

ASEAN HIGH LEVEL SPECIAL COMMISSION
ON
COVID-19 RESPONSE & ECONOMIC RECOVERY
TERMS OF REFERENCE

Commission Establishment & Purpose

The AHLSC to be established by instruction from the ASEAN Leaders to make clear, actionable recommendations on three fronts:

- to improve ASEAN's collective response to the current COVID-19 Pandemic by way of facilitating decision-making and execution of immediate, concrete and practicable measures;
- to build capacity at national and regional levels for the comprehensive handling of any future similar events; and
- to make recommendations for a collective medium to long-term ASEAN-wide approach for post-pandemic economic recovery through the development of an Economic Recovery Plan (ERP).

The Commission should consist of one high level representative drawn from the governments of each ASEAN Member State, and should be chaired by the Secretary General of ASEAN.

The Commission will take advice and suggested recommendations from a standing Special Business Advisory Board which will itself include members of the private sector (ASEAN Business Advisory Council, Joint Business Councils, other key private sector bodies such as the ASEAN Tourism Association, and knowledge partners such as CIMB ASEAN Research Institute and others) as well as other key institutions such as the ADB, OECD, WHO, World Bank and IMF. This Advisory Board to join meetings of the Special Commission to provide on the spot advice and suggestions.

The AHLSC should be formed immediately, and instructed to present a report with key recommendations to the ASEAN Leaders monthly for necessary action and implementation, with a full and final report to be submitted, and made public, before the Leaders Summit in November 2020.

Areas of Review

Current Pandemic & Planning for handling future Pandemics

Areas for the AHLSC to consider and make recommendations for enhanced ASEAN co-operation and collaboration include, but are not limited to:

- Identification of essential goods and services
- Ensuring continued operation of the whole of the supply chains to support the flow of essential goods throughout the region, including the temporary suspension of some customs procedures.
- Co-ordination and collaboration on the introduction (or removal) of travel restrictions, quarantine periods, or requirements for any form of health declaration.
- Pooling of resources in areas such as medical expertise, medical supplies and devices (including PPE), medicines etc.
- Improved information sharing on the nature and spread of any virus.
- Ensuring continued care for non COVID-19 patients.

- Enhancing intergovernmental cooperation and communication between private sectors and governments.
- Encourage digital transformation to adapt and develop digital resiliency. To build resiliency for future pandemics, and to take advantage of the opportunity to transform economies, stimulus funds should be focused on the digitization of sectors such as health, education, public administration, food and agriculture, manufacturing and transport. Digital transformation should be founded on simplicity, intelligence, automation and security as we look to build new business models, processes, software and systems.
- Protect and ensure safety in the Workplace. Implement COVID-19 control plans into their daily operations, to aid risk mitigation efforts.

Economic Recovery Plan

Areas for the AHLSC to consider and make recommendations for ensuring the best possible economic recovery include, but are not limited to:

- Measures to enhance the attractiveness of the ASEAN region for Foreign Direct Investment, including the removal of negative investment lists and rapidly improving the ease of doing business.
- Removal of anti-competitive non-tariff barriers, particularly in key industries such as food and beverage, agriculture and healthcare to ensure the most open intra-ASEAN economy possible
- Providing support for the most impacted business especially in travel and tourism sector in the form of preserve business liquidity (repayment terms, interest-free loans and regulatory reform), reduce the tax and utility burden (reduce payments in electricity and water as there are a major expense for companies), forming alternative tax structures and provide financial support for the affected employees.
- Implementation of strategic vocational training programmes aimed at fast tracking the development of skills for 4IR across the region.
- Target public sector training programmes to accelerate skills development in reforming policy and governance environments for economic recovery and growth across the region.
- Strengthen MSME community platforms and training programs aimed at improving business skills and resilience to support business recovery and participation in ASEAN. Considering stimulus measures for small businesses including tourism entrepreneurs who are hosting short-term rental accommodation or providing local activities through internet platforms.
- Measures to ensure the greatest possible use of technology to boost intra-ASEAN trade and further the development of the Digital Economy in the region.
- Encourage E-Commerce and the Digital Economy. The disruption triggered by COVID-19 has demonstrated the value of technology and digitalization. The pandemic has also brought digital commerce to the forefront as companies with employees working from home leverage on e-commerce platforms, e-payments and digital contracts and management tools to continue with their operations. To spur digital economy growth in ASEAN, we encourage ASEAN governments to continue promoting the use of e-payments (including cross border payments), encouraging e-invoicing (as a basis to promote electronic transactions), and growing the use of digital contracts execution (including the use of e-signatures).
- Focus effort on the most affected sectors and industries by the Pandemic, e.g. Tourism, Aviation, Hospitality, Recreation and related sectors by way of fiscal incentives, safety nets to

affected workers, and repurposing or restructuring of their business models to serve the emerging new normal.

The AHLSC should be targeting its recommendations at areas where immediate action can and should be taken.

This TOR is subject to review every six (6) months or earlier as AHLSC may deem necessary.