ASEAN country code implementation in 2007. *FAO* has also collaborated with the ASEAN Secretariat in fire and forest management, including combating illegal logging. The *ITU* has been drafting guidelines indicating how Member States can make use of more energy-efficient ICT equipment in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)* works to encourage reductions in energy use among residential and commercial consumers so countries in the region may achieve environmentally sustainable and economically efficient development. The *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)* collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat has led to the development of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. *UNEP* also provided financial assistance to the ASEAN Secretariat in developing the ASEAN State of Environment Report for the years 2002 and

2006. Since 2007, the *World Bank* has been providing technical assistance to the ASEAN Secretariat to increase the impact of forest law enforcement and governance. The *World Health Organization (WHO)* has developed a regional framework to build the capacity of the public health sector in preparing for and responding to climate change.

Gender equality

Achieving gender equality implies not only the advancement of women, but also tackling the underlying reasons for gender inequality. Increased coordination by Asia-Pacific RCM partners and stakeholders to promote gender-responsive strategies for MDG achievement can help in tackling prevailing gender disparities and discrimination against women and girls in the region. *ESCAP* has a long history of facilitating and convening a range of stakeholders on gender and development issues and the promotion of gender equality, to strengthen coordination and consistency in the approach to these issues. The *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)* will focus, among others, on promoting and advocating for high impact interventions to accelerate reductions in maternal and neonatal deaths through improved health, nutrition and water, hygiene and sanitation. In 2006, the *United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)* and ASEAN signed a Framework for Cooperation to promote and implement the 1988 Declaration of the Advancement of Women and the 2004 Vientiane Action Programme. Under the Framework, ASEAN and UNIFEM have agreed to jointly carry out practical measures to eliminate violence and end discrimination against women. There have also been efforts to share good practices and strengthen the capacity of governments in a number of other areas including: gender mainstreaming, gender equality legislation, and the rights of women migrant workers. The *United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)* is supporting South-South collaboration involving ASEAN countries in reproductive health, gender and population ageing.

UNFPA partnerships in the ASEAN region focus on reducing unwanted pregnancies, access to antenatal care and reducing the adolescent birth rate. Furthermore, UNFPA is working to strengthen the provision of skilled attendants at birth, and improve access to emergency obstetric care for all women with complications in pregnancy, as well as on improving maternal health.

Food security

FAO has been working with the ASEAN Secretariat on a regional framework for action to strengthen food security. The *ILO* is working with ASEAN countries to address the social impact of rising food prices and to promote labour productivity growth in agriculture. *The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* secretariat will be working with ASEAN countries to address land degradation issues such as reduction in land productivity and biodiversity. The *World Food Programme* has pursued national and regional initiatives related to the East Asian Emergency Rice Reserve and the ASEAN Food Security Information System.

Health systems

ESCAP has produced a range of practical recommendations that ASEAN Member States can adopt in order to increase fiscal space for spending on health care and to strengthen current efforts to pool risk and provide financial protection to individuals and households. *UNICEF* and ASEAN have a long-standing collaboration since 1991 within the biennial Ministerial Consultation on Children that provides an important forum to address a wide range of children's issues. These have resulted in great progress in ASEAN achievement of the child-related MDGs. *UNICEF* shall work with ASEAN regional and national bodies to address emerging threats that impact negatively on children and continue joint monitoring of the situation of children in the ASEAN region. *UNFPA* assists in increasing ASEAN capacity

to monitor sub-national inequities in reaching reproductive health targets, particularly within underserved groups such as the poor, migrants, as well as remote rural, ethnic minority and other socially vulnerable groups. *WHO-ASEAN* collaboration can be traced back to 1979 and has been covered by a series of MOUs. The World Health Organization is about to sign its latest Memorandum of Association with ASEAN focusing on: prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases; health systems strengthening; food security, food safety and nutrition; health effects of climate change and the environment; emergency preparedness and response; globalization and trade and their impact on health; and traditional medicine.

HIV/AIDS

ILO assisted in the establishment of the first group of HIV/AIDS Focal Points of ASEAN Ministries of Labour and facilitated their interaction with the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS. In 2007, the *ILO* worked with the HIV/AIDS Focal Points to draft the "Essential Workplace Action for the Prevention and Management of HIV and AIDS in ASEAN Member Countries". Planned ASEAN activities with *UNAIDS* include: scaling up prevention programmes, particularly those addressing the needs of vulnerable populations; obtaining increased resources for HIV prevention, treatment and care; integrating HIV and AIDS into development plans; and promoting exchanges of expertise among member States. The *UNFPA* technical team in South-East Asia worked with the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS (ATFOA) for the formulation of both the second and third ASEAN Work Plans (2001–2005 and 2006–2010).

Education

The *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* is working with the ASEAN Secretariat and other regional bodies to extend education to the

unreached, disadvantaged and underserved groups. UNESCO Bangkok is also working with the ASEAN Secretariat to establish a regular forum of Ministers of Social Development in Southeast Asia.

Human rights and governance

The *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)* has been providing technical support to the ASEAN Secretariat for the development of an effective and credible ASEAN human rights body. *UNDP*, in collaboration with OHCHR, is exploring the provision of support to the new ASEAN human rights mechanism. *UNHCR* will also work with ASEAN on its human rights body concerning the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Since ASEAN's Commitment for Children in 2001, there has been a series of Declarations on Cooperation in Youth Development Programmes and the Cebu Declaration on "One Caring and Sharing Community" – all of which *UNICEF* supports. In October 2000, under the auspices of the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)* and in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat and China, regional stakeholders adopted a regional framework, the ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD) Plan of Action which was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. In April 2003, the ASEAN Secretariat and UNODC signed an MOU on Drug Control and Crime Prevention Cooperation, to facilitate and support both parties in addressing the interrelated issues of drug control and crime prevention through joint technical cooperation projects and programmes.

Data collection, monitoring and review

ESCAP could offer statistical and analytical support in tracking ASEAN development outcomes, including those related to the MDG+ goals and the social consequences of ASEAN economic integration. *ESCAP* could facilitate the development of a joint peer review mechanism. *ESCAP* could also assist in tracking follow-up action on the outcomes of the Third ASEAN-UN Summit. The *ILO* Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific published two reports on *Labour and Social Trends in ASEAN*. The reports present major trends in employment and social conditions in the ASEAN region, along with thematic chapters that analyse key employment and social issues.

New directions

The partnerships that last are those that can be and are constantly renewed, as the partners tackle tough problems together in a spirit of friendship and mutual respect. The UN and ASEAN have long experience of working together, whether on issues of security, or of economic and social development. Progress has been more rapid in some areas than others, and there have inevitably been setbacks and frustrations. And as the global economic skies darken at the end of 2008, this may not seem any time to express a degree of optimism. But as recent experience has demonstrated, even the most difficult of circumstances can spark new ways of thinking and encourage a willingness to try fresh ideas. There is a demanding agenda for strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN – as both organizations strive together for prosperity, stability and peace.



THE ASEAN ACHIEVEMENT

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has been one of the world's more durable regional groupings. After more than four decades, it is now aiming to renew itself as an 'ASEAN Community', with a new Charter that creates opportunities for a stronger and more cohesive organization.

The countries that make up South-East Asia form a strikingly diverse group. From the sophisticated city state of Singapore, to the remote mountain regions of the Lao PDR, to the thousands of islands that make up the Indonesian archipelago, these nations cover most of the world's country typologies – in terms of population size and density, of economic development, of ethnic complexity, and of political systems.

Nevertheless, they have worked together in a stable regional organization – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Embarking with five countries in 1967, ASEAN has extended its membership to 10, allowing these countries to weave patterns of cooperation that match their own unique characteristics – as well as serve their different, and sometimes conflicting, interests. Timor-Leste, newly independent as of May 2002, has expressed interest in ASEAN membership and joined ARF in July 2005.

Like all other international organizations, ASEAN has had to adjust to a rapidly changing global environment – which also involves realigning itself with other institutions and groupings of countries, including the United Nations. The purpose of this study is to reflect on these changes and more specifically on the development of ASEAN's cooperation with the UN. In such a complex environment, this study cannot offer an elaborate roadmap, but it can signpost some of the potential for future collaboration as ASEAN moves into a new phase.

Building the ASEAN Community

The direction of future ASEAN-UN cooperation will be determined primarily by the ways in which ASEAN itself continues to evolve. When five countries of South-East Asia founded ASEAN in 1967 they were attempting to build or rebuild their own nations in the post-colonial, low-trust climate of the Cold War. For their new regional organization they therefore chose a loose form of intergovernmental association. The first binding treaty for South-East Asia – the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) – appeared in 1976. The TAC identified three key principles: respect for the territorial integrity of Member States; non-interference in each other's domestic affairs; and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

ASEAN countries complemented these principles with their own distinctive understanding of governance. Across South-East Asia, democracy was limited: governments had typically been hierarchical and paternalistic. Small networks of technocratically-minded elites would take most of the decisions, often privately and informally. There was a tendency to trade social and political freedom for strong economic performance.

This style of governance was reflected in the construction of ASEAN. In their dealings with each other, Member States adhered resolutely to principles of state sovereignty and non-interference. Rather than establishing new rules for each other they instead

embarked on a series of informal, consensus-driven consultations, taking decisions and resolving disputes behind closed doors. The public aspect of ASEAN summits, however, has tended to be highly formalized and symbolic, and these and many other meetings have often resulted in generally phrased resolutions and non-binding commitments.

For several decades, this mode of governance served ASEAN well. Disparate member states found ways to cooperate on resolvable issues, while putting sensitive, contentious matters on the back burner. They could, for example, take credit for maintaining peace in the region, for being instrumental in pulling Viet Nam out of Cambodia and, until 1997, generally achieving impressive economic growth.

This model was seriously weakened, however, by the Asian financial crisis of 1997. Globalization, and particularly the liberalization of the financial sector, exposed many countries to new economic risks and uncertainties. It also had serious implications for the model of economic paternalism. In some countries, the crisis and its aftermath undermined national elites. It weakened their claim to be consistently competent economic managers who could be trusted to act on behalf of the population as a whole – breaking the implicit pact that had involved sacrificing full democratic accountability for sound economic performance.

Moreover the crisis exposed an inherent weakness in ASEAN as an institution. In its reluctance to impose rules on its members it had also failed to develop robust financial procedures or institutions that might, for example, have been able to stabilize financial markets by imposing general controls on volatile and disruptive flows of capital.

Since then ASEAN has had to look afresh at how it should function in a new global environment – a world in which economic and political powers are distributed in different ways, and where people have higher expectations of how international organizations should function. In response, over the years ASEAN has evolved what is referred to as a loose, ‘three-track’ framework. Governments relate to each other through Track 1, while non-governmental organizations are represented, in a more limited way, through Tracks 2 and 3.

Track 1 – Intergovernmental

ASEAN’s highest decision-making body is the annual Summit of Heads of State and Government. Below this it holds various ministerial meetings, which take place around twice a year, of which those for foreign ministers carry the greatest weight. There are also over 100 senior official committees and working groups. The number of meetings has expanded and the Secretary-General of ASEAN is expected to attend all summits and ministerial meetings, although just half a decade ago ASEAN was viewed as having less activity between meetings, as compared with other regional bodies as a whole (Muthiah, 2003).

ASEAN’s principal institution is its Jakarta-based Secretariat. It has a staff of 60 officers recruited from ASEAN Member States and 150 more support staff recruited locally. So far it has had limited capacity and authority. The ASEAN Charter will give the Secretariat much more responsibility, though for this it would need significant additional human and financial resources.

The main work organs of ASEAN are the Standing Committee, which meets six times a year, and various sub-committees (Nguyen and Westcott, 2007). This is soon to be replaced by the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN in Jakarta. The main work in ASEAN is done by the 26 ASEAN Ministerial bodies assisted by their senior officials meetings or committees.

The ASEAN Summit is strong on protocol and symbolism, and sets a general agenda. But it does not closely manage ASEAN cooperation. Nor do the Ministerial Meetings and various specialized bodies and arrangements, which focus on specific sectors or narrow fields of work and thus find it difficult to consider the whole picture or the impact that ASEAN might be having on the lives and welfare of its population.

Formal decision-making in ASEAN is an exclusively intergovernmental affair that has taken great care not to alienate other member States. This means, decision-making is time consuming as it has to go through extensive rounds of consultations. ASEAN does, however, have a procedure by which one country can abstain from a particular issue or project as long as it is not totally opposed to it. The origin of this mechanism lies in the 1970s when Singapore decided not to go along with a diesel-making project but did not object to the others’ participation. This

approach to flexible participation in implementing economic commitments is now known as 'ASEAN – X' (Phar, 2003).

ASEAN is also represented in each member country by a national secretariat within the foreign ministry which has overall responsibility for ASEAN affairs and coordinates the country's implementation of ASEAN decisions. Outside the ministry of foreign affairs, decision-makers dealing with ASEAN come from technical agencies, such as the departments or ministries, but these still seek the advice of the foreign ministry on all matters relevant to ASEAN. The line ministries nowadays have greater influence now that their sectors and issues have emerged at the ASEAN level. However, if anything, this can make authority even more blurred. Rivalry between ministries can hinder work, and in a centralized system will always need clearance from the highest authorities (Zakaria, 2003).

Overall therefore, Track 1 has lacked an integrated or forceful decision-making structure and monitoring mechanism.

Track 2 – Academic institutions and think tanks

The key informal influence on many ASEAN policies has been the academic community – through the institutions and think tanks that form 'Track 2'. Within ASEAN, Track 2 entities serve the important function of allowing discussions and negotiations to be conducted and positions to be voiced and analysed in an 'informal', non-governmental atmosphere. They are the testing ground for initiatives that may subsequently be formally accepted by ASEAN Track 1 decision-making bodies. They have greater freedom to venture into sensitive areas and can also serve as mediators between Track 1 decision makers and the people they represent.

In the political field, the most important is the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS). This is a network of nine leading strategic studies institutes across the ASEAN region. The network has helped form a sense of community among ASEAN policy and intellectual leaders, and have opened policy dialogues between government officials, think-tanks, and policy analysts. A corresponding organization in the security field is the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). This has 21 members in ASEAN and beyond, with a Steering Committee served by

a secretariat in Kuala Lumpur at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia.

ASEAN-ISIS is widely considered to be the most established academic network working on ASEAN issues and has been the key actor in developing the concept of Track 2 diplomacy, namely, the policy dialogue involving government officials, think-tanks and policy analysts. ASEAN-ISIS success in penetrating the policymaking processes at the regional level is evidenced by the institutionalization of meetings between ASEAN-ISIS and the ASEAN Senior Official Meeting (SOM); the acknowledgement of the role of ASEAN-ISIS in the Joint Communiqués of the AMM since 1991; and the solicitation by ASEAN SOM of ASEAN-ISIS views on issues that ASEAN Senior Officials would like to have studied further prior to making official policy (Chandra, 2006).

Track 3 – Civil society organizations

If the ASEAN community is to function effectively and be truly representative, it will require stronger grass-roots interactions. ASEAN-ISIS has therefore helped open communication channels with civil society across the region – a process which has become known as Track 3. The most formal of these channels is the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA). During the 1990s, ASEAN officials endorsed the principle of a people's mechanism, though some Member States had reservations and blocked funding for its establishment. Nevertheless ISIS persisted and eventually secured mainly non-ASEAN funding. The APA has subsequently held meetings in parallel to those of the Heads of State and Government. Nevertheless, many civil society organizations have become disenchanted with the APA, seeing it as a place where CSOs, NGOs, and civic organizations can meet but not one which offers much opportunity to influence decision making (Caballero-Anthony, 2004).

Another official, though less recognized, Track 3 channel forum is the ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC). This was an initiative of the Government of Malaysia and intended as a one-off event at the 11th Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 2005, where academia and NGOs, with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat, organized a conference and presented a statement to the ASEAN Heads of State and Government. Subsequently, it has become an annual event (Chandra, 2006).

An emerging civil society player is the Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA) network. This too was a response to the slow progress of the APA, as well as to differences of opinion between academics and other representatives from civil society about the way ASEAN should pursue integration. Unlike the APA, however, neither the ACSC nor SAPA are mentioned in any formal ASEAN documents.

While ASEAN as a whole has not fully embraced civil society groups, it should also be noted that some of the difficulties lie with the CSOs themselves. They have yet to agree on how and to what extent they want to engage with ASEAN. Then there is the issue of which CSOs to include for cooperation, given their large numbers and variations in expertise and interests and the fact that despite their claims they are not representative of all citizens. Moreover, some CSOs may make generic or unrealistic demands that make it difficult for them to be involved constructively and collaboratively – particularly on fundamental issues such as democracy or human rights.

However, all these issues can be resolved and ASEAN should be able to involve CSOs more strongly, particularly those specialist organizations working on single issues which can serve as advisers to regional and international organizations. Furthermore, CSOs with extensive networks can mobilize the public and raise stronger awareness of ASEAN – a valuable resource for ASEAN, given its low levels of public recognition and overall weak regional identity. ASEAN could also involve civil society in monitoring and evaluation functions and in actively advocating for implementation of agreements on national and regional levels.

Working with business

Since its founding, ASEAN has also striven to work with regional business networks. One of the most important has been the ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI) which was founded after the 4th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in 1971. The ASEAN-CCI has allowed the business community to provide inputs and voiced its concerns. It played an important part, for example, in the creation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area and has lobbied for more regular and frequent meetings of the ASEAN Summit.

Other networks emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. The ASEAN Business Forum, for example,

was established in 1994 and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council in 2003. These and other institutions have promoted their interests while also contributing to an informal bottom-up process of regionalization (Chandra, 2006).

Nevertheless, the business community became somewhat disillusioned with ASEAN. Business leaders complained that they were not consulted in the planning and implementation of ASEAN projects. As a result, many schemes failed because they did not correspond to realities or needs on the ground. An early example was the 1981 ASEAN Industrial Complementation Scheme. This was intended to develop industrial projects, using components assembled from different ASEAN states. But the guidelines were drawn up without private sector participation and have been described by ASEAN business leaders as impractical and inflexible.

In an effort to address such issues, ASEAN Heads of State and Government at the 7th ASEAN Summit held in Bandar Seri Begawan in November 2001 established the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC), to promote public-private sector partnership in achieving ASEAN integration. ASEAN-BAC provides private sector feedback on the implementation of ASEAN economic cooperation and identifies priority areas for the consideration of ASEAN Leaders. Inaugurated at the ASEAN Secretariat in April 2003, ASEAN-BAC has taken key initiatives, including organizing the annual ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (ASEAN-BIS), which is held back-to-back or in conjunction with the ASEAN Summit. ASEAN-BIS brings together around 1,000 public and private sector delegates, including captains of commerce and industry, from within and outside of ASEAN for dialogue and networking, to advance business in the ASEAN Economic Community. ASEAN-BAC also organizes the annual ASEAN Business Awards to recognize outstanding ASEAN companies contributing to ASEAN economic growth and prosperity.

In April 2007, to promote greater awareness of the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Secretariat held an ASEAN Talks Business that was attended by more than 50 business leaders. A highlight of the 2008 ASEAN-BIS, in its sixth year, will be the announcement of the winner of the “Most Admired ASEAN Enterprises” of the 2008 ASEAN Business Awards. Also indicative of the dynamism of

ASEAN business is the number of associations as exemplified in one sector alone, transport, by the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations (FASA), Federation of ASEAN Shippers' Councils (FASC), ASEAN Ports Association (APA) and the ASEAN Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations (AFFA).

Building on the three pillars

Compared with other regional organizations which have stronger institutional structures and have entered into mutually-binding legal agreements, ASEAN is a much looser association. As an organization, ASEAN has issued many declarations often expressed in general terms, and which poorer Member States in particular may lack the capacity to implement. Nevertheless, it can point to a number of successes – in building what since 2003 have been referred to as the three pillars of an envisaged 'ASEAN Community' – the Security Community, the Economic Community, and the Socio-Cultural Community.

The Security Community

ASEAN can be seen as a regional force for peace and stability. The opportunity for regular meetings has helped national leaders build personal relationships and establish a degree of mutual confidence. Since its founding, not withstanding occasional border conflicts, no two ASEAN members have had a large scale war. In the 1980s, ASEAN was instrumental in resolving issues arising out of Viet Nam's incursion into Cambodia.

ASEAN was also instrumental in founding in 1994 the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). This has become Asia's principal arena for dialogue on peace and security. The ARF comprises 27 countries: in addition to the 10 ASEAN states it includes ASEAN's 10 'dialogue partners' – Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States, along with one ASEAN observer, Papua New Guinea – as well as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

ASEAN has also been instrumental in the establishment of other regional fora such as the ASEAN+3 process (ASEAN plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD).

The Economic Community

Another of ASEAN's primary tasks has been to promote economic integration. This process has largely been market driven, as the ASEAN region has been a favourable location for investment and production by many multinational enterprises. Accordingly, ASEAN countries have become indispensable building blocks of "Asia's factory". However, ASEAN itself has also become more active in pursuing economic cooperation. Some of the most important measures for economic integration include:

ASEAN Free Trade Area

The ASEAN Free Trade Agreements set the path towards an ASEAN free trade area (AFTA). This includes a Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme, signed in 1992, which allows for a flexible approach to liberalization. As a result, for the more developed countries that make up the ASEAN-6, applied tariffs have been reduced to between zero and five per cent, and should reach zero by 2010. The other four countries, ASEAN's newer members, Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV) are expected to reach that target by 2015.

Falling tariffs have promoted a steady increase in intra-ASEAN trade, which for ASEAN countries is now running at over 25 per cent of their total trade. This might be seen as a fairly small proportion – compared with the EU-15, for which intra-regional trade makes up around 60 per cent of their total trade. But ASEAN's trade also has to be considered within the context of its integration with wider production systems in East Asia. Moreover, trade is much more important for ASEAN than it is for some other regional groupings: its overall trade to GDP ratio is around 170 per cent compared with 75 per cent for the EU-15, for example, or 32 per cent for the countries of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Chiang Mai Initiative

The financial crisis from 1997 caused a massive outflow of capital across ASEAN, resulting in severe depreciations in exchange rates, obliging countries to seek more than \$100 billion from the International Monetary Fund under strenuous conditions. To avoid a similar scenario in the future – and the severe conditionality – the ASEAN countries have been building up their own national reserves. In addition

they have established a homegrown currency support system – relying on the mutual exchange of reserves. The result, in 2000, was the Chiang Mai Initiative – a system of multilateral and bilateral currency swaps using a portion of the foreign exchange reserves of ASEAN+3 countries. In May 2007, in lieu of the

previous system of bilateral swaps, ASEAN+3 agreed in principle to pool a portion of their foreign exchange reserves. In 2008, in response to the ongoing global financial crisis, ASEAN+3 has also been discussing ways in which the CMI could be further deepened or extended.

Box I-1

The Chiang Mai Initiative

The Chiang Mai Initiative, announced by the ASEAN+3 finance ministers in May 2000, consists of four areas of cooperation: swap networks, monitoring capital flows, regional surveillance, and the training of personnel. The swap arrangements have two elements: an expanded ASEAN Swap Arrangement (ASA), and a Bilateral Swap Arrangements (BSAs). These allowed countries to exchange their local currency for US dollars in case of “temporary international liquidity problems”.

