Chapter 4

ASEAN Community and the
Sustainable Development Goals:
Positioning Sustainability at the
Heart of Regional Integration

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Key Messages

- The work of ASEAN is primarily sectoral, with environmental sustainability as part of the organisation's Socio-Cultural pillar, separate from its Economic and Political-Security pillars.

- This arrangement has served ASEAN well in promoting conventional socio-economic development in areas such as trade and education, but not sustainable development, which requires more cross-sectoral coordination and policy integration—something ASEAN in its current form cannot operationalise.

- The framework of ASEAN, as a major regional organisation, could help member states formulate and pursue sustainable development models but needs to be 'rewired' in order to do so.

- Weak coordination over disparate policy areas and lack of engagement with non-state actors are the two Achilles heals of ASEAN's current framework. This chapter argues that sustainable development (and related development goals) would be better promoted via: (i) strengthened overall institutional and financial capacity of ASEAN's Secretariat; (ii) opening up ASEAN to greater engagement with non-state actors, including the scientific community; and (iii) establishing an SDG Expert Committee to support the ASEAN Secretariat and its member states in coordinating sustainable development actions that are regionally significant. The above activities should be funded equally by all ASEAN member states.

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1. Introduction

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) – by definition in its founding Declaration a region of peace, freedom and prosperity for its peoples with a common identity – is expected to reach a critical milestone by the end of 2015 through the launch of the ASEAN Community. This milestone event in South East Asia's regional integration process happens to coincide with the adoption of a new global set of development goals – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2016. This chapter argues that ASEAN member states should utilise the adoption of SDGs to both strengthen and partly refocus their framework for regional integration, as doing so would better serve

sustainable development across the region. In practice, this would mean aligning the overall objectives of the ASEAN Community with those of the forthcoming SDGs and strengthening this regional framework. The chapter analyses the current structure and working modalities of ASEAN, reviews its response to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and makes recommendations on how it could become better equipped to aid in successful SDG implementation throughout South East Asia.

Most observers would readily agree that community building in the region revolves around the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). However, the 'ASEAN Community' was conceived based on a much broader vision that is underpinned by three elements – 'Economic', 'Socio-cultural' and 'Political Security' – often referred to in ASEAN parlance as the 'three pillars' comprising the AEC, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) and the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). This broader vision is found in the ASEAN Charter (ASEAN 2008), which underscores the need for "...sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations...to place the well-being, livelihood and welfare of the peoples at the centre of the ASEAN community building process" (p.2). Such vision, therefore, is greatly at odds with the much narrower focus of 'liberalised' trade and investment, which runs the risk of undermining long-term sustainability unless accompanied by appropriate safeguards and capacity-strengthening measures. This chapter therefore argues that ASEAN Member States and institutions should start crafting a coherent response to future SDGs, in order to ensure that the ASEAN Community is based not only on aspirations for economic integration but also on principles of long-term sustainability, and to ensure that the sustainability aspirations of the ASEAN Charter form the bedrock of ASEAN's regional integration.

The current reality may be that economic and political interests supersede those of a social and environmental nature, but we argue that ASEAN's vision of a regionally-integrated 'community' should necessarily be more directly concerned with the environment and sustainability, and that it should establish safeguards to that end. To ensure that sustainability issues are addressed across the regional integration blueprints we also recommend the ASEAN to establish an SDG expert committee that sits institutionally across the three blueprints.

1.1 Addressing the SDGs regionally within ASEAN

Synergising the overall objectives of ASEAN integration with those of the future SDGs would be relevant for three main reasons. First, in theory, sustainable development should be pursued in a coherent manner at global, regional, national and sub-national levels, with nested objectives based on the subsidiarity principle coordinated vertically (top-down and bottom-up). Global goals such as SDGs can play a big role in galvanising support and guiding actions at the lower levels namely the regional level (via ASEAN), and further to the national and local levels in each ASEAN Member State. ASEAN regional integration could contribute positively to SDG implementation – both at the regional and country level – as long as it is organised in the proper way.

Second, as many sustainability issues, such as ecosystem management, biodiversity protection, migration, demographics and population change, climate change and disaster risk reduction are often determined by factors beyond national borders, it would be a good idea to address them through regional frameworks, raising the importance of bodies like ASEAN.

Third, sustainability of the AEC will to a large extent depend on the health of the region's ecosystems, its ability to produce clean energy and the overall health of the environment.

In this regard the 'environment', instead of being institutionally located as a sub-element under the ASCC 'pillar', needs to be attributed higher importance in the overall scheme of regional integration (ASEAN 2009a). This is also true for sustainability, which should be the overarching mission linked with development, to keep in check the effect of economic integration on the environment. The impetus to strengthen the agenda of 'environmental sustainability' through processes that reflect the future SDGs also at the ASEAN level is an opportunity that should not be missed.

### 1.2 Focus and structure of this chapter

Strengthening the status of the environment and sustainable development requires institutions and mechanisms to coordinate policies and actions across multiple dimensions, sectors and themes, and this chapter asserts that SDGs should be integrated in the overall ASEAN regional integration process and reflected in institutional frameworks and mechanisms. The chapter is structured as follows:

First, the institutional frameworks in the regional integration process are briefly reviewed. Second, how MDGs (the predecessor to SDGs) have been approached in the context of the ASEAN Community institutions and actors is described. Third, perceived gaps and shortcomings in the existing institutional set-up of MDGs within ASEAN integration are examined. Fourth, a hypothetical set of SDGs – which reflect the priorities of ASEAN Member States and overlapping thematic action areas between ASEAN regional integration and SDGs – is presented. The conclusion offers suggestions to synergise SDGs with ASEAN regional integration, particularly from the perspective of improving coordination within ASEAN and using practices that have been applied elsewhere, as well as improving coordination with external supporting stakeholders.

