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“Partnering for Tomorrow”

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on ASEAN-Korea Partnership

LINKING HEARTS, OPENING UP MINDS: STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL ARCHITECTURE TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT ASEAN COMMUNITY

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Presentation at the International Conference *on*
“ASEAN–Korea Partnership” jointly organised by the
ASEAN–Korea Centre & the Korean Institute of
Southeast Asian Studies (KISEAS), Lotte Hotel,
Seoul, South Korea, 30 August 2017

I Sub-Session 2

Working Together for A Resilient and Sustainable ASEAN Community: Role of Education and People's Understanding

Paper guided by the following challenges

Challenge A: How to build a more resilient & sustainable ASEAN Community in coming decades?

Challenge B: How to strengthen relations between ASEAN & its partners -- in this regard South Korea?

Challenge C: In what way can education & raising people's awareness & understanding open up minds & link hearts among the peoples?

II Current Status: Taking Stock

Current Status

- 50th Anniversary of ASEAN (8th Aug 2017) -> Calls for celebration & also rethinking on future road map, examining prospects for next 50 years
 - ASEAN has progressed beyond being an association of nation-states to become a community after five decades
- + *Establishment of ASEAN Economic Community in 2015;*
- + *Commitment to realise its other pillars: Politico-security community; & Socio-cultural community*
 - All these are welcome developments
 - But also must focus on challenges into future

Pertinent Questions

Q1) Have the peoples of ASEAN 'opened up their minds' towards the ASEAN Community? How deep is their sense of awareness & understanding of it?

Q2) Have their 'hearts been linked'? In other words, do the peoples feel a sense of common belonging, a shared destiny as members of the ASEAN Community? Or they feel 'linked' only to their own national community?

Q3: In the same vein, we can also ask the question: Are the peoples of ASEAN aware of ASEAN and its partnership with such countries as South Korea? Do they understand what it involves?

And what do they feel about it?

Several key findings on ASEAN & ASEAN Community:

1. ASEAN Foundation commissioned 10-nation Study – University students (2007). A baseline study with 2,170 student respondents

a) There is 'ASEAN enthusiasm' among students but it is not matched by level of knowledge & understanding of ASEAN;

b) There is unevenness of enthusiasm among 10 ASEAN members, with CLV (Cambodia, Laos & Vietnam) being most enthusiastic, but 'ambivalent' among rich members (Singapore, Brunei); skepticism in Myanmar.

Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand & Philippines generally enthusiastic

2. Study in 2010 by Guido Benny, Tham Siew Yean & Rashila Ramli – to measure support for ASEAN Economic Community

Sample: Survey of 1,256 respondents (551 Indonesians; 451 Malaysians; 294 Singaporeans) (mainly students).

- (a) 81% supported formation of AEC; highest in Malaysia (85%), Indonesia (83%), and lowest in Singapore (73%); (b) Majority gave priority to purchasing ASEAN goods & to investments from ASEAN investors; (c) Sizeable majority (75%) perceived AEC will give benefits to their country & people;
- (d) On regional integration, while respondents (70%) aspire for regional integration like the EU model, they reject the idea of single ASEAN currency; insist that passport still needed for ASEAN peoples to visit other ASEAN countries. On governance, views were mixed. While majority Malaysians accept ASEAN Parliament, ASEAN Commission & ASEAN Court of Justice, these were rejected by Indonesians & Singaporeans.

3. Study released by ASEAN Secretariat in 2013 – Survey of 2,200 respondents (public) & in-depth interviews of 261 business leaders from capital cities of 10 ASEAN member states. Findings:
- (a) 81% “familiar with or “have heard of ASEAN”;
 - (b) Overall perception & attitude towards ASEAN community is positive;
 - (c) But understanding low – - 76% lack basic understanding of what ASEAN is & what it tries to do;
 - (d) However, as expected, business leaders have better understanding of ASEAN.

4. 2014 10-nation study commissioned by ASEAN Secretariat & ASEAN Foundation conducted by ISEAS – focus on students in 22 universities – positive attitudes towards ASEAN remains the same as in 2007. Level of knowledge also improved.

High awareness of ASEAN still has to translate into better understanding of ASEAN & how ASEAN affects their lives.

5. 4th Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) 2014-2016 asked public in 8 ASEAN countries (excl. Brunei & Laos) how close they were to ASEAN.

Response: 11% "very close"; 40% "close";

Regarding connectivity, 51% expressed connectivity, 49% did not.

ABS Report states that given that ASEAN has a long history of 50 years, "there is serious deficit in building public support for ASEAN."