The expanded ASA of 2000 included all 10 ASEAN countries, with ASEAN-6 contributing more than the newer entrants. The swap currencies were extended to include the yen and the euro. Countries could borrow up to twice the amount of their contribution for up to one year. The total size of the fund was to be \$1 billion which was expanded in May 2005 to \$2 billion.

The BSAs allowed for swaps of local currencies, mainly for US dollars, between each of the three ASEAN+3 countries both with each other and with the 10 ASEAN Member States. The ASEAN framework agreement laid out the basic principles, although each BSA may differ somewhat in its specific

terms. As of May 2007 there were 16 BSAs with a total of \$83 billion in swaps between eight countries – China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Although theoretically any ASEAN country could undertake a BSA, in reality the main beneficiaries were Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Newer and less well-off ASEAN countries have relied instead on foreign aid.

In response to the recent global financial crisis, an expanded Chiang Mai Initiative agreed in May 2008 is planned to be speedily implemented. The outline of the plan foresees a self-managed reserve-pooling mechanism governed by a legally binding single contract. All the 13 nations would contribute to the fund and they would still manage their own reserves. This is a key change from the outcome of the old system of BSAs where ASEAN+3 countries were contributors and beneficiaries whereas the 10 ASEAN Member States were solely beneficiaries. The expanded CMI arrangement would be based on a number of strict criteria – on surveillance, access to borrowing, activation processes, decision-making arrangements, and covenants.

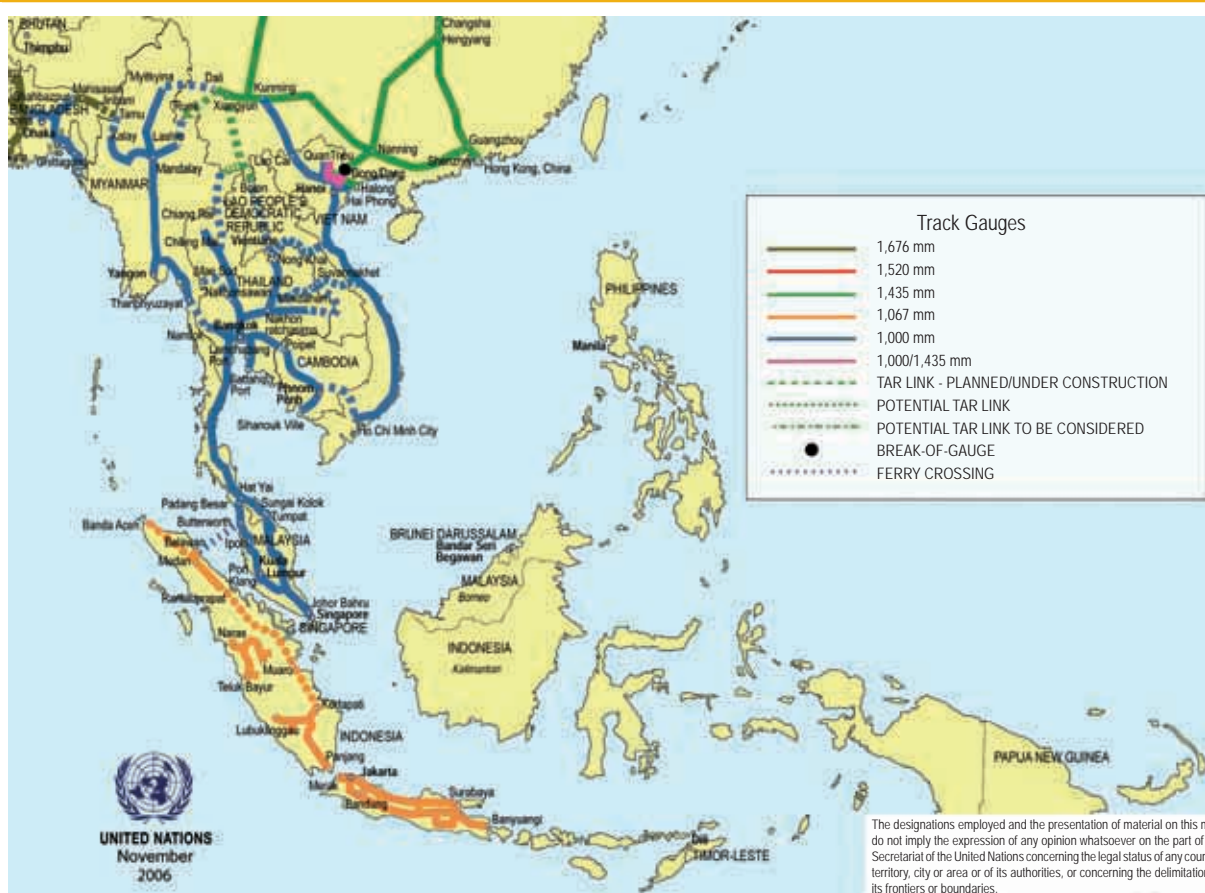
Transport agreements

ASEAN countries have made a commitment to work together towards regional connectivity, as part of broader Asian agreements on highway and railway networks. These and other understanding at subregional levels have helped improve physical infrastructure, as with the three bridges between Thailand and neighbouring countries, and a 228-kilometre road in the Lao PDR, which will form part of a North-South Corridor and the rehabilitation of 600 kilometres of railway track in Cambodia. However, because it is also vital to reduce non-physical barriers ASEAN Member States have concluded a

series of agreements relating to land transport facilitation and multimodal transport. These include the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit, 1998, which deals among other things with the designation of transit transport routes and facilities, the technical requirements of vehicles and an ASEAN scheme of compulsory motor vehicle insurance. Collaboration between the ASEAN subset of GMS countries and China has also resulted in the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement. Figure I-1 and Figure I-2 show the Asian Highway network and the Trans Asian Railway network routes within the ASEAN region.

Trans-Asian Railway, ASEAN region

Figure I-1



Asian Highway, ASEAN region

Figure I-2



Initiative for ASEAN Integration

A truly integrated ASEAN community will mean reducing disparities between richer and poorer members. To some extent this will require a transfer of resources across the economies. For this purpose, ASEAN has established programmes such as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI). The IAI Action Plan for 2002-2008 is devoted largely to 'soft infrastructure' through studies and training, with projects on infrastructure, human resource subregional development, information and telecommunications technology, capacity building for regional economic integration, tourism, poverty and quality of life. Assistance for most of ASEAN's 'hard infrastructure' still comes from international financial institutions and the aid programmes of developed countries.

The Socio-cultural Community

ASEAN envisages a "community of cohesive, equitable and harmonious societies, bound together in solidarity for deeper understanding and cooperation" (ASEAN, 2004). This remains a longer-term aspiration since there are still wide disparities between Member States. Efforts to reduce these could include, for example, intra-regional monetary transfers or technical cooperation, as well as setting regional standards on health and labour and the protection of vulnerable groups. ASEAN has a

number of relevant declarations. Many have yet to be implemented but ASEAN has achieved significant cooperation in some areas, including the following:

Disaster management

ASEAN's Committee on Disaster Management had been developing frameworks for cooperation. Priority projects under the ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management include the establishment of an ASEAN Regional Disaster Management Framework, whose activities emphasize the development of standard operating procedures and disaster response mechanisms. The Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 was a wake-up call for strong early-warning systems, including at the regional and subregional levels. During a special ASEAN Leaders' meeting in January 2005, ASEAN Leaders and heads of regional and international organizations agreed to establish a regional early-warning system and develop the necessary human and scientific capacity. ASEAN's contribution to post-disaster response was also demonstrated in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, the worst to strike Asia in 15 years, killing more than 140,000 people and affecting more than 2.4 million (OCHA, 2008). ASEAN helped bridge the psychological gap between Myanmar and the rest of the world and in building trust and cooperation between the Government of Myanmar and the international community.

Box I-2

A regional multi-hazard early-warning system for disasters

There is growing awareness of the importance of a multi-hazard approach. Through this approach, elements of early warning systems address a number of related hazards. For example, exchange of data on sea or water levels may help countries monitor tsunamis, cyclones, floods, storm surges, and climate change. Public awareness and education programmes would ideally cover all the main hazards that particular areas are exposed to.

A disaster early-warning system has four main inter-dependent elements^a:

1. Risk knowledge – systematic collection of data and assessment of risks;
2. Monitoring and warning service – hazard monitoring and generation of early warnings;
3. Dissemination and communication – communication of risk information and early warnings;
4. Response capability – building national and community capabilities to respond to disasters.

^a UN/ISDR (2006)

Prior to the 2004 tsunami, the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management had initiated the development of the ASEAN Regional Programme on Disaster Management. This promoted collaboration mostly on the response phase of the disaster management cycle, with some technical cooperation projects on early-warning-systems.

In 2005 in the aftermath of the tsunami, ASEAN Members signed an Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. This states that the parties shall, as appropriate, establish, maintain and periodically review national disaster early warning arrangements including: regular disaster risk assessment; early warning information systems; communication networks for timely delivery of information; and public awareness and preparedness to act upon early-warning information (ASEAN, 2005). Implementation of the Agreement is the responsibility of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management.

Communicable diseases

ASEAN has also enabled the countries of its region to work together on communicable diseases, particularly those with cross-border implications. In 2003, for example, ASEAN convened with China a summit in Bangkok on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which agreed to implement stringent measures to contain the spread of the disease. ASEAN was the first region in the world with a region-wide, multi-sectoral response to SARS and within two months had become SARS-free. In 2003 the Health Ministers adopted a Framework ASEAN+3 Action Plan on Prevention and Control of SARS and other Infectious Diseases. This has four priority areas: measures for international travel; strengthening the regional network of focal points; public education; and capacity building to respond to future outbreaks of new and emerging diseases.

Transboundary environmental challenges

Rapid growth and the exploitation of natural resources continue to place pressure on ASEAN's natural capital, with much of this pressure being transboundary in nature. ASEAN has been successful in creating relatively well-coordinated foundations for collective responses to key transboundary environmental challenges, such as haze, loss of biodiversity, water security and marine pollution. ASEAN action on transboundary haze remains one of the most important of ASEAN achievements regarding its transboundary environmental challenges. Following severe episodes in 2006 and 2007, the five countries most affected – Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand – agreed to come together as the Subregional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution and have endorsed Indonesia's Plan of Action. Member States have also, in cooperation with the Government of Indonesia, been offering capacity building support to Indonesia's fire-prone areas. Singapore, for example, is helping with a master plan for the Muaro Jambi district, while Malaysia will provide technical assistance for Riau province. The policy of non-intervention has been cited, however, as constraining the implementation of various environmental agreements, declarations and action plans, including agreements on transboundary haze. Lack of capacity at the national level also hinders effective implementation. Considering the environmental pressures that ASEAN's growing demand for energy and current energy development pathway implies, the projected demand for resources such as water and

agricultural land, and the impact of climate change on these resources, strengthened approaches to sustainable development will be increasingly required.

ASEAN Foundation

Another aim under the Socio-Cultural pillar is to promote ASEAN identity building in support of an ASEAN Community – “creating a greater sense of ASEAN awareness and belonging in the people's hearts and minds” (ASEAN Foundation, 2006) and “fostering a cohesive ASEAN cooperation ... especially in dealing with growing regional problems that can only be met with regional solutions ...” (ASEAN Foundation, 2006). This is one of the functions of the ASEAN Foundation, which was established in 1997. In recent years, the Foundation has intensified activities to raise public consciousness of ASEAN through human resource development activities in four sectors: social development; science and technology; environment; culture and information. Foundation activities have targeted groups as diverse as youth, fisherfolk, farmers, small and medium entrepreneurs, ICT users, health practitioners and cultural performers. While the Foundation has worked hard to make ASEAN more relevant to its people, it recognizes the need for further initiatives to promote more people-to-people exchanges in the region for ASEAN to be better heard and more visible among its people. Current priorities include building ASEAN awareness and identity, science and technology projects, scholarships and poverty alleviation (The Jakarta Post, 2008). Funding comes from an endowment provided by Member States, as well as from contributions from external donors, particularly Japan. The external partners of the Foundation also include China, the Republic of Korea, France, the International Development Research Centre of Canada, and private corporations such as Microsoft. In future it hopes to gain more funds from the private sector to enable young people in ASEAN countries to learn more about neighbouring countries and their cultures.

The ASEAN Charter

ASEAN took one of its most significant steps in 2003 when Governments adopted the Bali Concord II – establishing the three pillars of the ASEAN Community, which were to constitute a “just, democratic and harmonious environment”. Then the Kuala Lumpur Summit in 2005 assembled an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to make

recommendations for an ‘ASEAN Charter’ that would provide a legal and institutional framework for realising the ASEAN Community. This group consulted widely with civil society groups, representatives from the academic community, the private sector and parliamentarians, both through meetings and written proposals, before submitting its report to the ASEAN Summit in 2006 to be considered by a high-level task force, consisting mainly of former ambassadors (Morada, 2008).

The Task Force presented the Charter for signing at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore in November 2007. To a large extent, this codifies existing ASEAN practice. Many CSOs were disappointed with the Charter which is less ambitious than the report by the EPG. They felt it had been drafted too hastily without meaningful public consultation – thus missing an opportunity for promoting ASEAN and regional identity.

Even as it stands, however, the Charter contains the seeds for further debate since some of its provisions may be difficult to reconcile with each other. On the one hand, Article 2.1 states that “ASEAN and its Member States reaffirm and adhere to the fundamental principles contained in the declarations, agreements, conventions, concords, treaties and other instruments of ASEAN”. Together with some of the principles listed in its Article 2.2, such as respect for sovereignty and non-interference, this not only reiterates, but further legalizes and institutionalizes the classic ASEAN norms. This, however, is balanced in Article 2.2 (b) on collective responsibility, and (g) enhanced consultations on matters seriously affecting the common interest of ASEAN. Moreover, Article 2.2 (h) and (i) list a set of qualitatively new norms, such as adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government, respect for fundamental freedoms, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the promotion of social justice.

Given the national political and social realities in a number of ASEAN Member States, some of those norms may seem unlikely to be implemented in the near future. ASEAN thus faces a difficult task. To reinvent itself as a responsive regional actor, it has to adopt more inclusive and participatory approaches and move towards formal, rules-based mechanisms of decision-making. However, reforming ASEAN’s institutional governance will also require corresponding reform at domestic levels.

Realistically, ASEAN is likely to move in small steps and transform its norms gradually. Nonetheless, the Charter offers citizens of ASEAN Member States – and the world at large – a crucial legal document for holding ASEAN accountable and ensuring it fulfils its own commitments. As of mid-November 2008, all 10 ASEAN Member States had ratified the Charter. On 14 November 2008, Ambassador Don Pramudwinai, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations, deposited the instrument of ratification with ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan at the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, ensuring that when ASEAN Leaders next meet in Thailand they would “celebrate not only the full ratification of the Charter, but also the entering into force of the new basic law of ASEAN” (Pitsuwan, 2008b). The ASEAN Charter entered into force on 15 December 2008.

Into a new phase

At the beginning of 2009, ASEAN thus finds itself starting a new phase in its development – and doing so at a critical time, as financial storms swirl around the world threatening particularly the richest economies. If ASEAN can address these problems as a stronger and more democratic organization, it can make an even more important contribution to both regional and global stability.



The 10 ASEAN nations can claim a degree of integration. But they still have some way to go. In many respects they remain far apart, not just in political systems but also in terms of economic progress or standards of human development.

One way to assess ASEAN's success at integration is to consider the extent to which the countries of the region have become more similar – in both economic and social terms. This chapter builds on the analysis conducted in the 2007 ESCAP report, *Ten as One: Challenges and Opportunities for ASEAN Integration* (ESCAP, 2007c), which concluded that wide inter-country disparities in development outcomes were still prevalent in the ASEAN region (ESCAP, 2007c). This should come as little surprise since the richest member, Singapore, is now classified as a high-income country with a GDP per capita at constant dollars close to 100 times greater than that of the three poorest ASEAN countries. Similar contrasts are evident in social indicators such as under-five mortality: in Singapore only 3 children per 1,000 die before reaching the age of five; in Myanmar the number is 104, and in the Lao PDR it is 75.

In this chapter, the analysis is enhanced by focussing on the evolution over time of disparities in development outcomes among the ASEAN countries. There are many possible factors that can contribute to a reduction of inter-country disparities over time. Any convergence in outcomes can therefore not automatically be attributed to regional integration. Any absence of convergence (or evidence of divergence), however, can be taken as an indication that regional integration is “not working”.

Economic convergence

The extent of disparities can be measured using the Gini index. This is commonly used, for example, as a measure of income distribution within countries.

A Gini index of 0 would indicate absolute equality in income distribution, with everyone having the same income, while an index of 100 would represent absolute inequality, with one person owning everything. In practice, across the world the indices typically vary from 30 to 60. In the ASEAN region, the national Gini indices for income are not particularly high, nor very different: the highest index was in the Philippines with 45 in 2003, and the lowest in Viet Nam with 37 in 2004.

The same technique can be used to assess other kinds of inequality – as in the economic disparities between ASEAN nations. Thus, because of dramatic income differences between the richest and poorest countries the Gini index for per capita GDP is around 75. Note that this represents differences between countries, not between people. A Gini index for the whole ASEAN population would be similar to the Gini indices of individual countries, and thus likely to be around 40. Figure II-1 shows the latest inter-country Gini indices for a number of economic indicators. Figure II-2 shows how these have moved over time.

Income

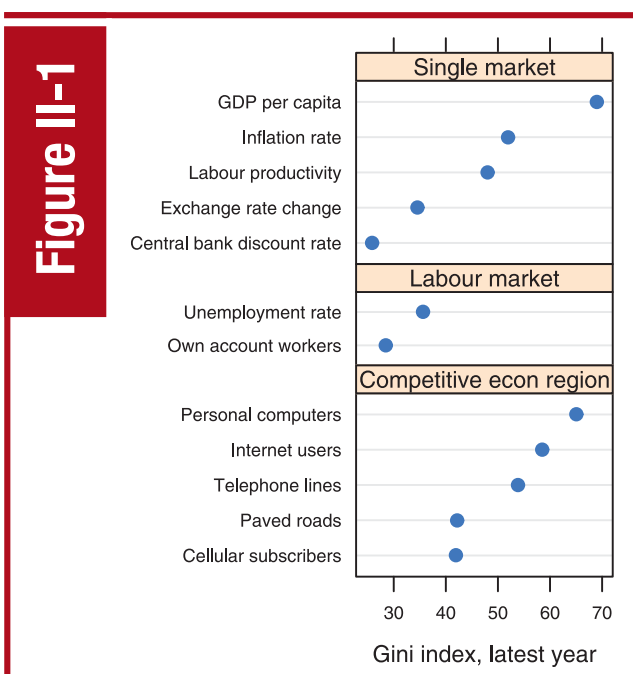
The ASEAN economies cover a very broad spectrum. In 2007, the GDP per capita of Singapore, in 1990 US dollars, was \$25,023 – twice that of the next richest country, Brunei Darussalam, and close to 100 times the per capita GDPs of Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar or Viet Nam. Moreover, this gap has shown little sign of narrowing; since 1990 the Gini index has been more or less constant. If there is to be convergence, the poorer countries would need to

grow much faster than the richer ones. As yet this is not happening. In fact in 2007 only Cambodia, at 8.3 per cent, and Viet Nam, at 6.8 per cent, were growing faster than Singapore which had an annual growth rate of 6.4 per cent. There are also stark disparities within countries: for example in the Lao PDR, economic growth has largely been in the mining and hydropower sectors. This has done little to reduce poverty, indeed income gaps have been widening. Cambodia, too is experiencing uneven development, with poverty reduction confined mainly to urban areas (ESCAP, 2008a).

Monetary factors

The countries of ASEAN have little immediate prospect of introducing a common currency. Nevertheless there are some signs of convergence in monetary and related indicators. Central bank discount rates, for example, having diverged, have now moved closer together, and exchange rate fluctuations are also similar. There are still, however, significant differences in inflation – a crucial factor when it comes to encouraging savings and investment. Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand have coped better with the rises in commodity prices, with inflation rates in July 2008 of around 7 to 9 per cent, compared with more than 20 per cent in Myanmar and Viet Nam. Nor since 1990 has there been a consistent pattern of change: the rates converged from 1996 to 1999, diverged from 1996 to 1999, converged again from 1999 to 2005, but diverged once more from 2006 onwards.

Latest Gini indices related to economic integration



Labour market

ASEAN also demonstrates striking disparities in labour productivity. These disparities are a result of large differences, not only in technology used, but also in the economic structures of Member States. Taking productivity in Singapore in 2005 as the benchmark, the level in Malaysia and Thailand was around one-quarter of this; in Myanmar it was 10 per cent and in Cambodia only 7 per cent. And as Figure II-2 indicates, if there has been any convergence it is very slight. ASEAN thus faces continuing contrasts in cost competitiveness as well as in living standards. Unemployment rates across the region in 2005, varied from 1.3 per cent in Thailand to 10.3 per cent in Indonesia – and the overall trend seems to be for divergence. Nor has there been much change in employment structures. The share of ‘own account’ workers, an indication of the proportion of the workforce in the informal sector, differs widely within the ASEAN region and has shown little convergence over time.

Basic infrastructure

On basic physical infrastructure, there does not seem to have been much convergence, at least based on the proportion of roads that are paved, though this is understandable given the geographic and economic diversity of ASEAN countries. In the 2003-2005 period, all roads in Singapore were paved, as were 81 per cent of those in Malaysia, and 77 per cent of those in Brunei Darussalam – compared with less than 15 per cent of those in Cambodia, the Lao PDR and the Philippines. However, it is noteworthy that for the intra-regional Asian Highway that crosses ASEAN countries, road quality has improved considerably in recent years.

