Integrative Chapter for Volume Four: ASEAN's Socio-cultural Community

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The Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) is by a wide measure the most adaptive, re-engineered, and reinvented pillar of the ASEAN Community. Often deemed to be the soft side of development or sectoral cooperation, conflated with technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC)[1], and eclipsed by political–security and economic cooperation for the first 2 decades of ASEAN, socio-cultural cooperation grew out of ideas and concepts of functionalism, neo-functionalism, and was significantly influenced by globalisation. This dimension of regionalism was given the official name 'functional cooperation' in 1987. On the wave of the sustainable development movement, its scope of work was expanded and then labeled 'socio-cultural cooperation' by 2004. The coming of age for the ASCC was the elevation of its status as a legal ASEAN organ granted under the ASEAN Charter in 2007, and at once armed with a stronger sense of purpose by the ASCC Blueprint (2009–2015), and given responsibility for championing and defining the ASEAN Identity.

Former Prime Minister of Thailand Abhisit Vejjajiva in his essay, 'The Critical Importance of Socio-Cultural Community for the Future of ASEAN' (Volume 1), asserts there is no doubt that much attention and focus has been placed on the economic goals, building on the achievement of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), the dominance of economic concerns, the desire to remain competitive and relevant in a region with the giant economies of China and India. However, he contends that expectations are misplaced that the ASEAN economic pillar alone would provide the main driving force towards 'a true and single community in the region'. He asserts that to attain its vision 'would require all of us to look beyond economic cooperation as the main driving force. On the contrary, even the AEC itself will find progress tough to achieve if the peoples of ASEAN are not brought closer socially and culturally'. He finds that aspiring to a

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[1] Originating from the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries by the United Nations General Assembly in 1978 (resolution 33/134), which itself has been renamed South–South Cooperation.

greater notion of social integration will help transform the domestic political agenda and that building on the achievement of the ASCC should be a key force for doing so. Abhisit provides examples of revisiting and returning to the essence of the 'ASEAN Way' as a cooperation modality rooted in the region's cultural roots. Compellingly, he believes that the ASCC pillar is of critical importance for refining and redefining the ASEAN Way in driving ASEAN forward.

Socio-cultural cooperation is a vital and highly complex constituency, poised in the post-2015 period to take a significantly greater role in the ASEAN Community project. Its strengths – and arguably its weaknesses – are its adaptiveness, eclectic nature, ability to mould its persona, and malleability to the political, economic, and social demands of the day. Will these characteristics enhance or constrain achievement of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 and the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it faces the challenges of the ASEAN Community in the next 10 to 15 years?

Governing the ASCC

The ASCC is managed by a ministerial council – the ASCC Council – which is supported by a body of senior officials that coordinates and monitors the work of some 20 sectors, each led at the ministerial level and in turn supported by sectoral senior officials who can form and call upon clusters and groupings of experts and subject-matter specialists, all of whom can in turn draw on an expanding pool of dialogue and external partners, non-governmental organisations, private sector organisations, civil society, and traditional and non-traditional partners. The ASEAN Member States have conferred coordination of the ASCC portfolio preponderantly to ministries that have purview over human development, social development, labour, and cultural sectors.[2] This is not a static configuration and it is a tribute to the ASCC's inclusivity while keeping sight of achieving its goals under the ASCC blueprint. However, this is illustrative of the complexity and elusiveness of classifying and categorising ASEAN's most dynamic and diverse community.

This volume explores recurring, persistent, and emerging themes that helped define the ASCC and frame the key challenges for the ASCC in the next 10 years: the role of

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[2]   ASCC Council Ministers: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Brunei Darussalam; Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Cambodia; Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture, Indonesia; Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR; Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia; Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar; Department of Social Welfare and Development, Philippines; Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore; Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Thailand; Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam.

social media and networking in social integration; responsiveness of ASCC institutions to promote and protect human rights and instil good governance; consolidating regional integration through capacity development of non-state actors; the promise of education and health services as a source of innovation; designing and modelling a sustainable and resilient future for ASEAN; addressing the demographics of social protection and its impact on integration; the ongoing work in progress of shaping and sculpting an ASEAN Identity suited for the ASEAN Community Vision 2025; and the coordination conundrum in facing cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issues.

