



# ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS



STUDY GUIDE



## Table of Contents

<b>Welcome Letter.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Information about the committee.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Scope of the committee.....	5
Observer states.....	6
<b>The Summit of the Future and Chapter I.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Topic A. ASEAN's Economic Community: Building Self-Sufficiency and Facing External Economic Dependence.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction.....	9
History of the topic.....	10
Role of external powers in ASEAN's economic history.....	11
Efforts for self-sufficiency.....	12
Recent developments.....	12
Free trade areas (FTAs).....	12
The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).....	13
Investment promotion.....	14
Bloc positions.....	14
Connections with SDGs.....	17
Questions a Resolution Should Solve.....	18
<b>Topic B. Political Instability and its Effects in Sustainable Development and Disaster Management.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Introduction.....	19
Contextualization of the topic: the relationship between political instability and development.....	20
History of the topic.....	21
Recent developments.....	23
Capacity building and governance.....	23
Climate change and disaster risks.....	24



Bloc Positions.....	26
Affected countries.....	26
Mainly affected countries.....	28
Open countries.....	29
Isolated countries.....	29
General aspects to consider.....	30
Relation with SDGs.....	30
Questions a Resolution Should Solve.....	31
Recommended readings.....	32
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>33</b>



## Welcome Letter

Dear delegates,

We are honored to welcome you all to the eighteenth edition of the Catalanian Model of the United Nations. We are Alejandra Segovia and Laia Marzá, your Chairs in the Intermediate Committee of ASEAN, and we are thrilled to start with this adventure with all of you.

This guide has been created to provide you with some relevant information about the two topics that will be discussed in the committee during the MUN. You will be able to get an insight into the role your nation can play and get to know a bit more about ASEAN and its competences. As you may already know, the topics to be discussed will be “Building Self-Sufficiency and Facing External Economic Dependence” and “ Political Instability and its Effects in Sustainable Development and Disaster Management”.

In order to align with C'MUN requirements and take part in the conference properly, it is convenient that all delegates submit a position paper that outlines the views and policies of their nations regarding the already mentioned topics. This guide will help you to contextualize the current situation about each topic and to have a global perspective on the matter, but it is important that each of you do your own research on the country you are representing in order to facilitate qualified discussions among member states. Besides, take into account that only those delegates that provide a position paper that meets the academic standards will be eligible for awards at the end of the conference. If you are not able to send the position paper on time, please do not hesitate to contact us as soon as possible.

We hope that this Study Guide is useful for you, and if you have any questions, you can get in touch with us whenever you want. It will be our pleasure to help you with anything we can. Thank you in advance and we are looking forward to seeing you very soon!

Best wishes,

Alejandra Segovia and Laia Marzá



**Director 1 and Study Guide Co-Author: Alejandra Segovia Tena**

Alejandra is in her second year of Economics and International Studies at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. The discovery of MUNs has been a meaningful step in her career, as she realized that her interests concerning the power dynamics of the international community goes beyond what she expected. However, she is also very passionate about mathematics and getting to know other cultures. For sure, the ASEAN committee will be an unforgettable experience in this last regard!

**Director 2 and Study Guide Co-Author: Laia Marzá Ferreres**

Laia is a last-year International Relations student at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). Her interests mostly remain on international security, peace studies, and conflict mediation, but she is also very passionate about history and dancing. She got into the MUN experience when she was in her second year of university, and she has loved it ever since. She joined UNANIMUN (UAB's MUN association), and she has participated as a delegate, Chair and as a member of the Secretariat in different MUNs. She is thrilled to get to know all the delegates and she hopes to make ASEAN the best committee they have ever been to!



## **Information about the committee**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok (Thailand) with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Later on, Brunei joined on 7 January 1984, followed by Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Laos and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN.

The Asian Charter, a legally binding agreement among the 10 ASEAN Member States, entered into force on 15 December 2008 and provided legal status and institutional framework for ASEAN. It is based on three main rights and obligations stated in Article 5:

1. Member states shall have equal rights and obligations under this Charter.
2. Member States shall take all necessary measures, including the enactment of appropriate domestic legislation, to effectively implement the provisions of this Charter and to comply with all obligations of membership.
3. In the case of a serious breach of the Charter or non-compliance, the matter shall be referred to article 20 (ASEAN Charter, 2008: 8).

The Charter also upholds the United Nations Charter and international law, and its main purposes are:

1. Maintenance and enhancement of peace, security and stability; and strengthen democracy;
2. Promote regional resilience through greater political, security, economic and socio-cultural cooperation;
3. Create a single market where there is free flow of goods, services and investment;
4. Alleviate poverty and narrow the development gap within ASEAN through mutual assistance and cooperation;
5. Promote sustainable development as to ensure the protection of the region's environment, the sustainability of its natural resources, the preservation of its cultural heritage and the high quality of life of its people;
6. Promote an ASEAN identity.



Moreover, ASEAN Member Countries have adopted the following fundamental principles in their relations with one another, as contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC, 1976):

- Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations;
- The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner;
- Renunciation of the threat or use of force; and
- Effective cooperation among themselves.