Information and communications technology

In contrast, there has been more rapid convergence in the availability of information and communications technology. Figure II-1 shows that the overall Gini index for computer and internet use is very high: in 2006 the number of personal computers per 100 people varied from 73 in Singapore and 28 in Malaysia to 0.9 in Myanmar and 0.03 in Cambodia. Similarly, while in Singapore and Malaysia more than half the population used the internet, in Cambodia the proportion was less than 1 in 200, and in Myanmar less than 1 in 1,400. However, it is clear that for both these indicators, and for the number of telephones, the Gini indices are coming down. Even more rapid is the convergence in the use of

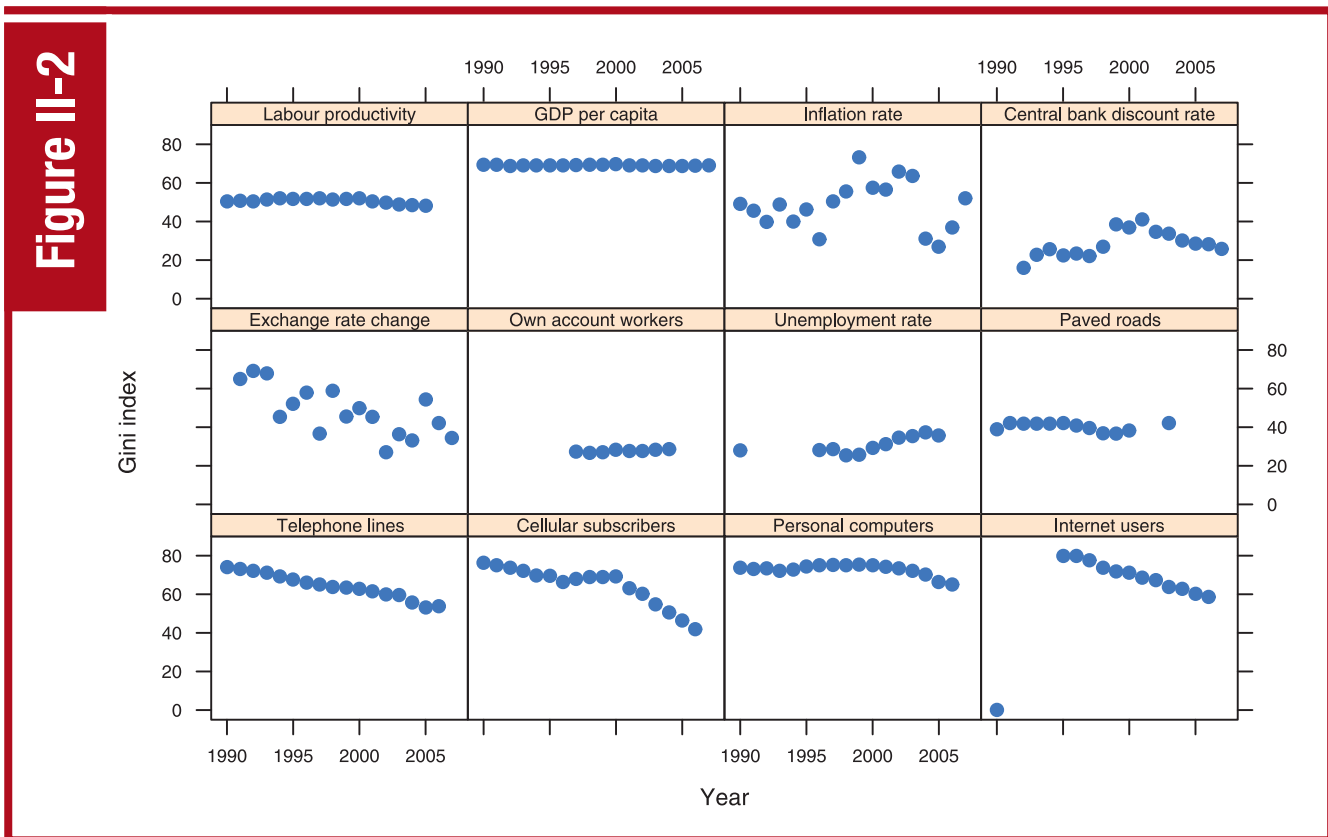
cellular phones for which since 1990 the Gini index has halved – a clear indication that in the poorest countries consumers are leapfrogging the landline option and moving straight to cellular.

Ease of doing business

Economic integration also means making it easier for people to do business in different countries. This is less easy to capture statistically and make meaningful trend comparisons, since the data are largely based

on perceptions, and may not be comparable or offer sufficient data over time. According to the World Bank, in 2007-2008, Singapore was the easiest country in the world to do business. Thailand and Malaysia also ranked quite highly, but most other countries in ASEAN performed poorly. Worryingly, compared with the previous year, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, the Philippines and Viet Nam all slipped in the rankings. Another concern is corruption with many countries performing poorly on the perception indices.

Gini trends related to economic integration, 1990–2005



Socio-cultural convergence

As with economic development, ASEAN countries also have very different attainments in socio-cultural development: people in the richer countries are likely to be healthier and live longer and also be better educated. Below is an analysis of ASEAN region convergence with regard to selected social indicators.

Child mortality

Within ASEAN the most striking contrasts are in health, particularly for children and mothers. The Gini index for under-five mortality is above 50, a reflection of disturbingly high rates in the Lao PDR (75 deaths per thousand live births), Cambodia (82)

and Myanmar (104), compared with less than 10 in the richest ASEAN countries. Convergence does not seem to have been achieved. Indeed, the rates are even moving further apart – this probably reflects relatively larger improvements in the better performing countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. So although between 1990 and 2006 Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Myanmar all managed to bring down their child mortality rates, the Gini index still increased.

Child malnutrition

As measured by the proportion of underweight children, the Gini index for child malnutrition was somewhat lower, at around 30. Although disparities are lower than in child mortality, in child malnutrition

too, the countries seem to be diverging. This is because countries that in 1993 had prevalence rates of less than 25 per cent, such as Thailand and Malaysia, managed to reduce them by more percentage points than the countries with prevalence rates of more than 25 per cent.

Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality is indicative of the level of priority given to maternal health. This remains a persistent problem across ASEAN countries though data are too scarce to permit any conclusions on convergence. Even in Singapore and Brunei Darussalam maternal mortality ratios, though relatively low, and similar to those in the United States, are still twice as high as in Australia and Japan. In the poorest countries the ratios in 2005 were disturbingly high: 660 per 100,000 live births in the Lao PDR, 540 in Cambodia, 420 in Indonesia, and 380 in Myanmar.

HIV/AIDS

HIV continues to threaten the ASEAN population. In 2007, the infection levels in Thailand (1.4 per cent), Cambodia (0.8 per cent), and Myanmar (0.7 per cent) were among the highest in Asia. Nevertheless there has been considerable progress across the region, with some evidence of convergence. This indicates that the strategy of targeted prevention for groups at risk can work. Between 2006 and 2007, access to anti-retroviral therapy increased for eight ASEAN Member States. Encouragingly, access in three ASEAN Member States has exceeded 50 per cent: the Lao PDR (95 per cent); Cambodia (67 per cent); and Thailand (61 per cent). Even so, the situation in Myanmar remains of particular concern: only 15 per cent of those with an advanced infection have access to anti-retroviral drugs.

Tuberculosis

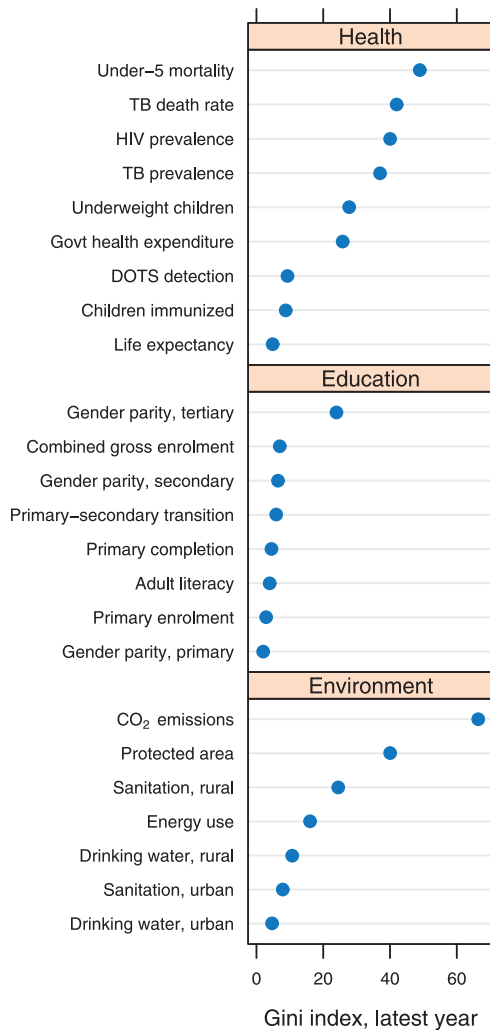
One of the region’s most serious communicable diseases is tuberculosis. Cambodia has the worst situation, with a prevalence in 2006 of 665 per 100,000 people and a death rate of 92, but the rates are also quite high in other countries, including Indonesia and the Philippines. Nevertheless, the prevalence has been coming down across the region, though since it has been doing so in most of the affected countries, this is not reflected in any convergence. One clear sign of convergence, however, is that the detection and treatment rates have improved, with greater availability of the directly observed treatment, short course (DOTS).

Water and sanitation access

Improved water and sanitation are critical to the improvement of health. Too many children die of diarrhoea which in most cases results from lack of access to clean water and sanitation. Access to water and sanitation is a human right and support economic development. There is good news in that ASEAN countries are moving towards full access to safe water supplies, with a median access of 84 per cent in rural areas and 96 per cent in urban areas – and both proportions are converging. Levels of access to safe sanitation are lower – 87 per cent in urban areas and 64 per cent in rural areas – but in this case too the numbers are converging. This is occurring despite increasing water demand associated with economic growth, population expansion and rapid urbanization in the ASEAN region.

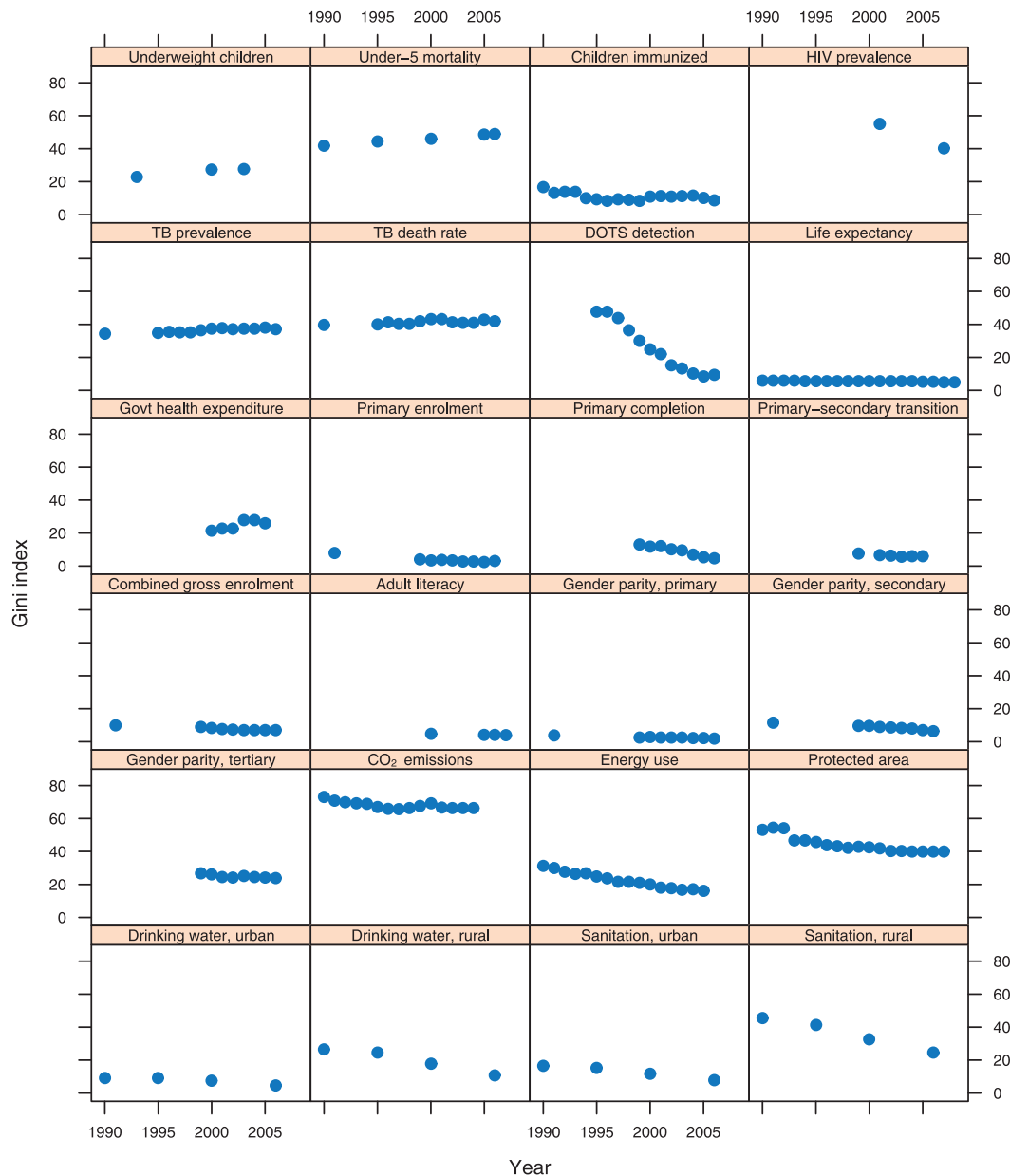
Latest Gini indices for the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community

Figure II-3



Gini trends related to the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community, 1990 – 2006

Figure II-4



Environmental sustainability

Countries with rapid economic growth show a large decline in environmental quality, diminishing biodiversity, and increasing degradation of land, marine and coastal resources, often leading to increased vulnerability to natural disasters caused by frequent climate variability. The ASEAN contribution to global emissions is relatively small. The ASEAN region is responsible for about 3.3 per cent of global CO₂ emissions, while its share of the world population is more than double that number (7.7 per cent). However, some ASEAN countries exceed the world average per capita CO₂ emissions by a large margin,

with CO₂ emissions per capita differing by over 600 times between the strongest and the weakest ASEAN performer. In this case convergence is bad news since this means that the least polluter countries are gradually increasing their emissions. Convergence is more welcome in terms of energy use per \$1,000 of GDP and ASEAN countries seem to be converging on this indicator. Between 1991 and 2006 the median value fluctuated between 200 and 222, and the Gini index declined from 30 to 16. Even so, energy consumption remains exceptionally high in Myanmar, as well as in Viet Nam and Indonesia.

Towards the ASEAN community

To a large extent economic convergence among ASEAN countries will depend on the outcome of the policies of individual Member States. But, as indicated in Chapter I, ASEAN has also attempted, especially in the economic sphere to create a distinctive ASEAN space – primarily in terms of trade but also to a lesser extent in investment and in the movements of workers across the region. The principal document guiding the process of economic integration is the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint – which lists many specific priority actions and policies for four biannual periods between 2008 and 2015 (ASEAN, 2008c). The Blueprint aims at a single market that will offer producers the opportunity to tap common sources of supply and serve larger markets, while providing consumers with a greater variety of goods at lower prices.

ASEAN's Vision of an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community recognizes that social inequity can undermine economic development (ASEAN, 2004). Among its key features are universal and equitable access to opportunities, upholding norms of social and distributional justice by giving special care to vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, women, youth and children, ensuring people's health and protecting the environment to sustain development. The draft Blueprint for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) (2008-2015) is expected to be adopted by the 14th ASEAN Summit to be held in Thailand. As envisaged in the draft, the primary goal of the ASCC would be to contribute to realizing an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible, to achieve enduring solidarity among ASEAN nations and peoples by forging a common identity and building a caring, sharing and inclusive society.

The primary responsibility for social development lies with national governments. But there are also opportunities for concerted regional action. This may include social redistribution mechanisms such as intra-regional monetary transfers or technical cooperation – as well as ASEAN-wide standards for health and labour and the protection of vulnerable groups. Moreover, regional entities may be in stronger positions than individual governments to negotiate with private providers to ensure access, affordability and quality standards in commercial services and utilities.

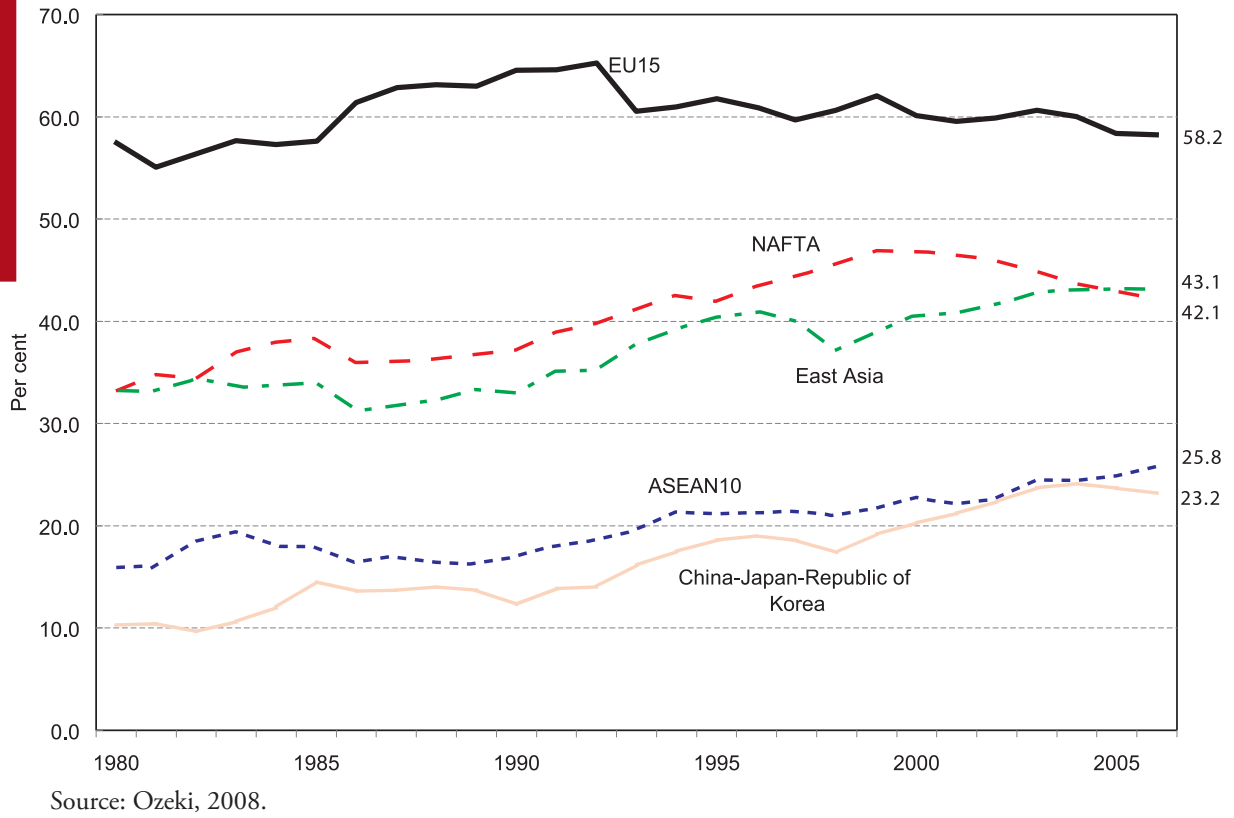
Other potential areas for regional cooperation include countering drugs and human trafficking and negotiating with pharmaceutical companies on prices and supplies. ASEAN can also work as a group with donor countries: it has, for example, already received sizeable amounts of Tamiflu and personal protective equipment in preparing for responses to possible outbreaks of avian influenza.

Trade integration

ASEAN should have a lot to gain from trade integration. Compared with other regional groupings it is much more dependent on trade. In 2006 the ratio of trade goods and services to GDP was 168 per cent – almost four times the ratio for the South Asia Free Trade Agreement and more than twice that for the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (World Bank 2008b). However, it does not appear that ASEAN has been particularly successful at intensifying trade between its own members. Among the ASEAN-10, intra-regional trade, although growing, represents only around one-quarter of total trade – a lower proportion than for NAFTA, for example, or the EU-15 (Figure II-5)(Ozeki, 2008).

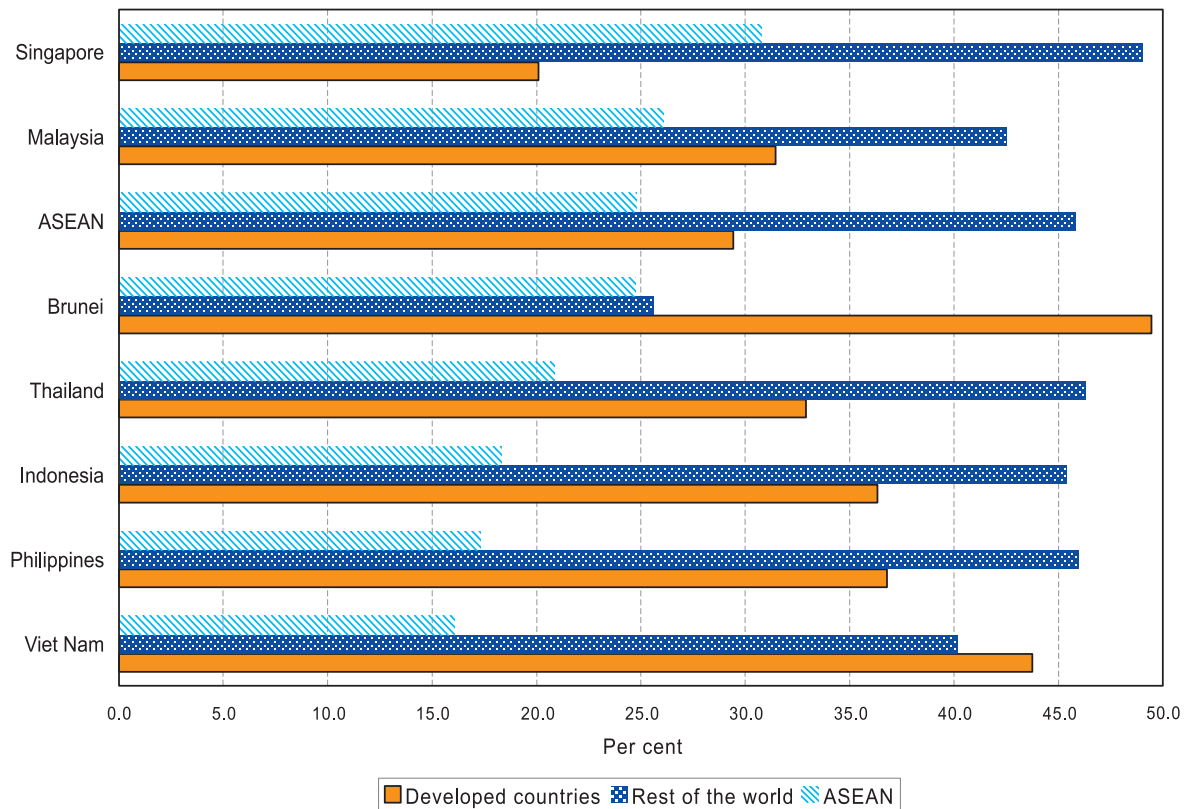
Intra-regional trade of regional blocs

Figure II-5



Intra- and extra-regional exports of goods, 2006

Figure II-6



Notes: Developed countries include Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States of America.