ASCC and Regional Integration:
A Social Networking and Diversity Messaging Pathway

How can ASCC tap into this dynamism and diversity in a manner that nurtures and creates a pool of the region's future leaders and citizens that believe in the regional organisation's principles and promises of regional integration? What are the indicators of success that tell us whether the ASCC is on the right path to cultivating and passing on the awareness, sustaining interest in, and maintaining relevancy of ASEAN Centrality especially among youth? In their fascinating paper, 'Leveraging on Business, Art/Culture, Technology, and Networking in Building ASEAN's Young Generation in an Integrated ASEAN', Karndee Leopairote, Marisara Promyotin, and Spencer Giorgio investigate how the young generation's mindset towards integration is shaped by business, art/culture, networking, and technology. They find in the young generation of ASEAN a belief in the power of networking in implementing integration, and that religion, ethnicity, educational backgrounds, and languages, for example, are viewed as unique assets. 'Diversity of the region is not a problem; it is an opportunity to learn from one another and grow', they argue. Of the elements examined, ASEAN millennials see networking as having the strongest impact on integration. The paper recommends a more ASCC orientation in the way ASEAN studies are pursued with a focus on teaching students that diversity is an asset to better leverage future advantages.

Empowered People and Strengthened Institutions:
Integrating Human Rights with Good Governance

The ASCC Blueprint 2025 is unequivocal in underscoring that 'the ASEAN Community shall be characterised as one that engages and benefits its peoples, upheld by the principles of good governance' (ASCC Blueprint 2025, Characteristic A). To this end, the ASCC Blueprint 2025 sees an important outcome as being an empowered people and strengthened institutions (ASCC Blueprint 2025, Key Result A.2). What will drive the next generation of ASEAN institutions and business processes to become responsive, and benefitting and engaging the people? Vitit Muntarbhorn's essay on 'Enlarging the

Space for the People: Whither Human Rights and Governance in ASEAN?' looks at the organisation's progress in human rights and good governance and poses important questions on the extent these are actually institutionalised as part of the regional order and the quality of their legitimisation in ASEAN declarations and frameworks, juxtaposed against its international commitments. As proxies and test cases for regional integration, Vitit looks closely at the integration of human rights and good governance, and of various regional human rights mechanisms, emanating from the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the ASEAN Commission on the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and the ASEAN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW). Vitit asserts, 'when the pillar of people's participation and people-based centrality anchored on human rights and good governance, alias democracy, is truly embedded in the region can ASEAN claim to have founded a dynamic regional architecture beyond the pedestals of an inter-governmental framework'.

A Key to ASCC Stakeholder Partnership Intensity and Expansion: Engaging Non-State Actors

Engaged stakeholders in ASEAN processes is the first key result of the ASCC Blueprint (Key Result A.1) aiming at an ASCC that engages and benefits the people (ASCC Blueprint Characteristic A). What do Non-State Actors (NSAs) feel about the space afforded and opportunities available to them in the ASEAN Community? Do NSAs feel they are given the recognition and the latitude to play a meaningful role in community building? The role of non-state actors is examined in appreciable detail by Alexander C. Chandra, Rahimah Abdulrahim, and A. Ibrahim Almuttaqi in their piece, 'Non-state Actors' Engagement with ASEAN: Current State of Play and Way Forward'. They argue that interactions with NSAs – the business community, think tanks and academia, and civil society organisations – have taken place on an ad hoc, informal basis and have become institutionalised. To measure the effectiveness of ASEAN's engagement with non-state actors their paper analyses the results of an online survey by some 100 respondents that shared perspectives on seven questions around the influence of NSAs in the ASEAN's decision-making process. Among important findings, the survey highlighted perspectives on how ASEAN policies were reflective of NSA interests more so in the economic sphere, and less of peoples' needs and rights; the limitations of ASEAN-led engagement processes and engagements in involving NSAs; a relatively favourable view of ASEAN-led engagements by NSAs given the simplified structure, flexibility, and inclusiveness of such mechanisms; a perception that NSA advocacy efforts were not easily attributable in ASEAN policies; and the view by NSAs that ASEAN-led engagement processes were utilised to socialise ASEAN policies rather than as a means to gather stakeholder inputs. The authors end by framing a number of recommendations to enhance the process of engaging and increasing the diversity of

