


THE  HABIBIE CENTER
The Habibie Center
TALKING ASEAN



Discussion Report
Talking ASEAN on

ASEAN Day: Towards a Domestically
Relevant, Regionally Engaging,
and Globally Active ASEAN

Jakarta, 9 August 2018



Introduction

On Thursday, 9 August 2018, The Habibie Center hosted Talking ASEAN dialogue entitled “ASEAN Day: Towards a Domestically Relevant, Regionally Engaging, and Globally Active ASEAN” at The Habibie Center Building in Jakarta.

This edition of Talking ASEAN was moderated by **A. Ibrahim Almuttaqi** (Head, ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center) and featured an expert panel made up of **H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono** (Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN), **Mahmudi Yusbi** (Programme Manager, the ASEAN Foundation), and **Avyanthi Azis** (Lecturer, International Relations Department, Universitas Indonesia).

The objectives of this Talking ASEAN were to: (a) explore ways for ASEAN to remain relevant for its citizens; (b) identify challenges and opportunities for ASEAN to become a stabilising

actor in the region; and (c) explore ways for ASEAN to become one of major sources of global peace, security, and prosperity.

This discussion report summarizes the key points of each speaker, as well as the question and answer session that followed.

Recommendations:

Among the key recommendations that emerged from this particular Talking ASEAN public dialogue were: (1) to actively engage in global politics while maintaining ASEAN-led mechanisms; (2) to strengthen and promote ASEAN identity through people interaction; (3) to encourage the governments of ASEAN Member States to provide more platforms and opportunities to enable people interaction; and (4) to utilize the ASEAN Social-Cultural Community's role in protecting the marginalized populations who are left behind by globalization.



**PRESENTATION
FROM THE PANELIST**

H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono

(Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN)

Ambassador Sarwono acknowledged that there will always be challenges in promoting ASEAN domestically despite the fact that the Association celebrated its 51st anniversary recently.

He went on to highlight that from a political aspect, the region has enjoyed peace and stability for a relatively long period of time. Meanwhile, in the economic area, reduced tariff has helped businesses to enter ASEAN's market. He also mentioned that the establishment of Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA) for seven types of professional services signaled the new phase of ASEAN Connectivity. Ambassador Sarwono also added ASEAN's achievement in the socio-cultural pillar. For example the ASEAN Consensus on the Rights of Migrant Workers, ASEAN Coordinating Centre For Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre), and ASEAN University Network.

At the regional level, there are a number of groupings and mechanisms led by ASEAN, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) which involves the ten ASEAN Member States and 8 other countries of the Asia-Pacific. Other ASEAN multilateral forums for official consultations on peace and security include the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). According to Ambassador Sarwono, these are important platforms, as by maintaining peace and stability in the region, people have their focus on economic development which will



contribute to their welfare.

Furthermore, Ambassador Sarwono believed that the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) has contributed significantly, not only at the regional level, but also globally. Signed in 1976 during Bali Concord I, the TAC was originally an ASEAN initiative which evolves into the practice beyond the region. Ambassador Sarwono added that even every ASEAN Dialogue Partners have to adhere to the TAC. While the TAC is something developed by ASEAN, it is arguably more than that as it is also attractive for other countries. Ambassador Sarwono showed how those things prove ASEAN's importance and relevance regionally and globally.

Mahmudi Yusbi

(Programme Manager,
the ASEAN Foundation)

Mahmudi began his presentation by pointing out the fact that ASEAN people hardly feel like ASEAN citizens, since most of them always identify themselves as Indonesians, Malaysians, Singaporeans, and etc. According to Mahmudi, for ASEAN people, ASEAN remains a theory which they regularly see in conference or workshop. It does not bring direct impact to them.

To force the so-called ASEAN identity, Mahmudi said that traveling within ASEAN would be the most effective way. The other important strategy is to build platforms to cultivate interaction among people. This is why, the presence of the ASEAN Foundation is crucial.

Mahmudi continued to explain what the ASEAN Foundation is and the mandate that it carries. According to the ASEAN Charter Article No. 15, the ASEAN Foundation shall support the Secretary General of ASEAN and collaborate with the relevant ASEAN Bodies to support ASEAN Community Building by promoting greater awareness of the ASEAN Identity, people-to-people interaction, and close collaboration among business sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders in ASEAN. One of its important mandates is to promote ASEAN awareness and identity. To make ASEAN domestically relevant to people, ASEAN Foundation works through its programme, cooperates with its partners and stakeholders by outreach and communication.

The ASEAN Foundation programme brings people together to share ideas, experiences and skills in areas such as Education, Culture and Arts, Media and Community Building to support the ASEAN Community Building process. Through this programme, the ASEAN Foundation has built the competitiveness of its people (especially the youth). At most basic, the ASEAN Foundation has trained its people, giving them sound education.

