

// TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE WORLD //

STATEMENT

TO THE ASEAN WORKING GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE (AWGCC)
BY CIVIL SOCIETY CONSTITUENCIES IN ASEAN MEMBER STATES



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INTRODUCTION

We, civil society networks and organisations working on climate change in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States, express our appreciation for being able to participate in and provide inputs to this meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC);

We thank the Government of Viet Nam as the Chair of ASEAN this year, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) as the

National Focal Point in Viet Nam for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), for providing this opportunity for our participation;

This statement outlines our expectations of ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC for the period to COP26 and beyond; it incorporates the voices of vulnerable and marginalised communities on the frontlines who are directly facing the impacts of climate change, including women and indigenous peoples.

BACKGROUND

The year 2020 and COP26, rescheduled to 2021, mark the beginning of a critical decade for climate change and ambition in tackling the climate crisis. The implementation of the Paris Agreement (PA) must send strong signals that ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC are committed to delivering ambitious, transformative, just and fair Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the benefit of the peoples of ASEAN and rest of the world.

These signals include:

- a. Implementing a robust and ambitious climate action agenda in line with the PA;
- b. Strengthening national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets by COP26 and developing plans to achieve them;
- c. Developing a national resilience framework that addresses climate risks as well as responds to the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

We are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic which has had devastating effects on lives, livelihoods and economies, and led to countries rolling out economic stimulus packages. ASEAN¹ estimates that the pandemic may lead to long-term and considerable economic implications.

This global crisis has shown global vulnerability and demonstrates the need to build greater resilience. The global lockdown has also resulted in unprecedented reduction in GHG emissions and pollution levels, whereas many fossil fuel dependent industries are calling for public sector support which could jeopardise responses to the climate crisis.

COVID-19 has shown the importance of placing environmental and health protection – including limiting encroachment on nature – social equity and food security, as well as a carbon-neutral future, at the core of economic development. These should be the priorities in the economic stimulus and financial recovery packages from COVID-19.

CSOs support equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, whereas adopting progressive sustainability strategies will provide winning solutions for the economies of ASEAN states and could promote greater resilience for our societies to future shocks. New research² shows that every country in the world would be economically better off if all could agree to strengthen commitments on the climate crisis through international cooperation. Conversely, weak action would lead to steep economic losses and loss of life.

STATUS OF CLIMATE IMPACTS AND EMISSIONS

ASEAN is:

a. Seriously impacted by climate change and extreme weather events:

Myanmar, Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand were listed among the 10 most affected countries according to the Long-Term Climate Risk Index (CRI) for the period 1999-2018³. Further, the Asian Development Bank estimated that Southeast Asia could suffer bigger economic losses than most regions in the world. Unchecked, climate change could shave 11% off the region's gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of the century⁴.

b. Facing rising GHG emissions:

The 80% increase in overall energy demand since 2000 was met by a doubling in fossil fuel consumption. With energy demand increasing further, the trend of rising emissions from fossil fuels will continue unless counter measures are taken.

As a region on the rise as described by the International Energy Agency (IEA)⁵, ASEAN can lead the world in addressing the climate crisis with ambitious GHG emissions reduction and adaptation action, and exceed its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

PROPOSALS

As we progress towards COP26 and implementation of the Paris Agreement in a state of climate emergency, we, the undersigned CSOs and networks in ASEAN, make the following five proposals to the AWGCC.

01 RAISE CLIMATE AMBITION IN THE NDCs OF ASEAN MEMBER STATES AND STRENGTHEN COOPERATION

We call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to raise their climate ambition and fully align their national climate change policies and actions to the PA, respecting the precautionary principle, in particular its Article 2, which include:

- a. "Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;
- b. Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low GHG emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production; and
- c. Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low GHG emissions and climate-resilient development."

We call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to enhance their NDCs well ahead of COP26 with targets and activities that are developed in an inclusive, gender sensitive, participatory and transparent manner involving all stakeholders, including civil society.