ASEAN NSAs: broadening, institutionalising, and regularising the formal engagement to the technical, ASEAN national secretariat and relevant national levels, with a transparent and simplified accreditation process, and a mutually agreed monitoring and evaluation mechanism; and encourage and structurally enhance Dialogue Partners programmes in NSA capacity development.

The ASEAN Identity and its Role in Building a Single ASEAN Community

There is intense regional discourse on the notion of an ASEAN identity, a concept enshrined in the ASEAN Charter (2007) albeit with an emphasis on promotion; and further supplemented by the ASEAN Declaration on Cultural Heritage (2000), which draws on the strength of the region's multiplicity of cultural and traditional identities. ASEAN Identity is defined as 'the basis of Southeast Asia's regional interests. It is our collective personality, norms, values and beliefs as well as aspirations as one ASEAN Community .... The strategic objective is .. to create a sense of belonging, consolidate unity in diversity and enhance deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN member countries about their culture, history, religion and civilization ....'. (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009) Interestingly, the ASCC's definition of ASEAN Identity is the most widely quoted and plausibly very compelling, with the ASCC Blueprint stating that the way to achieve this is 'to mainstream and promote greater awareness and common values in the spirit of unity in diversity at all levels of society'.

The ASEAN identity also informs ASEAN regionalism, which itself is closely tied to trade liberalisation, trade facilitation, and economic cooperation. As such, the quest for an ASEAN Identity is replete with tension as it adjusts through the various transitions of regionalism: from the influence of regional initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s that witnessed the establishment of the European Community to the so-called 'new regionalism', which paradoxically promoted closed regionalism in the 1980s and saw regional trade blocs, to the open regionalism championed in 1989 by the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to the challenges of East Asia regionalism in the 1990s, which led to the convening of the First East Asia Summit in 2005, to the more recent civil society-inspired movement on alternative regionalisms that seeks to promote global democracy.

Amitav Acharya (Acharya, 2000) makes an important clarification that ASEAN identity is a more recent notion and its contours dependent on political and strategic forces. And while it is a reflection of Southeast Asian identity, it is not identical to it.

More importantly, the two notions are not mutually exclusive: to understand one it is important to understand the other. ASEAN's identity-building project is challenged by inter-ASEAN tensions and externalities, notably the rise of China and India, economic globalisation, transnational threats, and renewed great power rivalry. Acharya argues for nurturing of identity through greater cohesion and purpose to preserve ASEAN's normative influence in regional and global affairs.

Indeed, outside of the ASCC Blueprint there is no other formal definition of what constitutes the ASEAN Identity. The definition offered equates the identity as embodying one ASEAN Community. And yet, the search for a regional identity can be ephemeral, bordering on a search for cosmic relevance or as Acharya puts it: 'a quest or 'identity in the making'. The search for regional identity is an amalgam of multiple identities spanning the individual and a person's relationship to the local and global community (Tafel and Turner, 1979). For ASEAN, developing a collective, shared identity increases the potential to be transformative, but it is should not be left as a static exercise. Shaping shared identity is a continuous and ongoing process.