He went on to note that the ASEAN Foundation programme focuses on the people-to-people exchange, cultural exchange, sharing knowledge and best practices which would help participants (ASEAN people) understand ASEAN's priorities and develop an ASEAN identity. The programme of the ASEAN Foundation has built a platform for the ASEAN citizens (in particular the



youth) to interact. The programme has made the ASEAN relevant domestically especially for youth.

Furthermore, the ASEAN Foundation also needs supporters that could support and sustain its platform, therefore the partners and stakeholders are playing the main important role. These partners and stakeholders include government institutions, students and youth, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, development agencies, academics, and private sectors.

Finally, Mahmudi also explained how the ASEAN Foundation utilizes their social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to promote greater ASEAN awareness and identity to strengthen the sense of "Think, Feel and be ASEAN."

Avyanthi Azis

(Lecturer, International Relations Department, Universitas Indonesia)

At the beginning of her presentation, Avyanthi reviewed ASEAN's existence at its 51 anniversary. ASEAN was formed as a product of Cold War necessity which evolved into a contemporary regional integration. Now that all of the goals have been achieved, what is ASEAN's continued relevance?

ASEAN has expanded from its previous focus on security to include the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). She noted that the socio-cultural pillar is the most difficult one to define due to the diversity of actors and

its vast array of issues. It might come across as fragmented, if not desultory. Avyanthi proposed that the core of the ASCC should be the protection of those marginalized by processes of regional integration. It should cover the promise of a caring, participatory, and people-oriented ASEAN. However, the dilemma in this situation is how to fulfil such promises if ASEAN is too focus on the Member States, not the people despite their contribution.

Avyanthi continued to highlighted how people, especially migrants, have contributed so much to ASEAN's prosperity through their remittances. According to the 2017 World Bank (2017) data, in 2015 only, Southeast Asian migrants remitted USD62 billion to their home countries. This amount is equal to Myanmar's GDP & triple Cambodia's GDP for that year.





Furthermore, remittances also form a vital part of several ASEAN Member States economies, such as 10% of GDP in the Philippines, 7% in Vietnam, 5% in Myanmar and 3% in Cambodia.

Based on this data, Avyanthi argued that remittances from migrant workers are extremely significant. However, the AEC Blueprint only discussed about the free flow of skilled labour. Of course there are mechanisms to regulate migrant workers, for example through bilateral MoUs or the ratification of international legal instrument. However, sometimes MoUs are not legal binding and ratification is only done by a few countries.

Avyanthi went on to explain some ASEAN migration governance. In 2007 an agency was established to negotiate the Instrument: the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the

Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW). ILO also helped the establishment of ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML). Not to mention the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of Rights of Migrant Workers. However, according to Avyanthi, the governance of ASEAN migration is not without problems. The issue of representation remains because not everyone has access to the regional level.

At the end of her presentation, Avyanthi threw some thought-provoking question. With the contemporary development and challenges of Chinese workers in the region, would ASEAN protect only their own workers or would their protection apply universally regardless of migrants' nationality? This is a question that ASEAN should be able to address if the Association wanted to be regionally relevant.



**QUESTION AND
ANSWER SESSION**

SESSION I

Question: ASEAN is currently 'sandwiched' between China and the so-called 'Quad'—United States, Japan, Australia, and India. What will ASEAN do? How does ASEAN look at it? Is it a threat or instead an opportunity for us?

Question: As Mahmudi has explained before, ASEAN people barely describe themselves as ASEAN citizens. What do you think would be the best way for them to internalize that they are ASEAN people?

RESPONSE

H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono In response to the first question, Amb. Sarwono acknowledged that it such a hot topic and we have so many jargons to describe the situation. One of the way to label it is the Indo-Pacific outlook. Between this ongoing rivalries, he believed that ASEAN should maintain its rule-based order and that ASEAN centrality should be the priority. The East Asia Summit (EAS) should be the avenue to discuss such issues. ASEAN continues to discuss its position in this Indo-Pacific outlook. Despite being 'sandwiched', ASEAN will continue to play an important role and its 51 year of experience will help accommodate and navigate the new power architecture.

In response to the second question, Amb. Sarwono believed that to be ASEAN doesn't mean that we have to relinquish our national identity. Being ASEAN shows that we also care about other countries. We can not deny, that national identity will always be there. However, it is important for us to understand, care, tolerate and work with each other.

Mahmudi Yusbi Mahmudi noted that ASEAN identity is a work in progress. Community building is not possible without a sense of belonging. He argued that to feel like you're a part of ASEAN, you need to think and feel like ASEAN.

