

REMARKS

MR. SATVINDER SINGH
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN FOR ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

**Seventy-eighth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(ESCAP)**
**“Subregional perspectives on a common agenda to advance sustainable development
in Asia and the Pacific”**

Wednesday, 25 May 2022

- The Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms. Alisjahbana,
- Distinguished fellow panellists from regional organisations around the globe,
- Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Allow me to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the UN-ESCAP for including the ASEAN Secretariat in your panel discussion. I am pleased to be able to share the ASEAN perspective on advancing resilient sustainable development, and possible areas of cooperation between our region with regional organisations.

2. My presentation this morning would focus on three main points. First, on ASEAN's efforts to **build back better post-pandemic**, followed by our efforts in **narrowing the development gap within ASEAN**, and finally I wish to share several **areas of cooperation which we wish to pursue with global partners**.

Building Back Better Post-Pandemic

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

3. The ASEAN journey of recovery after facing unparalleled loss in lives and livelihood in the region has been guided by the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework or ACRF, which serves as the region's consolidated strategy for COVID-19 recovery and beyond. Our aim was not to just recover, but to build back better. With this in mind, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the ACRF and its Implementation Plan, setting out five strategies on health systems, human security, economic integration, inclusive digital transformation, and sustainability.

4. As one of the immediate measures undertaken was in the area of health systems, where the ASEAN Member States worked very hard in vaccinating our 670 million population in order to be able to open economies fully and bring back general travel. As of May 2022, 70 percent of the ASEAN population has been fully vaccinated. The ASEAN GDP is projected to grow by 4.9 percent this year and 5.2 percent next year. These numbers are growth projections by the ADB taking into account the current geopolitical challenges, supply chain disruption and inflationary

pressures. Our trade volumes and investment flows have returned to pre-pandemic levels by late last year, driven by strong demand in commodity sectors, food & agriculture, medical products, construction and manufacturing, and ICT services. With the coming into force of the biggest FTA in the world - the RCEP agreement, we are looking forward to a much greater increase of regional value chain in ASEAN and hopefully this contributes further towards strengthening real growth in our region.

Narrowing Development Gap within ASEAN

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. Coming to my second point on the narrowing of the development gap in ASEAN. The principle of “leaving no one behind” is deep-rooted within ASEAN and as such, the concept of inclusivity is integrated in our development strategies. In this regard, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plans aim to achieve effective cooperation and mutual assistance to narrow the development gap among ASEAN Member States, devoting special efforts and resources to assist Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV) to meet the goals of the ASEAN Community.

6. The economic recovery of each region should be based on the needs of its most disadvantaged groups. In this light, besides the five strategic focus areas of food and agriculture, trade facilitation, micro small medium enterprises (MSMEs), education as well as health and well-being, the current IAI Work Plan IV (2021-2025) also places importance on three over-arching elements that are to be embedded into the action plans, which are the adaptation of Industry 4.0, Gender and Social Inclusion and Environmental Sustainability.

Cooperation at Global Level

7. This brings me to my final point— possible areas for cross-regional collaboration.

Distinguished guests, Excellencies,

8. Now more than ever, stakeholder engagement and partnerships should be given renewed emphasis. We do not want the current crisis taking away the impetus or resources from our actions and plans put forward. At ASEAN, we continue to seek technical cooperation and collaboration with global partners in many areas. In this regard, I am pleased to inform that in 2021, ASEAN has launched the Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Taxonomy on Sustainable Finance, to facilitate the region’s sustainable economic development.

9. As I mentioned earlier, our aim for the ASEAN economic recovery process is not only to build back better, but also think of the future, and we are doing this by putting sustainability at the core of our efforts. It is no longer possible to put the sustainability agenda just lying within the environmental sector. The leaders of ASEAN has tasked the finance and economic sectors

to take the lead and develop sustainable strategies which are both necessary and practical in achieving a carbon net zero economy for the region.

10. To ensure that the ASEAN transition to a circular and carbon neutral economy is met, multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration is vital, particularly with the private sector. I look forward to all your support towards ASEAN's efforts in promoting the integration of circular economy and sustainable consumption and production strategies and best practices.

Closing

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

11. Considering the diverse range of leaders from the various associations and organisations on the panel, I am optimistic that the discussions today are going to be beneficial and very fruitful. With that, I wish you the best of luck in our conversations today. Thank you.