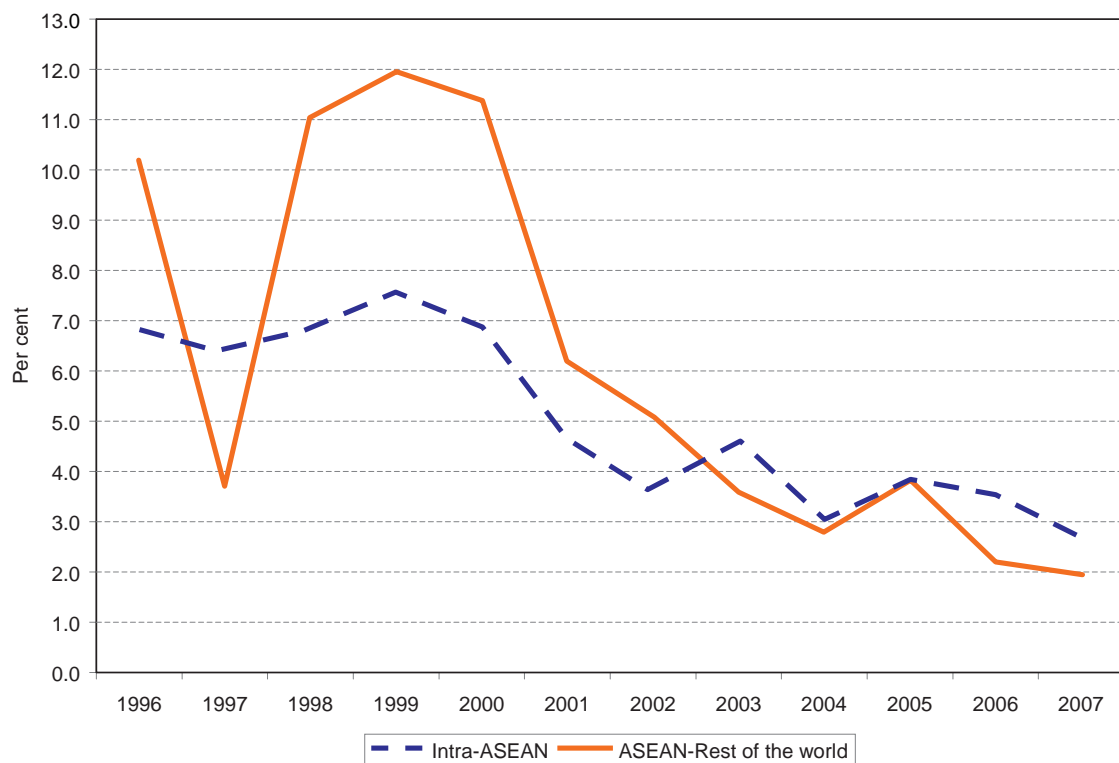
Source: ESCAP estimates based on COMTRADE; data downloaded from WITS.

A notable feature of the ASEAN nations is that they trade extensively with other developing countries. Thus although ASEAN accounts for only 6 per cent of world trade it contributes close to 18 per cent of total South-South trade (UNCTAD, 2008). Much of this is with the rest of Asia, notably with China, India and the Republic of Korea – a reflection of ASEAN's close integration in the production of parts and components for industrial sectors like electronics, cars, textiles and clothing. In these circumstances, while greater intra-ASEAN trade might be desirable it should not be pursued at the expense of trade with other Asian markets.

ASEAN's key instrument for trade integration has been the ASEAN Free Trade Area established with the signing in 1992 of the Agreement on the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme for the ASEAN Free Trade Area. These agreements have been designed along typically ASEAN lines with exclusions that allow for flexibility, even if this permitted some free riding. In 2003, the AFTA was supplemented with a protocol for elimination of import duties. The overall impact on intra-ASEAN tariffs can be seen in Figure II-7. By 2007, weighted tariffs were less than two per cent, though tariffs for the rest of the world were also low at less than three per cent. Figure II-8 shows the fall in intra-ASEAN tariffs, for various categories of goods, alongside the rising level of imports.

Effectively applied tariffs for ASEAN imports, 1996–2007

Figure II-7



Source: ESCAP estimates based on TRAINS; data downloaded from WITS.

Intra-ASEAN imports and changes in import duties, 1996-2007

Figure II-8



Source: ESCAP estimates based on TRAINS; data downloaded from WITS.

As these figures indicate, ASEAN tariff levels are generally quite low. Although it is not possible to draw any conclusion on the relationship between the falling intra-ASEAN tariffs and the rising imports, it is certainly clear that tariffs no longer present an obstacle to intra-ASEAN trade (Soesastro, 2008). At the same time, ASEAN is not discriminating to any great extent against goods from the rest of the world: the proportion of ASEAN's trade that is intra-ASEAN remains around 25 per cent, so changes in tariffs do not seem to be diverting trade to any great extent. It is also notable that ASEAN's trade regime is more liberal than other developing country regional groupings such as SAARC and MERCOSUR and is more on a par with those of developed country blocs such as NAFTA and the EU-15. It is noteworthy that the ASEAN Secretariat is preparing to consolidate all ASEAN initiatives, obligations and commitments in the area of trade in goods into a single ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA).

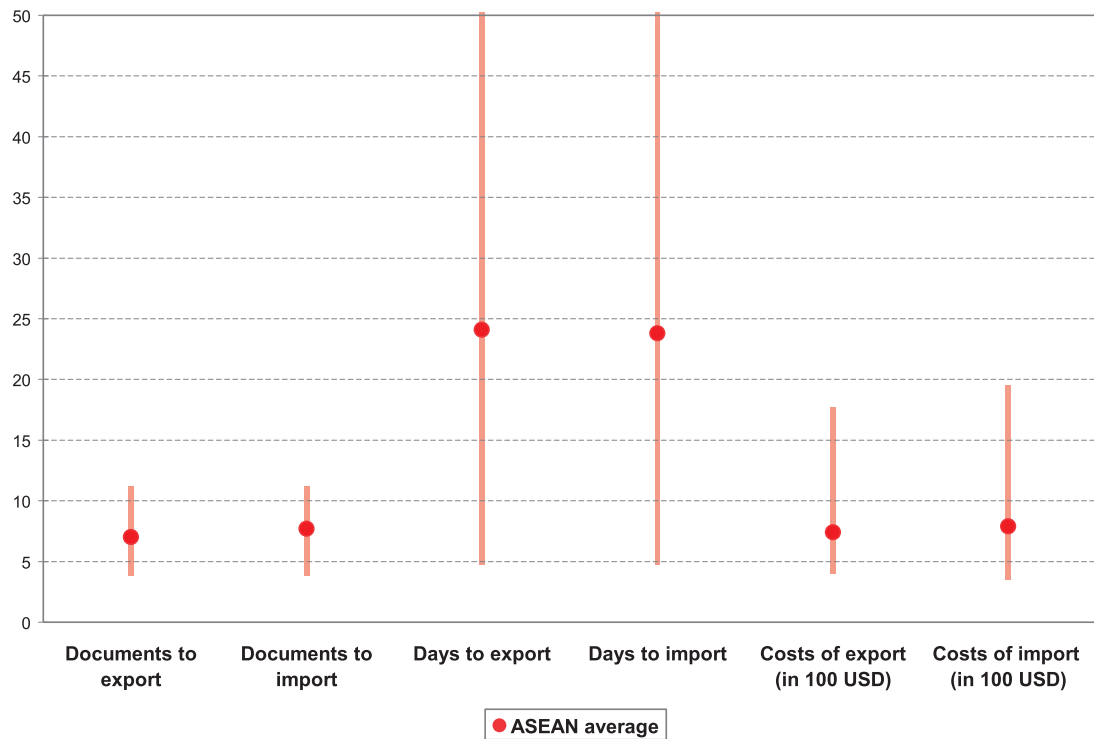
For the business community, policymakers, policy analysts and other stakeholders, this consolidation is a timely and important step forward.

ASEAN has now reached the stage where any obstacles to greater integration are related more to non-tariff barriers which include trade facilitation measures such as customs formalities and administrative procedures. On the whole these are more difficult to address since, for the poorer countries especially, they reflect more general weaknesses in technical, financial and human capacity. Figure II-9 summarizes the situation for a number of trade facilitation indicators. Generally, the widest variation across the region is in the time taken for imports and exports, between 5 and 50 days, with a narrower range in the number of documents required, which vary from 4 to 11. For most of these indicators Singapore offers the benchmark standard, while Cambodia and the Lao PDR present the greatest problems. Costs per container, for example, are four to five times greater in the Lao PDR than in Singapore.

The World Bank has compiled a perceptions-based logistics performance index (LPI) and ease of doing business rankings, in which Singapore occupies first place, not just in ASEAN but globally. For further details, on the LPI, see Table II-2.

Indicators of trade facilitation for ASEAN, latest year

Figure II-9



Source: ESCAP estimates based on data downloaded from World Trade Indicators, World Bank, 2008.

As well as liberalizing the trade in goods, ASEAN has also been attempting to liberalize the trade in services. Some ASEAN members are leading world exporters of selected services. Singapore, for example, is a major provider of travel, financial and computer and information services. But other countries too are important players: Thailand and Malaysia, for example, for travel and construction; and Malaysia and the Philippines for communication services. Nevertheless, on the whole and along with other developing country trade blocs, ASEAN has been a net importer of services.

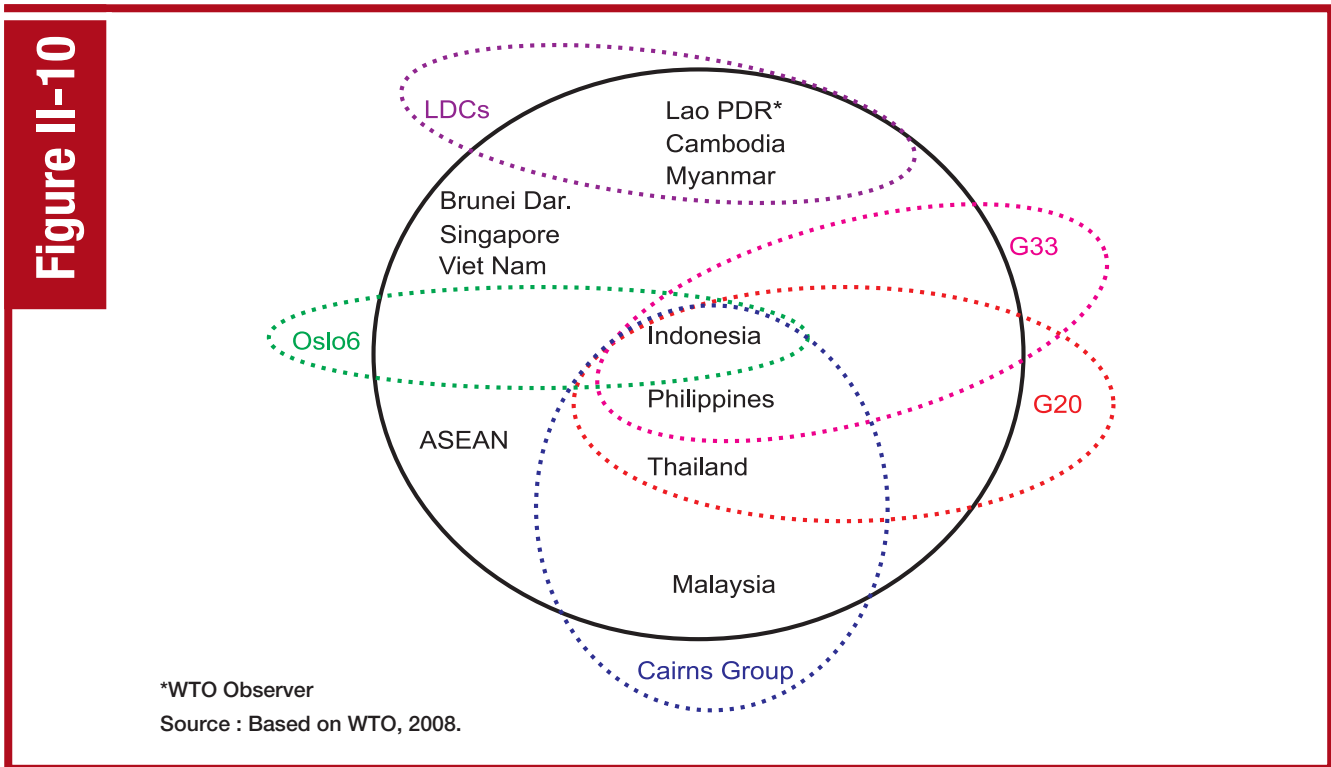
Since ASEAN members do not provide the appropriate data, it is not possible to analyze trends in intra-ASEAN services trade. However, some indication of liberalization may be gauged from commitments to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) at the World Trade Organization. On the basis of the World Bank's 'GATS commitments index', ASEAN commitments to liberalize at the multilateral level appear to be low, though the higher-income countries seem to be slightly more open than the others.

In addition to their commitments to GATS, ASEAN Economic Ministers signed in December 1995 the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) and held six rounds of negotiations. This is fairly flexible since it allows two or more countries to agree on concessions without extending these to all ASEAN members. The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint anticipates that by 2010 ASEAN countries will have removed almost all restrictions in air travel, health care, tourism, and information and communications technology, and by 2015 to have removed those in logistics. ASEAN countries have also been encouraging the integration of services through mutual recognition agreements (MRAs). MRAs enable the qualification of professional service suppliers to be mutually recognized by signatory Member States, facilitating an easier flow of professional services providers in the ASEAN region. Over the period 2005-2008 Member States have endorsed seven: engineering, nursing, architecture, surveying, accountancy, and medicine and dentistry.

A further trade issue for ASEAN is the extent to which Member States unite in engaging with the rest of the world. Since ASEAN is not a customs union it cannot be a member of the WTO. Nine ASEAN Member States are members and the Lao PDR is in the process of accession. Each Member State will thus negotiate its own position, though at times they have been able to coordinate their positions and to speak

with a single ASEAN voice. However, given the lack of common trade policies and large disparities in economic and industrial development and trade dependence, it is not surprising that ASEAN Member States have occasionally chosen to work with other country groupings to try to influence negotiations. This is illustrated in Figure II-10. Indonesia, for example, belongs to four groupings (WTO, 2008).

ASEAN Member States and coalitions in the WTO



ASEAN has also been entering into trade agreements outside the WTO with other 'Dialogue Partners'. These include ASEAN+1 agreements – with China, Japan, India, Republic of Korea, and Australia/New Zealand – and ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, Republic of Korea). ASEAN is also looking beyond these countries to strengthen trade linkages and cooperation in financial and other areas. A recent example is an agreement for cooperation in economic, development, political and security matters signed in September 2008 between the GCC Secretariat and the ASEAN Secretariat. Individual ASEAN Member States also have bilateral agreements with countries outside the region that add up to a veritable 'noodle bowl' of bilateral agreements. In an attempt to consolidate these arrangements the Blueprint has put forward the principle of 'ASEAN centrality' – which implies that

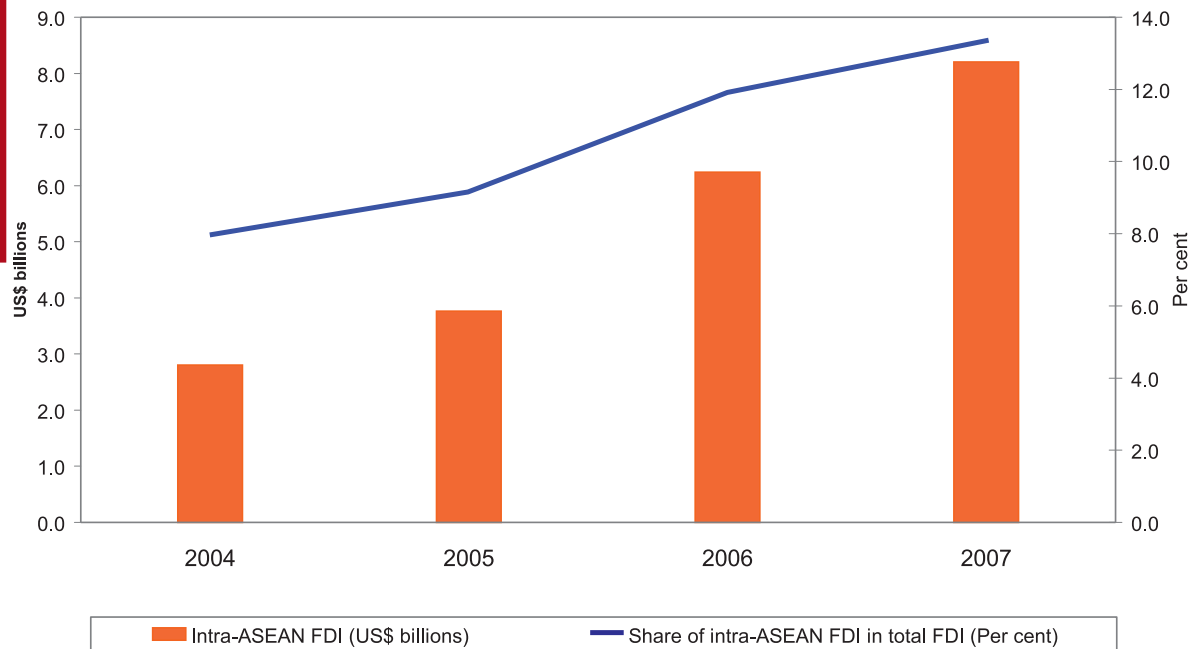
when formulating external economic relations, Member States should take ASEAN interests into account.

Investment integration

Integration of the ASEAN region could also be accelerated by greater flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) and capital. At present, these are relatively low, but rising. Between 2004 and 2007, intra-ASEAN FDI, for example, rose from \$2.8 billion to \$8.2 billion – from 8 to 13 per cent of total FDI into the region (Figure II-11). Most of this comes from Singapore and Malaysia, and the main destinations are the same two countries plus Indonesia and Thailand – cross-country investment that has spurred two-way integration in industries such as food, automobiles and communications equipment.

FDI inflows in ASEAN, 2004 – 2007

Figure II-11



Source: ASEAN Foreign Direct Investments Database and Joint Media Statement of the Fortieth ASEAN Economic Ministers' (AEM) Meeting, Singapore, 25-26 August 2008.

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There have also been intra-ASEAN investments in lower-income countries. These flows have been encouraged by the fact that these countries have preferential access to ASEAN markets – enabling them to exploit the economies of scale in a larger market and specialize according to their comparative advantages. They have a wealth of agricultural, marine and mineral resources which gives them advantages in the production of primary goods, as well as low-cost labour that is attractive for labour-intensive production. Viet Nam also offers a large domestic market and the geographic advantage of proximity to China. The apparel industry, for example, has migrated to lower-cost bases in Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Viet Nam for export to other countries. There have also been investments in these countries for food production, both for local consumption and for export.

Most of the FDI flows into ASEAN countries, however, are from outside the region (\$62 billion in 2007), especially other Asian economies which see ASEAN as an integral part of wider Asian production networks. Much of this investment is from China, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan Province of China, the Republic of Korea, and is primarily destined for Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. But the lower-income countries also benefit. Indeed although the

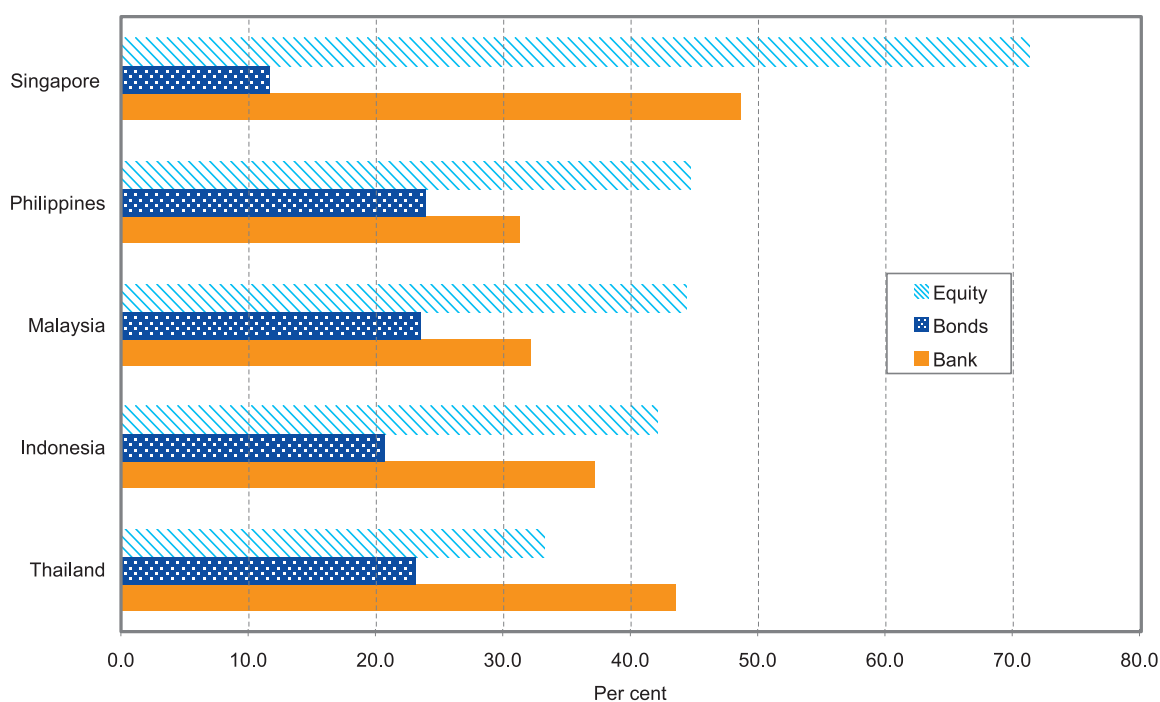
flows to these countries might be smaller in Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Viet Nam, their FDI represents a higher proportion of GDP.

In the case of intra-ASEAN capital flows, integration is hampered by the relative underdevelopment of domestic equity and bond markets. Compared with the developed economies, with the exception of Singapore, most of those in ASEAN rely heavily on finance from banks Figure II-12. Equity markets are often quite shallow, and not very open. And while bond markets have been growing rapidly they are still relatively small, with a limited number of issues and range of maturities, and bonds in domestic currencies are dominated by government bonds. The expansion of bond markets has also been hampered by legal and regulatory hurdles, such as lengthy approval times and poor disclosure standards.

For the lower-income countries, these limitations are compounded by financial systems which are generally underdeveloped. Banking systems are weak, with poor supervision and many of the financial institutions are state-owned. Governments also tend to get involved in bank lending decisions and there are many non-performing loans.

Domestic financing sources for selected ASEAN countries, 2007, 3rd quarter

Figure II-12



Source: Asia Bonds Online, ADB, <<http://asianbondsonline.adb.org/>>.

The opportunities for financial integration within ASEAN are also constrained by the extent of integration with developed country markets. The richer economies in the region are more likely to invest in Europe or North America – and to engage with them in cross-border lending and borrowing.

ASEAN has also made some efforts to spur growth in capital markets. In 1998, in the wake of the Asian financial crisis it set up the ASEAN surveillance process, in an effort to spot impending shocks and ensure early warnings and adequate consultation. ASEAN+3 countries also aim to facilitate the issuance of local currency-denominated bonds under the Asian Bond Market Initiative and aim to deepen the Chiang Mai Initiative. The East Asia-Pacific Central Banks have also embarked on an Asian Bond Fund Initiative.

The region has been promoted as a desirable investment destination by the establishment of the FTSE-ASEAN index and the CIMB-ASEAN Exchange Traded Fund. These and other initiatives should help increase financial integration by improving the regulation of domestic financial systems, opening financial services, and progressively relaxing capital and exchange controls. Cross-border

bond and equity portfolio flows have gradually increased over the past decade. Co-movement in equity market returns indicates greater integration in stock markets.

