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## Concept Note ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium on Localising the SDGs and Realising Poverty Eradication

Siem-Reap, Cambodia 20-21 August 2018

### 1. Background

The ASEAN Charter recognises the importance of sustainable development and provides guidance for ASEAN to ensure sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. The development of the ASEAN Vision 2025 and its three Blueprints have been informed and influenced by global frameworks and commitments, including the sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is not surprising that the ASEAN Vision 2025 shares complementarities with the SDGs. As such, successfully implementing the SDGs is high on the agenda of ASEAN.

ASEAN has carried out several initiatives to promote implementation of the SDGs. They include symposium on “Leave No One Behind” and ASEAN-China-UNDP Research and Symposium on Financing the Implementation of SDGs in ASEAN, both held in cooperation with China and the UNDP. The first symposium, “Leave No One Behind”, provided platform to share experiences and discuss policy responses to persisting and newly emerging poverty and inequality challenges in the context of the ASEAN Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Meanwhile, ASEAN-China-UNDP Research and Symposium on Financing the Implementation of SDGs in ASEAN was designed to elaborate creative ways of financing implementation of the SDGs in ASEAN.

Built on the two symposiums above, ASEAN-China-UNDP Symposium on Localising the SDGs and Realising Poverty Eradication will continue promoting implementation of the SDGs in ASEAN in the context of complementarities between the ASEAN Vision 2025 and the SDGs. This symposium will elaborate ways forward to mainstream the SDGs at regional and sub-national level. Many ASEAN Member States (AMS) have

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*For the purpose of this symposium, SDG localisation is defined as:*

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- *Strengthening enabling environment for policy coherence and cohesion between national and local level on SDGs*
  - *Translating SDGs into priorities that are relevant, applicable and attainable at the local level.*
  - *Enhancing partnerships for cooperation, financing, and implementation of SDG related initiatives*
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incorporated sustainable development in their development plan. Some AMS even have institutional arrangement for implementation of the SDGs. However, much of the focus has been mainly at national level and more efforts are needed at regional and sub-national level. As acknowledged in the UN Secretary General Synthesis report, "*many of the investments to achieve the sustainable development goals will take place at the subnational level and be led by local authorities*"<sup>1</sup>.

SDGs are a global framework that need to be implemented according to their local context. A large part of the SDGs can only be effectively pursued at regional and local level. This means that, among others, local governments need to be empowered, local governments' resources and capacity need to be enhanced, and local stakeholders need to be involved from planning to monitoring implementation of the SDGs. In addition, policy coherence between national and sub-national level is crucial. It necessitates understanding and awareness of the SDGs at regional and sub-national level.

## 2. Thematic Areas of Priority

The AMS are socially and economically diverse. Percentage of the population earning below \$1.25 ranges from 17 percent to 29 percent<sup>2</sup>, ageing population (above 65 years) is expected to range from 8 percent to 38 percent by 2030, the rate of urbanisation ranges from 21 percent (Cambodia) to 100 percent (Singapore), but is expected to grow more rapidly with additional 90 million people expected to move to ASEAN cities by 2030. Meanwhile, ASEAN cities are expected to drive 40 percent of region's economic growth.

With the fourth industrial revolution, and related technological advancements, AMS could potentially face the risk of increased unemployment. At the same time, new technologies also provide the means to improve quality of life for majority of the population. The challenge lays in how countries can leverage the technological advancement to create opportunities for all.

Given the above context, providing enabling factors for localisation of the SDGs is crucial. Such enabling factors are:

- I. Consensus and strong political will of decision makers both at regional, national and sub-national level.
- II. *Governance systems for and of SDGs*: strengthening planning and budgeting processes, financing for SDGs, prioritisation mechanisms and approaches (specifically for poverty eradication, and for leaving no one behind).
- III. *Data system*: improving systems for data collection, coherence; use of data for prioritisation, informed policy and implementation, as well as SDG monitoring/tracking.
- IV. *Stakeholder engagement*: achievement of SDGs is not a responsibility of a single government or agency but will require involvement of all relevant stakeholders. Systems and spaces for raising awareness and encouraging different stakeholder – *i.e.* from private sector to local communities (including vulnerable populations, minorities, etc.) – are important to successfully implement the SDGs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet (A/69/700, para 94).

<sup>2</sup> ASEAN Statistical leaflet: selected Key indicators 2017 [http://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ASEAN-Statistical-Leflet-2017\\_Final.pdf](http://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ASEAN-Statistical-Leflet-2017_Final.pdf)

These enabling factors pave the way for translating and achieving specific thematic goals at the local level. The symposium will elaborate these enabling factors. As part of the symposium, particular attention will be placed on core enabling factors for localising SDGs.