What can further inform and inspire the new generation of ASEAN citizens and further develop the ongoing formulation of the ASEAN Identity, brand, and common community language? And to what extent will pursuit of excellence in trade and commerce define the regional identity? Very few come as close to the core issues in examining the quintessential Southeast Asian identity as Farish Noor in his essay 'Where Do We Begin?'. He sounds a cautionary note about ASEAN's current talk of shared cultural identity and of ASEAN centrality, about learning the wrong pre-state/post-colonial historical lessons, oversimplification, and applying conventional so-called modernist analysis in returning to our complex past for symbols and emblems that would rationalise the concept of Asia and the place of South East Asia. Farish's essay helps to achieve a better perspective in examining the ASCC's championing of the ASEAN Identity and the challenges among political, economic, and social scientists. His essay argues for recognising our blind spots, our multiple realities, and calls for the promotion of new tools, vocabulary, and lexicon in the revival of a Southeast Asian historical root in defining the ASEAN identity.

ASEAN Community Vision 2025: Challenges and Responses

The ASCC faces multi-dimensional concerns and cross-sectoral issues that involve complex relationships to manage and comprehend, and are made more challenging by overlapping, contrasting, and intersecting national and regional interests.

Issues such as climate change, food security, energy security, and disaster management are multidimensional and multisectoral, and have claim holders as well as traditional, non-traditional entities and emerging stakeholders in the ASEAN Community. Under the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, there is a notable shift in the ASCC narrative and position in community building, which appears to adopt a Whole-of-Community, Whole-of-Society approach. With the declaration of the formal establishment of the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015), the ASCC Blueprint 2025 focuses on defining higher outcomes of significance and relevance to the ASEAN peoples: an ASCC that engages and benefits the peoples, and is inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic. The terms were carefully chosen to be more relatable and easier to communicate to the general public (excerpted from the ASEAN Community Vision 2025) (ASEAN, 2015: 16):

- **Engages and Benefits:** A committed, participative and socially-responsible community through an accountable and inclusive mechanism for the benefit of our peoples, upheld by the principles of good governance
- **Inclusive:** An inclusive community that promotes high quality of life and equitable access to opportunities for all, and promotes and protects human rights of women, children, youth, the elderly/older persons, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and vulnerable and marginalised groups
- **Sustainable:** A sustainable community that promotes social development and environmental protection through effective mechanisms to meet the current and future needs of our peoples
- **Resilient:** A resilient community with enhanced capacity and capability to adapt and respond to social and economic vulnerabilities, disasters, climate change, as well as emerging threats and challenges
- **Dynamic:** A dynamic and harmonious community that is aware and proud of its identity, culture, and heritage with the strengthened ability to innovate and proactively contribute to the global community

Innovation through Education and Health Services

Where will the next big idea come from and what can be done to tap into and expand the sources of ASEAN innovation? Does ASEAN have a conducive environment that incubates, nurtures, or incorporates disruptive technologies and disruptive innovation? In his paper, 'ASEAN in the Asia-Pacific Century: Innovating Education and Health Services Provision for Equity and Efficiency – The Role of the Private Sector, Technology, and Regulatory cooperation', Federico M. Macaranas notes how innovation is elevated in the ASCC Blueprint in the context of intended outcomes of 'Engages and Benefits', 'Dynamic', 'Inclusive', 'Sustainable', and 'Resilient'.

Macaranas adds that regional integration should be seen in its global community context for 'both education and health collaboration at the level of people, enterprises and institutions' that foresees these sectors to be 'more open and adaptive, creative, innovative and entrepreneurial' in striving for quality and competitive higher education institutions and contributing to global health platforms. Education's soft-connectivity character is critical to the success of the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025. Macaranas poses three questions that will challenge ASEAN's open regionalism: who champions ASEAN for its people; how does ASEAN contribute to global public goods; and what are the unforeseen or chaotic situations (or VUCA: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) ASEAN will face in the new millennium? Examining the factor vs. efficiency vs. innovation-driven growth trajectories among ASEAN members, Macaranas points to the need for rapid development of their human capital and workforce skills. In answer to Who, the author calls for reinventing partnerships across groups and countries (G2B – Government to Business, B2P – Business to Partner, G2P – Government to Partner) within ASEAN. These partnerships are deemed the way forward, which means that identifying the leaders in these reinvented partnerships will be critical. On How, he sees an answer in systems redesign as most important with technology disruption in learner-centred education systems, responsiveness to employment needs, and regional collaboration and health research cooperation. On What, Macaranas sees an answer in addressing chaos through learning how to redefine problems and relate past solutions. He concludes by suggesting that innovation for education and health must be a joint public–private undertaking, exploiting the potential of Big Data to help prevent disintegration and link small and large enterprises, and the process should be welcoming of like-minded global players to survive long-term challenges.