Development assistance

Economic integration within ASEAN can also be encouraged by flows of development assistance from the more developed to the poorer economies – to invest in both economic infrastructure and human development. Apart from the ethical and moral imperatives for such aid, there are powerful economic reasons, since countries that have higher standards of human development will also present stronger and more effective trading partners. The rapid growth in Viet Nam, for example, compared with some other countries, can be attributed in part to investment in education and health.

ASEAN has established a number of instruments to transfer financial resources across its economies. One is the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) which was launched in 2000, to help narrow the development gap within ASEAN and assist newer members in the process of regional integration. The current IAI Work Plan for 2002-2008 has over 200 projects in programme areas that include

infrastructure, human resource development, information and communications technology, regional economic integration, tourism, and poverty and quality of life. As of May 2008, ASEAN-6 Member States have contributed nearly US\$ 31 million to the IAI Work Plan, with Singapore accounting for over 70 per cent of the contribution (ASEAN, 2008f).

Another transfer mechanism is the ASEAN Development Fund (ADF). This was established in 2004 to provide financial resources to support the implementation of the Vientiane Programme of Action. The ADF is intended to leverage funding of regional cooperation programmes and projects from Dialogue Partners and other external donors, provide seed funding for initial activities of large-scale projects which will require major financial support from a Dialogue Partner or donor institution, and provide full funding support to small and short-term projects of a strategic nature. Contributions to the Fund of up to \$1 million have come from, among others, Australia, China, India, Malaysia and Singapore.

Nevertheless, ASEAN financial transfer mechanisms are dwarfed by aid from outside ASEAN. In 2006, net international official development assistance to Cambodia was \$529 million, to the Lao PDR \$364 million, to Myanmar \$147 million, and to Viet Nam \$1,846 million (OECD, 2008). Much of this is via multilateral programmes, of which the largest involving ASEAN countries is the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Regional Cooperation Programme, supported by the Asian Development Bank, which has financed cross-border communications and transport projects between ASEAN GMS countries and southern parts of China. Other subregional programmes included the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area, the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, and the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation.

An emerging and important type of financial transfer globally is the Aid-for-Trade mechanism. Donors have been devoting increasing attention to trade capacity and infrastructure. Between 2002 and 2005, global aid-for-trade volumes increased 22 per cent (OECD/WTO, 2007). Aid-for-Trade, both bilateral and multilateral transfers, have been important for the newer ASEAN members, Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Viet Nam, as well as for Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Clearly, such assistance can play

an important part in fostering intra-ASEAN trade. For ASEAN, the largest bilateral Aid-for-Trade donor is Japan and the largest multilateral donor is the World Bank.

On the whole, aid via ASEAN has been for 'soft infrastructure' in capacity building and technical assistance projects, while most of the finance for 'hard infrastructure' has come from outside the ASEAN region. Greater opportunities to integrate the two flows of development assistance could be explored using ASEAN as a channel for non-ASEAN funds. This would ensure better alignment with jointly agreed regional priorities. China, for example, provides some support to the IAI and ADF, but transfers most of its funding to lower-income ASEAN countries on a bilateral basis. It also provides a wide range of economic assistance that includes non-development aid and low-interest loans in sectors such as energy and transport.

Transport and logistics

If ASEAN countries are to work more closely together – and integrate fully with the world economy – they will need to strengthen their mutual transport links and the logistical systems. The specific thrust towards developing ASEAN transport networks derives from the Third ASEAN Summit held at Manila, during 14-15 December 1987. The Third ASEAN Summit recognized the importance of shipping in ASEAN economic cooperation since 80 per cent of ASEAN trade was reliant on maritime transport. Thus, initially the ASEAN Economic Ministers supported the promotion of ASEAN self-reliance in shipping. ESCAP and the South-East Asian Agency for Regional Transport and Communications (SEATAC) issued the report of an ESCAP/SEATAC Study on Intra-ASEAN Shipping to assist various ASEAN committees and meetings in their deliberations on these issues. During 1995, ESCAP undertook a study on "Trans-Asian Railway Route Requirements: Development of the Trans-Asian Railway in the Indo-China and ASEAN Subregion". The ASEAN Highway Network takes as its backbone the Asian Highway Network developed by ESCAP and adds to it ASEAN connections.

The ASEAN Transport Ministers have developed the ASEAN Transport Action Plan 2005-2010 to ensure that the region's multimodal transport infrastructure works efficiently, on land, on water and in the air – with seamless movement of people and goods.

ASEAN infrastructure has been developed within the framework of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway networks. An important project is the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link (SKRL) – connecting domestic rail networks linking Singapore with Yunnan, Province of China, and the countries in between. Some parts of this are already in place and others are being added. Recently the rail network of Thailand was extended into the Lao PDR with the completion of a 3.5-kilometre section from Nongkhai to Thannaleng. In 2007, the Government of Malaysia donated track components to Cambodia for the reconstruction of the 48-kilometre missing link between Poipet and Sisophon which could lead to the resumption of cross-border rail traffic. China has also been active in developing rail links with Myanmar and proposed connections through the Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and Cambodia.

One link that has made an important contribution to intra-ASEAN trade is the container land bridge, started in 1999 between Port Klang in Malaysia and the Lat Krabang inland container depot near Bangkok in Thailand. Each year this carries the equivalent of around 40,000 twenty-foot containers and will become even more useful with the development of links to the Lao PDR and Cambodia.

Two important components of the ASEAN transport infrastructure network that are nearing completion are the North-South (Kunming, Yunnan Province of China-Bangkok) and East-West (Da Nang, Viet Nam-Mawlamyine, Myanmar) Economic Corridors.

As well as building physical infrastructure, ASEAN has also been attempting to make services run more efficiently across borders. One important step has been the 2005 ASEAN Framework Agreement on

Multimodal Transport, following which Member Governments can enact legislation necessary for combining road, rail, air and maritime routes. This will also mean building capacities and skills in transport operators, greater collaboration between government ministries, agencies, and policymakers – to arrive, for example, at common standards and codes of conduct.

These international agreements would be more effective if each country could improve its system of logistics. This includes, for example, integration of information, transportation, inventory, warehousing, materials handling, and packaging. In many ASEAN countries the systems remain slow and expensive. In Indonesia, for example, logistics comprises 14 per cent of total production costs, compared with 5 per cent in Japan (JETRO, 2007). Better logistics can provide a substantial boost to trade. For example, it has been estimated that in Cambodia and the Lao PDR a 20 per cent reduction in logistics costs would increase the trade to GDP ratio by more than 10 per cent (ESCAP, 2007c).

One indication of the state of logistics across the region is the ‘enabling trade index’ (ETI) which is produced by the World Economic Forum. The ETI measures the factors, policies and services facilitating the free flow of goods over borders and to their destination in four areas: market access; border administration; transport and communications infrastructure; and the business environment. Singapore ranks highly on the overall index – number two in the world. Other countries have some clear weaknesses: Viet Nam in market access, for example; Cambodia in border administration; and the Philippines in transport and communications infrastructure.

Table II-1 – Enabling trade index for ASEAN countries, 2008

Country	Market access		Border administration		Transport and communications infrastructure		Business environment		Overall index	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Cambodia	108	2.6	107	2.7	105	2.5	93	4.0	113	3.0
Indonesia	22	5.0	63	4.0	74	3.1	32	5.0	47	4.3
Malaysia	68	4.1	24	5.2	27	4.6	27	5.1	29	4.8
Philippines	80	3.9	82	3.5	83	3.0	95	3.9	82	3.6
Singapore	27	5.0	1	6.5	7	5.5	3	5.8	2	5.7
Thailand	62	4.3	56	4.1	41	3.9	61	4.5	52	4.2
Viet Nam	112	2.5	76	3.6	75	3.1	62	4.5	91	3.4

Note: Data not available for Brunei Darussalam, the Lao PDR and Myanmar.

Source: World Economic Forum, 2008.

Another perspective on logistics comes from the World Bank's logistic performance index (LPI), in which a higher value, up to 5, indicates better performance. The LPI consists of both perception and objective measures and has three parts: perceptions by trading partners of each country's logistics environment; information on the logistics environment; and real time-cost performance data. In this case while Singapore is the global leader, the weakest performers are the Lao PDR and Myanmar.

ASEAN Member States have recognized the importance of logistics and established guidelines to

encourage logistics development. Proposed measures through the ASEAN Roadmap for the Integration of Logistics Services include liberalizing logistics services and enhancing the capacity and competitiveness of service providers. This will require the involvement of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including governments, customs and freight forwarders. One important platform for logistics development should be the creation of dry ports. Although ASEAN policy statements accord a high priority to the establishment of dry ports in landlocked and transit countries, there is as yet no strategic plan, and most such ports have emerged as a result of market forces (ESCAP, 2008b).

Table II-2 – Logistics performance index, for ASEAN countries, 2007

Country	Customs	Infrastruc- ture	International shipments	Logistics competence	Tracking & tracing	Domestic logistics costs	Timeliness	LPI	Ranking
Cambodia	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.2	3.1	2.5	81
Indonesia	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.9	3.3	2.8	3.3	3.0	43
Lao PDR	2.1	2.0	2.4	2.3	1.9	2.1	2.8	2.3	117
Malaysia	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.1	4.0	3.5	27
Myanmar	2.1	1.7	1.7	2.0	1.6	2.9	2.1	1.9	147
Philippines	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.7	2.7	3.3	3.1	2.7	65
Singapore	3.9	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.3	2.7	4.5	4.2	1
Thailand	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.9	3.3	31
Viet Nam	2.9	2.5	3.0	2.8	2.9	3.3	3.2	2.9	53

Note: Data not available for Brunei Darussalam.
Source: World Bank, 2007.

ASEAN will need a pool of skilled transport professionals who are abreast of current industry terms, operating procedures and practices. The ASEAN Secretariat, with support from the Marine Department of Thailand, and technical assistance from ESCAP has been carrying out workshops in CLMV countries. Since then, many ASEAN members, including Malaysia and Thailand, have been developing a curriculum and a pool of industry trainers on freight forwarding and multimodal transport.

The opportunities for cooperation across ASEAN have increased with the creation of a number of largely private-sector forums and bodies. These include: the ASEAN Airlines Meeting, the Annual Meeting of Chief Executives of ASEAN Railways, the ASEAN Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations, the ASEAN Ports Association, the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations and the Federation of ASEAN Shippers' Councils. So far,

the private sector bodies among these have enabled operators to build partnerships and share experience, but they have yet to engage fully with governments on the development of policy.

Energy

ASEAN is implementing the ASEAN Plan of Action on Energy Cooperation (APAEC) on a five-year cycle. This has six programme areas: the ASEAN power grid; trans-ASEAN gas pipelines; coal; energy efficiency and conservation; renewable energy; and regional energy policy and planning. Some programme areas are very active, with the involvement of various stakeholders, including the private sector; while others are making slow progress since they lack the necessary finance. Within the APAEC framework, there are already extensive interconnection plans for natural gas, oil and electricity. During 2010-2015, APAEC is expected to continue activities to facilitate these interconnections among ASEAN countries.

APAEC has brought together relevant national bodies, research institutions, public utilities and the private sector. However, it is clear that only certain economies have benefited, and within those economies, only some groups in society. For example, the electrification rate within the region varies from 99 per cent in Brunei Darussalam to 11 per cent in Myanmar. The ASEAN community has been developing large-scale energy infrastructure, including large-scale hydropower plants, gas and oil pipelines and recently promoting biofuel production and considering commissioning nuclear energy to ensure supply-side energy security. It would be important for ASEAN to also critically analyze and understand the long-term impact of such developments within ASEAN and on neighbouring countries.

Energy development goals must be based not just on the economic but also on the social and environmental impact. Generating energy from biomass, for example, is said to generate at least 20 times as much local employment as any other form of energy. In addition, the heavy use of fossil fuel exacerbates climate change. ASEAN will need long-term strategies based on existing indigenous energy resources, but it also has to shift to other sources in order to enhance the sustainability of the energy sector of the region, including renewable energy.

The potential benefits can be multiplied by regional cooperation. For investment projects, for example, countries could share the risks, and increase financing opportunities, to provide energy services beyond national boundaries. They can also share information and experience. For example, ASEAN could focus on research and development of the renewable-energy technologies most appropriate for the region by engaging the private sector and establishing policies to make renewable energy more competitive. Some ASEAN Member States have seen a commercial opportunity in renewable energy and could spearhead such a regional initiative.

Effective energy policy goals that will be politically, socially and commercially acceptable will depend on constructive public participation. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, also known as the Aarhus Convention, has principles that may be useful for this purpose (UNECE, 1998)

In pursuit of sustainable energy security for the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN, which has an exemplary institutional mechanism in leading transboundary energy cooperation in South-East Asia, could play a major South-South cooperation role in strengthening other subregional organizations in South, Central and North-East Asia and the Pacific.

Much of the cooperation with the UN system is through the ASEAN Centre for Energy which has worked with UNEP, UNIDO and UNDP mainly in energy efficiency. The UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, for example, has involved the ASEAN Secretariat in various forums, including a meeting on cross-border energy trade.

Through APAEC, ASEAN has long been working on systematically building interconnections for natural gas, oil and electricity. ASEAN experience would be valuable in further developing the concept and operational modality for the Trans-Asian Energy System (TAES) proposed by ESCAP. The TAES is proposed to be an Asia-wide integrated energy system linking and synergizing subregional energy systems; this was brought to the attention of ASEAN Senior Energy Officials in August 2008.¹

International migration

One of the most evident forms of integration between ASEAN economies is the growing flow of migrant labour. Most of the region's labour migrants come from other ASEAN countries. The main sources are Indonesia and Myanmar, followed by Cambodia and Viet Nam, while the main destinations are Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. In Malaysia, around 75 per cent of an estimated 1.9 million foreign workers are from other ASEAN countries, particularly Indonesia which supplies around 60 per cent of foreign workers in Peninsular Malaysia and more than 90 per cent of those in Sabah (Kanapathy, 2004). Thailand has around 1.8 million migrant workers, 75 per cent from Myanmar, with most of the rest from Cambodia and the Lao PDR (Martin, 2007). In Brunei Darussalam and Singapore about 30 per cent of the labour migrants are from ASEAN countries. In addition, countries such as Thailand and Malaysia are both sources and destinations. Only the Philippines, which is one of the world's largest sources of migrant workers, sends most of them to countries outside of the ASEAN region and in Asia, mainly to Hong Kong, China; Taiwan Province of China; and the Republic of Korea.

Migrants typically move for employment at higher wages. But there are also strong demographic factors at play: while destination countries, such as Singapore, have an ageing population and a shortage of younger workers, the source countries typically have younger populations and suffer from high levels of youth unemployment. Added to this are social and cultural factors, since as countries develop economically their educated young people are increasingly reluctant to do the 'dirty, dangerous or difficult' work in factories or construction and prefer to leave these jobs to immigrants (Ducanes and Abella, 2008).

The majority of intra-ASEAN migrants are unskilled. While there is some skilled-worker migration from the Philippines and from Malaysia to other ASEAN countries the majority of migrants are unskilled manual workers – travelling from Myanmar to construction sites in Thailand, for example, or from Indonesia to plantations in Malaysia.

An increasing number of migrants are women who constitute the majority of official labour outflows – from Indonesia, 83 per cent, and from the Philippines, 60 per cent. If irregular migrants are factored in, the feminization of migration would involve more countries, such as Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (World Bank, 2006). Demand for women migrant workers has been persistent in the fast-growing economies of South-East Asia, often to care for the children of local women who are drawn into the labour force and to look after senior citizens in an ageing population.

While a significant number of women migrants find jobs as professionals, most are concentrated in domestic work, manufacturing, care services, entertainment and sales. In 2007, about 45 per cent of out-going Filipinas worked as domestic workers, caregivers and nurses (POEA, 2007). About 90 per cent of Indonesian overseas women migrants are employed as domestic workers (World Bank, 2006).

Migrant workers in ASEAN face multiple vulnerabilities and gender discrimination at all stages of the migration process. Due to the nature of their work or their irregular status, many migrants have limited access to legal and social protection, including access to sexual and reproductive health services that would also provide information and health care related to HIV/AIDS. Women migrants often find

themselves employed in low-status jobs, which provide only minimum prospects for socio-economic mobility. Moreover, women migrants are in a particularly weak position because the type of work that they tend to do, such as domestic work, which is usually not covered by a labour code. Women domestic workers are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse (Human Rights Watch, 2005). In addition, despite the economic and social benefits of remittances, women's migration often has negative consequences for families left behind, especially in terms of parenting and care-giving issues involving children and older dependants.

Most unskilled migrants travel through irregular channels – often across long and porous borders to neighbouring countries. A large number of labour migrants from Myanmar to Thailand and from Indonesia to Malaysia are estimated to work under irregular status. Thailand and Malaysia have made efforts to regularize their large populations of unskilled foreign workers and have memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with neighbouring countries. For example, Thailand has MOUs with Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Myanmar. But even when a legal option is available, many migrants still prefer irregular channels, since these are quicker and cheaper.

Migration has made an important contribution to ASEAN economies. Foreign workers help to sustain construction, manufacturing and many service industries, enabling some businesses to run around the clock. Moreover, the availability of foreign domestic workers has enabled more women to join the workforce.

For skilled migration, one of the major barriers is the lack of a common set of professional standards. The varying quality of tertiary and professional degrees makes it difficult to ensure international recognition of professional education and training certification. The area with the greatest potential for such a joint effort could be the medical sector.

In its Economic Blueprint, ASEAN foresees a free flow of skilled labour by 2020 and is working to "facilitate the issuance of visas and employment passes for ASEAN professionals and skilled labour who are engaged in cross-border trade and investment related activities". The ASEAN Mutual Recognition

Agreements for nurses, dental and medical practitioners, engineering and architectural services, surveying professionals and accountancy services is a first step towards facilitating the movement of skilled labour.

While mutual recognition of academic degrees will help intra-ASEAN migration there are likely to be persistent language barriers. In many cases the common language is English. In Singapore, for example, migrants from the Philippines and Myanmar find it easier to obtain employment than those from Indonesia and Thailand who often lack English language skills (Manning and Sidorenko, 2007). At the same time, for nurses moving to Thailand, the Government requires that they speak Thai.

ASEAN has already committed itself to an ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. This acknowledges the “need to adopt appropriate and comprehensive migration policies on migrant workers” and “to address cases of abuse and violence” (ASEAN, 2007a). An important task of the ASEAN Committee that was established on 30 July 2007 for effectively implementing the Declaration (ASEAN, 2007c) is to develop an ASEAN legal instrument for the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers (Chalermphanupap, 2008a). One of the first steps could be to define minimum wages and maximum working hours for migrant workers – which would not only protect migrants, but also the nationals of the country, since migrants are often associated with decreased wages and labour standards. The Philippines, for example, has already passed a regulation to place domestic workers abroad only when they receive a monthly minimum wage of \$400. However, such a unilateral regulation can only be effective if other countries – countries of origin and of destination – similarly commit to it. Agreed working standards regulating wages and working hours for domestic helpers within ASEAN could enhance the implementation of ASEAN’s social agenda.

The difficulty with providing social protection for migrants lies in the fact that a large number of migrants are not registered and therefore not covered by the labour code – or work in areas of the economy where even national workers have little security.

Protecting migrant workers is an issue that has to be tackled on a regional level, since it affects both the country of origin and the country of destination. In order to make self-commitments to labour standards for migrant workers effective, all ASEAN countries have to commit to these standards.

Gender equality

The advancement of women can be partly measured by gender equality indicators such as the male to female ratios in primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment, or their participation in paid employment or politics. Violence against women is an indicator for power relations. Maternal mortality is also an indicator for women’s access to the health system and an indicator for power relations.

The situation of women in the ASEAN region is well documented in the ASEAN Secretariat’s 2007 *Third Report on the Advancement of Women in ASEAN*. (ASEAN, 2007b). All ASEAN countries have achieved gender equality in primary enrolment, but Cambodia and the Lao PDR are still lagging behind in female enrolment at the secondary and tertiary levels. Regarding employment, throughout the ASEAN region women’s participation is only half to two thirds that of men. Women are also likely to earn less – in manufacturing in Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, women’s wages are on average two thirds those of men. In manufacturing, as in the electronics sector, women tend to do the most tedious, repetitive jobs. In agriculture, women suffer discrimination since land titles are usually held in the names of husbands or sons, which also reduces women’s access to credit. Furthermore, women also have less influence in the political sphere: in most countries women occupy less than 20 per cent of parliamentary positions. Across the region, women are also subject to disturbing levels of sexual and other forms of violence.

Already in 1988, ASEAN through the “Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region” (ASEAN, 1988) committed to enhancing the advancement of women, recognizing “the importance of active participation and integration of women in the region in sharing the future development and progress of ASEAN and the necessity of meeting the needs and aspiration of women in the ASEAN Member Countries”. Since then, ASEAN has been

monitoring the implementation of the 1988 Declaration and published three reports on the advancement of women. In 2004 and for the first time, all 10 ASEAN Member States at the regional level committed to fighting violence against women – ASEAN Foreign Ministers adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

The situation of persons with disabilities is an indicator of the level of social inclusion and progress. According to global UN estimates, around 10 per cent of the population have a disability; this would mean that the ASEAN region has around 58 million persons with disabilities. Responses to a 2006 ESCAP questionnaire from nine ASEAN Member States indicated that the proportion of persons with disabilities ranged from 1 per cent in Malaysia to 8 per cent in the Lao PDR (ESCAP, 2008c). However, wide differences in definitions and methods of data collection make it difficult to assemble reliable and comparable data. Persons with disabilities and their families are disproportionately poor and persons with disabilities have low access to educational and employment opportunities. In Viet Nam in 2005, poor families with disabled family members constituted 33 per cent of the total number of families with disabled family members. Indonesia reported that only 5 per cent of children with disabilities had completed primary school. In Viet Nam, only 15 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age had jobs with sustainable income (ESCAP, 2006b). Over the past two decades, there have been efforts in ASEAN countries to improve opportunities for the participation of persons with disabilities in the development process. These have yielded advancements in entitlements and in access for persons with disabilities to the physical environment, transportation and information and communications.

ASEAN Member States, such as the Philippines, have long been in the forefront of championing the rights of persons with disabilities, actively supporting the first and second Asian and Pacific Decades of Disabled Persons (ESCAP, 2002). ASEAN plans on

social welfare envisage an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities (ASEAN, 2007d and e). The Vientiane Action Programme (2004-2010) recommends that ASEAN develop a standardized set of data on disability and the ASEAN Strategic Framework and Plan of Action for Social Welfare, Family and Children (2007- 2010) reiterates the need for regional cooperation on disability issues. In 2007, two ministerial meetings on social welfare and development (ASEAN, 2007 d and e) confirmed the importance of inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based societies for persons with disabilities – improving their standard of living, removing various barriers, and ensuring effective participation in society, as well as preventing the causes of impairment such as work-related injuries and vulnerability in natural disasters. The Ministers also recommended that the disability perspective should be “an integral dimension of policies and regulations in all spheres of ASEAN society to ensure that all those living with disabilities are given equal opportunity and access to the employment market”.