These NDCs are meant to help ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to:

- Commit to deeper emissions reduction targets using available and affordable technologies, in line with fairness, equity and capability, to achieve global GHG emissions reduction of at least 50% by 2030 that is necessary to limit average global warming to 1.5°C;
- Develop and adopt long-term national transformative pathways that correspond with net-zero global GHG emissions by 2050;

- Build resilience commensurate with the anticipated threats posed by slow onset climate change effects and increased climatic extremes;
- Use fiscal policy tools to make finance flows consistent with low GHG emissions and climate resilient development, and promote green finance and green banking to strengthen NDC implementation;
- Address the climate crisis in a manner that is consistent with achievement of the SDGs;
- Maximise co-benefits while minimising and managing areas where there may be trade-offs, as the IPCC Special Report on limiting global heating to 1.5 °C has demonstrated that climate responses can have many co-benefits;
- Ensure support for workers affected by climate ambition-related technology shifts in every sector by providing decent work as well as promoting investment in new sustainable jobs;
- Plan to reduce dependence on all fossil fuels by leapfrogging into sustainable renewable sources of energy;

With reference to discussions and negotiations before and at COP26, we call upon the ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to:

- Insist that the UK Presidency continues engaging countries throughout the year to address the technical issues that could be resolved before COP26;
- Collectively agree on a five-year common time frame for NDCs from 2031 onwards to provide a powerful signal for ramping up ambition by aligning the pace of implementation to the five-year ambition cycle of the PA;
- Protect environmental integrity under the unresolved Article 6 by agreeing on implementation guidelines that: a) avoid all forms of double counting by Parties in their internationally transferred mitigation outcomes, b) phase out Kyoto Protocol flexible mechanisms and do not recognise any Kyoto emissions units for compliance with non-Kyoto mitigation commitments, and c) include environmental safeguards and ensure the protection of human rights;
- Call for the adoption of a robust new five-year Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) work programme and mainstream it throughout the implementation of the Convention and PA.

We also call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to consider creating a unique negotiating block post COP26 onwards under the umbrella of ASEAN to represent ASEAN's unique interests, experience and solutions under its existing legal framework.

02 SUPPORT VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

With regard to supporting communities impacted by climate change in the region, we call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to:

- Enhance their efforts for resilience building, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation for vulnerable communities at the grassroots, provincial and national levels, while realising environmental and social co-benefits such as ecosystem protection and restoration, and respecting social safeguards and rights of indigenous peoples;
- Include gender analysis and mainstreaming in all climate change policies and plans, especially in their NDCs, and scale up support to poor and vulnerable communities on the frontline of the climate crisis, while ensuring this support is accessible and responsive to the differentiated needs and rights of women and other vulnerable groups;
- Implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in a gender-responsive, participatory and transparent manner, with involvement of civil society in measurement, reporting and verification (MRV);
- Establish a database to capture the extent of support provided to those in the frontline of the climate crisis to monitor the extent of loss and damage suffered by the region.

03 APPLY NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

ASEAN has three of the world's 17 most mega diverse countries – Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines⁶. Viet Nam, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia also host biodiversity of global significance. The global climate crisis and biodiversity degradation are two sides of the same coin and both must be addressed with the greatest urgency. Without the protection and restoration of natural systems, the PA ambition cannot be attained.

We call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to secure additional ambition in NDC policies and targets by incorporating Nature Based Solutions (NBS) for both mitigation and adaptation. Ways to mainstream NBS in addressing climate change include to:

- Prioritise protection, management and restoration of degraded habitats and ecosystems such as forests, mangroves, peatlands, coastal wetlands and marine habitats;
- Design to conserve existing natural areas, enhance degraded areas and see where nature-based solutions can help increase resilience for people;
- Invest in science and technology, and issue science-based policies to improve sustainable land management practices and address the concerns of the oceans and cryosphere in light of the IPCC Special Report on Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate;

These measures should be taken while respecting social safeguards and indigenous peoples' land rights and tenure.

04 PURSUE A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

We call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to pursue a just energy transition, ensuring participatory and inclusive processes towards renewable and efficient energy systems that give access to safe, modern, affordable and sustainable energy for all.

ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC are urged to:

- Phase-out all direct subsidies and indirect public sector support to fossil fuel exploration, production and consumption; while accelerating a just transition to renewable energy and energy efficiency by implementing just transition plans for workers, their families and communities;
- Completely phase out the use of coal-power by 2030, review and phase-out existing investments in coal-fired power plants; place an immediate moratorium on approval and construction of new coal-fired power plants; and do not recognise gas as a bridging fuel;
- Enable GHG emissions reduction with concrete policies, targets and measures for cuts by 2030 in fossil fuel consumption in industry, including cuts in production, use and export of single use plastic;
- Legislate and finance the energy transition in a manner that ensures the well-being of communities and ecosystems; in particular, stop the approval and construction of large-scale hydropower dams;
- Pursue co-benefits in the energy transition with increased renewable energy and energy efficiency towards low carbon and climate resilient economies, such as the creation of jobs, improved public health and a clean environment, and ensure that poor people and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are not left behind;
- Enhance the sourcing of green financing to support energy efficiency and renewable energy implementation.

