

# **NEAT MEMORANDUM No. 15**

## **NETWORK OF EAST ASIAN THINK TANKS ( NEAT)**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Network of East Asia Think Tanks (NEAT) is track two of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) that supports the goal of community building in East Asia. East Asian countries seek to promote the welfare and well-being of its peoples by realizing the East Asian Vision of Peace, Prosperity and Progress. To advance peace and prosperity in the region, the East Asia community building process is to be based on universal values, including good governance, the rule of law, democracy, human rights, international law and norms.

NEAT Myanmar and NEAT China co-hosted the 28<sup>th</sup> NEAT Country Coordinators Meeting (CCM) on 8 May 2018 and 29<sup>th</sup> NEAT CCM and the 16<sup>th</sup> NEAT Annual Conference (AC) from 17 to 18 September 2018 in Yangon, Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The theme of the 16<sup>th</sup> NEAT AC is “Strengthening Cooperation in Communications”. Representatives from ASEAN Plus Three (APT) countries participated in the meetings.

### **II. NEAT ACTIVITIES IN 2018**

In 2018, NEAT organized four Working Group (WG) meetings on Mapping the Blueprint for the East Asia Economic Community sponsored by NEAT China, East Asian Socio-Cultural Connectivity: Building an Institutional Network sponsored by NEAT Korea, Enhancing the East Asian Food Security Mechanism- APTERR’s Contribution to Food Security and Disaster Management sponsored by NEAT Japan and Mainstreaming Disability in East Asia Economic Community: Breaking Barriers and Creating Inclusive Society Through Mutual Collaboration sponsored by NEAT Thailand.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the 29<sup>th</sup> NEAT CCM and working groups activities in 2018, NEAT respectfully submits recommendations in the following four areas for consideration of the APT leaders:-

#### **1. Mapping an EAEC Blueprint for post-2020 Era**

In line with the spirit of an East Asian community developed through the East Asian Vision Group Report I and II composed of political-security, economic and socio-cultural pillars, we emphasize the need to strengthen existing plans of regional cooperation. It is highly recommended to pinpoint a new vision for the post-2020 EAEC era and map an EAEC blueprint for it, aiming to realize an open community of shared future featuring inclusive, innovative and sustainable development through enhancing regional economic integration which facilitates freer movement of goods, services, investment, technology and people within the region.

**a. To initiate a task force on EAEC in 2018**

- i. To designate a High-Level Task Force (HLTF), comprising representatives from both governments and think-tanks of the APT countries, to forge a new vision of EAEC and its blueprint and submit to 23rd APT Summit for consideration.

**b. To reinforce ASEAN's centrality in EAEC building**

- i. To integrate the processes of AEC and EAEC building in a symbiotic way;
- ii. The Plus Three countries should provide stronger support in terms of finance, expertise, technology, and human resources, etc.

**c. To strengthen institutional capacity building**

- i. To establish an EAEC Council as the principal body for the overall implementation of the strategic measures;
- ii. To upgrade "10+3 office" to "EAEC Unit" in the ASEAN Secretariat;
- iii. To strengthen ministerial cooperation mechanism in science, technology, and innovation (STI);
- iv. To strengthen cooperation between the ASEAN Secretariat and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS).

**d. To enlist more input for EAEC building**

- i. To expand APT Cooperation Fund to provide sufficient financial support for EAEC building;
- ii. To develop effective partnerships with external parties and international organizations.

**e. To set up an EAEC database**

- i. To set up an EAEC database and form this database by integrating the ASEAN database with the Plus Three database, which can also be an area for the ASEAN Secretariat and the TCS to cooperate.

**2. East Asian Socio-Cultural Connectivity:**

Socio-cultural elements have increasingly become significant to build an East Asian Community given the increasing demand for harmonized policies in dealing with various socio-cultural challenges. The institutionalization of socio-cultural connectivity is more necessary now and calls upon cooperation among the governments to arrange socio-cultural policies in the process of community building in the region. The following are key policy recommendations:

- a. To build a network among the socio-cultural institutes in the member countries. Upon the recommendation of NEAT coordinators, the representing institute will share information and update the state of the member states national and regional socio-cultural policies and challenges.
- b. To organize a regular policy forum that enables the regional network of sociocultural institutes to conduct collaborative research on the socio-cultural community and various sociocultural challenges the region is facing, which will lead to form an epistemic community that consists of scholars, policy makers and other stakeholders including those who participated in the NEAT process previously.
- c. To establish an inter-governmental research and monitoring unit, the so called Centre for Socio-Cultural Cooperation for ASEAN and East Asia, which will handle selected socio-cultural cooperation programs mainly in the field of education and research to fulfill its main task and monitor the progress of the ASCC and APT plans for socio-cultural cooperation.
- d. To secure durable financial resources (i.e. the APT cooperation fund) to pursue the institutionalization of socio-cultural connectivity.

