

2021 ASEAN LEADERS' DECLARATION ON THE BLUE ECONOMY

Adopted on 26 October 2021

WE, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, on the occasion of the 38th ASEAN Summit on 26 October 2021,

RECOGNISING the expansive, transformative, long-term, and multidimensional ramifications of the unprecedented Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic throughout the region and the need for ASEAN's collective efforts and holistic response to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 towards achieving a robust, resilient and comprehensive recovery for the peoples of ASEAN;

FURTHER RECOGNISING the challenges presented by the rapidly changing global and regional geo-political and socio-economic landscapes and non-traditional threats as well as other challenges, including climate change and sea-level rise, and the opportunities emerging from advancements in technology and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as well as the growing interest of other countries and regional and international organisations to engage with ASEAN, through peaceful and constructive dialogue;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the ocean and seas are key drivers of economic growth and innovation, while taking into account the need to ensure ocean sustainability and rules-based ocean governance;

NOTING the emerging significance of the Blue Economy and the different perspectives on the concept;

FURTHER NOTING that the Blue Economy is a multifaceted and cross-cutting concept that involves all three pillars of the ASEAN Community;

EMPHASISING the need for ASEAN to reach a common understanding on the Blue Economy as well as identify the scope of cooperation and activities that ASEAN Member States are comfortable to undertake together, and with external partners;

FURTHER EMPHASISING the universal and unified character of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and reaffirming that the 1982 UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector, and that its integrity needs to be maintained;

UNDERSCORING the importance of alignment with existing international frameworks such as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making use of existing approaches and tools available from international organisations that support the Blue Economy, and recognising the importance of ongoing work to develop an international legally binding instrument under the 1982 UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction; and

AFFIRMING the importance of upholding international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the 1982 UNCLOS, as well as ASEAN's shared values and norms as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) for enhancing mutual trust and confidence, promoting dialogue and cooperation in inter-state relations, and taking a multilateral approach in addressing emerging challenges to maintain and promote peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region,

HEREBY DECLARE TO:

1. **AFFIRM** ASEAN's commitment to taking the lead on regional cooperation in relation to the Blue Economy;
2. **AGREE** that the Blue Economy for ASEAN refers to the sustainable, resilient and inclusive use, governance, management and conservation of oceans, seas as well as marine and coastal resources and ecosystems for economic growth across various sectors such as fishery, aquaculture, maritime transport, renewable energy, tourism, climate change, and research and development while improving human well-being and social equity;
3. **AFFIRM** that international law, as reflected in the 1982 UNCLOS, provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources, while protecting biodiversity and the marine environment;
4. **ENDEAVOUR** to cooperate in the promotion of the Blue Economy by engaging and partnering with relevant stakeholders such as private sector, including micro, small and medium enterprises, financial institutions, youth, scientific community and academia;
5. **ENSURE** any cooperation is in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, the 1982 UNCLOS, other relevant UN treaties and conventions including those of the International Maritime Organization, the ASEAN Charter and relevant ASEAN treaties and agreements, as well as ASEAN's shared values, norms and principles, including strengthening ASEAN Centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, a rules-based framework anchored in international law, complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks, good governance, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, equality, mutual respect, mutual trust, and mutual benefit;
6. **AGREE** to explore cooperation on the Blue Economy in areas such as: marine environmental protection; Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing; marine and coastal ecosystems protection; sustainable aquaculture and fishing practices; sustainable production and consumption; biotechnology; marine industrial development; marine pollution; marine litter and plastic pollution; food security; trade; coastal tourism and heritage conservation; maritime transport; security and safety of navigation; marine science; ocean energy; sea and ocean governance and management; data, statistics, and data analytics; as well as capacity-building, digitisation and innovation;
7. **STRENGTHEN** cooperation among ASEAN Member States to pursue greater understanding of the Blue Economy, including through workshops and seminars, research and education, capacity building and training, and sharing of information and best practices, as well as other appropriate measures that are in line with obligations under international law, national laws and regulations of the respective ASEAN Member States;
8. **WELCOME** ASEAN's external partners to support ASEAN's development of the Blue Economy, with ASEAN as the driving force;

9. **TASK** the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) to oversee the overall implementation of this Declaration and explore and develop modalities for cooperation on the Blue Economy, which may include developing a regional action plan, and identifying the relevant Lead Sectoral Body, with the support of the Joint Consultative Meeting (JCM); and
10. **FURTHER TASK** the ACC to regularly update on its efforts, in consultation with the Lead Sectoral Body.

ADOPTED on the Twenty-sixth Day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-One in a single original copy in the English language.