



Office of
the President

The office of the president of ERIA deepened its policy relations activities through dedicated policy research and support for medium- and longer-term development and economic integration of ASEAN and the East Asia region. This was achieved through increased collaboration with foreign and economic ministries of East Asia Summit (EAS) member countries, joint works with multilateral organisations and think tanks, and working for concrete plans for greater connectivity of Asia with Africa and Europe. Policy relations activities covered traditional areas of trade and economic cooperation and issues that constitute new frontiers of global value chains and economic integration.

A. Support to EAS Members and their Dialogue Partners

The policy relations office supports several policy and research initiatives of EAS member countries and the Dialogue Partners of EAS. At the request of senior economic officials, the ASEAN–Russia economic ministers meeting was presented with a policy report on deepening of ASEAN–Russia economic relations. Developed jointly with the Russia Foreign Trade Academy (RFTA), the report has been accepted by the economic officials meeting. Since its publication, it has been widely consulted by stakeholders in ASEAN and outside of Asia. The reports brings out several avenues of trade and economic cooperation between the two partners, and lays out the scope for deepening the economic relations between the two. The report has been acknowledged by the ministerial meeting.

Greater connectivity between India and ASEAN has long been both an economic and strategic objective for the ASEAN–India partnership. India has commissioned ERIA to conduct a study on developing an economic corridor along the Trilateral Highway and the feasibility of its extension to Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. The President's office is supporting the ASEAN–India ministerial meeting on ERIA's study on 'Trilateral Highway and its Possible Extension to Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam'. The study is expected to be submitted to the ministers in August 2020.

B. Support to Host Country Indonesia on Indo–Pacific

The policy relations office contributed extensively to the works of the Policy Analysis and Development Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia in developing the 'ASEAN Outlook on Indo–Pacific'. The contributions included participation in and presentations at three roundtables held in Cirebon, Padang, and Jakarta. In 2020, the tasks of PADA, MOFA are being further supported in developing the institutional and governance framework of connectivity plans in the Indo–Pacific.

C. Support to G20

The policy relations office worked with and contributed to the proceedings of the G20 in Japan in 2019. It supported and contributed to the President of ERIA's participation in the G-20 Agriculture Ministers Meeting on 11–12 May in Niigata, Japan, with as its theme Agriculture and Human Resource Development. ERIA highlighted the need for making agriculture and farming in ASEAN more productive and inclusive through digital technology and smart governance. Prof Nishimura also highlighted the importance of the ASEAN–Japan human resource development project as a model project for training of young agriculture graduates at top agriculture universities in ASEAN, where institutional and digital connectivity are helping to develop human resources in ASEAN. The policy relations office also participated in the senior officials meeting on 10 May 2019 and contributed to the finalisation of the Agriculture Ministers Declaration, which was presented to the Chair of G-20. The two policy briefs were mentioned in the T20's recommendation to the Chair of the G20.

The policy relations office contributed two policy briefs to the T20 in Tokyo in 2019. The first policy brief was for Task Force 7 on the Future of Work and Education for the Digital Age. The policy brief was themed 'Industrialisation and Growth in the Digital Age: Disruptions and Opportunities for Employment Led Growth in Asia and Africa'. The second policy brief was for Task Force 5 on Cooperation with Africa. The theme of the policy brief was 'Industrial Development and ICT in Africa: Opportunities, Challenges, and the Way Forward'.

D. Collaboration with Multilateral Organisations

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

The policy relations office of the President of ERIA was invited to the annual meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), held in Luxemburg on 12–13 July, 2019. Based on its experience on Asia–Europe connectivity issues, ERIA was requested to provide inputs for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to help it organise the plenary session of the first Asian Infrastructure Forum, which was themed around 'Cooperation and Connectivity'. The policy relations office is working closely with the AIIB on multilateral cooperation for development finance (MCDF), and utilising this learning in helping to develop the institutional mechanisms for financing the connectivity plans in the Indo–Pacific.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The policy relations office of the president of ERIA also supported the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in its preparatory works for the G20 in Trade and Agriculture matters, through its collaboration with and participation in the meetings of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate. The policy relations office helped the Global Relations Secretariat (GRS) of the OECD to develop the theme and the concept paper of the fifth annual meeting of the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP) held on 12 March 2019. ERIA's presentation on connectivity plans in Asia was central to the theme of the meeting. The steering committee recognised that enhancing connectivity was a fundamental means to advance

regional integration and reconfirmed that the OECD is a partner of the Southeast Asian countries, sharing policy experience and best practices to enhance connectivity of the region. The steering committee encouraged the SEARP secretariat of the OECD to strengthen cooperation with ERIA and other regional organisations. On this occasion, the ERIA–OECD joint work on the ASEAN SME Policy Index ASPI 2018 was presented to and acknowledged by the Steering Committee meeting members of OECD SEARP. The policy relations office of the President also contributed to the OECD reports through findings from ASEAN and East Asia, and ERIA’s research and policy support activities.