2. ASEAN formal institutional structure

The primary responsibility for coordinating actions towards regional integration – both among ASEAN Member States and between ASEAN and other stakeholders – lies with the ASEAN Secretariat[1], which has the core mandate to 'provide for greater efficiency in the coordination of ASEAN organs and for more effective implementation of ASEAN projects and activities'. The Secretariat is envisioned as the 'nerve centre of a strong and confident ASEAN Community that is globally respected for acting in full compliance with its Charter and in the best interest of its people'.[2]

Naturally, it is a challenge for large regional bodies such as ASEAN to coordinate actions, which is why its functions were strengthened via adoption of a new Charter in 2008 (Letchumanan 2010). In terms of specific organs or mechanisms, the regional integration process is coordinated horizontally by the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC), which is represented by Foreign Ministers and meets at least twice a year. The ACC is tasked to (i) coordinate the implementation of agreements and decisions of the ASEAN Summit (the highest-level decision making organ within ASEAN); and (ii) coordinate ASEAN Community Councils to enhance policy coherence, efficiency and cooperation among them (see Figure 4.1).
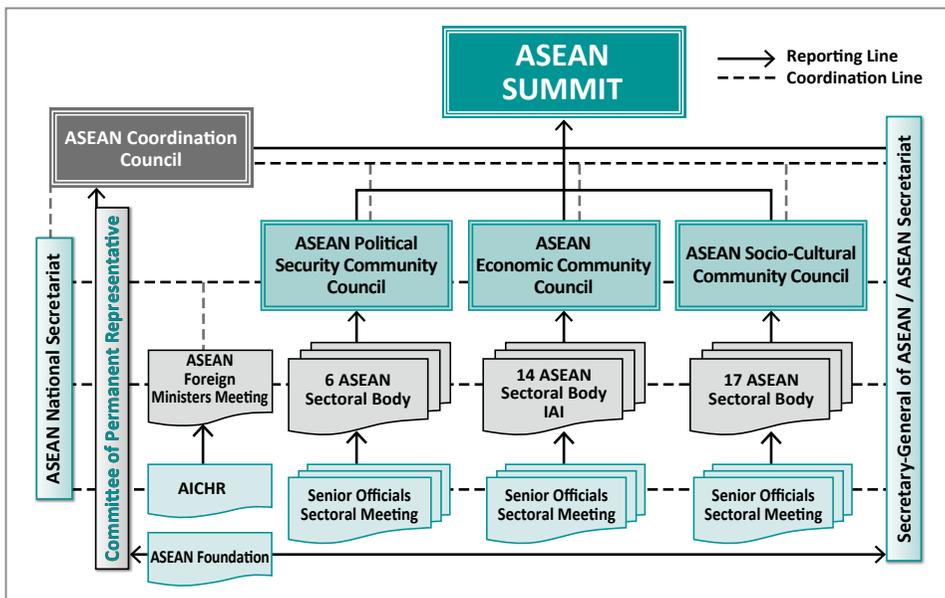
Source: Wahyuningrum (2012)

Figure 4.1 ***ASEAN organisational structure***

ASEAN Community Councils meet at least twice a year to review progress in implementation by sectoral or ministerial bodies under their purview based on decisions adopted by the ASEAN Summit (with regional integration being key on the agenda), coordinate cross-cutting issues across pillars and submit recommendations to the ASEAN Summit. The appropriate Minister from the Member State holding the ASEAN Chairmanship chairs these Councils. Below the Community Councils are the relevant sectoral or ministerial bodies and their subsidiary supporting meetings (working group level), which provide recommendations to the Councils on relevant issues according to their respective mandates.

At the level below the ACC, Community Councils are also supported by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), which consists of ambassador-level representatives who work with the ASEAN National Secretariat and ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies. The CPR liaises with the Secretary-General and ASEAN Secretariat on all subjects and daily affairs relevant to the work of ASEAN. One of the key roles of CPR is to facilitate and strengthen ASEAN cooperation with external partners.

Implementation of regional integration activities is guided by the overall Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009–2015), which consists of three Community Blueprints as well as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan 2 (ASEAN 2009a; ASEAN 2009b; ASEAN 2009c). These activities fall under three types: (i) nationally-driven initiatives: (ii) regional activities that enhance or complement national initiatives through shared experience, information and knowledge; establishment of regional networks; and joint regional approaches (e.g., development of regional work programmes); and (iii) regional activities that involve setting up regional mechanisms or standards. For regional integration and for the future SDGs, activities at all these levels will be important.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms for the regional integration process have been gradually developed and have also been enhanced over time. A key mechanism is the ASEAN Community Progress Monitoring System (ACPMS), which aims to measure the progress of achievement of ASEAN's main goals for only the AEC and ASCC. This system was based on the ASEAN Baseline Report (ABR), a preliminary study commissioned in 2006 by the ASEAN Secretariat and conducted by a team of consultants to provide an objective description of the baseline situation. More comprehensive M&E frameworks of the ACPMS were developed in 2007 and 2012 with the support of donors into its current form. The ACPMS itself is intended to complement other efforts of M&E, such as the Mid-term Review of ASCC and the ASEAN Economic Community Scorecard (which only measures compliance in implementing the specific measures and actions mentioned by the AEC Blueprint, and not the progress in achieving the objectives of the AEC (ASEAN 2014)). The ASEAN Political-Security Community Council (APSCC) receives periodic reviews on its implementation progress by ASEAN Coordinating Conference for the ASEAN Political-Security Community.

