

2024 JOINT STATEMENT OF THE 31ST ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING

Adopted in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR on 24 March 2024

1. The 31st ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Council Meeting was held on 24 March 2024, in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, under the ASEAN Chairmanship of Lao PDR.
2. The Meeting extended full support to the Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship with its theme of "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience", focusing on two sub-themes, namely "Enhancing Connectivity" and "Enhancing Resilience". Under "Enhancing Connectivity," four priorities were identified, namely: (1) Integrating and Connecting Economies, (2) Forging an Inclusive and Sustainable Future, (3) Transforming for the Digital Future, and (4) Culture and Arts: Promoting the Role of ASEAN Culture and the Arts for Inclusion and Sustainability. Five priorities were identified on "Enhancing Resilience", namely: (1) Development of Strategic Plans to implement the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, (2) Enhancing ASEAN Centrality, (3) Promoting Environmental Cooperation: Climate Change Resilience, (4) Women and Children: Promoting the Role of Women and Children Towards the Transformation of Behaviourism in ASEAN, and (5) Health: Transforming ASEAN Health Development Resilience in a New Context. The Meeting looked forward to the successful outcomes of the Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship to enhance ASEAN's connectivity and resilience, including through the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.
3. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the progress of implementation of the ASCC Blueprint 2025, including follow-up actions of various declarations under the ASCC Pillar. The Meeting noted that 97 percent of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 Strategic Measures have been completed or are in progress, and commended the ASCC on the achievement. As the End-Term Review of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 has started, the Meeting urged ASCC Sectoral Bodies to accelerate the implementation of their respective sectoral workplans and establish clear alignment to the ASCC Blueprint objectives.
4. The Meeting commended the successful development and launching of the ASCC Database for Monitoring and Evaluation (ADME) System which underscores the importance of data and evidence for ASCC policy-making, planning and implementation of initiatives, and strengthening partnerships and cooperation. The Meeting acknowledged the importance of the ADME System in providing timely data for monitoring the ASCC Blueprint 2025, strengthening statistical capacity, and enhancing coordination for improved availability of comprehensive and accurate socio-cultural data within ASCC.
5. The Meeting noted the progress of the development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan which encompasses the areas of culture and arts, civil service matters, information, education, promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, youth, social welfare and development, sports, rural development and poverty eradication, environment, disaster management, labour, and health. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group to Develop the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan which will provide strategic guidance and facilitate engagement with ASCC stakeholders for the development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan.
6. The Meeting discussed the strategic directions for ASCC and shared views on the development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan as well as the importance of incorporating the findings and recommendations from the ASCC End-Term Review of the Blueprint 2025. The Meeting underlined the need for stakeholder engagement as well as cross-sectoral and cross-pillar engagement on the development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan to shape the future of ASCC beyond 2025.

