

## **ASEAN Goes Far Beyond Summits**

Its summits and ministerial meetings get a lot of media coverage, but ASEAN's engagement with its stakeholders, partners and constituencies goes far beyond official venues.

For example, the ASEAN Foundation was created during ASEAN's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1997 with the twin objectives of promoting greater awareness about ASEAN, greater interaction among the peoples of ASEAN and their participation in ASEAN activities; as well as contribute to the evolution of a development cooperation strategy that promotes mutual assistance, equitable economic development, and poverty alleviation.

Called 'the people's arm of ASEAN' and mandated by the ASEAN Charter to support the ASEAN Secretary-General in the community-building process, the ASEAN Foundation's range of activities includes organising and promoting education, training in science and technology, health and culture by providing fellowships to and supporting exchanges of ASEAN youth and students, and promoting collaborative work among academics, professionals and scientists.

Among the Foundation's programs is the 'Model ASEAN Meeting', an interactive process where students and young people role-play as ASEAN senior officials in an ASEAN meeting as part of an interesting and enjoyable learning experience. The first Model ASEAN Meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur in tandem with the 27<sup>th</sup> Summit in November 2015.

Also enshrined in the ASEAN Charter is the creation of an ASEAN human rights body, which was established as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights in 2009. It is the first sub-regional human rights institution in the Asia-Pacific. The Commission played a key role in the drafting of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD, which ASEAN Leaders approved in 2012 as a framework for human rights cooperation and a mechanism to mainstream human rights in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community.

Apart from the ASEAN Foundation and the AICHR, which are provided for in the ASEAN Charter, there also exists a diverse group of organisations that are accredited as "entities associated with ASEAN" that are to support the purposes and principles of the Charter. These entities may be involved in ASEAN-related dialogues, consultations, seminars, workshops and fora.

There are 78 associated entities at present, consisting of parliamentarians, business organisations, think tanks and academic institutions, accredited civil society organisations and other stakeholders in ASEAN. For instance, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly consists of parliamentarians or members of legislative assemblies in ASEAN Member States.

There are currently 19 business organisations classified as entities associated with ASEAN, coming from sectors such as airlines, banking, textile, tourism and shipping. Examples include the ASEAN Business Advisory Council, ASEAN Bankers' Association, and ASEAN International Airports Association.

Two think tanks or academic institutions are among the ASEAN associated entities that provide analyses and venues of discussion on various strategic issues. These are the ASEAN-Institute of Strategic and International Studies Network in the region, and the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation.

| There are 52 civil society organisations accredited to ASEAN as of November 2015. They include the AirAsia Foundation, ASEAN Confederation of Employers, ASEAN Fisheries Association, ASEAN Football Federation, ASEAN Law Association, ASEAN Music Industry Association, and Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program Foundation.

Finally, there are four groups classified as 'other stakeholders in ASEAN', which include the ASEAN Supreme Audit Institutions, Federation of Institutes of Food Science and Technology in ASEAN, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre and the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism.

| Regardless of which sector they focus on, these organisations and entities associated with ASEAN share a common objective in complementing ASEAN's Community-building efforts, and contributing to a deepened sense of a shared ASEAN identity. ASEAN invites other organisations and entities in the region to explore opportunities to associate with ASEAN, and contribute to the strengthening of the ASEAN Community beyond 2015.