

ASEAN Plus Three Leaders' Statement on Connecting the Connectivities Initiative

WE, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, gathering at the 22nd ASEAN Plus Three Summit on 4 November 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand;

RECOGNISING the geographical proximity, the increasing interdependence and growing connectivity between the ASEAN Plus Three countries and within the region as well as the challenges and opportunities stemming from the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR);

RECALLING the importance of connectivity in realising our collective efforts for regional integration and cooperation as well as the promotion of sustainable development both within ASEAN and beyond, in response to emerging challenges and opportunities;

AFFIRMING the importance of the spirit of peaceful cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and shared benefit in promoting infrastructure connectivity and sustainable transport, as well as regional and inter-regional economic integration and cooperation;

REAFFIRMING the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, in which enhanced connectivity is one of the key elements to building the ASEAN Community;

RECALLING the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on ASEAN Connectivity issued in Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand, on 24 October 2009;

RECALLING the Leaders' Statement on ASEAN Plus Three Partnership on Connectivity (2012), whose main objective is to support ASEAN's efforts in implementing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) and enhancing connectivity beyond ASEAN, in the wider region of East Asia;

REITERATING our commitment in the Manila Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation (2017), where the ASEAN Plus Three countries declared to continue cooperation on ASEAN's connectivity agenda to support the implementation of the MPAC 2025;

HIGHLIGHTING the MPAC 2025, which focuses on the five Strategic Areas of: (i) sustainable infrastructure; (ii) digital innovation; (iii) seamless logistics; (iv) regulatory excellence and; (v) people mobility;

WELCOMING the identification of economically viable connectivity-related infrastructure projects in the Initial Rolling Priority Pipeline of Potential ASEAN Infrastructure Projects under the MPAC 2025;

ACKNOWLEDGING that ASEAN Connectivity is a foundation for the development of enhanced connectivity in East Asia and that enhanced connectivity is important in building an East Asian community as envisaged in the Leaders' Statement on ASEAN Plus Three Partnership on Connectivity (2012) and the Manila Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation (2017);

REAFFIRMING our commitment to promote regional connectivity in East Asia and cooperative activities to support the successful implementation of the MPAC 2025, as stated in the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan 2018-2022;

REAFFIRMING the commitment of the ASEAN Plus Three countries in enhancing regional connectivity, while noting the principles of openness, transparency, inclusiveness and ASEAN centrality presented in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which puts connecting the connectivities as a priority area of cooperation;

EMPHASISING that connectivity strategies can make a strong contribution to economic growth and enhanced links within the East Asian region through the Connecting the Connectivities Initiative.

DO HEREBY DECLARE TO:

1. Promote regional connectivity among the ASEAN Plus Three countries by enhancing links and synergies between the MPAC 2025 and key connectivity initiatives promoted by China, Japan, the ROK, as well as other sub-regional and multilateral cooperation frameworks with and within ASEAN in order to attain people-oriented, people-centred community of peace and prosperity with sustainable and inclusive growth and development for shared benefit in the East Asian region, through extensive consultations and joint efforts, while reaffirming the need to promote sustainable, high quality infrastructure in accordance with broadly accepted international principles to facilitate trade, investment, and service competitiveness in the region;
2. Enhance regional and sub-regional connectivity with a view to strengthening overall economic cooperation among the ASEAN Plus Three countries, including by supporting various designated economic corridors in the region;
3. Promote complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where connectivity and infrastructure are components, to catalyse sustainable development in the ASEAN Plus Three countries;
4. Promote multi-sectoral cooperation that contributes to sustainable infrastructure, including by enhancing energy security and energy efficiency and conservation as well as promoting the use of renewable energy;

5. Enhance physical connectivity by, inter alia, promoting an integrated multimodal transport, including air, sea, and land transport between ASEAN and the wider region in order to ensure seamless logistics and enhance the ASEAN Plus Three competitiveness;
6. Promote digital connectivity and innovation in the ASEAN Plus Three countries by (a) exchanging views and information on regulatory frameworks for the delivery of digital services including data management and digital financial services; (b) sharing best practices to support the digital economy of the region; (c) supporting ASEAN's efforts to establish an ASEAN open data network which builds on ASEAN ICT Master Plan 2020; (d) equipping micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with the capabilities to access new technologies and financial support for development and innovation; and (e) encouraging collaboration and sharing of experiences and best practices to facilitate the development of digital infrastructure and utilities;
7. Enhance regulatory excellence, including that relating to trade facilitation as well as the harmonisation and mutual recognition of standards, where applicable, in line with a country's contexts and regulations and with World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements and applicable international standards, in order to further facilitate economic activities across the ASEAN Plus Three countries;
8. Promote greater people engagement and cooperation on people-to-people connectivity initiatives by enhancing facilitation of travel and tourist visits as well as developing quality tourism, and further strengthening cultural exchanges and cooperation, in order to promote mutual understanding and greater awareness of each other's culture;
9. Enhance people-to-people connectivity, through greater collaboration on human capital development including exchange and internship in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and further promotion of student mobility and quality assurance of higher education among the ASEAN Plus Three countries, to raise the skill level of manpower and upgrade quality education in response to the challenges posed by 4IR;
10. Enhance the ASEAN Plus Three cooperation in preventing and addressing cybercrime as well as issues such as violent extremism and radicalisation, misinformation and exploitation of ICTs and enhanced connectivity by entities or individuals engaged in transnational crime, recognising the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice as a forum to address such matters;
11. Support efforts to advance infrastructure development and financing and encourage public-private-partnerships (PPP) in mobilising resources and expertise, information sharing, as well as developing and financing bankable projects;

12. Further strengthen existing regional financing arrangements and financial cooperation under the ASEAN Plus Three framework towards the strategic direction of maintaining regional economic and financial stability; fostering economic growth and promoting integration, and further promote partnerships between existing mechanisms and relevant financial institutions and international organisations, including Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Bank;
13. Encourage relevant Sectoral Bodies to explore possible cooperation in the ASEAN Plus Three framework to enhance linkages and synergies between ASEAN Connectivity and other key connectivity initiatives in the region;
14. Enhance partnership on connectivity at the regional and global levels to promote economic growth, free trade and sustainable development;
15. Encourage the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee to work with the Plus Three countries on appropriate initiatives that would enhance the implementation of the MPAC 2025, thus contributing to greater connectivity in the East Asian region as a whole.

ADOPTED in Bangkok, Thailand, on the Fourth of November in the Year Two Thousand and Nineteen.