### **3. Enhancing the East Asian Food Security Mechanism:**

Food security should be better achieved through the collective and concerted regional actions. The ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) is a unique program materialized under the APT cooperation. Since its establishment in 2012, all parties of APTERR committed to earmarking certain quantity of rice reserve, and a considerable amount of rice was released from the APTERR stockpiled emergency reserves to the areas damaged by the typhoon, drought and other emergencies. Although being greatly appreciated by the recipients, the current program has many challenges to become more effective mechanisms of regional cooperation for food security. Thus, the following policy recommendations are made.

- a. To enhance awareness of APTERR**
  - i. To make all possible efforts to raise the awareness of the APTERR and to gain their full support for its programs.
- b. To coordinate with other agencies and groups**
  - i. To strengthen the coordination with other national and international agencies, NGOs and private sectors that are also conducting various activities that enhance food security in East Asia;
  - ii. To play a leading role in collecting, analyzing and disseminating information on rice stocks and emergency food deliveries, in close collaboration with the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS).
- c. To encourage the use of “earmarked” reserves**
  - i. To encourage the use of earmarked reserves by finding appropriate measures including

flexible pricing mechanisms.

**d. To strengthen “stockpiled” rice reserve mechanism**

- i. To improve the quality and quantity of rice stockpiles through technical assistance and collaboration with local experts ;
- ii. To examine the change of operational rules regarding the partial encashment of stock piled rice after reserve period so that various activities can be implemented more effectively.

**e. To devise the form of stockpiled rice**

- i. To plan and store partly the stockpiled rice reserves in a manner that can meet both requirements for immediate consumption at emergencies and for the use of post reserve period including disaster management training or dietary education.

**f. Towards common regional policies**

- i. To accelerate discussions based on the experience of APTERR how to reach a more collective and inclusive common food security policy in the APT region.

#### **4. Mainstreaming Disability in East Asia Economic Community: Breaking Barriers of Creating Inclusive Society Through Mutual Collaboration**

The objectives of the working group are to enhance the quality of life and promote an inclusive society for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Based on the WG discussion, the key recommendations consist of four categories, including:

**a. Policy, funding, and attitudes toward PWDs**

It is important to have a clear policy, adequate funding to support, and inter-agency collaboration to enhance the inclusiveness and quality of life of PWDs. In addition, APT countries need to address the challenges on the negative attitudes and discrimination toward PWDs.

**b. Education administration and provision**

APT countries need to provide adequate training to teachers, family members, other professionals and stakeholders who work in the interest of PWDs. In addition, it is crucial to make education and curriculum flexible in order to provide opportunity, full access, and participation of PWDs based on the labor market and society needs.

**c. Employment and livelihood provision**

It is crucial to provide PWDs with employment opportunity. To achieve this goal, APT countries should review and revise their employment policies and provide customized employment and job coach for PWDs. Additionally, the governments have to make the assistive technologies available and create a barrier-free environment for PWDs. The APT should concern and support the ageing PWDs and those affected by disasters.

**d. Utilizing research regarding PWDs in the policy formulation and implementation processes**

To promote and sustain the knowledge and practices in PWDs, APT should establish a “Regional Disability Studies Center.” The Center will keep the accurate record on PWDs and facilitate the utilization of research and practices in the policy formulation and implementation processes.

The detailed reports appear in the ANNEX.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

NEAT greatly appreciates serious consideration by the APT SOM, Ministers and Leaders of the recommendations in this Memorandum, and welcomes opportunities to interact further with decision-makers its content. We reiterate our continued support to build a sounder, healthier and flourishing East Asian Community. We look forward to supporting more positive contribution towards the socio-economic development of the community in the region.