Modelling Regional Cooperation for Sustainability and Resilience

Under the ASCC Blueprint (2009–2015), environmental sustainability was seen as achieving sustainable development as well as promoting clean and green environment by protecting the natural resource base for economic and social development including the sustainable management and conservation of soil, water, mineral, energy, biodiversity, forest, and coastal and marine resources as well as the improvement in water and air quality for the ASEAN region. ASEAN aimed to actively participate in global efforts towards addressing global environmental challenges, including climate change and ozone layer protection, as well as developing and adapting environmentally sound technology for development needs and environmental sustainability. Whereas the period 2009–2015 saw environment goals and actions condensed into a single community characteristic of 'Ensuring Environmental Sustainability', the ASCC Community Blueprint 2025 extols community characteristics that achieve 'Sustainability' and

'Resilience' at the same time adhering to a service-oriented characteristic of 'Engaging and Benefits the People' in an 'Inclusive' and 'Dynamic' community.

How will these multi-characteristic qualities of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 help in achieving the goals of post-2015 environmental sustainability? In 'Ensuring ASEAN's Sustainable and Resilient Future', Venkatachalam Anbumozhi looks at efforts in sustainable development, and argues for further adjustments that are nuanced, context dependent, and modulated. He notes that regional cooperation for sustainability differed from the European experience where legal and economic mechanisms were created and institutionalised at the intergovernmental and supranational levels, and where EU members voluntarily waived some of their sovereignty in areas such as water quality, air pollution, disaster responses, and climate change mitigation. ASEAN institutions on the other hand are strictly intergovernmental, and lack a central environmental bureaucracy, which emphasises trust and consensus in decision-making – an approach that has helped to build mutual trust and confidence – and setting a pace that is comfortable to all ASEAN members. ASEAN environmental governance will eventually require knitting together programmes across three community pillars and consciously co-opting the SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement on NDCs, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Sustainability concerns in ASEAN are increasing, particularly because economic growth in many of the ASEAN Member States remains fueled by energy-intensive, carbon emitting production and polluting industries. Anbumozhi calls for an integrated collaborative framework to maximise, prioritise, and sequence the actions that derive different benefits from a sustainable and resilient environment. While noting considerable governance innovations, the author maps out what he terms as being transformative pathways that can be achieved and championed by the ASCC through a series of policy adjustments, which in turn call for cooperation between ASEAN and the international community in information and reporting systems; capacity building, particularly in resolving open trade and environment conflicts; and in innovative financing to address specific actions such as climate change.

Percy E. Sajise's essay on 'Empowering Communities and Countries to Conserve Biodiversity at the National and ASEAN Levels: Status, Challenges, and Ways Forward' asserts that loss of biodiversity could lead to lack of sustainability. Biodiversity's significance in ASEAN and to the world is borne by the fact that the region occupies 3% of the earth's surface – it contains over 20% of all known plant, animal, and marine species. Southeast Asia is also home to many of the world's most important crops, such as rice, mango, banana, and coconut, as well as a wealth of crop-wild relatives. Food and nutrition security in ASEAN will not be attained if the present rate of biodiversity loss continues. The latest research indicates the biodiversity situation is dire. It will be difficult to achieve the ASEAN Vision 2020 if biodiversity is not conserved