05 ENSURE DELIVERY ON CLIMATE FINANCE

On the delivery of climate finance, we call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to:

- Advance discussions related to the shifting of financial flows in accordance with the implementation of Article 2.1c of the PA to ensure a shift away from fossil fuels into renewable energy and low carbon and climate resilient development, including sustainable infrastructure;
- Initiate this conversation between Parties with immediate effect in order to enable constructive discussions at COP26 which must result in a work program to align financial flows;
- Demand that multilateral development banks, export credit agencies and other private and public financial institutions end their financial support for fossil fuel projects and redirect it towards investments in renewable energy, and low carbon and climate resilient development;
- Ensure direct access to climate finance for communities which includes promoting gender-specific climate finance and ensuring finance is targeted at the most vulnerable groups to climate change such as indigenous peoples;
- Encourage private financial institutions including banks to incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria in their business activities, investment decisions and relationships;
- Enter into projects that promote transition to a resilient near-zero carbon economy when accessing sources of international finance.

As 2020 is the deadline for developed countries to mobilise USD100 billion a year for climate finance, we call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to ask contributor countries to:

- Update how their provision of climate finance has progressed since the last biennial assessment in 2016, and report on what quantities were public or private finance, and what was given as grants or loans;
- Update their projections of the level of finance they have collectively reached, with a specific focus on bridging the adaptation finance gap;
- Ensure that more support for poor communities for adaptation will be provided as grants without the incursion of debt. For the greatest impact, this funding should be decentralised and provided directly to communities.

To enable transformational change in countries to not exceed the 1.5°C warming threshold, we call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to:

- Consider and develop a position on the continuation of the long-term finance programme under the UNFCCC, building on lessons learned and ensuring that this programme helps countries operationalise Article 2.1c of the PA;
- Call for an inclusive process towards defining a new global finance goal to fully respond to the needs of vulnerable communities in terms of adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage, and foster the implementation of ambitious action plans;
- Call for new and additional sources of climate finance for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage.

Based on decisions of COP25, we call upon ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC to:

- Agree on how new finance and support can be scaled up to address loss and damage in the region and offer direct and on-the-ground support for those most impacted by the climate crisis through localised, community-based adaptation and climate resilience programmes.

CONCLUSION

By designing and implementing economic stimulus and recovery packages which align with the PA, ASEAN Member States will be able to respond to immediate social needs, while enabling a just recovery from the COVID-19 crisis as well as addressing the climate crisis.

In this regard, cooperation and collaboration on climate change among ASEAN Parties to the UNFCCC should be strengthened and formally institutionalised within ASEAN.

The ability of CSOs to participate in the AWGCC meeting is an important development in stakeholder engagement, which we highly appreciate. We hope this will become standard practice at all forthcoming meetings of the Working Group.

We urge MONRE of Viet Nam, through the Government of Viet Nam, to include the climate crisis and outcomes of the AWGCC meeting on the agenda of the forthcoming ASEAN Heads of State Meeting.

We hope that this consultative process will be adopted by the national focal points of the UNFCCC of all countries which take on the chairmanship of ASEAN.

August 2020, Ha Noi

Submitted on behalf of:



ASEAN Policy Brief. Economic impact of COVID-19 outbreak on ASEAN. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (April 2020).

- 2 Wei, Y., Han, R., Wang, C. et al. Self-preservation strategy for approaching global warming targets in the post-Paris Agreement era. *Nat Commun* 11, 1624 (2020) <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-15453-z>
- 3 Germanwatch. *Global Climate Risk Index 2020 - Who suffers most from extreme weather events? Weather-related loss events in 2018 and 1999 to 2018.* Germanwatch (2019) https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/20-2-01e%20Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202020_14.pdf
- 4 Asian Development Bank. *Southeast Asia and the economics of global climate stabilization.* Asian Development Bank (2015) <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/178615/sea-economics-global-climate-stabilization.pdf>
- 5 International Energy Agency. *Southeast Asia Energy Outlook 2019.* International Energy Agency (2019). <https://www.iea.org/reports/southeast-asia-energy-outlook-2019>
- 6 <https://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/megadiverse-countries>