Furthermore, the symposium will focus on specific thematic areas that are of relevance to the ASEAN region. These include: poverty eradication, resilience, disaster risk reduction, promoting innovation, and building inclusive and smart cities.

Specific attention will be given to strengthen innovation for equitable service delivery, responsive municipal governance and smart cities, and stakeholder partnership platforms (including for youth engagement). This is not limited to application of technology, but also includes employing innovative approaches such as design thinking and system thinking in tackling issues.

### **3. Partnership and Participants**

The ASEAN Secretariat will implement the symposium in close cooperation with China and the UNDP. In addition, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia will be involved in preparing the symposium.

China has been one of the important dialogue partners of ASEAN for sustainable development. China has been providing valuable supports for ASEAN in implementing projects on sustainable development, including the Symposium on “Leave No One Behind” and ASEAN-China-UNDP Research and Symposium on Financing Implementation of the SDGs in ASEAN. China is also an important dialogue partner for ASEAN in this initiative since China has experiences in pursuing sustainable development. China has made remarkable achievement since the era of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially in eradicating poverty. China has taken major measures to localise and achieve the SDGs not only within China but in other countries through the Belt and Road Initiatives, and other initiatives.

Meanwhile, the UNDP has long history of collaboration with ASEAN in promoting sustainable development. In addition to previous symposiums on the SDGs, other cooperation between ASEAN and the UNDP includes the ASEAN My World Survey. As the UN agency in charge of promoting sustainable development, the UNDP brings valuable experiences and expertise to the symposium. At the same time, the symposium can provide an opportunity for the UNDP especially in:

- Identifying common challenges, as well as best practices in localising SDGs;
- Showcasing (through relevant country-level examples) how and where the UNDP can support governments at all levels to localise the SDGs;
- Co-designing regional (ASEAN) and country level initiatives to localise SDGs (including as part of SDG platforms), which leverage innovation, employing design thinking and system thinking approaches.

The symposium will bring senior government officials (including city officials) in charge of implementation of the SDGs in ten AMS. Moreover, experts, international organisations,

development partners, NGOs/CSOs, and private sectors, among others, will participate in the symposium.

#### **4. Main Agendas and Contents**

The symposium will be held for two days. Main agendas and contents of the symposium will include the following:

##### **Group Discussions with Local Community “Under the Sun, under the Tree”**

Participants will have a visit to and discussions with local communities in Siem Reap, so-called “Under the Sun, under the Tree”. Set as a direct interface between symposium’s participants and local communities, the discussions will provide local communities with an opportunity to present their voice to the policy makers. At the same time, it will provide symposium participants with valuable information on mainstreaming the SDGs at community level.

There will be four group discussions with different topic held simultaneously. Participants of the symposium will be divided into those four groups and rotate to another group after 30-minute discussion. The four groups are as follows:

Group A: “Gender Mainstreaming”

Participants from local community include women with low income, vulnerability/HIV, disadvantaged women.

Group B: “Disaster Risk Reduction”

Participants from local community include relevant NGOs/CSOs.

Group C: “Sustainable Livelihood for Farmers and Entrepreneurs”

Participants from local community include small/medium-income farmers and entrepreneur.

Group D: “Capacity Building for Workforce and Local Officers”

Participants from local community include youth, labour, and local government officers

##### **Plenary Sessions and Key Note Address**

Plenary sessions and key note address are designed as a platform to share experiences and expertise on localisation of the SDGs from experts and high-level officials. Designed to set the tone of the following discussions, plenary and key note address will be centered on the general picture of SDGs localisation and poverty eradication, and ways forward for AMS.

##### **Roundtable Discussions**

Roundtable discussions will provide a platform for participants to share best practices on certain aspects of SDGs localisation, such as institutional arrangement, stakeholder engagement, monitoring/tracking, capacity and resources of local governments, and innovation. Roundtable discussions will allow for deep discussion since participants will be divided into small group

discussions. Moreover, it will allow sharing hands-on experiences when best practices with case studies on certain aspect of SDGs implementation are exchanged.

In line with the main objectives of the symposium, it is expected that all participants will gain valuable strategies in implementing the SDGs according to their respective condition, challenges, and resources; and involve stakeholders from planning to monitoring implementation of the SDGs. Also, it is expected that creative approaches on eradicating poverty will be explored during the symposium.

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