



Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana
Under-Secretary-General of United Nations and Executive Secretary of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Keynote remarks
The 5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue
on Enhancing Complementarities
between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and
the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Wednesday 31 March 2021
Virtual Meeting, UNCC
13:00 to 13:30, Bangkok

Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

Excellency Dato' Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Fifth High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and ESCAP.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents one of the most profound challenges to socio-economic development in our region, and beyond.

The ongoing pandemic-induced crisis has underscored the importance of harnessing multilateral partnerships in our recovery plans and programmes.

ESCAP, along with the UN family, has been working closely with Governments in our region in promoting and enhancing regional cooperation.

To recover better together, it is more important than ever to support effectively and sustainably in gaining regional momentum back for advancing the 2030 Agenda, while building our economies inclusive and societies resilient.

I am pleased to inform that we have been able to assess the pandemic's impact; devise immediate socio-economic response and develop solution-oriented plans for a sustainable recovery.

As the coordinator of the economic and socio-cultural pillars of the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action, ESCAP has been focusing efforts to ensure that COVID-19 response and recovery strategies would not happen at the expense of progress towards the achievement of SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ASEAN and ESCAP have been able to scale up coordination to support our member States.

The new ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025 that was endorsed by the Leaders at the 11th ASEAN-UN Summit in 2020 provides a solid foundation to scale up collaboration and to respond to the socio-cultural opportunities and challenges of ASEAN.

The Plan of Action identifies an actionable framework for both the UN and ASEAN to develop joint programmes and activities.

The UN Secretary-General at that Summit expressed our support to the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and readiness to work with ASEAN Member States to build resilience, improve preparedness and safeguard the environment, calling the pandemic an opportunity to build back better.

This is a key planning document for UN entities to deliver on joint actions on the ground for people, planet and prosperity.

By forging a strong regional development partnership, our joint work is clearly showing tangible results.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fifth Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021 highlights that the region is falling short of its 2020 milestones for all the 17 SDGs.

The region has made significant progress in good health and well-being (Goal 3), which may partly explain its relative success in reducing the health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its population.

Yet despite these hard-won gains, the region continues to face challenges, such as providing an adequate healthcare workforce, reducing premature deaths and improving mental health.

In the ASEAN, the Report indicates that member States are making significant progress on several SDGs such as no poverty (Goal 1), quality education (Goal 4), clean water and sanitation (Goal 6) and industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9).

However, with respect to the other goals, progress needs to be further accelerated such as in climate and environment related areas (Goal 13) which are distressingly regressing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ESCAP has been engaging with ASEAN extensively on the development of a recovery framework that is fully aligned with the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, including through a series of High-level dialogues.

For example, ESCAP participated in the first ASEAN Socio-cultural Community or ASCC Partnership Conference organized by the ASEAN Secretariat.

The meeting highlighted the priority activities under the ASEAN Socio-cultural community that addresses the COVID-19 recovery in the various sectoral work plans as well as through the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework.

I am pleased to inform that ESCAP's on-going work relates to the proposed initiatives in the sectors of disaster management, environment, social welfare and development, and women empowerment.

ESCAP will continue to work with the ASEAN Secretariat, ASCC sectoral working groups, and member States to further intensify cooperation in support of ASEAN's sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery.

Furthermore, ESCAP will soon be collaborating with the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue and partners to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

Together, innovative and impactful regional initiatives will be implemented with the ASEAN sectoral bodies to deliver the five priorities of the Complementarities Roadmap.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very encouraged to see the number of partners attending this year's Dialogue.

It is reassuring that support is being provided to ASEAN and member States with regards to advancing the 2030 Agenda and in recovering better together from the pandemic.

I look forward to hearing the recommendations and actions to deliver the priority areas and flagship initiatives of the Complementarities.

I wish all of you a very fruitful deliberation.

Thank you.