

ASEAN Leaders' Statement on ASEAN Connectivity

Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand, 24 October 2009

1. The Heads of State/Government of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) discussed the concept of ASEAN Connectivity at the 15th ASEAN Summit in Cha-am Hua Hin on 24 October 2009.
2. They observed that ASEAN was located at the crossroads of an economically vibrant and growing region bounded by India in the west; China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea in the Northeast; and Australia and New Zealand in the South. ASEAN thus has the potential to physically anchor itself as the transportation, Information and Communication Technology, and tourism hub of this region.
3. Enhancing intra-regional connectivity within ASEAN and its subregional grouping would benefit all ASEAN Member States through enhanced trade, investment, tourism and development. As all of the overland transport linkages will have to go through the mainland Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar, these countries stand to benefit the most through infrastructure development, and the opening up of remote inland and less-developed regions. All these efforts would significantly narrow the development gap within ASEAN.
4. In addition to the tangible economic benefits of ASEAN Connectivity, the linkages created would intensify and strengthen ASEAN Communitybuilding efforts, not only in terms of enhanced regional cooperation and integration, but also through people-to-people contacts. In this regard, the concept of ASEAN Connectivity would also complement the ongoing regional efforts to realize a people-oriented ASEAN Community by 2015 with a focus on fostering a sense of shared cultural and historical linkages.

In order to do this, the Leaders hereby agreed that:

5. It is vital to complete the physical road, rail, air, and sea linkages within ASEAN. Development of infrastructure and multi-modal transport projects such as, inter alia, the ASEAN Highway Network and the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link, should be expedited in parallel with addressing software related issues within relevant existing work plans of ASEAN. Given the importance of the Internet in business, education and development, it is also crucial to complete the ASEAN ICT Master Plan in 2010 to enhance intraregional Information and Communication Technology linkages.
6. The deepening and widening of connectivity in the region would reinforce ASEAN's position as the hub of the East Asian region, which could further be strengthened through realizing the potentials of a broader connectivity in the longer term with its partners in the wider region. In this regard, the Leaders were of the view that this concept of ASEAN connectivity would complement and support integration within ASEAN and within the broader regional framework in East Asia.
7. ASEAN should seek the support of all its Dialogue Partners and other international agencies and development partners to realize the vision of ASEAN Connectivity, including the establishment of an infrastructure development fund for ASEAN. ASEAN should also explore ways to effectively capitalize on existing cooperation funds for infrastructure development with its Dialogue Partners and remain open to future cooperation with other interested parties, as appropriate.
8. An ASEAN High Level Task Force, comprising relevant experts, supported by the ASEAN Secretariat and relevant sectoral bodies, in cooperation with relevant international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), shall be established to study ASEAN's internal and external connectivity, and to develop an ASEAN Master Plan on regional connectivity, that include, among others, innovative infrastructure financing mechanisms, taking into account the work done and planned to ensure optimum synergy rather than duplication of work. In devising the Master Plan, the Task Force should ensure that the limited resources from ASEAN, Dialogue Partners and International Development Banks and Agencies are employed in the most efficient and effective manner to realise our vision. The ASEAN High Level Task Force should consult with the APSC Council, the AEC Council and the ASCC Council before submitting their recommendations to the 17th ASEAN Summit in 2010 through the ASEAN Coordinating Council.