Expressed in another way, "So close, but yet so far" – disconnect between ASEAN & the public core (Habibie Center *ASEAN Briefs*. Vol. 3(6) Aug 2016)

To sum up:

- a) Enthusiasm & awareness for ASEAN is generally high; perception of AEC and ASEAN integration is positive.
- b) But there is still relatively low level of understanding & knowledge about ASEAN & ASEAN Community even among segments of population (such as university students) who are expected to know about it.
- c) There seems to be a disconnect between ASEAN & the core public in the region. In other words, we can assume they are mainly connected to their own nation-states.
- d) Hence there is a need to 'open up their minds' (knowledge & understanding), & to link their hearts (feeling towards ASEAN & identification with it) so as to enhance their sense of

connectedness.

III

ASEAN-Korea Partnership

Is there a conception of community between ASEAN & its dialogue partners?

No, conception of community is with regard to ASEAN, while with its dialogue partners such as South Korea, it is a Forum.

However, can ASEAN-ROK relations – while formally a Forum -- be more than a Forum?

Yes, in reality it is more than a Forum.

In fact, it is important to nurture & strengthen the social basis of the relations

While there is mobility between ASEAN & South Korea through education & exchange, not much is known about these programs & activities in ASEAN among public, including among academia & students.

However, evidence is still anecdotal; no known studies as such.

The ASEAN-Korea Academic Exchange Program to establish an “epistemic community” of regional intellectuals, particularly for those in ASEAN and Korea is a noble endeavour.

The challenge is: How the region-wide common perspective among regional intellectuals can be disseminated to & shared by the public, including academia & students.

IV

Conclusions & Recommendations

Brief Conclusions

- (1) Many enthusiastic & positive about ASEAN & ASEAN Community;
- 2) Many aware of ASEAN, but their understanding & knowledge of ASEAN Community & what it stands for is something else.
- (3) ASEAN Community seems to be still a 'top down' entity, while the people still don't feel a part of it.
- (4) The fact that university students do not have much knowledge & understanding about ASEAN & ASEAN Community shows an important knowledge gap among potential future leaders.
- (5) ASEAN-ROK Forum is noteworthy & necessary; that it is more than a Forum, given the people-to-people relations, education exchanges, etc.

However, more needs to be done to build a resilient & sustainable

ASEAN Community, and with regard to partnering for the future.

Recommendations – Two Parts

A: Need to strengthen the social architecture (schools, colleges, universities, regional networks, family, media, etc.) in ASEAN & between ASEAN & ROK to promote ASEAN commitment & identity to open up minds & link hearts.

1. Education – revisit the curriculum at the school & university level with regard to ASEAN. Assess to what extent ASEAN is included as part of the curriculum. Based on such assessment, new materials on ASEAN & ASEAN Community can be suggested.
2. Repositories of knowledge – libraries should be strongly supported: (a) ASEAN Digital Library; (b) AUNILO (ASEAN University Network Inter-Library Online or Libraries of ASEAN University Network); ASEAN Theses Repository (social sciences & humanities)

3. Education for future: Scholarships > from more affluent ASEAN states (e.g. Singapore ASEAN Scholarships), & ASEAN-EU scholarships.
4. ASEAN studies in Korea & Korean studies in ASEAN – assess impact; find new ways to expand.

5. Sports & other activities between schools & universities in ASEAN (e.g. volunteerism) are an important means to promote ASEAN solidarity & cooperation. More attention should be paid in this endeavour.

Something to ponder: Every two years, we have the South East Asia (SEA) Games being organised since 1959. Is it appropriate & timely for the name of the SEA Games be changed to ASEAN Games to promote more understanding & conception of ASEAN?

6. Effective use of communication–channels to promote awareness, understanding & knowledge of ASEAN, & more so the ASEAN Community (economic, socio-cultural & political).
 - (a) Focus should not be merely on history, demography & cultures of the region, but the concept of ASEAN community itself & what it means to peoples of ASEAN.
 - (b) Use of Internet & social media, besides the traditional forms of knowledge & information dissemination (schools, books, media);
 - (c) Usage of language to suit target audience
 - (d) Mind set change – issues should not be seen only from perspective of capital cities, but also periphery.

B: Need for new studies – policies must be based on research

1. Studies thus far were undertaken before the formation of the AEC & ASEAN economic integration; thus, it is necessary to conduct new studies post-AEC & post-50th anniversary of ASEAN to assess the AEC after its formation – to what extent it has made an impact upon the people
2. Study on ASEAN-Korea relations should also be carried out.

Thank you

Note on speaker

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