Avyanthi Azis Regarding the concern of having multiple identity at the same time, Avyanthi Azis doesn't think that it is a problem for Indonesians, because we are very used to it as they have national and ethnic/local identities already. To generate the feeling of being an ASEAN citizen, student exchange program is very effective. This is surprising but we barely know our neighbors, we don't know them enough, while we have so much exposure and knowledge about the United States, European Union, or China. We need to democratize such access for exchange program to expand the opportunity.

SESSION II

Question: 60% of Indonesia working population's education is below High School. That is why we need to push for more vocational trainings and education. In terms of certifications, they are also not always accepted in other ASEAN countries. How to support the progress in this area?

Question: In order to make ASEAN globally relevant, with the rising of populism in the world, is ASEAN on the right track or are we going backwards?

Question: Is there any challenges for Ambassador Sarwono in doing his daily job? For Mahmudi, a big part of your job is to raise ASEAN awareness. With this whole ongoing globalization, how to convince to people that ASEAN is attractive? Question to Avyanthi, if there is migrant problem that doesn't involve ASEAN, will ASEAN be able to step up, or these problematic countries should settle it bilaterally?

Question: What kind of progress happening on the issue of youth and what ASEAN is doing about that?

Question: Is Indo-Pacific outlook an economic cooperation, or security cooperation, or both?

RESPONSE

H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono Amb. Sarwono noted that there is challenge in certification for vocational education as it has not been widely accepted by ASEAN Member States. We can improve our standards by cooperating with dialogue partner and try to promote the programs on vocational training. He went on to argue that it is not easy to bring such standards to Indonesia. But if we can't manage a bilateral cooperation in this issue, we can always do it through ASEAN.

He continued to state that discussion often takes a slow turn in ASEAN because everybody has different background, religion, or history. He conceded that foreign ministry won't be able to take action before there is actual problem. According to Amb. Sarwono, Foreign Ministry is like the final gate to settle everything.

In regards to youth participation, Indonesia always encourages this engagement but it always depends on the ASEAN Chairmanship. He hoped that in the the next summit we will see this happened.

Mahmudi Yusbi Mahmudi explained that we have provided education exchange through regional mechanism of ASEAN University Network-Credit Transfer System and a number of internships from ASEAN Foundation. However, we can't deny that visa is hard to accommodate. We have to deal with policy makers in order to smoothen the proces but ASEAN has their own rule.

He went on to say that ASEAN identity is important because we belong in this region and other ASEAN countries are our closest neighbors. It is true that the United States, European Union, and etc are increasingly important. But when we have problems, neighbors are the first ones that we run into.

For youth engagement, ASEAN Foundation initiated Model ASEAN Meeting in order for youth to understand the process inside ASEAN meetings. Hopefully on the next ASEAN Summit, we can conduct Model ASEAN Meeting simultaneously.

Avyanthi Azis Avyanthi explained that since February, the CSOs have worked on Action Plan in response to the ASEAN Consensus on the Rights of Migrant Workers. I hope we will hear immediate response from the government and by next year, we will see the result.

For certification. Avyanthi saw there are a lot of them in the field of tourism or hospitality. But she hasn't seen one on migrants. In order to address this issue, she suggested local CSOs to open a traning facility and provide adequate training for migrants.

In response to the populism question, Avyanthi believes that populism takes advantages of people who are left behind by globalization. ASCC is a perfect avenue to provide justice for those who are marginalized, so can minimize the side effect of the populism rise. The question is how far ASCC is successful in achieving this objective?

With strong solidarity among ASEAN member states and CSOs, she also believes that if migrant crisis occured in a country, it will not stop other countries to help eventhough they are not involved in the crisis.



ABOUT ASEAN STUDIES PROGRAM

The ASEAN Studies Program was established on February 24, 2010, to become a center of excellence on ASEAN related issues, which can assist in the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. The Habibie Center through its ASEAN Studies Program, alongside other institutions working towards the same goal, hopes to contribute to the realization of a more people-oriented ASEAN that puts a high value on democracy and human rights.

The objective of the ASEAN Studies Program is not merely only to conduct research and discussion within academic and government circles, but also to strengthen public awareness by forming a strong network of civil society in the region that will be able to help spread the ASEAN message. With the establishment of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center aims to play its part within our capabilities to the ASEAN regional development.

ABOUT TALKING ASEAN

Talking ASEAN is a monthly public dialogue held at The Habibie Center in Jakarta. Covering a wide array of issues related to ASEAN, Talking ASEAN addresses topics of: Economic Integration, Socio-cultural, & Democracy, human rights and regional peace, among others. Featuring local and visiting experts, Talking ASEAN is one of a series of twelve dialogues regularly held each month and open to a target audience consisting of ASEAN officials, foreign ambassadors & diplomats, academics, university students, businesses, and the media.

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