3. The MDGs and ASEAN

3.1 ASEAN's institutional response to the MDGs

The following section provides an overview of ASEAN's institutional response to the MDGs, with a view to making suggestions as to how to improve ASEAN's organisational structure in support of implementation of future SDGs. The MDGs are complementary to ASEAN integration goals. Table 4.1 shows the occurrence of MDG themes in the three Community blueprints, and since ASEAN has already incorporated MDGs into its blueprints, it would be logical to continue doing so with the SDGs. However, we also note that the somewhat inconsistent incorporation of MDGs in the blueprints could imply that for the future, new development goals would have to be more consistently incorporated in the objectives across all three blueprints.

Table 4.1 *Occurrence of MDGs within ASEAN Community Blueprints*

MDGs	Occurrence in the three blueprints for regional integration			Corresponding mechanisms	
	AEC	APSC	ASCC		
Goal 1 (poverty eradication)	✔		✔	Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication Meeting of ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry	Other relevant bodies include: ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting, Ministers Meeting on Development Planning, and IAI Task Force (narrowing development gaps)
Goal 2 (education)			✔	Ministers Meeting on Education	
Goal 3 (gender equality)			✔	ASEAN Committee on Women	
Goal 4, 5, 6 (health)	✔		✔	Ministers Meeting on Health Development Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (child-related)	
Goal 7 (environment)			✔	Ministers Meeting on Environment Minister-level meeting on transboundary haze	
Goal 8 (global partnership)	✔	✔	✔	All sectoral bodies	

As seen in the table above, it is notable that MDGs are not strongly represented in either the AEC or APSC. Even within the ASCC, the main responsibility in each goal has been tasked to selected mechanisms such as the Ministers Meetings on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication as well as Agriculture and Forestry for Goal 1 (poverty eradication). For Goal 8 (global partnership for development), all sectoral bodies related to MDGs are involved but there is no coordination mechanism dedicated to such. The environment unexpectedly falls into the weakest of the three pillars with no mention in the other two. Moreover, most of the mechanisms listed in the table are high-level meetings, thus it is unclear to what extent these meetings have contributed to the implementation of MDGs at national or sub-national levels. Regularly updated, country-specific data does exist on the performance of ASEAN member states as regards the MDGs (ESCAP, ADB and UNDP 2012), but it is difficult to prove any causal links between the actions of regional agencies and progress at the national level. These shortcomings should be taken into account and remedied via the SDGs to increase the likelihood of an integrated and coherent response to the new development goals.

How has ASEAN been cooperating with others in the work pertinent to the MDGs? The 'tracks' terminology has been used previously to describe the modes of engagement in regional or inter-governmental processes, and is useful for further analysing how the MDGs have been handled in the three ASEAN Communities. There is no universal definition for the 'tracks', but this paper adopts an interpretation that is consistent with the general usage in literature for the Asian region.[3]

According to the literature (Taylor et al. 2006; Morrisson 2009), 'Track 1' (T1) refers to official, government-led activities, while 'Track 2' (T2) refers to unofficial activities with

close links to 'Track 1', led by external and non-government entities, including the research community. T1 and T2 are seen as functioning symbiotically. To T1 actors, T2 may serve as: (i) a source of advice and expertise, especially for emerging or highly dynamic issues; (ii) a relatively 'safer' and more conducive socialising space for discussion and to generate new ideas, especially on sensitive issues; and (iii) an alternative route for action when T1 is stalled.

T1 refers to the activities of all official ASEAN bodies (ASEAN Summit, ministerial or other official meetings, etc.) carried out by national government representatives from ASEAN Member States. Meanwhile, T2 refers to activities outside T1 led by non-ASEAN, non-government entities, including other governments[4] (in ASEAN terminology they are referred to as 'Dialogue Partners'), supporting organisations such as the UN (an ASEAN Dialogue Partner since 2007), as well as other international or regional organisations, academia and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

In general, non-government affiliated T2 actors who are not Dialogue Partners have a limited role in ASEAN formal meetings. Typically, only ASEAN Member States (T1 government representatives) have formal standing in ASEAN meetings. The participation of T2 actors is determined by official nomination by T1 actors, after which they may act as members of government delegations for specific purposes – as technical resource persons, advisors or project implementing partners who assist in providing reports and inputs into ASEAN meetings for example.

Actions on MDGs in the context of the ASEAN have been pursued at varying levels by both T1 and T2 actors, from high-level expressions of political commitment, to policymaking, as well as implementation and monitoring and evaluation, as summarised in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 ***Existing work for MDGs that can be built on and adapted for SDGs***

Levels of action	Existing work for MDGs that can be built on and adapted for SDGs	
	Track 1 Actors	Track 2 Actors
High level expression of commitment	An MoU was signed between the ASEAN Secretariat and UN to work closely on promoting regional security and achieving MDGs (2007) Joint Declaration on the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in ASEAN (2009)	Informal consultations and discussions between T2 actors with ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN government officials outside ASEAN processes. Provision of technical advice and inputs to T1 ASEAN meetings as a government delegation member during high-level and policy formulation meetings
Policymaking	Incorporated as action lines in the ASCC Blueprint (2009) under the elements of: • Poverty Alleviation[5] • Access to Healthcare and Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles[6] • Improving Capability to Control Communicable Diseases[7] ASEAN Roadmap on the Attainment of MDGs (2012) – a regional study conducted by ASEAN Secretariat (with Australian Government's support)	
Implementation	National and regional MDG-relevant activities by ASEAN member states acting on the high-level ASEAN expression of commitment	Activities which are designed explicitly to support MDGs, particularly by country-based UNDP offices, ADB and World Bank and their partners, as well as NGOs and academia such as AIT's ASEAN Regional Centre of Excellence for the MDGs (ARCMDGs)
Monitoring & Evaluation	Overall monitoring by ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Coordinating Council ASEAN Statistical Report on Achieving the MDGs	ESCAP's Asia-Pacific Regional MDG Report (2007) ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Asia-Pacific Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Report (2012) MDG Reports by UNDP country offices Assessment papers by various universities, research institutes and think-tanks

Source: Authors' Compilation

The MDGs have been a largely UN-driven agenda, so the UN was naturally a key T2 actor for the introduction of them into the ASEAN framework, but given that the UN is mandated by governments, it has a special standing compared to other T2 actors. ASEAN and the UN held joint summits in 2000 and 2005.[8] Subsequently, the UN General Assembly invited ASEAN to participate in its sessions and work in an observer capacity in 2006. Then the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in 2007 accorded the United Nations full Dialogue Partner status. In 2007, an MoU was signed between the ASEAN Secretariat and the UN to work closely on regional security and promoting the MDGs (ESCAP 2010).

The 2007 MoU was followed by the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in ASEAN (ASEAN 2009d) which acknowledged that various complementary actions on MDGs are being pursued concurrently through a

range of ASEAN initiatives.[9] In addition, selected action lines in the ASCC Blueprint refer to the MDGs, for example in the case of health, poverty alleviation and others.

As a response to the Joint Declaration on the Attainment of the MDGs, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) established the ASEAN Regional Centre of Excellence for MDGs (ARCMDGs). One of the achievements of this Centre was the formulation of the ASEAN Roadmap on the Attainment of MDGs (2011). Among others, the Roadmap proposed actions such as: (i) identification of MDG Focal Points within each ASEAN member state (i.e., within Ministry of Planning); and (ii) reporting progress in implementation by ASEAN member states of the Roadmap 2011 through the ASCC as well as for the ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting (AHSOM) MDGs Statistics Report.

Concurrently, T2 actors appear to have played a more prominent role in implementing practical activities, including capacity building and M&E, as publicised through MDGs progress reports at regional and national levels. ADB, World Bank, UNDP and other UN agencies, such as WHO and UNICEF, have played significant roles in implementing projects and programmes in collaboration with national ministries and partners.

The MDG experience within ASEAN can be capitalised on when devising ways in which future SDGs can be more holistically integrated into ASEAN regional integration processes. What are the lessons from these ASEAN institutional responses to MDGs when considering SDGs? The following section briefly analyses the strengths and weaknesses of these mechanisms.

3.2 Analysis of ASEAN's institutional treatment of MDGs: challenges and gaps

The MDGs successfully gained T1 high-level commitments, which are reflected in key documents such as the Joint Declaration on the Attainment of MDGs in ASEAN (ASEAN 2009d) and subsequently the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009–2015 (2009). This led to the formulation of an ASEAN Roadmap for the Attainment of the MDGs in 2011 (ASEAN 2012), which was spearheaded by the ASEAN Secretariat and a T2 actor (AIT) with the support the Australian Government.

However, the recommendations and actions of the Roadmap (ASEAN 2012) appear to have gained only limited traction. For instance, the roadmap came relatively late, and as a result, has so far had limited impact on accelerating implementation and developing a solid monitoring mechanism. More generally, MDGs work has not been explicitly linked into the ASEAN regional integration process. The Roadmap indicates that ASEAN's work on MDGs shall contribute to the process of ASEAN regional integration, but this mainly concerns areas situated within ASCC and its linkage to other communities remain unclear. Thus while there seems to be a high level commitment, there is also a lack of concrete action lines within and between relevant community pillars for the MDGs.

This means that to ensure meaningful implementation and monitoring of the Roadmap's prescriptions and strategy, there needs to be effective follow-up and coordination between the ASPC and ASCC Focal Points at both the country (between line ministries) and ASEAN (between two pillars) level. In theory, individuals acting as MDG Focal Points (i.e., within national planning ministries) could act as bridges connecting AEC, APSC and ASCC. However, typically Focal Points are changed, and often there is insufficient transfer of information from the predecessor to the successor, and this lack of continuity obstructs effective coordination over time. Second, although in theory the coordination of work across and within pillars is the responsibility of the ASEAN Community Councils and the ASEAN Coordinating Council, these bodies function more as a series of high-level

'meetings' rather than as a working-level forum within ASEAN where Focal Points can convene for in-depth discussions on how to coordinate actions for MDGs implementation and cross-pillar actions (as well as ASEAN regional integration) (Chalermpalanupap 2009).

The ASEAN Secretariat is supposedly directly responsible for coordinating action across ASEAN organs and pillars, but is generally acknowledged to be understaffed and under-resourced considering the scale of its operations and responsibilities (Nesadurai 2013a; Chongkittavon 2012). Compared to the past, many ASEAN countries are more developed and have a larger potential to support a stronger ASEAN, but the matter is rather one of priorities – it would be a simple calculation to estimate the cost of adding staff to the ASEAN secretariat, and our guess is that even 100 extra staff would cost significantly less than, say, a single fighter jet.

In other words, these institutional and capacity barriers render T1 actors within ASEAN as unlikely candidates for promoting the level of coordination that MDGs have required. At this point, it must be also noted that both the Joint Declaration and Roadmap were developed relatively 'late' – almost a decade after the MDGs were introduced in 2000 – so there has been somewhat limited time for implementing follow-up actions. For the future SDGs it is recommended that ASEAN provide a joint response faster to allow more time for follow-up both at the level of ASEAN and in countries.

This brings us to the role of T2 actors, who may be more effective in leading coordination across line ministries and across pillars within ASEAN. A key T2 actor involved in developing the MDGs Roadmap for ASEAN is the ARCMDG hosted by AIT. The operations of ARCMDG in following-up the Roadmap have been limited so far, possibly due to the lack of funding and also recent changes within AIT. It has also been a challenge for ARCMDG to be directly and continuously involved in the ASEAN processes and meetings related to MDGs as it relies on invitations from ASEAN Member States or Dialogue Partners. This may happen simply because the national Focal Points have changed or lost track of developments in past meetings. It may also partially reflect the closed and bureaucratic nature of the ASEAN itself, where there is no strong mandate or incentive for ensuring and promoting the participation of non-government T2 actors in its meetings and processes.

Compared to non-government actors like AIT, Dialogue Partners (i.e., Australia, who has supported work on MDGs) are formally involved in ASEAN meetings and processes, and also have a stake in ensuring follow-up of key processes, but this may also not be pursued strongly due to changes in the Dialogue Partner Focal Points as well as fluctuating regional cooperation policies. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, it must be noted that data on the progress of regional integration and MDGs achievements may overlap. The Mid-Term Review of ASCC Blueprint also recognises the inadequate M&E tools and knowledge management system in ASEAN ASCC (ASEAN 2014). Data collection and analysis for both the regional integration process and MDGs has been highly challenging and ASEAN has required assistance from T2 actors in this task (ASEAN 2011). It has proven challenging to obtain complete and comparable data across ASEAN member states.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the task of harmonising indicators for the MDGs across ASEAN countries, as well as strengthening statistical systems, is a crucial one, but it is beyond the realistic reach of ASEAN (ASEAN 2011). Hence, T2 actors such as ESCAP and UNDP may be better positioned to lead the monitoring role, including publication of MDGs progress reports at regional and national levels, in cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat.

4. SDGs and ASEAN regional integration

4.1 Inherent linkages between the SDGs and ASEAN regional integration goals

Given that MDGs have been pursued at the national level and are also reflected in the ASEAN regional integration blueprints, this section makes some tentative recommendations as to how ASEAN through its regional integration process could institutionally respond to a new set of development goals. However, since there are no agreed goals at the moment, the following section uses the outcomes from a workshop exercise carried out in the latter half of 2013 in the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.[10] This workshop focused on the future SDGs, taking participants through a number of simulated negotiations to reveal common Focus Areas for goals among the participating ASEAN country representatives.

After presenting the context of the future SDGs and some proposals (ASEF 2014), participants proceeded to identify possible priority areas for development in the respective ASEAN countries, and were then divided into groups to conduct mock negotiations aimed at deciding on possible ASEAN-wide priorities for SDGs.[11]

At the end of the two-day workshop, the representatives formulated a statement (Annex 1), which outlined the possible development priorities for ASEAN SDGs. The excerpt below (Table 4.3) outlines these priorities, and how they occur in the Blueprints for the ASEAN Community.

Table 4.3 **Results of ASEAN mock-negotiation exercise**

Goals as result of the ASEAN mock-negotiation exercise	Occurrence in the 3 Blueprints for regional integration		
Recognising the need to strengthen cooperation among ASEAN Member States, we are committed to pursue the following ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals:	**AEC**	**APSC**	**ASCC**
1. Reaffirm our commitments to reduce poverty in the region as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.			✓
2. Emphasise the need to secure sustained access to nutritious food through increased productivity of food production as well as limiting the negative impacts of food production.	✓		✓
3. Reaffirm the importance of universal access to quality education.			✓
4. Recognise the importance of access to healthcare and health services for all.	✓		✓
5. Advance environmental sustainability, improve disaster risk reduction management, as well as minimise the impacts of climate change.		✓	✓
6. Recognise the need to ensure sustained supply of energy through, *inter alia*, the promotion renewable energy use.	✓		
7. Endeavour to narrow the development gaps, both at regional and national levels.	✓		✓
8. Enhance good governance through improved transparency and accountability, as well as increase efforts in strengthening capacity monitoring and performance evaluation.	✓	✓	
9. Establish an ASEAN sustainable development goals (SDGs) fund.	✓		

Reflecting what ASEAN member states might pursue as region-wide SDGs, the direction set forth in the Jakarta Statement (annex 1) is mainly a reiteration of the MDGs with more ambitious moves in sectors such as energy, quality education, environmental sustainability and good governance. Furthermore, the mock-negotiations also offer clues on: (i) institutional overlap and where coherence should emerge; (ii) which issues are already prioritised in current development blueprints, and (iii) which issues may have to be added or receive more emphasis, as a result of real SDGs negotiations. One notable example is that closely related issues such as climate change and disasters are added to the environment thematic cluster, and it is possible to recognise these issues not only in the SCB but also in the PSCB blueprint – providing impetus for more cross-sectoral integration of environment issues than can be presently seen in the blueprints for regional integration.

Moreover, Table 4.3 shows that both the AEC and the ASCC Blueprints dedicate attention to thematic areas of (i) food security, quality and sustainability of production; (ii) health issues and universal healthcare; and (iii) regional and national development gaps. Horizontal coordination by the CPR or another institutional framework would be important in these three development areas. Issues pertaining to good governance are emphasised in both the AEC and the APSC blueprints, and matching mechanisms to avoid overlaps should be considered here, as well as increased synergies. Both of the APSC and the ASCC blueprints are problematic in terms of environmental sustainability, and since natural resource use and environmental degradation may become increasingly relevant for political stability and security of the region, cooperation in these themes would seem relevant for ASEAN as well.

Issues mentioned in only one of the Blueprints does not mean that they are not important, but indicates that coordination among the regional integration institutions may be delegated to only one pillar. Important emphases are placed on the primary concerns relating to poverty reduction (ASCC), which have political and economic implications, as well as financial aspects (AEC), which of course are strongly anchored in the AEC Blueprint. Other cross-cutting priorities that the ASEAN Secretariat has identified for 2015 and beyond include the environment, disasters, and health.

4.2 Policy integration: EU experience and relevance to ASEAN and SDGs

The following section will briefly summarise the main findings from a few reviews of regional integration at the EU level. This is done mainly to see if there are any lessons or pointers as to how regional integration could proceed for ASEAN, whilst taking into account environmental and wider sustainability issues.

Some literature (Peters 1998; cited in Steurer and Berger 2009) on environmental policy integration (EPI) in the EU has reviewed the use of institutional mechanisms and arrangements to drive cross-sectoral integration. However, while the literature documents little success resulting from their use, the reviewed practices could be applied to integration of SDG priorities in the ASEAN regional integration context.[12]

At the high levels of agenda and direction, some examples from the EU include so-called 'political declarations of intent', which are often based on shared constitutional documents (Jordan 2008) such as the Amsterdam or Maastricht treaties. These declarations highlight the importance of environmental sustainability in their preambles and objectives and help place specific components on the agenda despite the fact that they offer no concrete means by which such intentions can be realised. As such they represent a step in the right direction.

Political declarations of intent already exist at the ASEAN level, but are yet to be explicitly linked to SDGs. Articulating them would be the logical first step when the SDGs emerge and could be anticipated earlier, so that the almost ten-year delay that occurred with the integration of the MDGs into ASEAN's work can be avoided. In fact, such political agenda-setting could potentially prove more useful for ASEAN than it did in the EU context, because the SDGs will already exist as national level commitments once they have been negotiated at the intergovernmental level in late 2015. Thus, reaffirming a commitment via such declarations at the ASEAN level would be backed up by existing commitments at the country level, and such reaffirmation should not be a very difficult task for this reason.

At the operational level, one way to increase horizontal coherence is establishing integration units mandated to design and implement sustainability appraisals or screening tools of policy proposals at the regional level for their potential impact on SDG issue areas. Jordan (2008) reveals that at the level of the EU such appraisals lacked momentum since they were articulated only at the regional level, and it seems to have been difficult to institutionally reflect this at the national level without a pre-existing national commitment to do so. Here again, extant national commitments to future SDGs may prove to be the spark to ignite national level action.

SDG-Committees could also be one way to institutionalise integration at the ASEAN level. It may be possible to establish one that could act in an advisory role to inform the ASEAN Coordinating Council of possible implications of different regional integration policies on SDGs. Such a committee would need to consist of experts from across the region with thorough and region-specific knowledge, both on sectoral issue areas and their interlinkages. The success of such a committee would depend on its professional and financial capacity, and could be one of the initiatives supported by the SDG Fund, as proposed in the Jakarta Statement (see Annex 1).

5. Concluding recommendations

The ASEAN regional integration framework requires balanced, coherent and coordinated actions in three pillars – economic, political security and socio-cultural – and for the resulting development to be of a mutually reinforcing, and not undermining nature. Yet in reality economic integration tends to take priority, with little coordinated action under the economic pillar taking place with the other two areas. The adoption of the SDGs represents an important waypoint and opportunity for ASEAN to shift from its 'business as usual' paradigm of development, in which economic development runs roughshod over all else, especially the environment, to a paradigm that elevates sustainable development, in the quest for regional prosperity.

However, the cross-cutting nature of Sustainable Development, as articulated for example in the SDGs, makes it hard to find a 'comfortable' fit within ASEAN's current structure. ASEAN's treatment of the MDGs suggests that with the existing structure effective coordination will be challenging. The ASEAN itself is based on three loosely-coordinated Community pillars that are further subdivided into a large number of sectoral ministerial and working-group mechanisms, and which also involve a number of Dialogue Partners and external non-government stakeholders.

As shown in the previous sections, the MDGs have mainly been handled within the ASCC and institutional links of ASCC with other pillars have been limited. However, in contrast, the future SDGs should be more embedded throughout the three Community Blueprints.

For instance, AEC and ASCC are both related to food and health, as well as to addressing development gaps at regional and national levels. Similarly, APSC and ASCC are linked in terms of environmental sustainability and disaster risk reduction, and AEC and APSC both handle issues related to good governance.

Without effective institutional coordination mechanisms *across*, as well as *within* these Communities (and within national institutions among the ASEAN member states for that matter), ASEAN's institutional response for the future SDGs will likely be fragmented and as a result only provide very limited support for national and sub-national implementation[13].

Hence, it might be meaningful to consider establishing an SDG expert committee – which does not strictly reside within any of the three Community pillars – that is tasked with coordination of multiple sectoral bodies relevant to SDG actions and which reports directly to the ACC. The committee could consist of ASEAN staff from all member countries and, once momentum has been achieved, also include regional experts from other sectors of society. The first task for this committee could be to undertake a comprehensive study on the inter-linkages and potential cross-pillar effects of the measures undertaken under the three Community pillars from a holistic, sustainable development perspective.

It must also be recognised that the ASEAN Secretariat needs to be boosted significantly in terms of finances and human resources to the level where it is capable of carrying out far more effective coordination than at present. And in this respect, although ASEAN Member States have historically been reluctant to provide additional resources for a more empowered ASEAN Secretariat or for establishing additional mechanisms, their attitude seems to be changing, as evidenced by the recent Declaration on strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat and reviewing the ASEAN Organs.[14] Further, countries in the ASEAN are wealthier than before, thus the timing is right for strengthening the Secretariat and providing it with the necessary human resources – after all, the cost of an upgrade can't be much compared to other less sustainable priorities of countries in the region.

The EU's experience on horizontal institutional and cross-sectoral coordination in relation to sustainability shows how leadership and coordination can be bolstered to advance integration of the future SDGs within the regional integration framework. This applies especially for the 'softer' approaches that may be more suitable given the ASEAN principles of non-interference, and the emphasis countries place on national sovereignty (Nesadurai 2013).

In spite of the above anticipated challenges, there are some recommendable pragmatic, incremental actions that may be pursued by T1 and T2 actors and that fit within the existing institutional constraints of ASEAN and build on the past work related to MDGs, as outlined in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 ***Recommended actions for regional coordination and cooperation***

Level of action	Recommended actions by T1	Recommended actions by T2
High-level Expression of Commitment	ASEAN Leaders to incorporate SDGs as the successor to MDGs at future ASEAN Summits ASEAN Coordinating Council to: • clarify/specify/mandate responsibility of SDG-regional integration activities to CPRs and ASEAN National Secretariats • establish ASEAN Development Fund with support for SDG activities within ASEAN framework	UN agencies to build awareness of SDGs among ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN member states and aid with capacity for implementation
Policymaking	Revise the ASEAN Roadmap on the Attainment of MDGs into a new Roadmap for Attainment of SDGs	ARCMDGs, ESCAP and others to initiate close connections to official ASEAN dialogue partners and T1 (governments) for regional policy coherence
Implementation	CPR and ASEAN National Secretariat to link directly with country-based implementing agencies such as ADB, WB, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF	IOs with access to T1 processes to propose implementation mechanisms, and offer funding resources or coordination services
Monitoring & Evaluation	Same as above, in terms of collecting data and information for M&E across multiple ministries	
Intra-ASEAN Coordination among SDGs	Create 'coalition of the willing' among countries with common challenges in specific SDG thematic areas	IOs support implementation capacity among the 'coalition of the willing'
Overall multi-stakeholder Coordination	Governments support emerging participation mechanisms as proposed by NGOs in the region	NGOs develop closer working relationship and trust with T1

In terms of expression of high-level political commitment, T1 should continue to play a strong role. As with MDGs, SDGs and regional integration should be explicitly, systematically and closely linked in terms of high-level political support throughout planning, implementation and monitoring phases and the adequate existing institutions at T2 levels should be involved to provide expert support and input. The high-level expressions and policies may consider assigning greater responsibility and mandates to nationally-oriented T1 actors – CPRs and National Secretariats – working with expected lead agencies of the UN and development banks to strengthen coordination and collaborative efforts on SDGs, especially on implementing practical actions and M&E.

Furthermore, ASEAN Leaders should consider establishing the ASEAN SDG Development Fund (goal 9) with the support of its Dialogue Partners. The initiative for such a fund would have to be established at the highest level, i.e., at the UN-ASEAN Summit and would need to be maintained and replenished probably by public sector funding from ASEAN member states themselves. The fund could be used to bolster human resources through twinning programmes among ASEAN member states to help coordinate country-based implementation action with regional M&E actors, such as international

organisations in the region (ESCAP and ARCMDGs). Aligning such an approach with external development support could happen if ASEAN member states use an SDG promotional approach to Dialogue-Partner funded projects at the ASEAN level, and at national/country programme levels. Japan (JICA) is already experimenting with such approach in Lao PDR under the IAI framework, the aim of which is to integrate the country's needs and participation more actively and fully in ASEAN processes and activities.

As mentioned earlier, in terms of policymaking and implementation, ASEAN's institutional structure makes institutional coordination for cross-sectoral and cross-pillar actions, as well as with external supporting stakeholders, a key challenge. There is no quick-fix for the fragmented implementation within and across its pillars. Nevertheless, T2 actors, such as UN agencies, ADB, World Bank, IGES, and regional networks of practitioners should at least aim to improve coordination of implementation efforts at the country level, as well as do more in linking with and providing inputs to the CPR, ASEAN National Secretariats and the ASEAN Secretariat informed of country-level and regional work relevant to SDGs in the context of ASEAN regional integration.

Monitoring and evaluation should ideally reside within the ASEAN Secretariat, which would imply that needs to increase its capacity and resources. One clear challenge relates to the lack of available data, and the capacity to collect and analyse data on development aspects covered by potential SDGs. For the MDGs, some directions have already been established, primarily through the T2 level monitoring and reporting initiatives, but more emphasis needs to be paid to harmonising development-related indicators across ASEAN countries. Moreover, the efficacy of existing information-sharing mechanisms and forums, such as ARCMDGs, remains limited. Rather than creating new mechanisms, donors might wish to consider mobilising funding and other resources to strengthen and support existing mechanisms and institutions (both within and outside of ASEAN) already conducting M&E.

ESCAP, UNEP, UNDP and others (ARCMDG) may be suitable T2 actors for leading M&E efforts in SDG progress, working in close partnership with relevant ASEAN bodies such as the CPR and national secretariats – even at the working group level.[15] This would make sense, not only in terms of ESCAP being the principal UN Secretariat in the region, but also to provide follow-up on behalf of the UN so that it can help ASEAN member countries meet their global and ASEAN commitments. This is all the more plausible, since the UN was accorded full ASEAN Dialogue Partner status in 2007, in return for being awarded Observer status in the UN General Assembly.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. The ASEAN Secretariat, based in Jakarta, has a staff of around 270.
2. Former ASEAN Secretary General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan harbored this ambitious aspiration. With the the recent adoption, by the 25th ASEAN Summit in Naypyitaw, of the Declaration on Strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat and Reviewing ASEAN Organs, there is now some hope that regional support and recognition will be there for the Secretariat to fulfill this role.
3. While there is no official definition of the different tracks, other authors have discussed the terms. See for instance Noel Morada, 2007 on "The ASEAN People's Assembly and Track 2 ½ Diplomacy". Yuyun Wahyuningram has also written on

the different tracks. ASEAN practitioners usually refer to Track 2 as the research track and Track 3 as the civil society/NGO track. The parliamentary input is referred to as Track 1.5, as are conferences/workshops that mix government and research.

4. Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, Russia, UN and the United States; Pakistan is only a 'sectoral' and not a 'full-fledged' Dialogue Partner.

5. B1/19-i "Develop and implement an ASEAN Roadmap towards realising the UN Millennium Development Goals in consultations with concerned sectoral bodies with a view to identifying and extending technical assistance required in the field of poverty reduction".

6. B4/22-i "Promote investment in primary health care infrastructure, in a rational manner and likewise ensure adequate financing and social protection for the poor and marginalised populations for better access to services and achievement of health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)".

7. B5/23-iv. Reduce the impact of HIV transmission and the impact of HIV epidemic, consistent with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UNGASS declarations on HIV and AIDS, ASEAN Commitments on HIV and AIDS, and Third ASEAN Work Programme on HIV and AIDS".

8   Subsequent ASEAN-UN Summits were held in 2008, 2011 and 2013.

9. They are: Framework Plan of Action on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, the projects/programmes on poverty and quality of life in the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan, the Joint Statement of the Third ASEAN Education Ministers' Meeting, the Work Plan for primary education, gender equality as well as combating certain infectious diseases for Women's Advancement and Gender Equality (2005-2010) and the Work Plan to operationalise the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (2006-2010), the ASEAN Work programme on HIV/AIDS and the measures on health development and sustainable development in the Vientiane Action Programme as well as the ASEAN Declaration on Environmental Sustainability.

10. The training was organised and facilitated by ASEF, IISD, and IGES representatives, who presented findings from a research project on SDGs, along with a methodology for countries to identify relevant targets and indicators at national levels to match global SDGs. Following this context setting, the ASEAN representatives were given several tasks, involving identifying their own country priorities for SDGs based on hand-outs containing targets and indicators found in national documents.

11. Note that the results of this do not infer positions of countries **and that this outcome in no way has any official legal status**. The findings are merely the result of a very early stage action-research. At the time of this workshop no SDGs existed, so none of the participating ASEAN representatives came with a negotiation mandate. Nevertheless, the results revealed a certain level of interest across ASEAN nations for future SDGs.

12. One marked difference between EPI and integration of broader sustainable development concerns is that – compared to environmental policies only, sustainable development includes social and economic concerns and may precisely therefore fare les poorly than the attempt at EPI in the EU.

13. The Mid-Term Review of the ASEAN ASCC Blueprint (2014) also suggests this point on enhancing coordination and cross-sectoral mechanisms such as strengthening Focal Point networks, in particular for cross-sectoral issues and shared targets such as MDGs and the future SDGs.

14. This declaration is from November 12 2014 and can be read at http://www.asean.org/images/pdf/2014_upload/ Declaration%20on%20Strengthening%20the%20ASEAN%20Sec%20and%20Reviewing%20the%20ASEAN%20Organs. pdf

15. An MoU was signed between ASEAN Secretariat and UN to work closely on promoting regional security and achieving MDGs - this can be specifically enhanced/reviewed to specifically incorporate SDGs and follow up at the high level, through the regular UN-ASEAN Summit.

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Annex 1: Jakarta Statement (result of mock negotiation exercise)

Jakarta Statement on the ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

We, the representatives of ASEAN Member States, participating in the Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 2 to 4 September 2013;

Recalling the resolve of the ASEAN Member States as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Roadmap for the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by ASEAN Leaders at the 19th ASEAN Summit in November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia, and other relevant ASEAN documents, to "ensure sustainable development for the benefit of the present and future generations to place the wellbeing, livelihood and welfare of the peoples at the centre of the ASEAN community building process";

Recalling the outcome document of the General Assembly on the MDGs in 2010, entitled "Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the MDGs", the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, with the outcome document entitled "The Future We Want";

Reiterating the importance of peace and security as the fundamental condition to attain sustainable development in the region;

Recognising the need to strengthen cooperation among ASEAN Member States, we are committed to pursue the following ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals:

1. Reaffirm our commitments to reduce poverty in the region as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.
2. Emphasise the need to secure sustained access to nutritious food through increased productivity of food production as well as limit the negative impacts of food production.
3. Reaffirm the importance of universal access to quality education.
4. Recognise the importance of access to health care and health services for all.
5. Advance environmental sustainability, improve disaster risk reduction management, as well as minimise the impacts of climate change.
6. Recognise the need to ensure sustained supply of energy through, inter alia, the promotion of the use of renewable energy.
7. Endeavour to narrow the development gaps, both at the regional and the national level.
8. Enhance good governance through improved transparency and accountability, as well as increase efforts in strengthening capacity in monitoring and performance evaluation.
9. Establish an ASEAN sustainable development goals (SDGs) fund.
10. Extend our deep appreciation to the Government of the French Republic for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting.
11. Recognise the value of the process of developing targets and indicators and commitments of countries.