- Concept Paper -
SDG Summit 2019 Side Event

“Regional Dimension in Achieving SDGs: From Lessons Learned to Practical Action in the ASEAN Region and Beyond”
Co-organised by Thailand, the ASEAN Secretariat and UN ESCAP

Tuesday 24 September 2019 at 08.15 - 09.45 hrs.
Conference Room 12, UN Headquarters, New York

* * * * *

I. Background

On 24 – 25 September 2019 under the auspices of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA74), world leaders will gather in New York for the SDG Summit, the first UN Summit on the SDGs since the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. This Summit marks a significant juncture in the path towards SDGs as the international community enters the second quarter of the SDG cycle. It will also be an important high-level platform for dialogue in reviewing the global progress on the implementation of the SDGs as well as discussing ways forward to accelerate the realisation of the SDGs.

Partnership plays an important role in advancing the SDGs. The UN 2030 Agenda requires bold changes in UN development mechanisms and the deepening of regional cooperation and partnerships, within the frameworks of existing regional and sub-regional institutional arrangements, for the implementation of the SDGs across Member States in all geographical regions.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can be viewed as a successful and inspiring model of regional development cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Over the past five decades since its inception in 1967, ASEAN has grown stronger through a deeper integration in political, economic and socio-cultural spheres. ASEAN has also grown into the sixth largest economy in the world and has the potential to become the world's fourth largest economy by 2030 based on some projections. Furthermore, the spirit of development cooperation is deeply rooted in ASEAN.

In support of global efforts on the SDGs, ASEAN has been working together and with external partners to promote complementarities between the UN 2030 Agenda and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, or also known as the “Complementarities Initiative”. In 2017, Thailand, as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation, the ASEAN Secretariat and UN ESCAP published the Complementarities Report to provide a framework for action for the Complementarities Initiative. Five priority areas – namely, poverty eradication, infrastructure and connectivity, sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable consumption and production and resilience – have been identified. To further advance the cooperation under this initiative, the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD) will be launched in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2019, to serve as an institutional platform for promoting sustainable development cooperation in ASEAN. This process is taking place under Thailand’s ASEAN Chairmanship theme of “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability”.

Regional cooperation for achieving sustainable development can provide useful insights for reorienting modalities of partnerships across regional organisations and institutional frameworks. In order to make regional cooperation more cohesive, cooperative and coherent, countries can utilise policy fora to share best practices and lessons learned, especially in translating the desirable vision into practical action and concrete outcomes as well as in
fostering partnerships for sustainable development. Going forward, the significance of partnerships within and across regional and sub-regional organisations for the effective implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda is another important aspect that should be looked into in helping countries meet their aspiration of becoming resilient societies.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) serves as the United Nations’ regional hub in promoting cooperation among countries in Asia and the Pacific as well as regional and sub-regional organisations to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in the region. UN ESCAP has also been a vital platform for the exchange of lessons learned and good practices on issues related to sustainable development and the SDGs implementation. Specifically, being a valuable partner of ASEAN in promoting the Complementarities Initiative, UN ESCAP has co-organised with Thailand the annual High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLBD) since 2017. The HLBD has been an important forum in advancing cooperation and partnerships for the realisation of sustainable development in ASEAN.

The side event on “Regional Dimension in achieving SDGs: From Lessons Learned to Practical Action in the ASEAN Region and Beyond” is jointly organised by Thailand, in its capacity as the ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation and the current Chair of ASEAN, the ASEAN Secretariat and UN ESCAP. The format will be a panel discussion, which will focus on sharing good practices of ASEAN in concretely pursuing the complementarities between regional and global sustainable development agendas, translating its regional development vision into concrete action as well as fostering partnerships and synergies within and beyond the region in support of the realisation of the SDGs in the region. Speakers will include high-level representatives of ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat. Representatives from ASEAN’s external partners will also be invited to share their perspectives on how such partnerships can help drive the sustainable development agenda forward in the region.

II. Objectives

1. To share ASEAN’s experience in shaping regional sustainable development cooperation;
2. To promote regional cooperation in the implementation of the SDGs;
3. To promote global partnerships for achieving the SDGs.

III. Organisation and Speakers

The event will be organised by the Royal Thai Government in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat and UN ESCAP. The programme outline of this event is as follows:

- Opening Remarks by
  - Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand (TBC)
  - Executive Secretary of UN ESCAP (TBC)
  - Secretary-General of ASEAN (TBC)

- Panel Discussion by
  - Representative from UN ESCAP
  - Representative from the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD)
  - Representative from ASEAN Member States
  - Representative from ASEAN’s external partners
    Moderator: TBC

* * * * *