One of the most significant advancements for disability rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,² became effective in 2008. It underscores persons with disabilities as holders of rights and agents of development, not objects of charity. The Philippines and Thailand have ratified the Convention, and Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Malaysia and Viet Nam have signed it (United Nations, 2008c). To comply with the Convention, Thailand, for example, has revised its constitution and introduced comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination on grounds of disability. ASEAN could lead the promotion and implementation of the Convention by creating a disability focal point position within its Secretariat and ensuring that disability concerns are mainstreamed into development processes at all levels, as appropriate, as also into human rights activities.

While seven ASEAN Member States have reported that they have accessibility codes or regulations

(ESCAP, 2007b), they have tended to focus on wheelchair users with rather weak enforcement. Noteworthy is Singapore which has involved experts with disabilities in revising its building code and in significantly improving the accessibility of its built environment, benefiting not only persons with disabilities but also senior citizens, as well as families with small children and older tourists. At the ASEAN level, one useful measure would be to remove tariffs on devices or vehicles for people with disabilities.

Strengthening the pillars

ASEAN has thus made an important contribution to regional convergence and in establishing the three pillars of the ASEAN Community has set out the priorities for future activities – in the Security, Economic and Socio-cultural Communities. Now it has the opportunity to move forward through practical cooperation with the United Nations. The shape and direction of that cooperation is the subject of the next chapter.



STRIVING TOGETHER ASEAN & THE UN

In its efforts to promote integration and reduce economic and social disparities across the region, ASEAN will be able to rely on continuing support from the United Nations system. This chapter indicates the extent of cooperation so far, and some of the potential for future collaboration as ASEAN moves into a new and more ambitious phase of its development.

Almost from its inception ASEAN has worked with the United Nations. In 1977 it welcomed the United Nations Development Programme as a 'dialogue partner' (ASEAN, 2008e). At that time UNDP was the only multilateral aid organization to be accorded that status. In the 1980s and early 1990s, ASEAN also worked very closely with the UN on Cambodia and the related issue of Indo-Chinese asylum seekers – cooperation that was to prove critical in the resolution of these issues (Severino, 2006). And from the 1990s into the early years of the 21st century, ASEAN and the United Nations have worked together on conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.

Now ASEAN is looking to strengthen regional cooperation by adopting a new Charter which looks beyond mutual security, aiming to build a solid ASEAN Community that has stronger economical and socio-cultural ties. This will not be easy. As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, the 10 countries that make up ASEAN often have very different circumstances. Some have the resilient and outward-looking economic and social structures that should serve them well as the global economy enters a new and more turbulent era. Others are in a much weaker position and will rely on the support of other Member States if they are to engage constructively in a more testing environment.

ASEAN now has the opportunity to fulfil its potential as a strong and productive community of nations.

This will mean exploring new routes and channels that fit its distinctive regional circumstances. In this, it should also be able to draw on other valuable resources, particularly those of the United Nations family with its practical experience in many of the difficult issues that ASEAN has to address.

From summit to summit

ASEAN held its first joint summit with the United Nations in 2000 in Bangkok. The then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and ASEAN Leaders discussed peace and security, human resources development and the future role of the United Nations in South-East Asia – along with South-South cooperation and especially that between ASEAN and African countries.

The second ASEAN-UN Summit was held in 2005 in New York. Both organizations recognized the need to broaden ASEAN-UN cooperation and increase the involvement of the United Nations specialized agencies in key issues related to development, in particular poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals, the prevention and control of infectious diseases, disaster management, transnational issues, and trade and investment, as well as peace and security.

Following these summits, the UN General Assembly adopted four resolutions that underscored a strengthening of ASEAN-UN cooperation. In its

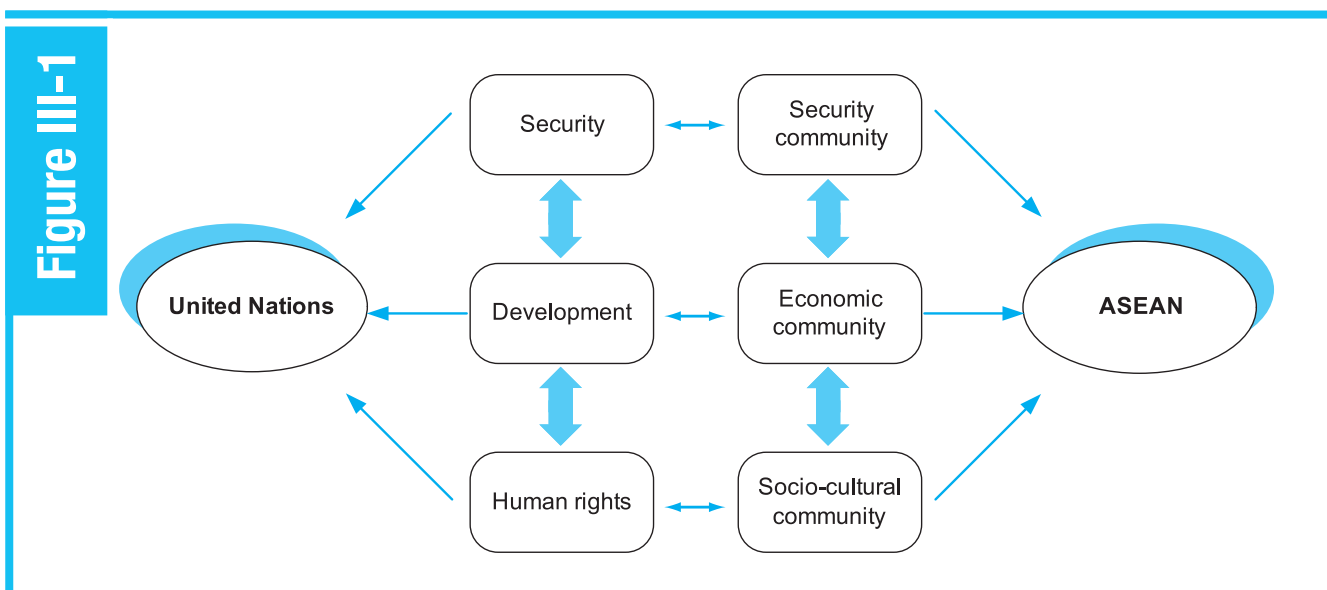
resolution 61/44 on observer status for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the General Assembly, the General Assembly decided to invite ASEAN to participate in its sessions and work in an observer capacity. Subsequently, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, at their meeting in 2007 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, accorded the United Nations full 'dialogue partner' status.

Accordingly, in 2007, the Secretaries-General of ASEAN and the United Nations signed an MOU – committing their organizations to working together to promote regional peace and stability and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The MOU also provides for regular consultation on matters of strategic importance. Later the Secretary-General of the United Nations also met with ASEAN Foreign Ministers and the Secretary-General of ASEAN

in September 2008, on the sidelines of the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals – a meeting at which they pledged to further intensify ASEAN-UN cooperation.

The third ASEAN-UN Summit thus presents an opportunity not just to reflect on the road traversed thus far, but also to inject new energy into the partnership. The ways in which the priorities of the two organizations are closely matched is illustrated in Figure III-1 – showing how the three pillars of the ASEAN community, correspond to those of the United Nations. This will allow for extensive synergies and mutual support towards achieving the shared goals of what the Chair of the 13th ASEAN Summit in 2007 referred to as “a region of lasting peace, stability, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and social progress”.

Corresponding pillars of the United Nations and ASEAN



As ASEAN moves to a new phase in its development, it is looking for different ways of engaging all its Member States in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community. This will be easier in some States than others. The real test is how far ASEAN can succeed in the most difficult circumstances – on issues that have so far remained outside the reach of conventional strategies and approaches. This is where closer cooperation with the United Nations can be of particular value – combining ASEAN’s capacity to build trust between neighbours with the United Nations experience in promoting economic and social development that is firmly grounded in universal principles and values.

The response to Cyclone Nargis

The benefits from such a partnership were amply demonstrated in the channelling of international assistance following Cyclone Nargis which hit Myanmar in May 2008. The United Nations and ASEAN were able to rise to the challenge with a joint response to the Government of Myanmar that led to the formation of a unique tripartite partnership, to expedite the flow of aid to people in desperate need and to move on quickly to begin reconstruction.

This partnership capitalized on the particular strengths of the two organizations. The comparative advantage of the United Nations in responding to a crisis lies in its principles of neutrality, humanity,

impartiality and independence. For its part, ASEAN as the regional grouping was, as its Secretary-General expressed it, able to “get around a lot of suspicion and sensitivities and mistrust”, to address ASEAN’s “utmost concern for the ... victims of Cyclone Nargis who were awaiting assistance in all forms” (ASEAN, 2008d).

The result was an unprecedented tripartite collaboration between the United Nations, a regional grouping, and a Member State, working together to reach a politically acceptable solution (Box III-1). This eased the entry of relief supplies and aid workers,

helped prevent the spread of starvation and disease, and saved many lives.

Five months after Cyclone Nargis, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his Group of Friends on Myanmar praised the ASEAN-led humanitarian operations – thanking the Secretary-General of ASEAN for his leadership and support. The High Representative of the European Union pointed out that the humanitarian operations had created a crucial window of opportunity for the international community to work with ASEAN and Myanmar – a window that should be kept open for the long-term benefit of Myanmar’s people.

Box III-1

A model of collaboration: the response to Cyclone Nargis

In May 2008, following Cyclone Nargis, ASEAN, the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations, established a working-level mechanism to facilitate trust, confidence and cooperation in urgent post-Cyclone Nargis humanitarian relief and recovery work. The Tripartite Core Group of the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force (TCG) has become an effective model for cooperation between the international community and Myanmar for assisting Cyclone Nargis survivors (ASEAN, 2008b).

One of the first TCG activities was to conduct a Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA), to determine the scale of the damage and provide the basis for humanitarian and recovery programmes. Upon the release of the PONJA report in July 2008, ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan said, “By linking hands with the UN, the international NGOs, and the rest of the world, ASEAN has shown how international humanitarian cooperation can work to help bring relief and assistance to the victims of Cyclone Nargis. At the same time, ASEAN is putting into action its pledge to build a caring

and sharing community” (ASEAN-United Nations, 2008). The results of PONJA were taken into account by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs when it launched a revised appeal for \$482 million on 10 July 2008.

From a crisis emerged an opportunity: for ASEAN to respond quickly and effectively in support of one of its members; and for the UN to place at ASEAN’s disposal the combined weight of its humanitarian, diplomatic and development machinery and expertise, to save lives and rebuild the social and economic fabric of communities. The new bond forged in the face of dire immediate needs has strengthened the ASEAN-UN partnership in a way that no communiqué or memorandum of understanding could have. Furthermore, the tripartite partnership has opened a window of re-engagement for major financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, which had not worked in Myanmar for over 20 years.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism

Future cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN can capitalize on the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM). The RCM was established by the Economic and Social Council to improve coordination among the work programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system. This mechanism aims to increase collaboration among United Nations regional entities and their development

partners in addressing regional development issues – ensuring that the United Nations ‘delivers as one’.

The Asia-Pacific RCM is composed of 30 United Nations and affiliated entities, of which 25 are regional offices based in Bangkok. The RCM is chaired by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, the highest ranking United Nations official in Asia-Pacific. ESCAP, the Asia-Pacific arm of the United Nations, with 62 members and associate members,

is the only comprehensive intergovernmental forum dedicated to economic, social and environmental issues in the region. The ESCAP secretariat is supported by a multidisciplinary team of around 600 staffs.

The RCM could enhance system-wide coherence at the regional level, and also support the ASEAN Secretariat in strengthening South-South and North-South links through 'triangular cooperation' – joint activity among two or more developing countries that is supported financially by northern donors or by international organizations.

Successful coordination of a large number of organizations working over a vast and diverse region requires substantial investments of time and energy. But the results can be very worthwhile. In June 2008, ESCAP carried out a mapping study of the RCM and noted two emerging trends. First, RCM entities are now tending to focus more on their core mandates and areas of comparative advantage. Second, the UN organizations are being selective in their areas of coordination so as to optimize value-addition and enhance United Nations regional-level impact.

The Executive Secretary of ESCAP, together with RCM members, have identified three broad areas in which the RCM can work effectively: first, joint advocacy, including on the MDGs; second, convening

power in areas of high-level policy concerns, as well as cross-cutting or transboundary issues, such as climate change or water access; third, joint reporting, based on the analytical capacity of ESCAP and individual RCM entities.

Cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations can cover a very broad range of activities, so those listed in this chapter are intended only as an indication of what is possible. Generally, however, this support will contribute to the provision of regional public goods characterized as goods for which consumption by one state does not prevent consumption by another. This would include, for example, promoting trade and financial stability, preparing for emergencies, and preventing the spread of infectious diseases (Box III-2).

ESCAP as the secretariat of the Asia-Pacific RCM could, together with RCM entities, help facilitate coordinated mapping of regional-level follow-up to MOUs on areas of priority concern for the ASEAN Secretariat which Asia-Pacific RCM members are already working on or would be in a position to contribute to. The ESCAP secretariat also proposes to consult with the ASEAN Secretariat on specific areas of collaboration for inclusion in a more focused and revised MOU to mark the new phase of partnership, which would supersede the MOU that had been signed in January 2002.

Delivering public goods

A useful framework for the analysis of regional cooperation is the concept of 'public goods'. These differ from other kinds of goods in two ways. First: the consumption of the good by one individual does not prevent another individual consuming that good in the same quantity. Second: no one can be excluded from consuming the good. Public goods that benefit people in two or more countries are considered regional public goods (Kaul, 2005). Some examples are tackling climate change, promoting regional financial stability, and preventing the emergence and spread of infectious diseases (International Task Force on Global Public Goods, 2006).

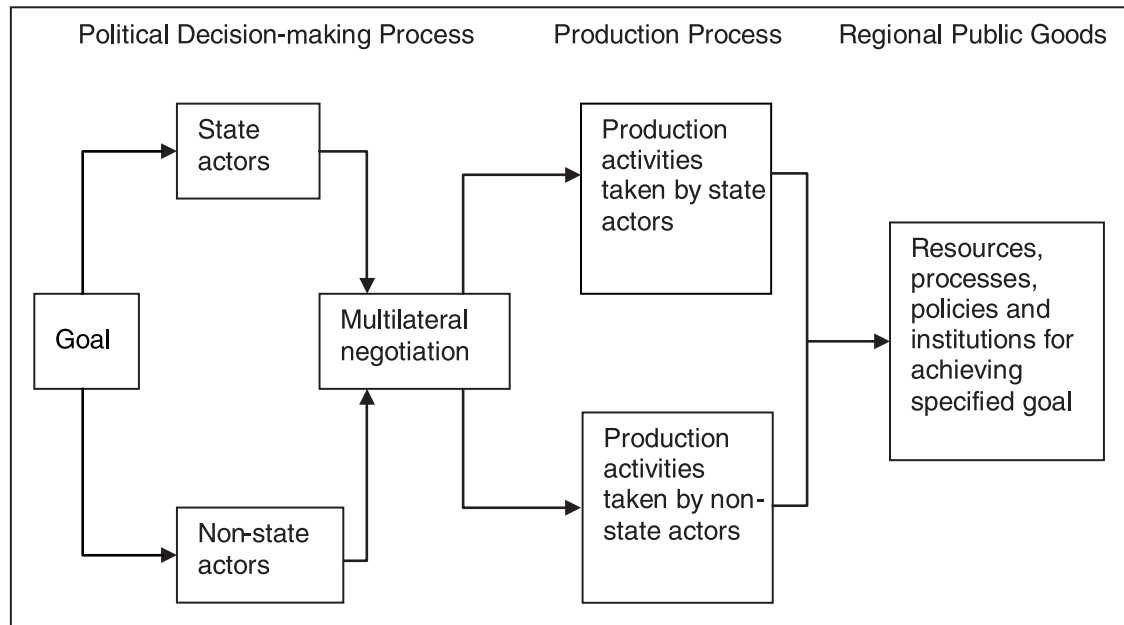
A multi-hazard early warning system is an example of a regional public good. The use of such a system by one ASEAN member would not prevent other members from using the system and benefitting from it in the same way. Clearly, a single country would not be able to implement such a system without the cooperation of other countries and relevant regional and international organizations. Member

countries, through regional cooperative mechanisms on early warning, could share expertise in assessing risks, develop sustainable monitoring and warning services, create proper dissemination and communication systems, and coordinate with communities to increase their response capabilities. A model for making decisions on producing regional public goods is shown in Figure III-2. While the state may have the primary responsibility, non-state actors may appear in both decision making (UN agencies, NGOs and CSOs) and in production (the private sector) (Chan, 2005). During the political decision-making process, regional organizations such as ASEAN may serve as convener and facilitator.

The sum total of the public goods will vary from one type to another. For example, collective action for curbing greenhouse gas emissions will be the sum of the individual contributions to its production. On the other hand in the case of financial stability the regional total will be affected by the country with the weakest mechanism – since a crisis in one country can spread to other countries.

Model for the production of regional public goods

Figure III-2



Source: Based on Chan, 2005.

Towards a common market

ASEAN is aiming to establish an effective Economic Community in the form of a common market by 2015. According to the Economic Community Blueprint, this will transform ASEAN “into a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and freer flow of capital”. A number of UN and related agencies can work with ASEAN towards this objective, including the Asian Development Bank, ESCAP, the International Labour Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, and the World Bank.

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

In August 2006, ADB signed an MOU with ASEAN which was finalized during joint consultations in 2007, to support ASEAN cooperation and integration initiatives through subregional programmes to narrow the development gap in a variety of sectors. These include: the Greater Mekong Subregion Programme; the Initiative for ASEAN Integration; the Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Viet Nam Growth Triangle; the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-the Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area; and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle. Further to this, the MOU calls for closer working arrangements to support faster, more sustainable and

inclusive development, especially in poorer countries. It also calls for continued cooperation in such activities as the ASEAN+3 Economic Review and Policy Dialogue Process, the Chiang Mai Initiative, the ASEAN+3 Asian Bond Markets Initiative (ABMI), and the Asia Recovery Information Centre. The MOU proposes joint work activities that include regional training programmes for ASEAN officials on trade agreements, capacity-building support for the Bureau for Economic International and Finance at the ASEAN Secretariat, and concrete actions in support of the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community. The MOU also refers to disseminating joint studies and exchanging information at the institutional level. Under implementation is the technical assistance programme on “Strengthening Capacity of ASEAN Secretariat in Regional Economic Cooperation and Policy Dialogue” which covers research capacity support, development of a regional economic integration website and capacity building activities for ASEAN Secretariat staff.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

ESCAP has an ongoing programme on benchmarking of regional trade agreements for the purpose of transforming them into drivers of dynamic regional cooperation. ASEAN is accorded special attention

given its achievements in trade integration. ESCAP is well positioned to contribute to the process of peer review to benchmark the progress of trade and trade-related integration. As the ASEAN Secretariat grows in strength there will be more opportunities for ESCAP to augment its current collaboration with a number of trade research institutions. Joint training, as well as research and advocacy activities would be possible in various areas, including the rationalization of non-tariff barriers; recognition and harmonization of standards; introduction of development-friendly private sector practices and norms; standardization of trade documentation; and improving understanding of the mechanisms of inclusive and coherent trade and investment policymaking and the ASEAN response to external and internal trade and financial shocks.

Following the 2008 financial and economic crisis, financial cooperation at the regional level has returned to the top of the international policy agenda. As part of its ongoing analytical work, ESCAP could play a valuable role in building consensus around policy actions that broaden and deepen financial integration in ASEAN and beyond. Furthermore, ESCAP, given its wide membership, could play a bridging role between a broader Asian and Pacific-wide financial integration process and reform of the multilateral architecture on financial issues. Two areas in which there is scope for ESCAP-ASEAN cooperation is in evolving a region-wide surveillance and early warning system on the financial sector, and capacity-building activities on monitoring regional financial vulnerability.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Over the years, the ILO and the ASEAN Secretariat have built a cooperative relationship. This has included a joint review of core labour standards in ASEAN countries and the publication of joint studies on the labour and employment implications of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement. In 2007 ILO and ASEAN signed a Cooperation Agreement that provides a framework for joint programmes and activities in order to promote decent work while supporting ASEAN community-building initiatives. This includes, for example, Guidelines on Good Industrial Relations Practices, strengthening occupational safety and health programmes, and policies and work on labour statistics and youth entrepreneurship. At the request of the ASEAN

Secretariat, the ILO has produced a “Labour and Social Trends in ASEAN” report both in 2007 and 2008. The latter was prepared for the inaugural ASEAN Human Resource Summit held in Singapore in October 2008. The ILO will continue to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat in support of the Asian Decent Work Decade and on ASEAN efforts to ensure that regional integration incorporates a strong social dimension.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The ITU has been cooperating with the ASEAN Secretariat since the early 2000s. It has, for example, participated as a resource organization in meetings of the ASEAN Telecommunications Regulators Council, as well as those of the ASEAN Telecommunications Senior Officials Meeting (TELSOM) and the ASEAN Telecommunications and IT Ministers’ Meeting (TELMIN). Lately, ITU has supported ASEAN in the conduct of the Study on the Dynamics of Women in the ICT Sector in ASEAN Countries. At the 9th ASEAN TELSOM in August 2008 in Bali, Indonesia, ITU proposed working on an ASEAN-ITU Cooperation Agreement to formalize the status of ITU in ASEAN TELSOM/TELMIN meetings and to define concrete areas of cooperation. ITU has also invited ASEAN, through TELSOM as its partner, in a number of planned ITU actions for 2009, including a study on subregional connectivity in Asia, a regional forum on cybersecurity, and a forum on M-Commerce – the use of mobile phones and other devices for transactions.

World Bank

The World Bank is conducting joint research and studies on the regional integration agenda to support analytical work for regional trade negotiations, trade facilitation and standards. This aims to support ASEAN in carrying out the liberalization of the service sector under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint. The World Bank is also discussing an ASEAN Regional Infrastructure Finance Network and is supporting development in the CLMV group as the region moves to the 2015 target for economic integration.

International migration

In 2004 at the 13th ASEAN Summit, Government leaders issued an ASEAN Declaration on the

Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers which aimed to promote the “full potential and dignity of migrant workers in a climate of freedom, equity, and stability” (ASEAN, 2007a).

For the receiving countries, the Declaration aimed for greater harmony and tolerance with migrant workers, offering information, training and education, access to justice, and social welfare services, as appropriate – as well as fair employment protection, payment of wages, and adequate access to decent working and living conditions for migrant workers. For the sending countries, it emphasized the need to ensure that workers had alternatives to migration but that those who wanted to migrate would be assisted through adequate processes for recruitment, preparation for deployment overseas and protection when abroad – as well as with repatriation and reintegration when they returned. To carry out this mandate, ASEAN has established a Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

ESCAP

In September 2008, ESCAP coorganized with the IOM the Asia-Pacific High-level Meeting on International Migration and Development in which six ASEAN Member States participated actively in discussing the protection of migrant workers. ESCAP could cooperate with ASEAN in supporting dialogue among ASEAN Member States, to facilitate migration through regular channels and on providing protection for migrant workers.

