

2021 ASEAN STRATEGIC POLICY FRAMEWORK ON PROMOTING AN ADAPTIVE ASEAN COMMUNITY OF GREATER UNDERSTANDING, TOLERANCE AND A SENSE OF REGIONAL AGENDAS AMONG THE PEOPLES OF ASEAN

Adopted on 26 October 2021

WE, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (hereinafter referred to as ASEAN) representing the peoples of the Member States of ASEAN, representing the peoples of the Member States of ASEAN, attending the 38th ASEAN Summit on 26 October in 2021, Brunei Darussalam;

REAFFIRMING the goals, purposes and principles enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the respective Blueprints of ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, and the Ha Noi Declaration on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision, among others, towards building a peaceful and harmonious community, and to further strengthen shared peace-oriented values in the region;

RECALLING the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society to support sustainable, social and human development in concert with upstream efforts to promote a culture of peace and intercultural understanding, and a culture supporting the values of moderation;

ACKNOWLEDGING Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship priorities and deliverables in 2021 under the theme "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper", that imbues an adaptive spirit of preparedness and resilience to build a caring and prosperous region, reflective of ASEAN's commitments with renewed aspiration in consolidating and strengthening ASEAN's common goals;

NOTING during the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore in April 2018, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam raised the importance of fostering greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN in light of global and regional uncertainties, and highlighted the value of education and sports, greater information accessibility, and initiatives to showcase the benefits of living in harmony are some examples to foster greater understanding and tolerance;

COGNISANT of the prevalence of socio-cultural challenges such as but not limited to, the lack of respect for life and, discrimination, marginalisation, gender biases, the radicalisation of views, extremism, and the proliferation of fake news and misinformation create a deleterious climate of intolerance and distrust;

RECOGNISING the continued efforts of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Pillar to foster greater understanding, tolerance and regional solidarity through a multitude of regional policy initiatives and project implementation;

ENCOURAGING enhanced collaboration amongst relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, and complementing other regional and international efforts, in the cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination, to reaffirm commitment towards an open, inclusive and adaptive ASEAN;

EMPHASISING the importance of developing an overarching document that lends greater coherence and narrative in guiding the efforts of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Pillar and its stakeholders to promote greater understanding, tolerance and to imbue a sense of regional agendas among the peoples of ASEAN;

DO HEREBY ADOPT THIS STRATEGIC POLICY FRAMEWORK AS FOLLOWS:

VISION

1. To foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas that enhance regional solidarity and engender ASEAN Identity among the peoples of ASEAN towards promoting ASEAN as an adaptive “Community of Opportunities for All” that celebrates diversity, tolerance and inclusivity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2. Challenges to foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas are multi-faceted. Conflicts, intolerance and schisms may arise due to a clash of cultures, beliefs and values, among others. They may also fester as a result of trust deficit. Non-traditional security threats such as the impacts of climate change, natural and human-induced disasters, health emergencies including pandemics may have the potential to exacerbate tensions. Other asymmetric threats including the proliferation of fake news and its negative impact, hate speech and extremist views may also contribute to a climate of distrust. These fault lines are not just underpinned by political-security aspects because more often than not, the underlying causes are differences in the culture or socioeconomic factors.
3. Cognisant of the importance of maintaining peace, stability and social harmony especially in uncertain times, we shall adopt a set of overarching principles to guide and coordinate our efforts so as to future proof our approach as follows:
 - i. Enhance communication and collaboration among ASEAN sectoral bodies to identify nexuses that promote greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas to minimise silo approaches;
 - ii. Direct greater attention to our common interests, shared goals and visions, towards nurturing a sense of belonging and unity among the peoples of ASEAN, as a celebration of our diversity;
 - iii. Amplify and socialise greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas through strategic communications and positive narratives;
 - iv. Value and encourage activities that promote peace and provide a safe space to inculcate greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas’ norms and character-building development especially among the youth, children, women and family institutions;
 - v. Encourage inclusive and universal participation of ASEAN societies at all levels in greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas’ conversations;
 - vi. Nurture greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas’ mindset in concert with upstream efforts by the ASEAN Culture of Prevention.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