ASEAN is composed of three Community Councils that tackle multiple areas among its member states. These include the Political-Security Community, the Economic Community, and the Socio-Cultural Community. The former aims to ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with a world in a just, democratic and harmonious environment. The Economic Community, however, tackles economic integration among ASEAN members by envisioning the association as a single market product base, a highly competitive region, with equitable economic development, and fully integrated into the global economy. Finally, the Socio-Cultural Community is committed to ensure a socially responsible community for the benefit of ASEAN people by promoting certain rights, such as a high quality of life, equitable access to opportunities for all, social development, resilience, among others. It includes a wide variety of areas, such as culture and arts, information and media, education, youth, sports, social welfare and development, gender, or disaster management and humanitarian assistance (ASEAN, 2024).

According to the ASEAN Charter, in order to realize the objectives of each of the pillars of the community, each ASEAN Community Council shall:

- ensure the implementation of the relevant decisions of the ASEAN Summit;
- coordinate the work of the different sectors under its purview, and on issues which cut across the other Community Councils; and
- submit reports and recommendations to the ASEAN Summit on matters under its purview.



## **Scope of the committee**

ASEAN resolutions are typically not legally binding in the same way as treaties or international agreements. Instead, they are considered as expressions of the collective will or consensus of ASEAN member states on particular issues. ASEAN operates on the basis of consensus-building among its members, and resolutions are often adopted through consensus rather than by formal voting. While ASEAN resolutions may not have the force of law, they can still carry significant political and diplomatic weight.

However, enforcement mechanisms for ASEAN resolutions are generally weak. Compliance with resolutions largely depends on the willingness of member states to implement them voluntarily. ASEAN's emphasis on non-interference in the internal affairs of member states further limits the organization's ability to enforce resolutions.

## **Observer states**

Considering that ASEAN is constantly establishing close relationships with its neighboring countries, it is important to mention the presence of Observer States in the committee due to multiple reasons:

- They enhance dialogue and cooperation in political, economic, and security matters, which promotes regional stability and development.
- They bring diverse perspectives and insights to ASEAN discussions and decision-making processes, which enriches a more comprehensive understanding of regional challenges.
- They allow ASEAN to strengthen partnerships in multiple areas of interest, such as sustainable development or trade.
- They promote regional peace, stability and security in the region, so conflicts are more easily addressed and cooperative mechanisms for conflict resolution are tackled.
- They also promote regional integration that goes beyond ASEAN members, which helps to deal with global issues such as climate action.





## The Summit of the Future and Chapter I

The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to enhance cooperation on critical challenges and address gaps in global governance, reaffirm existing commitments prioritizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Charter, and move towards a reinvigorated multilateral system that is better positioned to positively impact people's lives (United Nations, 2024). The main purpose of this Summit is to strengthen international cooperation based on existing agreements, while focusing on an effective response to new threats and opportunities for present and future generations, and to finally reaching the fundamental SDGs.

The Areas of Potential Action underlined in the Summit of the Future are the following<sup>1</sup>:

- Account for the future
- Better respond to global shocks
- Meaningfully include young people
- Measure human progress more effectively
- Agree on a vision of digital technology
- Commit to integrity in public information
- Reform the international financial architecture
- Advance the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space
- Agree a new agenda for peace
- Transform education
- UN 2.0

The first Chapter of the Summit will be the focus of this committee, and it is labeled as "Chapter I: Sustainable Development and Financing for Development". This initiative aims to advocate for a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, emphasizing collaboration between public and private sectors through strategic investments in infrastructure, technology, and education to address developmental disparities and promote inclusivity. Also, the establishment of a global endowment for sustainable development, stressing transparency and debt sustainability are tackled, along with a call for ethical business conduct to foster comprehensive and sustainable developmental strides globally. This advocacy aims to serve as a blueprint for a transformative journey prioritizing sustainability, inclusivity, and ethical stewardship.

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<sup>1</sup> Further information with regards to the full extension of the Areas of Potential Action may be consulted in the official web <https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda/summit-of-the-future>



This ASEAN committee will be fundamentally revolving around the priorities of the Summit of the Future, more precisely on sustainable and financial development strategies. This is why it is expected that delegates will continuously be giving much importance and refer to some aspects of the Summit and Chapter I in their position statements and throughout the debate.



## **Topic A. ASEAN's Economic Community: Building Self-Sufficiency and Facing External Economic Dependence**

### **Introduction**

In a world where economic interdependence is declining while barriers to trade are being reimposed, countries are taking up two different strategies: economic interdependence or self-reliance. In order to understand the topic, it is key to take into account the following definitions: economic dependence versus economic self-sufficiency on the one hand and Asian centrality on the other hand.

Economic dependence is a term widely used to portray the relationship of inequality between the underdeveloped countries and the advanced, prosperous countries on which the former depend for technical and industrial know-how (Sonaike & Olowoporoku, 1980). Nonetheless, economic self-sufficiency describes the extent to which individuals or, in this case, countries, are able to provide for themselves without external aid. It is becoming an increasing trend in nowadays' international community, due to the widespread outbreak of political tensions and even threats.