ILO

As a tripartite organization representing governments, workers and employers’ organizations, the ILO helps build consensus among the social partners in ASEAN countries of origin and destination. In this way, countries can try to ensure that migrant workers do not displace host country workers and are not subjected to unfair treatment or abuse. Within ASEAN, the ILO has, for example, advised countries on best practices in admission of temporary workers, regulating the status of undocumented migrants, regulating recruitment, improving systems for sending workers abroad, and the best forms of a worker registration scheme. It has also investigated the options for strengthening social protection for

ASEAN migrant workers through social security agreements. The ILO initiated the establishment of a regular ASEAN Forum on Labour Migration which in the future might be lodged in an existing national or regional institute. The first such Forum was hosted by the Department of Labour and Employment, Government of the Philippines, in Manila in April 2008, with assistance provided by the ILO in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat. This Forum, which is envisioned to become an annual event, aims to deepen understanding of cross-border movements of workers, and build trust and confidence through dialogue on labour migration policies, actual experiences in labour management and emerging labour migration problems. It also aims to help national authorities anticipate future challenges by considering the implications of demographic trends and current economic and political developments for migration pressures, and enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation for effective governance of labour markets and migration. Furthermore, the ILO is assisting ASEAN in the development of principles and guidelines for an ASEAN regional framework for managing labour migration. It also recently prepared a report on *Strengthening Social Protection for ASEAN Migrant Workers through Social Security Agreements*.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been strengthening in recent years its cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat on several migration-and trafficking-related activities. In 2005 ASEAN Member Countries commissioned IOM to conduct a pilot research project to identify the ‘best practices’ in data collection on trafficking and to prepare a situation report in four ASEAN countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. The results of that research were published by ASEAN and IOM in late 2006 as *ASEAN and Trafficking in Persons: Using Data as a Tool to Combat Trafficking in Persons*. In addition, IOM has supported ASEAN, the UN and the Government of Myanmar in the ‘Post-Nargis Joint Assessment’. Currently the IOM is jointly implementing with the ASEAN Secretariat a project to develop and institutionalize regional ‘Standard Operating Procedures for the Return, Recovery and Reintegration of Trafficking Victims’. Within this framework the project also serves to increase regional awareness of trafficking policies and strengthen coordination among the principal

government agencies and non-state actors involved at the national and regional level in the return and reintegration process. IOM also aims to support the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers and has proposed a tailored training programme facilitated by IOM's International Migration Law and Legal Affairs Department.

Transportation networks

ASEAN has been engaged in coordinated efforts to promote the necessary transport linkages and logistics services in support of the establishment of a single market and production base. In the case of land transport, ASEAN Transport Ministers at their fifth meeting in 1999 in Hanoi signed a Ministerial Understanding on the Development of the ASEAN Highway Network and work has been planned to construct the missing sections of the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link.

ASEAN member countries have also concluded a series of agreements relating to land transport facilitation and multimodal transport. These include: the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit, 1998; the draft ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Inter-State Transport; and the Agreement on the Recognition of Commercial Vehicle Inspection Certificates for Goods Vehicles and Public Service Vehicles issued by ASEAN Member Countries, 1998. A number of other transport-related agreements have also been formulated by ASEAN, including the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Multimodal Transport, 2005, and the ASEAN sectoral integration protocol for the logistics service sector, 2007.

ESCAP

For a number of these agreements ASEAN has worked closely with ESCAP in increasing awareness, understanding and capacity to address the underlying issues. ESCAP and ASEAN could continue working together in three main areas. First, on land transport infrastructure development: priority investment needs for the development of the Asian Highway network in the ASEAN region could be updated; means of financing transport infrastructure of regional importance could be studied; and the extension of land transport networks to intermodal systems through the development of dry ports and inland container

depots could be considered. Second, on transport facilitation, the rationalization of ASEAN and GMS facilitation agreements, together with lessons learned in their development, could be considered along with accession to international transport agreements, including those identified in ESCAP resolution 48/11.³ ASEAN could also measure the effectiveness of facilitation measures by using the ESCAP methodology for identifying bottlenecks in cross-border and transit transport. Third, concerning human resources development, ESCAP is ready to cooperate with ASEAN in addressing the need for consolidation and professionalization of the freight forwarding, multimodal and logistics industries.

Disaster preparedness and early warning

In recent years the ASEAN region has suffered some of the world's most devastating natural disasters – notably the 2004 tsunami and more recently the 2008 Cyclone Nargis that hit Myanmar. Among other disaster preparedness measures, improved early-warning systems could reduce the risks from such disasters. Cooperation for the higher end of such systems – ensuring the risk knowledge and hazard monitoring and warning services – will require collective action among countries, and regional and international organizations, with coordination from the ASEAN Secretariat. Cooperation for the lower end of the system – dissemination, communication and response – will mean building the capacities of governments and local communities.

Discussion is ongoing concerning ASEAN-RCM cooperation to enable ASEAN to have the capacity to support Member States in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into national and sectoral development planning and programme implementation, in line with the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

An effective regional multi-hazard early-warning system will require clear delineation of responsibilities between different entities of ASEAN Member States in order to maximize synergies, along with extensive partnerships with the UN system and other key stakeholders, such as regional organizations, civil society and the private sector. It will also require strong coordination mechanisms at all levels, taking into consideration the significant work of bodies such as the Typhoon Committee, Panel on Tropical Cyclones and IOC-UNESCO, and various national governments.

ESCAP

ESCAP established a new intergovernmental Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, which will address core issues such as policy options and strategies on multi-hazard disaster risk reduction and mitigation; regional cooperation mechanisms for disaster risk management, including space and other technical support systems; and multi-hazard assessment, preparedness, early warning and response to disaster risks.⁴ The secretariat of ESCAP is also mandated to support regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction, including through the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Asian and Pacific region.⁵ Through its newly-established programme on ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction, ESCAP is promoting a regional mechanism for the provision of critical information for all phases of disaster management, regional/subregional disaster and emergency communication systems for disaster management and emergency response, as well as strengthening country capacities for managing disaster processes, including training on the damage and loss assessment methodology to be conducted in cooperation with ECLAC, ESCAP's sister regional commission in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). Such planned activities, to be developed and implemented in partnership with the ASEAN Secretariat, would further support the disaster management efforts of ASEAN Member States.

ASEAN and the UN could also strengthen cooperation in the framework of the ESCAP Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia – the 'Regional Tsunami Trust Fund'. The Fund is already supporting a number of ASEAN countries in areas such as the development of multi-hazard early warning systems, standard operating procedures for disasters and community preparedness. ESCAP and the ASEAN Secretariat could collaborate in supporting ASEAN Member States to develop further initiatives that address the highest priority early warning needs. ESCAP also convenes high-level meetings of policy makers, development partners and experts to facilitate experience sharing and discussion on strengthening joint efforts to support inclusive and sustainable recovery from disaster. For example, in October 2008, ESCAP and ASEAN, with the support of the Government of Myanmar, convened

the Regional High-level Expert Group Meeting on Post-Nargis Recovery and Livelihood Opportunities in Myanmar, that drew out lessons learned from disasters in the region for a comprehensive strategy on Post-Nargis disaster preparedness and recovery.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Since the beginning of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) crisis in 2004 in Asia, FAO has been collaborating closely with the ASEAN HPAI Task Force to support efforts to control this serious animal and human health threat. FAO manages a large portfolio of projects related to HPAI control in ASEAN countries and has assisted in building capacities on HPAI prevention and control in the poultry sector. The ASEAN Secretariat, with technical assistance from FAO and OIE and funding from ADB, organized workshops to discuss the technical components of HPAI control and prevention under the ASEAN Regional Framework for HPAI Control and Prevention. These discussions paved the way for the development of the first and second regional frameworks for HPAI control which have been endorsed by the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF).

In the immediate term FAO plans to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat in providing support to ASEAN Member States in capacity building and implementing activities related to animal disease control and prevention. In the medium-to longer-term, FAO will collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat and Member States in improving planning for HPAI prevention and control through better understanding of disease risks and socio-economic factors along the poultry supply chain at domestic and cross-border levels. In addition, long-term human resource improvement will be conducted to enable Member States to deal with potential animal health problems.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

For some years UNHCR has been conducting an emergency management training programme throughout South-East Asia. Since 2005, this has taken the form of a cooperative endeavour with the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM). UNHCR's support to ACDM has included

the provision and funding of expertise in the areas of contingency planning and emergency response, as well as support for ACDM focal points in all ASEAN countries. This has resulted in the signing of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, the establishment of an interim ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management, the development of standard operating procedures, and a number of training exercises for disaster response which have seen several ASEAN countries contributing disaster response teams and learning to work together.

Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)

UN/ISDR serves as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among the disaster-reduction activities of the United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in socio-economic and humanitarian fields.⁶ It also serves as an international information clearing house on disaster reduction, developing awareness campaigns and producing articles, journals and other publications, and promotional materials related to disaster reduction. UN/ISDR is working with ASEAN on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, a global strategy to reduce disaster risks under the guidance of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. This includes assessing, in cooperation with ASEAN Member States and regional supporting organizations, the current status of disaster risk reduction. UN/ISDR also cooperates with the ASEAN Sub-Committee on Public Awareness and Education regarding education on disaster risk reduction issues.

The ISDR Asia Partnership on Disaster Reduction (IAP)

The IAP is an informal multi-stakeholder forum that was expanded in 2007 to now include some 30 entities. Among them are not only UN entities, but also national and regional organizations such as ASEAN, donor agencies and CSOs. After attending an IAP meeting as an observer in November 2007, the ACDM has endorsed participation of the ASEAN Secretariat and the Chairperson of the ACDM in IAP meetings. The IAP could ensure availability of

expertise, guidance and coherent support to the ACDM and assist ASEAN Member States in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into their national development strategies and plans.

World Food Programme (WFP)

WFP is in ongoing discussions with ASEAN regarding a portable, disaster simulation capability – known as the Asia Emergency and Preparedness Response. The intention is that relevant disaster-related training would be provided to government and civil society officials from ASEAN countries. In concert with other United Nations agencies, WFP has started collaboration with ASEAN on preparedness plans to deal with emerging infectious diseases, with a special focus on avian and human influenza. These in turn could be springboards for pandemic preparedness plans.

Environmental sustainability and climate change

The November 2007 ASEAN Declaration on Environmental Sustainability adopted by ASEAN Heads of State and Government at the 13th ASEAN Summit committed to achieving the ‘common goal of a clean and green ASEAN’. The Declaration focuses action on climate mitigation. It encourages “efforts to develop an ASEAN Climate Change Initiative”. The elaboration of the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative will play an important role in the ASEAN response to climate change. It is hoped that this Initiative can lead to reforms that better equip ASEAN for addressing long-term climate change-related decision-making and cooperation needs.

ADB

Under its 2020 strategic framework, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been working to mainstream climate change into its core development operations by financing projects that focus on mitigation, adaptation, technology, and capacity building for low-carbon development and resource management. Projects are designed with a view to incorporating vulnerability risks into national development strategies and actions, such as increasing the resilience of vulnerable sectors to the adverse effects of climate change. ADB’s Carbon Market Initiative provides technical and financial support for CDM-eligible projects in developing member

countries. *The Promoting Climate Change Adaptation in Asia and the Pacific* initiative underscores ADB's efforts to foster greater regional cooperation in addressing climate change concerns. In particular, current ADB work on assessment of the economic costs of climate change directly involves most ASEAN Member States.

ESCAP

ESCAP serves as the regional platform for policy dialogue to forge Asian and Pacific perspectives on the post-2012 climate framework. Since 2005, ESCAP has been promoting the "Green Growth" approach as a practical tool for environmentally sustainable economic growth, as well as a strategy for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. In line with the Green Growth approach, ESCAP would be ready to work with ASEAN on developing an evidence-based strategy for low-carbon development and climate-resilient ASEAN societies. The strategy would provide innovative policy options for proactive mitigation and adaptation in the context of ASEAN-wide sustainable development.

As mitigation measures are primarily energy-related, ESCAP and ACE could collaborate on identifying effective measures to deal with climate change, including through a Low-Carbon Development Path (LCDP), emphasizing development needs that also contribute to mitigating climate change. ESCAP could strengthen ACE's role as a centre of excellence for South-South cooperation on energy security issues, facilitating contact with entities in diverse subregions within and outside of Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, ESCAP and the ACE could collaborate in facilitating the establishment of ASEAN-related links and synergies in the proposed TAES. For this, ESCAP would be ready to coorganize with ACE a series of policy dialogues towards agreement on the concept and modality for operating the TAES in the ASEAN subregion. A common challenge for the APAEC Trans-ASEAN energy system and for the TAES is to place sustainable and inclusive development as the core principle for energy that benefits all.

As a co-founder of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, along with the Japan Water Forum and ADB, ESCAP will continue to collaborate with the ASEAN Task Force on Water and particularly the South-East Asia Water Forum (SEAWF) in monitoring investments in the water sector, MDG achievements on water and

sanitation as well as readiness in adaptation to climate change with regard to water resource in preparation for the second Asia-Pacific Water Summit (APWS) to be held in Singapore in 2010.

As the region is prone to natural disaster and has the world's highest level of human casualties from such disasters, ESCAP has recently intensified its work on developing an integrative approach to disaster risk reduction and building of climate change-resilient societies whose outcome could also be shared with ASEAN entities. To reinforce the regular ongoing ESCAP dialogues with ASEAN countries on promoting a low carbon economy approach to economic development, ESCAP welcomes close cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat to assist ASEAN Member States in forging an ASEAN position for the post-2012 climate framework, taking into consideration low carbon, Green Growth principles.

FAO

Close FAO-ASEAN Secretariat collaboration led to endorsement by ASEAN Senior Officers on Forestry (and subsequently by ASEAN Ministers) of the Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting in Asia and the Pacific in 2001, followed by joint monitoring of ASEAN country-level implementation. With FAO support, the ASEAN Secretariat conducted a formal assessment of ASEAN country code implementation in 2007. FAO has also collaborated with the ASEAN Secretariat in fire management and related capacity building, as well as in policy dialogue with ASEAN countries on combating illegal logging and associated trade. FAO-ASEAN Secretariat collaboration through the regional project on "Strengthening monitoring, assessment, and reporting on sustainable forest management in Asia" aims to enhance the criteria and indicators for achieving sustainable forest management.

ITU

ITU has been active on climate change since the adoption of Resolution 35 at the Kyoto Plenipotentiary Conference (1994) on "Telecommunications Support for the Protection of the Environment". Since then ITU has been drafting guidelines indicating how Member States can make use of more energy-efficient ICT equipment in mitigating and adapting to climate change, including the utilization of

emergency telecommunications and alerting systems for disaster relief. In addition ITU has been collaborating with the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to develop a coordinated UN climate change strategy.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP's "Barrier Removal to the Cost Effective Development and Implementation of Energy Efficiency Standards and Labeling Project (BRESL)" promotes greater energy efficiency through the adoption and implementation of energy standards and labels (ES&L) in Asia. By endorsing the manufacture and sale of energy-efficient appliances and equipment, UNDP works to encourage reductions in energy use among residential and commercial consumers so countries in the region may achieve environmentally sustainable and economically efficient development.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat began in 2001 through its assistance to government negotiators in developing the terms of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. UNEP provided financial assistance to the ASEAN Secretariat in developing the ASEAN State of Environment Report for the years 2002 and 2006. In June 2008, UNEP and the ASEAN Secretariat supported the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration in hosting the ASEAN+6 City Forum on Climate Change which resulted in the Bangkok Declaration for ASEAN+6 Mayors Forum. In follow-up, UNEP, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and associate partners would like to work with ASEAN in promoting the objectives of the Forum as spelt out in the Bangkok Declaration. UNEP would also be interested in linking its youth environment network with the ASEAN youth network in pro-environment activities.

World Bank

Since 2007, the World Bank has been providing technical assistance to the ASEAN Secretariat to increase the impact of forest law enforcement and governance. This aims to help ASEAN Member States in addressing illegal logging and forest-related corruption through the provision of more substantive

and higher quality analysis leading to stronger ownership of forest law enforcement and governance initiatives. The World Bank is also supporting ASEAN in conducting a climate change awareness campaign.

World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO, upon the request of South-East Asian Regional Ministers of Health, is presently implementing a training course for raising national- and regional-level awareness about the impact of climate change on human health. To this end, a regional framework has been developed to build the capacity of the public health sector in preparing for and responding to climate change.

Gender equality

Achieving gender equality implies not only the advancement of women, but also tackling the underlying reasons for gender inequality. Increased coordination by Asia-Pacific RCM partners and stakeholders to promote gender-responsive strategies for MDG achievement can help in tackling prevailing gender disparities and discrimination against women and girls in the region. In many countries, such disparities and discrimination have been shown to be even more pronounced for those who are poor, disabled, disadvantaged, and who are ethnic minorities, internally displaced people and migrants, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and people living in rural areas. The Asia-Pacific RCM seeks to strengthen attention to gender as a key element of achieving all MDGs and to better coordinate work being done by all RCM entities based in Bangkok, as well as those located elsewhere in the region.

ESCAP

ESCAP has a long history of facilitating and convening a range of stakeholders on gender and development issues and the promotion of gender equality, to strengthen coordination and consistency in the approach to these issues. ESCAP, in collaboration with UNIFEM and other RCM members, would be ready to enhance cooperation with ASEAN in mainstreaming gender concerns in the promotion of economic and socio-cultural integration. This would support follow-up to the ASEAN High-level Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming held in Jakarta in November 2006 which had adopted the Joint

Statement and Commitment to Implement Gender Mainstreaming. For example, ESCAP could pursue work on some common gender indicators, to which ASEAN could commit, to help track the advancement of women in the ASEAN region.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Despite achievement of gender parity in some areas such as education, the continuing gender inequity in all areas is a major obstacle to achieving the MDGs with equity. Based on internal UNICEF consultations held in the first week of November 2008, UNICEF will focus, among others, on promoting and advocating for high impact interventions to accelerate reductions in maternal and neonatal deaths through improved health, nutrition and water, hygiene and sanitation. Emphasis will be on ensuring a high coverage of continuum of care from pregnancy to childhood, as recent evidence shows that the first 28 days of life is the period when most of child deaths occur.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

In 2006 ASEAN and UNIFEM signed the Framework for Cooperation to promote and implement the 1988 Declaration of the Advancement of Women and the 2004 Vientiane Action Programme. Under the Framework, ASEAN and UNIFEM have agreed to jointly carry out practical measures to eliminate violence and end discrimination against women. The measures include technical assistance, consultations, the exchange and dissemination of information, research, advocacy and awareness raising. UNIFEM will provide technical assistance to implement the operational plan on the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in ASEAN under the aegis of the ASEAN Committee on Women. It will also build capacity to deepen gender mainstreaming, positing links between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women⁷, the Beijing Platform for Action⁸, and the MDGs, and promoting women's political participation. There have also been efforts to share good practices and strengthen the capacity of governments in a number of areas including: gender mainstreaming; services on violence against women; gender equality legislation; the establishment of an ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children,

and engendering the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Universal access to reproductive health contributes significantly to reducing maternal mortality. UNFPA is supporting South-South collaboration within ASEAN countries in reproductive health, gender and population ageing. UNFPA is working with ASEAN Member States such as Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam to strengthen the provision of skilled attendants at birth, and improve access to emergency obstetric care for all women with complications in pregnancy. UNFPA partnerships in the ASEAN region focus on reducing unwanted pregnancies by meeting the need for family planning, access to antenatal care and reducing the adolescent birth rate. Furthermore, UNFPA is working on improving maternal health and decreasing child marriage by addressing gender and social issues.

Food security

With rapidly fluctuating food prices and low stocks of grain, the international community has become increasingly concerned about food security. One indication of a lack of food security in South-East Asia is that in 2005, 28 per cent of children were underweight (ESCAP, 2007c) and in 2001, 12 per cent of the population was below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption (FAO, 2004). FAO has urged ASEAN countries to prepare programmes to mitigate the possible negative impact of the ongoing global financial crisis on food security, particularly if jobs are cut in a global recession and the poor do not have sufficient income to afford food at reasonable prices, despite the availability of food.

The ASEAN region is a net exporter of several food commodities and has sufficient food supply to feed its people. Total ASEAN production of rice increased steadily from 120.7 million tons in 1993 to 178.8 million tons in 2006. ASEAN rice exports account for almost 50 per cent of the total global exports, based on the 2006/2007 production year (ASEAN Business Advisory Council, 2008a). Among ASEAN members are the world's biggest rice exporters – Thailand and Viet Nam – and the world's biggest rice importer – the Philippines (ASEAN Business Advisory Council, 2008b).

There are also concerns about banning rice exports. In the short run, this may calm domestic fears and prevent civil unrest, but it may have undesirable consequences, undermining national, regional and even global food security. Export bans can, for example, not only increase prices for people in food-importing countries or encourage smuggling, but also impede agricultural development in the exporting countries and thereby threaten long-term domestic and international food security and in turn political stability.

In 1979, ASEAN established the ASEAN Food Security Reserve (AFSR) with 67,000 metric tons of rice, and in 2003 ASEAN+3 established the East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve (EAERR) comprising ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and the Republic of Korea). In the face of the soaring price of rice in 2007 and 2008, countries such as the Lao PDR established rice banks. Several ASEAN Member States have also adopted measures to restrict food trade: Cambodia and Viet Nam, for example, banned exports of rice for a period of time (FAO, 2008).

In 2008, the UN High-level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis drafted a Comprehensive Framework for Action. This urges countries not to increase national food stocks as it would simply inflate prices. Instead it promotes programmes which develop regional stocks or food reserve agreements, virtual stocks, financial instruments including options, and weather risk insurance or bonds and contracts with the local private sector to manage stocks (United Nations, 2008a).

ASEAN ministers meeting in Manila in October, 2008 declared their support for a regional rice action plan proposed by the International Rice Research Institute. This involved measures for boosting yields, using new technology and introducing policy reforms (Reuters, 2008).

ASEAN countries have also benefited from emergency food assistance from multilateral and bilateral donors, in small but significant amounts. Between 1998 and 2007 food aid was delivered to Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam – as well as to Timor-Leste. This represented between two and five per cent of annual global food aid distribution. Among UN agencies, those most directly concerned with food security in ASEAN are FAO and WFP (WFP, 2008).

The Philippines, as ASEAN lead country in engaging with the UN on food security under the framework of the 2007 ASEAN-UN MOU, convened the ASEAN-UN Meeting on Food Security in Manila during 11 to 12 November 2008. The Meeting yielded a matrix that identifies areas of convergence between the ASEAN Integrated Food Security, ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security and the above-mentioned Comprehensive Framework for Action, as well as specific activities for ASEAN-UN partnership. The 'Convergence Matrix' shall be submitted to the Third ASEAN-UN Summit.