4. The Framework identifies 3 strategic outcomes to promote greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas, namely:
 - (a) A Cohesive, Tolerant and Caring Community that is supported by an enhanced whole-of-ASEAN nexus approach;
 - (b) A Future-Proofed Culture that is Responsive, Resilient, Gender Sensitive, Inclusive and Prepared by mainstreaming greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas' awareness in regional policy considerations and activity implementation;
 - (c) A Dynamic, Sustainable and Inclusive Ecosystem of Stakeholders to foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas' value-centric ASEAN identity and communities through forging partnerships.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

5. The Framework further identifies 3 key strategic initiatives that can be implemented to support the desired Strategic Outcomes, which are to:
 - (a) Create and develop a Strategy Playbook that outlines best practices and set value-based norms for greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas and identify potential nexuses for ASEAN Sectoral Bodies to mainstream greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas;
 - (b) Mainstream the Strategic Policy Framework in the works of the ASEAN Working Group on Culture of Prevention to foster mindset shift and to promote upstream activities for greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas;
 - (c) Collaborate with Dialogue Partners, ASEAN Entities and other external partners including youth groups and women's groups to implement activities that promote creative greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas.

APPROACH

6. ASEAN must adopt a nexus approach towards promoting greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas by way of advocating a paradigm shift from treating underlying issues as sector-centric to considering them as vectors that may work across a range of policy areas to foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas.

Having identified these vectors across the sectors, respective ASEAN Sectoral Bodies need to:

- i. better facilitate and support inter-sectoral collaborations so that greater impact with such efforts can be achieved; and

- ii. identify existing areas that can add value to the ongoing efforts and propose new areas which can be value-created to promote greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas. For example, the lack of understanding and tolerance is more often than not due to a lack of proper or clear communications and lack of a safe space to address differences. To do so entails more than just efforts to disseminate timely and accurate information, but also the need to create purposeful space for difficult conversations to take place and to expand toolboxes to include strategic communications to counter misplaced views and violent narratives.
7. In considering the above modality, it will be useful to identify various nexuses to foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas. Nexuses could include, but are not limited to the youth, gender, marginalised groups, education, health and social protection, sports, information and media, creative economy, climate change and disaster management, creative and sustainable peace, technology trends among others. Based on the identified nexuses, relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies could collaborate through regular interfaces to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration (within ASCC as well as with APSC and AEC Pillars) and to mainstream greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas in work plans and programmes, activity implementations and policy formulations.
8. Recognising that our people, especially the youth, are not just beneficiaries and passive recipients of interventions but also persons with lived experiences and expertise, it is important that efforts to foster greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas' value-centric ASEAN citizenry and communities must be people-oriented and people-centred, and that universal participation of all relevant stakeholders can be facilitated in promoting greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas. Furthermore, efforts must continue to build strategic partnerships, develop proactive stakeholder engagements and ensure robust and sustainable project management with effective performance monitoring.

IMPLEMENTATION

9. Following the implementation of this Strategic Framework, a Strategy Playbook will be developed to further delineate nexuses in cross-cutting areas such as people-to-people exchanges, strategic communications, digitalisation, identity-building, youth engagement, gender mainstreaming and character-building, with the view to forging a synergistic nexus approach in the formulation of policies, projects and programmes that promote greater understanding, tolerance and a sense of regional agendas' norms to transform individual and societal behaviours as well as building an adaptive ASEAN Community of greater understanding, tolerance and regional solidarity.
10. The development of the Strategy Playbook shall be informed by best practices and lessons learnt from the ASCC Sectoral Bodies, the Working Group on ASEAN Culture of Prevention and external parties including but not limited to peace experts, academics, youth, women, media, interest groups and civil society organisations who work in communities that tackle asymmetric security issues such as climate change, the lack of respect for life, discrimination, and marginalisation, gender biases, the radicalisation of views, extremism, the proliferation of fake news and misinformation, among others. To this end, the envisaged Playbook will outline an overview, identify the nexuses, delineate the strategies to implement the nexus approach, highlight case studies that exemplify a Cohesive, Tolerant and Caring Community and broach the development of baseline monitoring and evaluation, following the adoption of the Framework.

Therefore, **WE TASK** the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Pillar to oversee the overall process of the implementation of this ASEAN Strategic Framework with the support of the ASEAN Political-Security Community and ASEAN Economic Community Pillars.

ADOPTED in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, this Twenty Sixth Day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-One, in a single original copy in the English Language.