

**COMPREHENSIVE RESULT OF  
EXPERT ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSION  
"THE FUTURE OF ASEAN:  
IN THE POST INDONESIA  
CHAIRMANSHIP"**

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## **I. Existing Condition**

After almost 45 years since the Bangkok Declaration was signed in August 8, 1967, the Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN has been growing significantly, but remains an elite organization. ASEAN has gained some achievements regarding its existence as the longest regional association in this region. ASEAN has also enlarged its members to ten countries, including the CMLV (Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam). As part of global community of nations, ASEAN contributes to free the region from any open conflict. Recently, ASEAN becomes more solid by having the ASEAN Charter as its legal personality that underlines the commitment of each member to implement principles of democracy and good governance, promoting human rights, rule of law, and fundamental freedoms at the national level.

Along with the success story of ASEAN, there are also unresolved problems, challenges, and obstacles because of internal and external factors. ASEAN has certain

characteristics that make it different from other regional cooperation, such orientation of political systems, economic institutions and orientations, culture and religions, and development gaps, including lack of infrastructures. Externally, ASEAN has to face the reality at the international level, which shows the growing numbers of actors, issues, and complex relations and situation, such as the rise of China and India, and the rivalry between the US and China. ASEAN has incorporated the external actors in ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, ASEAN+8 and the East Asia Summit.

## **II. Problems/Gaps**

All the pillars of ASEAN (political and security, economic and socio-cultural) have to deal with different problems. Approaching the ASEAN Community in 2015, ASEAN has serious problems in the context of development gaps, while political decisions do not always support the efforts in reducing the differences and asymmetries within ASEAN.

In the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC) pillar, there are at least four major problems that ASEAN seems to avoid discussing (i.e. it is discussed mostly rhetorically).

1. ASEAN identity
2. People-centeredness
3. Centrality of ASEAN in the new regional architecture
4. Institutional arrangements

Moreover, the ASEAN Economic Community pillar suffers from two other deficits: inadequate infrastructures that cause the slow progress of intra-ASEAN economic development. Besides, building infrastructures is very important to realise the ASEAN Connectivity. The other problem is related to the political and economic institutions in ASEAN that have mostly been unable to implement the principles of democracy and good governance. This causes greater gaps between the people, private sector and the government. While the economic institutions follow the global economy,

the biggest problem for ASEAN is to integrate economically because of a high degree of sovereignty and non-interference among the members.

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community pillar that focuses on how to share and care towards the needs of the people, remains unable to promote human rights not only in the political context, but also in economy. First, the lack of human rights approach is dominated by the state approach (state security). Moreover, this pillar has no clear indicators and parameters due to the long list of problems that are not covered in the two other pillars. Therefore, all of the unresolved problems within the political-security and the economic pillars, such as the causes of poverty, end up there.

### **III. Solutions**

Regarding the unsolved problems within the three pillars, ASEAN has to combine two approaches: deepening and widening, depending on the issues. In the context of political-security pillar, for the time being ASEAN has to conduct an intergovernmental approach, while in the economic pillar it clearly has to stick with the integration method. And in the socio-cultural pillar, ASEAN needs to develop deeper public awareness and promote human rights by shifting gradually state-centred security to people/human security orientation.

### **IV. Recommendations**

1. ASEAN has to treat all the three pillars equally.
2. ASEAN has to provide additional documents (addenda) to bridge the gaps.
3. ASEAN has to formulate indicators and parameters for assessment of the progress in each pillar.
4. ASEAN has to put the people at the centre of its regional development process by revitalizing the ASEAN institutions; otherwise it will remain a lifeless elite organisation in the future.

5. ASEAN has to continue shaping the regional architecture to be able to contribute to the global community of nations. Therefore, the decision making and implementation process within ASEAN needs to be more efficient in the future.