7. The Meeting expressed its pleasure for the direct engagement with fellow sectoral colleagues during the ASCC Council's Interface with the Ministers of ASCC Sectoral Bodies of the Lao PDR for the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and highlighted the need for better cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination and synergies, as well as taking measures and initiative further in empowering youth; strengthening regional health architecture through ensuring the highest attainable of health; strengthen PPR and collaboration between health and finance; promoting climate and disaster resilience; and fostering the care economy to support vulnerable populations. The Meeting noted the views and recommendations of Ministers and representatives of the Lao PDR's ASCC Sectoral Bodies on the development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan which reinforced the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement to comprehensively capture and understand sectoral realities, trends, challenges and opportunities that may impact the ASCC beyond 2025. The Meeting urged ASCC Sectoral Bodies' active and timely participation in the development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan.
8. The Meeting looked forward to the ASEAN Leaders' adoption of the Vang Vieng Declaration on Promoting the Small and Medium-sized Cultural Enterprises aligned with the Green Growth for Sustainable Development at the 44th and 45th ASEAN Summit, which recognizes the significant role of ASEAN culture and the arts in promoting inclusion and sustainability, and community-based small and medium-sized cultural enterprises (SMCEs) as vital sources of innovation and creativity to support local culture and its products.
9. The Meeting reiterated the importance of finalising the Establishment Agreement and the operationalisation of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) as well as the importance of continued collaboration between Health and Finance Minister to strengthening financing for health emergencies. It commended the convening of the first ASEAN Finance and Health Ministers' Meeting (AFHMM) in Jakarta as a stepping stone to build closer collaboration between Health and Finance sector and looked forward to the convening of the 2nd AFHMM. It also looked forward to the adoption of the Framework on ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System (APHECS) which reflects an overarching coordination system on public health emergencies that focuses on preparedness and response, under the directive of ASEAN Health Sectoral Body. The Framework reaffirms ASEAN commitment in establishing an effective mechanism for coordinating public health emergencies through collective and concerted national efforts, as well as strengthened regional and international cooperation.
10. Recognising the significant role of media in enhancing awareness, fostering ASEAN identity and ensuring the dissemination of accurate and reliable information, the Meeting commended ASCC Sectoral Bodies' efforts in strengthening information and media governance in ASEAN, and looked forward to the notation of the ASEAN Guideline on Management of Government Information in Combating Fake News and Disinformation in the Media, Vision Statement by AMRI - ASEAN 2035: Toward a Transformative, Responsive and Resilient Information and Media Sector, and the Da Nang Declaration on Media: From Information to Knowledge for a Resilient and Responsive ASEAN.
11. The Meeting noted the ongoing efforts in ASEAN's unwavering commitment to address climate change and looked forward to the notation of the ASEAN Community-based Climate Action which underlined the importance of collaborative efforts involving multi-stakeholders' engagement, particularly the role of the local community in achieving climate goals. The Meeting also looked forward to the full operationalization of the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change (ACCC).

12. The Meeting underscored the importance to address the transboundary haze pollution in the region and the need to strengthen ASEAN's cooperation in this aspect. We reaffirmed our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) and looked forward to the full operationalization of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACC THPC).
13. The Meeting acknowledged the significance of strengthening disaster risk management systems to deliver anticipatory action and looked forward to the notation of the Ha Long Ministerial Statement on the Strengthening of ASEAN Anticipatory Actions in Disaster Management. The Statement reaffirms ASEAN's commitment to support the implementation of the ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management and underscores the importance of enhancing the planning, operations, and delivery of anticipatory actions in disaster preparedness and response at the regional and national levels. The Meeting also noted the Report on Transboundary Disaster Risk Assessment and Scenario Planning for Tropical Cyclones and Droughts in the ASEAN Region which provides recommendations for ASEAN Member States in enhancing disaster risk management actions; and the ASEAN Disaster Law and Public Health Emergency Mapping and Guidelines which emphasises a comprehensive and multi-hazard approach, and underscores the significance of incorporating opportunities within disaster risk management frameworks to effectively address public health emergencies. The Meeting further highlighted the importance to implement the ASEAN Declaration on Sustainable Resilience to strengthen a resilient ASEAN Community.
14. The Meeting looked forward to the notation of the ASEAN-ERIA Study on Promoting and Safeguarding Traditional Sports and Games in ASEAN: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies which underscores the crucial role of traditional sports and games in fostering cultural diversity, and emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts to safeguard ASEAN's intangible cultural heritage. The meeting further highlighted the importance of nurturing the region's shared civilizational values as part of the effort to strengthen ASEAN Identity, including but not limited to, through the convening of ASEAN Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue Conference (IIDC).
15. The Meeting expressed support for Timor-Leste's preparation to join ASEAN and commended its active participation in the ASEAN Traveling Resource Programme (ATRPP), covering the three ASEAN pillars. The Meeting commended the ASCC's component of the ATRPP, conducted from January to March 2024, which enhanced Timor-Leste's capacity to undertake ASCC's work, meetings, and sectoral priorities and responsibilities, as well as preparations required for hosting and chairing ASEAN meetings.
16. The Meeting conveyed deep appreciation to the Lao PDR for the effective Chairmanship and excellent arrangements for the 31st ASCC Council Meeting, and looked forward to the 32nd ASCC Meeting in September 2024.