

2021 JOINT STATEMENT OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Issued on 31 March 2021

1. The 25th ASCC Council Meeting was held on 31 March 2021, via video conference under the ASEAN Chairmanship of Brunei Darussalam.
2. The Meeting extended full support to Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship with its theme of 'We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper', and look forward to the realisation of the three priorities identified: (i) harnessing the caring nature of ASEAN to build a harmonious and resilient community with the people at its centre (A Caring Community); (ii) preparing and adapting for the future to ensure that ASEAN remains relevant and resilient to overcome existing and future challenges and threats (A Prepared Community); and (iii) creating opportunities for people to benefit through initiatives that enhance the sustainable prosperity of the region (A Prosperous Community). The Meeting commended the areas of focus, including Health and Development, Environment and Climate Change, Social Welfare and Development, Education, Youth and Sports, Culture and Information, Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, Human Resources Development, as well as the follow-up to the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the ASCC Blueprint 2025.
3. The Meeting noted with appreciation the ASCC Sectoral Bodies and stakeholders' continued commitments in caring for the ASEAN people by seizing current and future opportunities and addressing challenges, such as economic uncertainties, public health emergencies and environmental issues towards shared prosperity. The Meeting agreed to forge ahead to better organise regional efforts and guide ASEAN as it progresses with its Community building efforts, in tandem with the ASEAN Political-Security Community Pillar and ASEAN Economic Community Pillar. The Meeting supported Brunei Darussalam's proposal to establish a Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD) so that the whole ASEAN Community is more coordinated, resilient and prepared for the future.
4. The Meeting commended the completion of the MTR of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 undertaken by SOCA with support from ASCC Sectoral Bodies, with the guidance of the ASEAN Secretariat, which have been invaluable in assessing the progress nationally and regionally towards achieving the commitments of the ASCC Blueprint 2025. The Meeting encouraged all ASCC Sectoral Bodies to further contribute to enhancing the implementation of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 and to strengthen cross-pillar engagement on cross-cutting issues through the implementation of their respective post-2020 Work Plans (Programmes). The Meeting welcomed the proposed establishment of a Roadmap and Terms of Reference for the High-Task Force (HLTF) for the ASEAN Community's Post 2025 Vision, as mandated by the Ha Noi Declaration on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision.
5. The Meeting recognised that the ASCC Council's role should be expanded to look into ASCC related cooperation with Dialogue Partners and beyond, as part of maintaining ASEAN centrality on ASEAN-led frameworks and ensure coherence and consistency in policies. Towards this, the Meeting encouraged ASCC Sectoral Bodies to look into possible expansion of platforms with Dialogue Partners through +1 and +3 mechanisms. The Meeting agreed to establish an Innovation Platform Dialogue within ASCC. The Meeting recognised that these mechanisms will further strengthen the agendas towards ASEAN community-building.

6. The Meeting supported the development of the Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy that is expected to provide sharper focus by looking at the policy state on the potential of a care economy and to reframe more comprehensive and enabling ASEAN policies. This will also support and complement the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan and the ASEAN post-2025 vision.
7. The Meeting underscored the importance of youth development and commended the spirit of volunteerism amongst the ASEAN youths and welcomed the preparations for the youth-led project: ASEANWalk 2022, while building a caring and sharing ASEAN Community. The Meeting also looked forward to the establishment of the ASEAN Aid which is expected to imbue ASEAN citizens with a sense of regional agendas and greater awareness as well as expanding public's mindshare on ASEAN developments. The Meeting also noted that the Financial Rules for the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief (ADMER) Fund will be revised to allow the public to contribute to the ADMER Fund.
8. The Meeting looked forward to the timely adoption of the Regional Policy Framework on Fostering Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a Sense of Regional Agendas among Peoples of ASEAN at the 38th ASEAN Summit in October 2021. The Meeting also noted with appreciation the regional initiatives for the promotion of mental health, sustainable climate, poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming, readiness for the future of work, social work, sports development, children's rights, and information and awareness.
9. The Meeting endorsed in principle the ASCC Sectoral Bodies' respective Work Plans (Programmes) 2021-2025, and recommended for their notation by ASEAN Leaders at the 38th ASEAN Summit. The post-2020 Work Plans (Programme) are expected to ensure continuity in all ASEAN work towards realising the shared goals of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the Master Plan on Connectivity 2025, and the Initiative on ASEAN Integration, as well as taking into account the relevant documents related to COVID-19 pandemic challenges.
10. The Meeting noted the schedule of the ASCC Fact-Finding Mission to Timor-Leste and commended the ASCC Sectoral Bodies for opening up capacity-building opportunities for Timor-Leste to participate in. The Meeting noted on the progress of seconding ASCC officers to respective Permanent Missions to ASEAN.
11. The Meeting conveyed deep appreciation to Brunei Darussalam for the effective Chairmanship and excellent arrangements for the 25th ASCC Council Meeting and looked forward to the 26th ASCC Council Meeting in September 2021.