

2021 ASEAN LEADERS' STATEMENT ON ADVANCING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN ASEAN

Issued 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 held via videoconference on 26 October 2021;

RECALLING the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan, adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 37th ASEAN Summit held in November 2020 via video conference, which under the Broad Strategy 4 on Accelerating Inclusive Digital Transformation calls for leveraging on the momentum and imperative of digital transformation and seizing the enormous opportunities presented by digital technologies to boost economy and improve society in the post-COVID-19 era;

RECALLING FURTHER the ASEAN Declaration on Industrial Transformation to Industry 4.0 in 2019 which reaffirms ASEAN's commitment to advance the Industry 4.0 through the development of the Consolidated Strategy on the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) for ASEAN as well as explore the possibility of establishing new mechanisms and open platforms to support government, academia and industry in accelerating the ASEAN transformation to Industry 4.0;

RECOGNISING that ASEAN should transform itself into a leading digital community to harness the tremendous potential of digitalisation which brings many benefits to ASEAN, including contributing to the increase of business opportunities, enhancing the variety and quality of goods and services, boosting productivity and efficiency, and improving diversification and competitiveness across segments of the economy;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that digital transformation is a cross-cutting issue that requires coordinated actions from multiple stakeholders from across all ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and Community Pillars to address effectively;

COGNISANT of the challenges in implementing digital transformation in ASEAN and unlocking its full benefits such as the existing digital divide within the region, the increase of cyber threats, the need to build trust within ASEAN Member States to further enhance digital integration and connectivity, and the overwhelming speed and scale of changes that expose many government policies and regulatory gaps;

RECALLING the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Cybersecurity Cooperation adopted at the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore which called for closer cooperation and coordination among ASEAN Member States on Cybersecurity Policy Development and capacity building initiatives, the promotion of voluntary, non-binding cyber norms, as well as the development of a peaceful, secure and resilient rules-based cyberspace to realise the vision of a peaceful, secure and resilient regional cyberspace that serves as an enabler of economic progress, enhanced regional connectivity and betterment of living standards for all;

NOTING that various ASEAN sectoral fora have called for greater support for digital transformation including through the ACRF (2020), ASEAN Digital Masterplan (2021-2025), ASEAN Digital Integration Framework Action Plan (2019-2025), ASEAN Agreement on Electronic Commerce, (2019), ASEAN ICT Master Plan 2020, Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and the Consolidated Strategy on 4IR for ASEAN to be adopted in 2021;

RE-EMPHASISING the need to synergise relevant undertakings across ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and Community Pillars to avoid duplication of efforts, while ensuring that existing and future initiatives in advancing digital transformation are coordinated and streamlined;

ACKNOWLEDGING the work done to foster greater regional digital transformation cooperation and capacity building efforts by various regional platforms such as ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting (ADGMIN), ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting (AEM), ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity, ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ARF ISM on ICTs Security), ASEAN Cybersecurity Coordinating Committee (ASEAN Cyber-CC), ASEAN Network Security Action Council (ANSAC), and other ASEAN sectoral fora, where relevant;

TAKING NOTE of the initiatives to advance digital transformation under other multilateral fora, including the United Nations:

DO HEREBY AGREE TO

DEEPEN COOPERATION across ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and Community Pillars for a strategic and holistic coordinated approach to enable inclusive and accelerated digital transformation to drive the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery and build long-term resilience against future challenges and crises, including through implementation of the ACRF, the Consolidated Strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) for ASEAN, Bandar Seri Begawan Roadmap: An ASEAN Digital Transformation Agenda to Accelerate ASEAN's Economic Recovery and Digital Economy Integration, the ASEAN Digital Integration Framework Action Plan (2019-2025), the ASEAN Agreement on E-Commerce, the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025, the MPAC 2025, as well as leverage on the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) to promote smart and sustainable urban development;

REINFORCE cybersecurity cooperation and capacity building under the coordination of the ASEAN Cyber-CC to advance the continued development of a secure, resilient, interoperable and rules-based cyber space as a key component of digital transformation, by encouraging policy coherence across the sectors, strengthening ASEAN centrality in the region's cybersecurity architecture, and enhancing alignment of regional cybersecurity policy;

DEEPEN the commitment to promote quality, accessibility and affordability of digital connectivity in ASEAN, enabled by interoperability, which is critical for establishing a leading and competitive digital economy;

IMPLEMENT the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025 and its vision for ASEAN as a leading digital community and economic bloc, powered by secure and transformative digital services, technologies and ecosystem, through the complementary efforts of governments, regulators, and market players;

STRENGTHEN regional digital integration and transformation by commencing negotiations for an ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement by 2025 under the coordination of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council, for a coherent, harmonised, and rules-based approach to progress ASEAN's cooperation in the digital ecosystem;

PREPARE FOR a digitally and future ready society in ASEAN that is equipped with the skills and knowledge to participate confidently in digital transformation, among others, through capacity building for all, in particular Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the most marginalised, towards an inclusive digital society;

PROMOTE cooperation and partnerships with ASEAN's external partners through various ASEAN-led mechanisms, international organisations, private sector and trade associations to advance digital transformation in all dimensions of ASEAN Community building; and

TASK Community Pillars and ASEAN sectoral bodies to harness ongoing digital transformation, accelerate existing work on digitalisation to prepare for the future, and institutionalise sustainable digital transformation through policy coordination, technical cooperation, and capacity building efforts, so that ASEAN's efforts are focused, effective, and holistic, in line with the theme of ASEAN 2021 – "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper".