



# ASEAN's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Cambodia's Common Journey



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## **ASEAN @50**

Cambodia jointly cherishes with all the ten members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as we are celebrating the group's 50th anniversary this year.

This regional bloc has come a long way since its foundation in 1967 weathering economic and security storms and challenges. Currently, ASEAN is being looked upon as one of the most successful regionalism models and it is taking a center stage in shaping agenda for peace and prosperity in the region and beyond. ASEAN shows how integration becomes plausible despite differences in background, culture and stages of development.

Following half a century of evolution of open regionalism, the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) at the end of 2015 was seen as one of the greatest achievements that ASEAN has been undertaking. The AEC Blueprint 2025 provides broad directions and strategic measures towards achieving a highly integrated community along with other principal documents namely the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint 2025 and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2025.

If we think of ASEAN as a single country, today, it is a global economic and trade powerhouse, ranking sixth worldwide in terms of its combined GDP. In 2015, ASEAN's total trade ranked fourth after China, USA and Germany. In the same year, ASEAN attracted US\$121 billion or 7% of total global foreign direct investment inflows.

Politically, ASEAN is a magnet for regional architectures.

ASEAN has initiated and carefully nurtured many crucial regional architectures that have kept the region stable and prosperous, namely the ASEAN Free Trade Area, ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Plus Three, East Asia Summit, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus).

Countries within and beyond the region highly regard the ASEAN-led fora as credible platforms to address common concerns and challenges. ASEAN's approach of seeking dialogue, consultation and engagement has served the region well. Core regional instruments like the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and the Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the Southeast China Sea (DOC), which was adopted in 2002 in Phnom Penh, among others, have been widely recognised as guidelines for inter-state relations.

Gradually, Dialogue Partnerships have been established with Australia, Canada, China, the EU, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Nations. To date, 35 countries, including all ASEAN member states, are High Contracting Parties to the TAC. 87 sovereign states and one regional organization have accredited their ambassadors to ASEAN. Interest from countries outside the region and other regional organizations in Asia, Africa and Latin America to forge cooperation with ASEAN continues to grow.

As the region is increasingly integrated, ASEAN has also been instrumental in addressing non-traditional security challenges such as climate change, pandemics, natural disasters, trans-national crimes in various forms and protection of rights of migrant workers, etc.