and sustainably used at the community, country, and regional levels. However, as the term is value-laden and various stakeholders interpret biodiversity in many different ways, Sajise calls for an interpretation in terms of 'functional biodiversity', which is the least studied but is implicit while serving to provide options for social livelihoods and ecosystem services. In assessing the ASCC Blueprint 2025, Sajise notes that biodiversity will play a critical role in promoting resilience and the use of green technology, 'through a people-oriented and people-centred process of empowerment and people-centred goals in biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use'. He enumerates various opportunities in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the region, among others, ranging from the presence of a Regional Biodiversity Institution, enhanced Public Awareness of the Value of Biodiversity, and Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA), the existing Research Consortia on Climate Change. Sajise then lays out a practical strategy for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the region, among others enhancing the ASEAN Agenda on the Characterisation of Protected Areas as food and nutrition baskets, supporting and monitoring the enhanced exchanges of biodiversity materials under the Nagoya Protocol and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) through existing ASEAN networks, strengthening capacities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in response to Climate Change, and developing an ASEAN Consortium on Research for Biodiversity and Climate Change (AC–BCC).

Addressing the Demographics of Social Protection and its Impact on Integration

The ASCC Blueprint (2009–2015) highlighted a commitment to enhance the wellbeing and livelihood of the peoples of ASEAN through multiple avenues including ensuring social welfare and protection. ASEAN has adopted two indicators (HDI Index and availability of legislations, policies, and programmes on social protection for women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities) to assess the strategic objective of ensuring that all ASEAN peoples are provided with social welfare and protection from possible negative impacts of globalisation and integration by improving the quality, coverage, and sustainability of social protection and increasing the capacity of social risk management. The ASCC Blueprint 2025 places social protection within the goal of an inclusive community that seeks a high quality of life, access to opportunities, and rights.

How can ASEAN build upon its human development gains in the past decade to realise future regional economic integration and balance these with its social protection needs to meet the challenges of ASEAN Community Vision 2025? Fauziah Zen, in her piece, 'Whither Social Protection and Human Development in an Integrating ASEAN', calls for turning ASEAN's current demographic dividend potential to maximise productivity

growth into actual benefits and to pursue this before such dividends close in about 2 decades. Zen's projections have a bearing on the ASCC's Blueprint as ASEAN will face a rapidly ageing population when the majority of ASEAN Member States are still at relatively low income levels with a dearth of programmes for the elderly. This points to a need to balance expected productivity with proper support for the wellbeing of the population.

Fit for Purpose: A Post-2015 ASEAN Identity

The quest for an ASEAN Identity continues in the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 with the proviso that this is the shared responsibility of all pillars, not championed solely by the ASCC but with each pillar providing its own unique imprimatur. The ASCC Blueprint 2025 prioritises internationalisation and institutionalisation of the ASEAN Identity under the rubric of 'Engages and Benefits its People' and 'Dynamic'. Engages and Benefits its People focuses on multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagements, including Dialogue and Development Partners; sub-regional organisations; academia; local governments in provinces, townships, municipalities, and cities; private–public partnerships; community engagement; tripartite engagement with the labour sector; social enterprises; government organisation, non-governmental organisation, and civil society organisation (GO–NGO/CSO) engagement; corporate social responsibility (CSR); and inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue, with emphasis on raising and sustaining awareness and caring societies of ASEAN, as well as deepening the sense of ASEAN identity. In parallel, promoting the ASEAN Identity is to be accomplished by empowering people and strengthening institutions, particularly in promoting ASEAN awareness among government officials, students, children, youths, and all stakeholders as part of building ASEAN identity. Under 'Dynamic', the ASEAN Identity is instilled by developing an ASEAN that continuously innovates and is a proactive member of the global community. That identity would be nurtured under an enabling environment with policies and institutions that engender people and firms to be more open and adaptive, creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial. This is premised by the assumption that an ASEAN Identity would further evolve by developing an open and adaptive, creative, innovative, and responsive ASEAN, and a culture of entrepreneurship. In many respects, while vouchsafing that the ASEAN Identity is a collective responsibility of all three pillars, the many traits and personalities that will contribute to the ASEAN Identity through the ASCC Blueprint has made the goal even more challenging.

