INTERVENTION
BY H.E. EKKAPHAB PHANTHAVONG
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN FOR ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

The 6th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue
on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

30 May 2022, 14.30-17.00 hours

Agenda Item 2 (A): Progress on implementing actions under the Complementarities Initiative (15.00-16.50 hrs.)

Excellency Chulamanee Chartsuwan, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Thailand;
Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary of UN ESCAP;
Excellency Theng Pagnathun, Director General of Planning, Ministry of Planning of the Cambodia;
Excellency Chirachai Punkrasin, Executive Director of the ASEAN Center for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue;
Representatives from ASEAN Member States and ASEAN partners;
Distinguished delegates.

Good afternoon.

1. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to brief on ASEAN’s initiatives to promote sustainable development. I also would like to thank Thailand for its leadership in promoting sustainable development in the region.
2. Despite the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 Pandemic, ASEAN continuously promotes the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap and achievement of the SDG targets. Our preliminary mapping shows that there are more than 100 initiatives that have been implemented or initiated by ASEAN sectoral bodies that contribute to addressing the five priority areas of the Complementarities Roadmap.

3. In September last year, ministers in charge of national development planning from ASEAN Member States met for the first time during the ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Accelerating Actions to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The ministerial dialogue reinforces ASEAN commitment to achieve the SDGs. The ministers reaffirmed the importance of national planning agencies working together in accelerating SDG implementation and agreed to conduct the dialogue regularly. The dialogue featured an open session where experts shared their thoughts, including a suggestion for ASEAN to maintain collective voices at international level and harness the roles of stakeholders including the private sector.

4. The annual ASEAN-China-UNDP symposium on SDGs has served as an important platform to exchange best practices among policy makers and stakeholders. The 6th symposium held in December last year focused on SDG 10 – reducing inequality – and underscored the need to redouble efforts in narrowing the gaps within society as the result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Ladies and gentlemen

5. Poverty eradication as one of the key priority areas in the Complementarities Roadmap remains a top priority for ASEAN. Various initiatives in the form of capacity building, policy dialogues, research and studies, and policy commitment have been undertaken to address the needs of the poor and vulnerable groups. These include the adoption of the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication 2021-2025. In addition, I am pleased to inform you that ASEAN is currently developing a Masterplan on Rural Development, which will promote a whole-of-ASEAN
approach to foster rural development and address the needs of vulnerable groups in rural areas.

6. Remarkable progress has also been made in improving nutrition and reducing stunting. Guided by the ASEAN Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Nutrition 2018-2030, ASEAN continues to take concrete actions to equip policy makers and health practitioners through policy dialogues, development of guidelines and standards, and collection of data, including the ASEAN Food and Nutrition Security Report 2021.

7. Tailoring policies and intervention to the needs of the target groups is critical to ensure inclusive and optimum outcomes. To this end, ASEAN produced the ASEAN Gender Outlook: Achieving the SDGs for All and Leaving No Woman or Girl Behind in 2021, to inform targeted and evidence-based policies and programmes in addressing the needs of women.

8. On Infrastructures and connectivity, progress in this priority area includes utilization of the Framework for Improving ASEAN Infrastructure Productivity, which aims to promote well-informed policies towards improving infrastructure productivity across the entire infrastructure project cycle. With the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to ensure that our infrastructure development corresponds to our needs and are able to tackle emerging challenges in the region. ASEAN is currently preparing the Assessment of Future Sustainable Infrastructure Trends and Priorities in a Post-Pandemic ASEAN, to better understand how future infrastructure development could adapt to changing priorities, speed up economic recovery, and promote resilience.

9. On sustainable management of natural resources, I am pleased to inform on the important work of ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) in promoting sustainable management of natural resources including in the area of water management, forest, and biodiversity protection. Of particular note, ASOEN expressed positive response to the Concept Note and has adopted terms of reference (TOR) of the ASEAN Resources Panel (ARP), which was identified as a flagship initiative for this priority area in the Complementarities Roadmap. I thank ESCAP for its support in developing the Concept Note and TOR, and I look forward to working further with you in operationalization of the ARP.
10. Last year, the ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting adopted the Joint Declaration on Energy Security and Energy Transition. The declaration reaffirms ASEAN’s shared commitment and collective responsibility in the pursuit of energy security and energy transitions, and is expected to contribute to environmental sustainability.

11. At the same time, ASOEN has undertaken various initiatives to foster and mainstream sustainable consumption and production (SCP). Currently, we are working with the EU to prepare the ASEAN SCP Framework which aims to scale up SCP practices in an integrated approach through a knowledge-based analysis. The endeavor to promote SCP was strengthened by the adoption of the Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN Economic Community last year.

12. The Covid-19 Pandemic has clearly indicated the need to strengthen resilience. Notable progress in this priority area includes development of the ASEAN Disaster Resilience Outlook in 2021, which highlights emerging challenges, explores key concepts of disaster management in the future, and proposes future-proof solutions. Guided by the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, building resilience will remain a priority for ASEAN and I would like to encourage more collaboration with partners in this area.

Ladies and gentlemen

13. All of this progress would not be possible without the strong support from and cooperation with our partners. I would like to use this occasion to express appreciation to all partners and stakeholders involved in fostering sustainability in the region.

14. Moving forward, allow me to share some thoughts on how to move our cooperation forward. First, I think it is time for us to review our strategy and sharpen our focus in implementing the Complementarities Roadmap. It might be useful for us to identify areas where we should invest our resources more.

15. Second, I believe the national planning agencies play critical roles in the successful implementation of the SDGs. The ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Accelerating Actions to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals can serve as useful platform to engage
them. Moreover, I would like to invite Thailand as ASEAN Coordinator for Sustainable Development Cooperation to co-lead in conducting the second ministerial dialogue this year.

16. With that, I would like to conclude my intervention and look forward to fruitful discussion with all of you.

Thank you.