FAO

FAO has been collaborating with the ASEAN Secretariat in various activities, promoting and supporting food security and sustainable agricultural development. This includes extensive programmes on animal health and disease, agricultural development and water supplies, as well as on fisheries development. FAO is collaborating with the ASEAN Secretariat in the development of a regional framework for action to strengthen food security – participating, for example, in the Senior Officials Meetings and Ministerial Meetings of the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) and contributing technical inputs and advice. Recently, FAO shared its comments and suggestions on the draft concept note on the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (ASIF) Policy Framework. FAO has also been a partner of ASEAN in promoting policy dialogues and actions in both national and regional initiatives related to the East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve and the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS). For food security, planned activities include collaboration in organizing a session on food security in the Senior Officers Meeting of AMAF in October 2008 in Viet Nam. FAO has been a main partner in the organization of the biannual South-East Asia Water Forums, convened by the South-East Asia Water Partnership, that provide inputs to the meetings of the ASEAN Senior Water Officials which are followed by meetings of the ASEAN Ministers on Water. FAO will collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat in the development of a subregional (South-East Asia) water investment framework addressing food security, environment and poverty reduction issues. The framework will aim at promoting investment to improve agricultural water productivity and coping with water scarcity. FAO is also planning to collaborate with the ASEAN Secretariat under an operational

regional project focusing on water allocation policies and mechanisms and a regional initiative with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) on reinventing irrigation and agricultural water management. FAO, jointly with ESCAP, will also support the organization in 2009 of the fourth South-East Asia Water Forum in Cebu, the Philippines.

ILO

The ILO is working with ASEAN countries to address the social impact of rising food prices and to promote labour productivity growth in agriculture, which is essential for both food security and poverty reduction. Between July and October 2008, a joint ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, WFP research study examining the impact of rising food prices on child labour and education in selected ASEAN countries led to the development of draft policy recommendations. The feasibility of the recommendations has been tested through local, provincial and national workshops in Cambodia and the Lao PDR. The ILO is now drafting a policy brief on “Guidance for mitigating the social impact of crisis in Asia”, for the use of practitioners and policy makers. To increase labour productivity in agriculture and rural areas, the ILO supports local development initiatives in several ASEAN countries and, together with the OECD and the ASEAN Secretariat, is organizing an expert meeting on “Fostering local employment and skills development in Indonesia and the Philippines”, scheduled to be held in December 2008.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

The UNCCD secretariat will be working with ASEAN countries to address land degradation issues such as loss of soil fertility, reduction in land productivity, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and other associated problems. In 2005 in Bin Thuan, Viet Nam, ASEAN experts formulated the South-East Asia Subregional Action Programme for Combating Land Degradation and Eradicating Poverty in Drought Prone, Seasonally Arid and Food Insecure Areas. With the cooperation of member countries the UNCCD secretariat has been facilitating the implementation of this programme in three areas: geo-informatics development for land degradation control; sustainable land and integrated ecosystem management; cross-cutting programme areas on information network, exchange and transfer of science, technology and traditional knowledge; and capacity building and community empowerment.

WFP

WFP has pursued national and regional initiatives related to the East Asian Emergency Rice Reserve and the ASEAN Food Security Information System. WFP worked closely with ASEAN in the response to Cyclone Nargis and in 2008 conducted a logistics training event for ASEAN. Future cooperation will involve advice and training in food assistance, assessments, early warning, planning, and distribution. WFP will also provide assistance for the establishment of logistics depots as well as for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance in Jakarta.

Health systems

For many member countries of ASEAN, annual per capita investment in health care – from both public and private sources – is among the lowest in the world. Seven of the 10 ASEAN countries invest less than \$40 per capita annually. Delivering a reasonable basic package of health services requires a minimum of \$60 per capita (ESCAP, 2007a).

Low investment in health care undermines the availability and quality of services. Underinvestment also contributes to low ratios of medical personnel to population. In South-East Asia there are around 5 physicians per 10,000 population – compared with 16 in the Republic of Korea and 20 in Japan. A similar shortage exists for nursing and midwifery personnel.

To offset low public expenditure, people in most ASEAN countries have to spend a lot of their own money on health care. In five of the poorer countries more than 60 per cent of total health spending comes from household out-of-pocket payments – a rate significantly higher than the global average of 23 per cent. This undermines the health and well-being of the poor, not only discouraging them from accessing much-needed care, but also at times plunging them even deeper into poverty.

In April 2000, the ASEAN Ministers of Health met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and envisaged that by 2020 health would be at the centre of development. In 2004, the Vientiane Action Programme, endorsed at the 10th ASEAN Summit, included measures to integrate the ASEAN health-care sector – strengthening capacity and competitiveness in health-related products and services, harmonizing standards and

enhancing human resources for health. In addition, ASEAN would also need to facilitate the movement of health professionals – by establishing MRAs and standardizing visa and work permit regulations for the full range of health professionals and ensuring the full implementation of the MRAs.

All countries are concerned too about the health implications of climate change. These will include: vector-borne diseases from rising temperatures; respiratory disorders exacerbated by greater use of fossil fuels; water and food-borne diseases; and malnutrition from disruption to food production and food security. Temperature increases have already contributed to a rise in the incidence of dengue fever. For instance, in Singapore, over the period 1978-1998 the mean annual temperature increased from 26.9 to 28.4 degrees centigrade, and the number of dengue fever and dengue hemorrhagic fever cases rose more than ten-fold from 384 to 5,258 over the same period (WHO, 2007).

ASEAN is well endowed with resources, both natural and human; the key is for countries to work together to address the health risks from climate change with greater collective responsibility and attention to social justice.

ESCAP

ESCAP, through the Regional Meeting on Promoting Sustainable Social Protection Strategies to Improve Access to Health Care held in Bangkok in 2008, produced a range of practical recommendations that Member States can adopt in order to increase fiscal space for spending on health care and to strengthen current efforts to pool risk and provide financial protection to individuals and households.

UNICEF

UNICEF and ASEAN have a long-standing collaboration since 1991 within the biennial Ministerial Consultation on Children that provides an important forum to address a wide range of children's issues. Reinforced by UNICEF country programmes, these Consultations have resulted in great progress in ASEAN achievement of the child-related MDGs. UNICEF shall work with ASEAN regional and national bodies to address emerging threats that impact negatively on children – such as the food and economic crises and climate change that is resulting in the emergence of new

diseases like Avian Influenza and malaria. Furthermore, UNICEF and ASEAN shall continue to work together to monitor the situation of children in ASEAN as per UNICEF's December 2007 Report to ASEAN on "Situation Review of Children in ASEAN" and discuss ways to address challenges identified.

UNFPA

UNFPA assists in increasing ASEAN capacity to monitor sub-national inequities in reaching reproductive health targets, particularly within underserved groups such as the poor, migrants, as well as remote rural, ethnic minority and other socially vulnerable groups.

WHO

WHO-ASEAN collaboration can be traced back to 1979 and has been covered by a series of MOUs. These have included the prevention and control of specific communicable diseases: with an emphasis on malaria, dengue hemorrhagic fever and other vector-borne diseases; vaccine-preventable diseases and the poliomyelitis eradication initiative; HIV/AIDS; tuberculosis; hepatitis and meningococcal meningitis. There has also been collaboration in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, environmental health and the provision of essential drugs as well as on nutrition, health promotion and human resource development. A new MOU to span 10 years (2009-2018) is expected to be signed before the end of the year, following a high-level review of WHO-ASEAN cooperation in July 2008. This will focus on: prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases; health systems strengthening; food security, food safety and nutrition; health effects of climate change and the environment; emergency preparedness and response; globalization and trade and their impact on health; and traditional medicine.

HIV/AIDS

Prevention efforts in the ASEAN region still need to be further scaled up, if countries are to be able to successfully reduce the number of new infections. The scaling up of high-impact prevention services is often stymied by counter-productive laws and policies which stigmatize and criminalize populations who are most at risk. ASEAN Governments could do more to converge on reviewing and repealing laws that

obstruct the rollout of condom promotion, oral substitution and needle and syringe exchange programmes. Initiatives to foster cooperation between public security and the public health sectors need further encouragement across the ASEAN region. Unless funding for the AIDS response is made an integral part of national health expenditure, the AIDS response is likely to stay as a crisis response when AIDS should become a long-term development priority.

ILO

ILO assisted in the establishment of the first group of HIV/AIDS Focal Points of ASEAN Ministries of Labour and facilitated their interaction with the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS. In 2007, the ILO worked with the HIV/AIDS Focal Points to draft the “Essential Workplace Action for the Prevention and Management of HIV and AIDS in ASEAN Member Countries”.

UNAIDS

Cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat started in 1997 with the preparation of the first ASEAN Medium-Term Work Programme on HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS has focused on issues that require an inter-country approach and which individual countries are unable to address alone. The work, carried out under five Letters of Agreement, has, for example, helped ASEAN prepare for its First and Second ASEAN Summits on HIV and AIDS (2001 and 2007), and supported the operationalization of the declarations into prioritized work plans, including the provision of catalytic funding for certain priority activities and support for a staff position dedicated to servicing the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS.

UNAIDS work with ASEAN focuses on following up on agreements such as the Joint Communiqué of the Second ASEAN-UN Summit in 2005 and the commitments on HIV and AIDS adopted by the ASEAN Summit in Cebu, January 2007. Some specific planned activities include: scaling up prevention programmes targeted at vulnerable populations; obtaining increased resources for HIV prevention, treatment and care; fostering cooperation between public health and public security sectors in supporting prevention; support sharing of experience among National AIDS Commissions; and promoting exchanges of expertise among Member States.

UNAIDS will strengthen the involvement of civil society groups and people living with HIV in ASEAN regional cooperation. Another priority is gender equality in all responses to HIV, including addressing spousal transmission. UNAIDS will also coordinate with its cosponsors to support ASEAN efforts in addressing issues regarding mobile populations, infrastructure development and HIV vulnerability.

UNFPA

UNFPA is contributing to ASEAN achievement of MDG 6 through prevention of HIV with a focus on specific target groups – out-of-school young men and women, and most at risk groups such as sex workers. The UNFPA technical team in South-East Asia worked with the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS (ATFOA) for the formulation of both the second and third ASEAN Work Plans (2001-2005 and 2006-2010). In addition, UNFPA also provided technical assistance in the preparation of the 12th ASEAN summit special session on HIV and AIDS through the ASEAN Inter-Country Consultation, along with the 14th ATFOA meeting in July 2008 in Singapore.

Education

South-East Asia has made significant progress in terms of meeting the Education for All (EFA) goals and the education targets of the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, it has taken major strides towards providing access to primary education. However, as most countries have also acknowledged, it will be difficult to reach the remaining 10 to 20 per cent of the learners who are not in school. It will also be important to improve the quality of education; although children are in school, they may not be learning well – and either repeat grades or decide to drop out of school. Many countries also lack the resources to build or expand schools or to improve learning materials and ensure that sufficient qualified teachers are available where they are needed. Furthermore, although South-East Asian countries have made significant gender parity progress on core EFA indicators, especially in primary and secondary enrolment over the past two decades, achieving gender equality in education remains a challenge. For progress on this, action is required to address social exclusion, as well as to alter gender socialization processes and certain learning conditions.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

In conjunction with the ASEAN Secretariat and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), UNESCO organized a meeting in September 2008 to develop strategies and projects that ASEAN Member States could undertake jointly to extend education to the unreached, disadvantaged and underserved groups. This resulted in concrete proposals for joint projects and activities which will be presented at the next SEAMEO High Officials Meeting for endorsement. The proposals were drafted with the assistance of key resource persons from EFA partner organizations, including the ILO and UNICEF. UNESCO will continue to work closely with SEAMEO and the ASEAN Secretariat, along with other EFA partners, to support South-East Asian countries in implementing the proposed projects and activities in 2009. As co-chair of the RCM Thematic Working Group on EFA, UNESCO will also continue to mobilize EFA partners to work with SEAMEO and the ASEAN Secretariat to provide concrete implementation support. UNESCO Bangkok is also currently working with the ASEAN Secretariat to establish a regular forum of Ministers of Social Development in South-East Asia as well as regular social policy forums with governments, researchers and civil society.

World Bank

The World Bank has prepared a project concept on accreditation on higher education in the ASEAN region.

Human rights and governance

The ASEAN Charter lists an important set of norms for the organization, such as adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government, respect for fundamental freedoms, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the promotion of social justice. The ASEAN commitment to promote and protect human rights through regional cooperation is reflected in the Preamble, Purposes and Principles of the ASEAN Charter. The Charter also calls for the creation of a human rights body. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers have established a high-level panel to draft terms of reference for the ASEAN human rights body. The high-level panel has convened five meetings

as of December 2008. The high-level panel has held consultations with stakeholders, including the (informal) Working Group for an ASEAN human rights mechanism, the Network of Four National Human Rights Institutions, the Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy and the Women's Caucus for the ASEAN Human Rights Body. (Chalermphanupap, 2008b). The high-level panel plans to visit Geneva in 2009 to learn about human rights issues at the international level from the United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights. Once established, the ASEAN human rights body will be the first of its kind in Asia. (Chalermphanupap, 2008b). With long experience in promoting human rights, United Nations entities are in a strong position to assist, including through facilitating regional and interregional knowledge and experience sharing on promoting and protecting human rights.

Good governance is undermined by challenges posed by organized criminal activity which transcends borders. These range from trafficking in drugs, humans, forest products and protected wildlife, to migrant smuggling and money laundering. Organized crime is a major contributor to corruption. South-East Asia is a major source for human trafficking and a global centre for the manufacture, trafficking and consumption of amphetamine-type stimulants. It remains the world's second largest source of heroin. Illicit drug production, trafficking and use, which facilitate the spread of HIV/AIDS, damage the social fabric of ASEAN communities. An important part of the ASEAN response to these challenges will come through effective application of the rule of law. The rule of law forms the basis for the promotion of security and justice and underpins the attainment of all the MDGs. Foreign Ministers at the 31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 1998 signed the Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN by 2020 which affirmed ASEAN commitment to eradicating illicit drug production, processing, trafficking and abuse by the year 2020. The 33rd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 2000 reiterated concern over the threat from the manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of illegal drugs to the security and stability of the ASEAN region and agreed to advance the target year for realizing a Drug-Free ASEAN to 2015.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The South-East Asia Regional Office (ROB) of OHCHR has been engaging with the ASEAN Secretariat since the beginning of 2006 to provide technical support for the development of an effective and credible regional mechanism. In February 2007 the ROB held a workshop on ‘Experiences with Regional Human Rights Mechanisms in Africa, Europe and Latin America’ and has also, on request, provided the ASEAN Secretariat with further written information on basic principles for regional human rights mechanisms and on mechanisms from other regions. This information has been used for an information pack for members of the High-Level Panel responsible for drawing up the terms of reference for an ASEAN human rights body, which is due to be established by the end of 2009. ROB has participated in other ASEAN initiatives on regional human rights mechanisms, such as the Joint Roundtable Discussion on the ASEAN Committee on Women and Children, organized in Jakarta in April 2008. ROB plans to continue working with the ASEAN Secretariat towards the establishment of an effective mechanism, which could include not just an ASEAN Human Rights Body, but also a Commission on Women and Children and an Instrument for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. ROB also plans to engage with the ASEAN Secretariat to mainstream human rights in each of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community.

UNDP

The Regional Centre Bangkok, in collaboration with OHCHR, is exploring support to the new ASEAN human rights mechanism. In addition, UNDP plans to seek cooperation from the ASEAN Secretariat for the establishment of a Legal Empowerment for Asia Partnership facility focusing on the ASEAN region. RCB is also currently working with UNDP Thailand on a regional legal empowerment for Asia partnership to further the agenda at the regional, national and local levels.

UNHCR

In view of its refugee mandate, UNHCR will seek future collaboration with ASEAN in relation to the protection challenges faced by ASEAN countries in the context of migratory movements which include

asylum seekers and refugees. Key to this will be work undertaken by ASEAN on the development of the human rights mechanism foreseen in the ASEAN Charter. This could constitute an important stepping stone in a region which is still broadly characterized by a very low level of accession to international refugee instruments and, in the majority of ASEAN countries, the absence of domestic asylum laws.

UNICEF

A whole generation of ASEAN children has grown up since world leaders adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁹ All 10 ASEAN Member States have ratified the Convention, started to build stronger legal and policy frameworks and institutions to deal with children’s issues and made large strides in combating child deaths, with mortality for under-fives now half what it had been in 1990 (UNICEF, 2007). ASEAN Leaders have also committed themselves to the MDGs and UNICEF’s World Fit for Children. Since ASEAN’s Commitment for Children in 2001, there has been a series of Declarations on Cooperation in Youth Development Programmes and the Cebu Declaration on “One Caring and Sharing Community” – all of which UNICEF supports.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

UNODC leads the UN response to organized crime, drugs, human trafficking and terrorism. To promote more effective ASEAN application of the rule of law, UNODC could facilitate the implementation of relevant international legal instruments, and promote effective, fair and humane criminal justice systems through the use and application of UN standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice. UNODC could also strengthen cooperation with ASEAN to build technical expertise that would enable ASEAN to enhance knowledge of trends and impact assessment in drugs and crime. Other areas in which UNODC could support ASEAN include the reduction of opportunities for illicit activities and gains, through sustainable alternative development, reduction of drug abuse, HIV/AIDS (as related to injecting drug abuse, prison settings and human trafficking), criminal activity and victimization.

In October 2000, under the auspices of UNODC and in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat and China, regional stakeholders gathered in Bangkok at the International Congress “In Pursuit of a Drug-Free ASEAN and China 2015 (UNODC, 2007)”. One result from this Congress was a regional framework, the ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD) Plan of Action which was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. ACCORD was intended to outline specific actions that are guided by a cooperative framework for the benefit of all drug control stakeholders in the region. In April 2003, the ASEAN Secretariat and UNODC signed an MOU on Drug Control and Crime Prevention Cooperation, to facilitate and support both parties in addressing the interrelated issues of drug control and crime prevention through joint technical cooperation projects and programmes.

Data collection, monitoring and review

To keep track of the implementation of the numerous regional initiatives, ASEAN leaders at the fourth Informal Summit in Singapore in 2000 introduced the idea of a ‘score card’ which would offer sufficient data to monitor progress. Then at the 40th ASEAN Economic Ministers meeting in August 2008 it was agreed that the score card would be web-enabled and include an assessment of the current situation while highlighting areas for improvement (ASEAN, 2008g).

According to the ASEAN Charter, the Coordinating Council will assemble reports of the Community Councils to the ASEAN Summit and consider the annual report of the Secretary-General of ASEAN. At present, however, the ASEAN Secretariat does not have the resources to do comprehensive reviews. Moreover, Member States are not necessarily keen on them, and the ASEAN Secretariat can only include information provided by Member States – which can be rather selective.

Another opportunity for monitoring would be through some type of peer review. Currently Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia and the Philippines are piloting a new ‘peer consultation framework’ (PCF) whereby one country’s practice in a sector is assessed by other Member States. The PCF adheres to the principles of non-interference and consensus among Member States – a cooperative process which relies

on mutual trust, respect and shared confidence among the participants. The PCF centres on the creation of knowledge, mutual learning and capacity building among Member States and ASEAN as a whole. It should improve Member States’ policy making, helping them to adopt good practices and adapt them to national circumstances, and comply with regional and international commitments (Paulme, 2008).

ASEAN views the MDGs as a firm basis for bridging the social and economic gaps among its Member States (Pitsuwan, 2008a). In the ASEAN context, the MDGs “should be seen as a tool and platform for ASEAN Member States to make development choices that move beyond achievement of these fundamental but essential development parameters”, to encompass the three areas of economic integration, security integration and socio-cultural integration. ASEAN Member States are negotiating the MDGs road map, which includes localized and adapted targets for narrowing development gaps (Pitsuwan, 2008a).

An issue closely related to MDG progress tracking is the analysis of disparities of MDG outcomes within countries. High disparities in MDG outcomes along sex, educational attainment, residence (urban versus rural and state/province), and income or wealth dimensions, are not only a concern *per se*, but it also endangers MDG attainment by 2015.

A major issue in tracking progress towards the MDGs and other development goals — including for the ASEAN region — is the availability of data that are comparable between countries and over time. In some cases, data are available at the national level, but are not being used in the production of international estimates, or vice versa. In others, there is an apparent discrepancy between national and international data and the reasons for these discrepancies are only partially due to differences in definitions applied at national and international levels. There is also a critical need for better quantitative and qualitative data and analysis that focus on the poor and the most vulnerable, to inform policymaking and programming (UNICEF, 2007).

ESCAP

ESCAP could offer statistical information and analytical support in tracking ASEAN development outcomes, including those related to the MDGs goals and the social consequences of ASEAN

economic integration. ESCAP could facilitate the development of a joint ASEAN-ESCAP secretariat peer review mechanism. In this, ESCAP could draw from the peer review mechanism experience of ECA, its sister regional commission in Africa, which aims to enhance development and eradicate poverty through good governance, partnership, and acceleration of integration. ESCAP could also assist in tracking follow-up action on the outcomes of the Third ASEAN-UN Summit. ESCAP, as a partner in a tripartite collaboration that includes UNDP and ADB, has developed well-established and widely-recognized methods for tracking MDG progress (ESCAP, 2006a; ESCAP, UNDP and ADB, 2005, 2006 and 2007). This not only involves the tracking of the progress of individual countries, but also that of subregions and countries with special needs within Asia and the Pacific, as well as that of other major regions for comparison. ESCAP would be ready to calculate ASEAN aggregates of MDG progress and achievement, as well as expand the tracking methods to cover development outcomes that are additional to those of the MDGs, ESCAP could also assist ASEAN in developing targets and indicators for the ASEAN MDG+ road map.

In addition to tracking MDG progress, ESCAP has developed composite indicators to measure overall country achievement in narrowing gaps across MDG targets and MDG progress in Asia and the Pacific over time. Such indicators could be developed specifically for the ASEAN region, and could also be extended to other development outcomes. ESCAP has also developed methods for analyzing and highlighting disparities in MDG achievement for some MDG targets in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. This work could be extended to cover more targets, areas beyond the scope of the MDGs and all ASEAN countries, provided countries make available the microdata sets

(ESCAP, UNDP and ADB, 2007). ESCAP is in the process of identifying the main reasons for data differences between countries and over time and proposing remedial steps. This work, which has thus far benefitted only one ASEAN Member State, Viet Nam, could be expanded to include all ASEAN Member States.

ILO

The ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific published two reports on *Labour and Social Trends in ASEAN*. The reports present major trends in employment and social conditions in the ASEAN region, along with thematic chapters that analyze key employment and social issues. The reports also include a comprehensive statistical annex with the latest national and regional macroeconomic, demographic and labour market data.

New directions

The partnerships that last are those that are can be constantly renewed, as the partners tackle tough problems together in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. As this study has shown, the United Nations and ASEAN have long experience of working together, whether in issues of security, or of economic and social development. Progress has been more rapid in some areas than others, and there have inevitably been setbacks and frustrations. And as the global economic skies darken at the end of 2008, this may not seem any time to express a degree of optimism. But as recent experience has demonstrated even the most difficult of circumstances can spark new ways of thinking and encourage a willingness to try fresh ideas. The United Nations and ASEAN have much to reflect on, and as this chapter has indicated, there is a demanding agenda for strengthening cooperation – as both organizations strive together for prosperity, stability and peace.



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