The Coordination Conundrum for Cross-Cutting and Cross-Sectoral Issues

The ASCC Blueprint 2025 presents unique challenges in addressing cross-cutting issues through a conceptual and strategic framework that focuses on people and institutions. This is in stark contrast to the earlier ASCC Blueprint (2009–2015), which adopted a more conventional approach aligned with normative international and regional development outcomes such as human development, social welfare, and protection; social justice and rights; environmental sustainability; ASEAN awareness; and narrowing the development gap. With an emphasis on achieving a symmetry between an empowered and informed people and more responsive and effective institutions, the ASCC Blueprint 2025 will need to develop specific metrics and tools that can measure awareness and promote the ASEAN identity within the ASCC, and can be attuned and contribute to the work of other pillars.

The Road Ahead: A Menu of High Expectations for ASCC

The menu of expectations for ASCC and its Blueprint 2025 is a long a complex one:

- **Crossing-cutting Issues:** There remains the unfinished business left from the ASCC Blueprint (2009–2015) to compellingly and comprehensively tackle cross-cutting issues such as Climate Change; Disaster Management; Energy and Food Security; Emerging Infectious Diseases; Poverty Alleviation; Financial Crises; etc. This will require an unprecedented level of involvement by relevant sectoral bodies within and across communities, to engage in focused discussion and planning of actions to ensure complementation of efforts, attain unity of purpose, and to efficiently measure and mobilise resources.
- **Governance through Inclusive Partnerships:** A review of the current ASCC governance mechanism is required to better manage expanding stakeholder partnerships that are increasingly multi-sectoral and which requires nurturing a multi-stakeholder base. This requires a capacity in internal control management and an accountability framework that clarifies roles and responsibilities of an increasingly wide stakeholder base that needs to deliver results and use resources efficiently. To promote collaboration and be responsive to emerging cross-cutting issues, an institutional vision has to adhere to the people-centred and inclusivity principles of the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Declaration on the ASEAN Community, which demand a conviction to engage with more elements of the society in the region, and the creation of innovative partnerships that leverage the region's network of civil society, scientists, think tanks, and the private sector.

- **Reaching out to the Global Community: SDGs and 'Leaving No One Behind' Pathways:** The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a framework that stands to strengthen each ASEAN Member State's capacity gained from regional integration and community building, and narrow the development gap. This new universal agenda will require an integrated approach to sustainable development and collective action, at all levels, to address the challenges of our time, with an overarching imperative of 'leaving no one behind' and addressing inequalities and discrimination as the central defining feature. Some national governments, institutions, and organisations have already started to translate the new agenda into their development plans, strategies, and visions. To address some of the incompatibilities between the ASEAN Community Vision's strategic measures with the targets of the UN 2050 Agenda for Sustainable Development, work is already underway nationally and by ASEAN sectoral bodies to align the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 with the SDGs in yearly or multi-year targets and indicators.

- **Monitoring by each Community Council with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat:** Expectations are that ASEAN underscores a need to go beyond a symbolic and rhetorical embrace of sustainable development and a focus on extending operating principles and a focus on results. Implementing the ASCC blueprint will not be confined to the SDGs, but needs to address outcomes of the international conferences, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Climate Change Conference, the World Humanitarian Summit, and the New Urban Agenda. This points to the development of ASEAN-specific composite development indicators that would form the basis of ASEAN Development Goals.

- **Address the Policy Coherence–Results Gap:** ASCC will face the pervasive need for coordinating and aligning international and regional aspirations and goals, drawing clear policy linkages between the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, the Blueprints of the other pillars, and other cross-cutting issues. To address its reach to the global community, there will be a need to develop in-depth analysis of the blueprint achievements, based on indicators that measure progress of cross-sectoral programme and activities, and inform ASCC sectoral bodies in setting priorities, milestones, and targets for sectoral annual and multi-year work planning process, while linking national, regional, and global strategies.

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