

FOREWORD

ASEAN will emerge and present itself as a stronger community on the global stage with the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). With 2015 fast-approaching, governments in the region are working hard to ensure the realization of the AEC. The fact that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for more than 96 per cent of all enterprises in ASEAN shows their significance as the engine of growth in the region. It is therefore vital that development of SME policies is comprehensive to enable SMEs to be well-positioned to tap on incoming opportunities for growth.

The publication of this index is thus a timely milestone for the ASEAN SME Working Group (SMEWG) to review the policy development for the SME sector, and to examine the effectiveness of their implementation. This index tracks SME development among ASEAN member states, and identifies gaps in both policy development and implementation. In charting the direction for policy design in the medium term, this index serves as a useful reference for ASEAN to identify areas for collaboration, and essential pillars of SME development to be strengthened. One example is the need to drive greater public-private partnership at both the national and regional level to benefit more SMEs.

I am heartened by the collaboration between the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), OECD, members of the ASEAN SMEWG, and the ASEAN Secretariat in producing the ASEAN Policy Index. This is a positive step in deepening the cooperation between the ASEAN SMEWG and multilateral organizations. I look forward to more of such initiatives to support the development of SMEs in the region.



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