The policy relations office of the president organised the seventh OECD–ERIA–ADB–ADBI–AMRO roundtable in Jakarta on 18–19 June 2019. In 2020, the ERIA–OECD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for joint works and activity in the next 5 years was renewed by the president’s office for joint signing in 2020.

E. Connectivity

The policy relations office of the President has been working on physical and institutional aspects of connectivity in ASEAN and East Asia, as well as between Asia and Africa, and Asia and Europe. In 2019–2020, the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the Asia–Europe summit meeting (ASEM) was presented the study on ‘Global Value Chains in ASEM Region’ which had originally been requested by the ASEM Trade and Industry Ministers meeting. In 2019, Cambodia, the current chair of ASEM, requested ERIA to prepare a plenary study for the 13th ASEM Summit in November 2020 where the

President of ERIA will present the study to the ASEM leaders. The theme of the study will be an inclusive and sustainable and future-ready ASEM. The ASEM study is being conducted by several authors from Asia and Europe on diverse elements of physical and economic connectivity; trade and value chains; trade facilitation and NTMs; e-commerce, digital economy and taxation; energy cooperation and climate change; movement of people, gender, and youth roles in a future-ready economy; and institutional cooperation.

ERIA and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission jointly hosted the Asia Europe Sustainable Connectivity Scientific Conference (AESCON), bringing together researchers and policy analysts working in the fields of international connectivity and globalisation and their impact on sustainable development, with a particular focus on Asia–Europe connections. The conference was attended by 70 scholars and provided an academic forum to discuss global challenges on transport infrastructure, energy transition, climate change, digital economy, trade and investment flows, security, people mobility, and cultural exchanges as tools of sustainable connectivity. The conference followed on from the ASEM Sustainable Connectivity Monitor 2018, which was launched at the 12th ASEM Summit. Due to the onset of COVID-19, this conference has been postponed to September 2020

After drafting the vision document of the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) in 2017, the president’s office has been continuously engaged with the development of the AAGC with other members in ASEAN, Asia, and Africa. In 2019, it co-authored the book ‘Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Development Cooperation in Indo Pacific’ with RIS, Delhi, which was published in June 2020.

F. South–South Cooperation

ERIA's network organisation in India, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), organises the Delhi Process on South–South Cooperation to further the goals of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. ERIA participated in Delhi Process V, held in New Delhi from 21 to 25 August 2019. The conference sessions were themed to assess and identify the future challenges and their implications for South–South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation, and develop a roadmap in tune with the consensus arrived at BAPA+40 in Buenos Aires. The Delhi Process also deliberated to find ways for scaling up SSC and evolving an impact assessment framework that captures the unique features of SSC. ERIA presented the experiences from ASEAN Community building process as a good example of South–South Cooperation. East Asian economic integration was also portrayed as a model of triangular cooperation, in particular the positive role of Japan, Australia, and the Republic of Korea in economic growth in Southeast Asia. The president's office will continue to share its work and findings in the next initiatives in South–South and Triangular cooperation in the coming years.

G. Blue Economy

The Blue Economy concept is viewed as an alternative economic model for sustainable development that puts the oceans at the centre of this approach. This is in line with Goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. In Southeast Asia, the maritime sector is very important for logistics and

transportation, economic resources, environmental sustainability, and sovereignty. Connectivity between AMS with India is essential in many ways, given their potential in the blue economy, their economic size, geographical location, sea–land connectedness, and trade relations.

ERIA co-organised the Third ASEAN–India Blue Economy Workshop with the ministry of foreign affairs, Thailand and the ASEAN–India Center of RIS in Bangkok on 12 September 2019. The conference was of significance for maritime cooperation in South and Southeast Asia in that it presented specific recommendations on how to strengthen the links between India and ASEAN on maritime issues, such as security, commerce, and port development.

H. Support to Stakeholders

The policy relations office participated in several workshops and symposiums across Asia and the Pacific, and in Europe to bring the stakeholders in, and bring partners of ASEAN and East Asia closer, through dissemination of East Asian economic cooperation experience and through demonstrating the value of free trade and economic cooperation. It has written extensively in several regional newspapers and contributed to online platforms on the issues of multilateral governance, connectivity, and sustainable financing and development issues facing East Asia. It is expected that such advocacy and research dissemination activities will support the policymaking on trade and economic cooperation amongst the stakeholders.