

Press Release



ASEAN Connectivity Symposium is Successfully Conducted Highlighting the Need to Step Up Efforts to Facilitate the Mobilization of Resources.

November 9, 2011 - The Symposium on “Enhancing ASEAN Connectivity to Support ASEAN Community 2015” has been successfully conducted on 8-9 November 2011 in Nusa Dua – Bali, participated by around 200 government officials, researchers and the private sector from ASEAN and Dialogue Partner countries such as European Union, United States, Japan, Australia, Canada, China and Korea. Organizers of the Symposium are the Government of Indonesia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), ASEAN Secretariat and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA).

The Symposium provides a platform that brought together diverse groups of stakeholders, and informed participants to exchange information, lessons learnt, on the progress of implementing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, and develop networking among the participants on connectivity.

The Symposium highlighted the need to step up efforts to facilitate the mobilization of resources. Therefore, it is essential to have sound, attractive and bankable infrastructure projects to attract funding from the private sector for private-public partnerships (PPPs) projects, and this means the need for appropriate infrastructure and resources to support PPPs. In particular, such as: transportation, ICT and the energy sector.

ASEAN must work out effective mechanism to achieve that and to coordinate with ASEAN Dialogue Partners and other external partners who are keen to provide funding and/or technical assistance towards the implementation of the Master Plan, and managing these resources effectively and efficiently.

One year on since its adoption, interest in ASEAN Connectivity remains high. It is thus paramount to sustain the interest and momentum that has been built up through: (i) demonstrating progress and achieving concrete results in the implementation to key stakeholders, and (ii) instituting a channel of regular communication or dialogue with key stakeholders. We also encourage effective public-private sector engagements in policy formulation and implementation.

The implementation of land and maritime infrastructures will effectively contribute to connecting the mainland with the archipelagic states. We must put emphasis on connecting the dispersed and isolated parts of the region, to promote growth and connect them to the centers of economic activities. This is also inline with the global initiatives to alleviate poverty and promote economic and social welfare.

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The Symposium identifies several opportunities and challenges and attempted the following recommendations:

- **On physical connectivity**, progress noted on many physical connectivity projects, particularly the progress of implementing priority projects and other sub-regional projects. Connecting archipelagic with mainland ASEAN remains a challenge to ensure the attainment of the goals of establishing the ASEAN Community. The Symposium also highlighted the progress of ICT projects as mean to bridge development gap. The Symposium registered progress in the development of ICT infrastructures (e.g., low cost broadband satellite), develop ICT human capacity building, capitalize ICT for value innovations, services systems, smart communities, smart environment, learning, and create a sustainable institutional framework.
- **On institutional connectivity**, progress registered on the development of national and regional single window system, the challenges are lack of transparency / awareness of regulatory issues, variations in cross-border standards and regulations, lack of human capacity and funding constraints for implementing projects. Among the recommendations are: enhancing policy coordination, IT and data standards), alignment of policies and practices, build up knowledge and skills of Customs and its staff, mass adoption & support program to create awareness, skills, and buy-in to use new service, and provide requisite assistance to CLMV to expedite their National Single Window system.
- **On people-to-people connectivity**, exchange of culture, youth and education are progressing. The Symposium acknowledged that cultural diversity is dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon, therefore, intercultural dialogue and adopting a project based learning scheme would be relevant. The role of media is also emphasized as cross cutting issue to bridge the gap.

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Ambassador I Gede Ngurah Swajaya said, "I was delighted with the outcome of the Symposium and expects that this kind of activity to be continued." As co-organizer of the event he added, "I encourage more activities centered around a more specific seminar on many pillars of the Master Plan aimed at ensuring effective implementation of the Master Plan, and promoting participation of the private sectors."

In October 2010, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) that aims to facilitate economic growth and narrow development gaps by enhancing physical, institutional, and people-to-people linkages in the region. ASEAN, as a region, has some 32,000 islands spanning over 4 million square kilometers and are inhabited by some 600 million people who speak more than 900 different languages and dialects on a daily basis. Equally diverse is the level of economic development where the GDP per capita between the least and advanced members varies from US\$ 800 to US\$ 49,000.

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ERIA is an international organization that supports the ASEAN Secretariat by making policy recommendations at regional governmental meetings such as the East Asian Summit (EAS), aimed at furthering East Asia's economic integration.

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