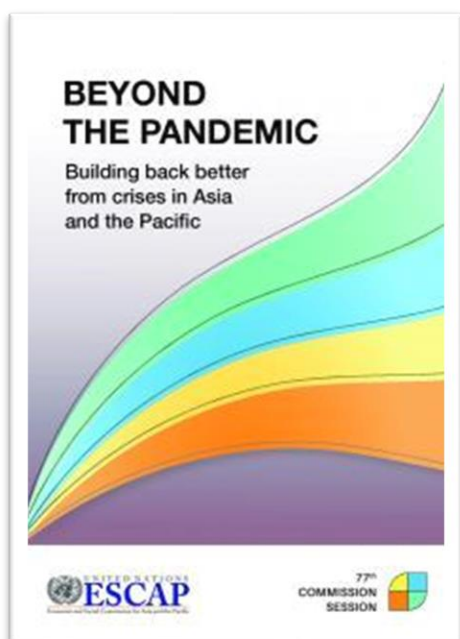


Launch of the 2021 Theme Study
“Beyond the Pandemic: Building Back Better from Crises in Asia and the Pacific”
11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. (UTC+7), Tuesday 20 April 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the worst crisis in Asia and the Pacific since World War II. Across the region, countries have suffered sudden economic contractions such as interruptions to trade, broken supply chains, and the collapse of international tourism – leading to widespread job losses and increases in poverty. In all countries, the economic shock caused by the pandemic has exposed many structural weaknesses and fault-lines – notably in health and social protection systems, in digital connectivity and skills, as well as the extent to which production and consumption patterns have been destroying the environment. As countries now work to stem the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, they also need to address these weaknesses to build back better.



The theme study for the 77th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific analyses the socio-economic effects of the pandemic, takes stock of action so far, and sets out a policy agenda for building back better grounded in regional cooperation and centred around four critical interconnected areas: broadening social protection; investing in a sustained recovery; strengthening connectivity and supply chains; and mending a broken relationship with nature.

Particularly, throughout the South-east Asian region, the pandemic has disrupted economic activities in the sectors of retail, and export-oriented industries like manufacturing, as well as labour-intensive activities and businesses that rely heavily on international supply chains. Export-dependent countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam are heavily reliant on global and regional trade flows.

Some countries were more successful than others in containing the spread and impact of the virus. State of emergency in its major cities were declared to contain the spread of the pandemic. But imposing travel restrictions followed up by much stricter mobility and locked-down measures had widespread negative economic along with increased social distress throughout the much of the region.

The launch of the 2021 Theme Study will likewise feature a breakout session highlighting subregional priority areas and perspectives of South-East Asia. Questions to be addressed include:

- Against the multi-dimensional impact brought on by COVID-19, what are the pathways to addressing security-development challenges in Southeast Asia?
- How can ASEAN realise the SDGs after the pandemic?
- What are issues that need to be addressed regarding monitoring the post-pandemic recovery in ASEAN?

Register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/htZ9cPZP40>

Programme

Launch of the 2021 Theme Study

- 11:00 – 11:02 Welcome and introduction
- 11:02 - 11:20 Remarks by Ms Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, followed by Q&A

Development seminar hosted by ESCAP Subregional Office for South-East Asia

- 11:20 - 11:30 *Beyond the Pandemic: Building back better from crisis in South-east Asia*
Rony Soerakoesoemah
Head, Subregional Office for South-East Asia, ESCAP

- 11:30 - 12:00 Speakers:

Topic: Deepening political and security regional cooperation in a post-pandemic environment

Dr Mely Caballero Anthony
Professor of International Relations
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University

Topic: Realising the SDGs after the pandemic

Dr Teh Lip Li
Senior Fellow
ASEAN Studies Centre

Topic: Monitoring the post-pandemic recovery in ASEAN

Dr Aladdin Rillo
Senior Economic Advisor
Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia

- 12:00 - 12:10 *Q&A session*
Moderator: So Jeong Lee
Junior Programme Officer, ESCAP

- 12:10 - 12:15 *Closing and conclusion*
Rony Soerakoesoemah
Head, Subregional Office for South-East Asia, ESCAP

Profile of Speakers



Dr Mely Caballero Anthony is Professor of International Relations, Head of Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies; President's Chair in International Relations and Security Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Prof. Anthony's research interests include regionalism and multilateralism in Asia-Pacific, human security and non-traditional security, conflict prevention and global governance. She has published extensively on a broad range of security issues in Asia-Pacific in peer-reviewed journals and international academic press. Her books, include: *Negotiating Governance on Non-Traditional Security in Southeast Asia and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), *An Introduction to Non-Traditional Security Studies*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016), *Asia on the Move* (Japan: JCIE, 2015), and *Human Security and Climate Change* (London: Routledge, 2014).



Dr Teh Lip Li is Senior Fellow at ASEAN Studies Centre of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. Her interests include regionalism and multilateralism, institutions, human security, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, sustainability (defined broadly), public diplomacy, advocacy, and conflict. She has also been a lecturer of the MA and PhD in International Development Studies at Chulalongkorn University. She previously worked at the ASEAN Secretariat.



Dr Aladdin D. Rillo is Senior Economic Advisor of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, Indonesia. He was the Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Economic Community from 2018 to 2021. Dr. Rillo was a Senior Economist with the Asian Development Bank Institute in Tokyo where he designed and administered capacity building training and policy dialogue on development issues. He had worked at the ASEAN Secretariat for more than ten years where he served in various positions. Dr. Rillo has written and published extensively on the ASEAN economy and on the broader economic and finance issues. Dr. Rillo holds PhD and MA degrees in economics from the University of Hawaii.