



## Concept Note

# 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Mayors Forum

## *Driving Local Actions for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*

The United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC)  
26 - 28 August 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

### Introduction

The ASEAN Mayors Forum (AMF) was originally conceived in 2011 when visionary mayors in Southeast Asia met for the first time in Surabaya, Indonesia, to demonstrate the importance of local contributions to ASEAN's regional integration. The Forum has gained prominence since 2015, with successive AMF meetings to discuss the ASEAN Community building and how mayors can help accelerate its progress and benefits for citizens. The role of local governments has been enhanced due to the wide recognition that at least 60 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be achieved without actions at the local level.

The particular dynamics of urbanisation in Asia calls for ASEAN mayors' active work to prevent and mitigate its adverse consequences. According to the UN, the world's populations that live in urban areas will increase from currently 55 to 68 per cent in 2050, equivalent to 2.5 billion more people in cities. Similar pattern is projected in Southeast Asia. While only 36 per cent of ASEAN's populations lived in urban areas in 2014, around 90 million more people will move to cities in 2030.

Urbanisation in ASEAN presents ample opportunities for economic prosperity and social advancement, if well managed. Many of the fastest-growing cities in Southeast Asia are expected to drive almost 40 per cent of GDP growth through 2030. Whether this prospect will be fully realised depends on ASEAN's abilities to address a broad-range of challenges, while accommodating new city dwellers and ensuring high-quality public services to all citizens.



Among the key issues facing ASEAN is the need to sustain economic development without compromising environmental conditions and worsening inequalities. While ASEAN’s urban population has grown by 3 per cent annually, the rate of COs emission has increased by 6.1 per cent. The Asia-Pacific SDGs Progress Report 2017 points that the region has not successfully reduced inequalities and, in fact, is **the only sub-region with widening inequalities**. Adding to these challenges is that the on-going urbanisation will expose more people to natural disasters. In 2030, ASEAN’s citizens who live in extreme risk areas will likely increase by 50 per cent, as compared to 2015.

### **Driving Local Actions for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth**

ASEAN is intensifying its collective efforts to promote sustainable development and address the urban challenges. In 2017, a report on *Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Framework for Action*, was published in partnership with UN ESCAP. The report was among the first initiatives to enhance complementarities between regional and global efforts to achieve the SDGs. It identifies five priority areas for ASEAN’s actions: 1) poverty eradication; 2) infrastructure and connectivity; 3) sustainable management of natural resources; 4) sustainable production and consumption, and 5) resilience.

The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC), under its sustainable infrastructure component, sets a goal to scale up the sharing of smart urbanisation models across cities in ASEAN. To support MPAC’s objectives, the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy (ASUS) was published in 2018. The Strategy presents detailed analysis on the impacts of ASEAN’s urbanisation and identifies priority areas for Member States and their partners to take actions. It points out that rapid economic growth, coupled with expanding urban population, has made a centralised form of governance difficult to sustain and less responsive to public service demands.



In light of cities' growing responsibilities on sustainable development, the United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC), which serves as the AMF Secretariat, collaborated with Cities Alliance and other institutions to develop a report on *City Enabling Environment Rating: Assessment of the Countries in Asia and the Pacific* (CEE) in March 2018. The publication provides insights on critical factors that enable effective decentralisation and local governance in 28 countries including in ASEAN. Building on the CEE and other sources, UN ESCAP with UN-Habitat, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Union (EU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Rockefeller Foundation and Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) is preparing the *Future of Asia-Pacific Cities Report 2019* which will promote the means of implementation for cities to effectively plan, build resilience, apply smart technologies and finance efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Inputs from these reports will serve as discussion frameworks at the upcoming AMF meeting and the 7<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Urban Forum during 15-17 October in Penang, Malaysia.

### **5<sup>th</sup> AMF Meeting Objectives**

The ASEAN Mayors Forum (AMF) has been advocating for local governments' indispensable roles and contributions to the ASEAN and global development, notably the UN SDGs, the New Urban Agenda (NUA), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). While local governments in Southeast Asia are embracing the benefits of urbanisation, their leadership and capacity need stronger support, collaboration and engagements at all levels.

The 5<sup>th</sup> AMF will serve as a platform for discussions among ASEAN's local political leaders, national policy makers, international development partners and other experts, on how cities and local governments can collaborate in the priority areas set forth for ASEAN's SDG implementation as well as other relevant frameworks to address urbanisation challenges.



In line with Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship, this year's AMF will be held in Bangkok and will contribute to the overarching theme of the Chair country: Advancing Partnership for Sustainability. The event will be jointly organised by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), the United Nations Economic Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), the European Union (EU) and the United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC).

The 5<sup>th</sup> AMF will aim at ***Driving Local Actions for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*** to support ASEAN's efforts to accelerate SDGs achievements while ensuring effective management of urbanisation, protecting environment and inclusive growth. The meeting discussions will be framed by the following sub-themes: **Digital ASEAN (future-oriented), Seamless ASEAN (enhanced connectivity), and Sustainable ASEAN (sustainability in all dimensions).**

Objectives and focus of the discussions take into account the AMF's relevance, linkages and contributions to other ASEAN cooperation frameworks such as the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN). Outcomes of the 5<sup>th</sup> AMF meetings and recommendations put forward by ASEAN Mayors will feed into the 7<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, which will be held in Penang, Malaysia, from 15-17 October 2019.

### **Expected Participants**

The event will draw up to 300 participants, with more than 100 mayors/governors, senior of local governments officials and representatives of local government associations from all ASEAN member states. Other participants will include the Permanent Representatives to and Secretariat of ASEAN, national government representatives, policy makers, academics, technical experts, development partner countries and institutions, specialised agencies and private sector representatives.

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