Turning to Asian centrality, numerous evidence points out that the region of Southeast Asia has been turning inwards in the last few years. Even though once they perceived international trade as an opportunity of effective growth, nowadays it is perceived as a source of uncertainty and threat, due to the undeniable increase in international tensions worldwide. Instead of becoming self-sufficient regimes, ASEAN countries have developed a spirit of unity and willingness to encourage intra-Asean markets. In the report issued by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2020), it is reflected: "With the export-led growth model traditionally adopted in Asia out of favor, governments are looking to cultivate more self-sustaining economies."

Asian centrality is about the larger dynamics of regionalism and regional architecture in the Asia Pacific and even beyond. Even though the term of Asian centrality might resemble the idea of an exclusive handiwork of ASEAN members, it is far from its real meaning and the current situation. ASEAN has evolved from an association dedicated to keeping the Southeast Asian region free from being entangled in great power rivalries to one which accepted its 'centrality' in a wide East Asian and Asia-Pacific regionalism (Acharya, 2017).



This process entails accepting involvement of and economically engaging the major powers in the context of the region, without letting them take the initiative in the matter. Therefore, collaboration among Asian countries will be key in order to promote their economic activities, as well as retaining sovereignty over the region.

There is evidence that strengthening intra-regional trade would enable it to attain large gains from trade within the region, at the same time that it would limit the exposure of the region to major external powers. Intra-East Asian trade offers the promise of a new, additional engine of demand and growth, even though there is still a long way to go. For this reason, economic policy plays a major role nowadays within ASEAN in order to promote regional economic integration, enhance competitiveness, attract foreign investment, mitigate economic risks, foster sustainable development, and integrate into the global economy, ultimately contributing to the region's economic growth, stability, and prosperity.

## **History of the topic**

ASEAN economic integration started in the mid-1970s with the first two ASEAN Summits. At that time, political instability in the region was the driving force behind ASEAN. The withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam and of British military forces from “east of Suez” in the 1970s alleviated the situation and cleared the way for a new period of cooperation among Asian countries in order to eliminate external threats.

Not wanting to be at the mercy of other major powers, ASEAN members championed the importance of regional autonomy, which led them to start cultivating the idea of a united front (Thomson & Chong, 2020). Asserting their position as a single bloc would enhance their bargaining power to face external powers who would want to exploit ASEAN countries for their own benefit. In 1971, in an attempt to safeguard their collective interests, ASEAN adopted the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality declaration, which declared its intent to keep Southeast Asia “free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers.” This was one of the first manifestations of ASEAN’s policy of non interference, which would soon spread to other fields such as the economic one.

Despite ASEAN’s great emphasis on upholding regional autonomy and minimizing external interference in their territory, ASEAN still recognizes the huge and beneficial impact that some external powers have in the region. For instance, the United States is seen as a source of security, while China is the leading trading partner of ASEAN members (Thomson & Chong, 2020). It should also be pointed out that the conflicting interests of these two world



powers poses a real challenge in the region. Therefore, ASEAN-led multilateralism is pursued not to cut off economic and political relations with external powers, but instead, as a means of continuing constructive engagement with external powers while maintaining enough authority and allowing ASEAN to retain a central role.

In an attempt to promote this central role, ASEAN has implemented numerous measures to attain economic integration since the 1970s and, especially, since the 1980s; achieving impressive results and an unbelievably rapid economic growth through different agreements to stimulate trade. Nonetheless, in 1997, the Asian financial crisis would change this whole panorama of success. Estrada et al. (2011) argues that although ASEAN's overall track record of economic performance had been broadly impressive up until that moment, especially in comparison with other parts of the developing world, the 1997/98 Asian financial crisis dealt a severe blow to the region's previously sky-high self confidence. Due to the continuous fast growth in the previous years, the economic contraction and the upturn in poverty caused by this crisis came as a hard shock.

Despite its evident setbacks, the Asian crisis promoted regional cooperation and integration in East Asia, triggered by the widespread conception that the IMF was managing the crisis in an attempt not to fight its repercussions in the region, but to serve the interests of the industrialized countries. Overall, ASEAN's experience during the global crisis highlights the risks of excessive dependence on extra-regional demand for exports and growth (Estrada et al., 2011).

### **Role of external powers in ASEAN's economic history**

With regards to the role of other significant Asian countries which do not belong to the ASEAN organization, we must emphasize the importance of three large economies as potential sources for demand and growth. There is no need for ASEAN countries to look far, as they are located in the region's own backyard: the PRC, Japan and the Republic of Korea. However, extreme dependency on any of these three countries, especially on China, could also entail multiple risks for the organization.

In previous decades, Southeast Asian countries have grown increasingly dependent on China for trade, investment, and tourism. This has placed the region in an extremely vulnerable position, given Beijing's inclination to apply economic coercion. It is widely known that China does not hesitate to do whatever it takes to attain its economic and political goals, as numerous countries have already suffered its reprisals in the past. Two clear examples



are the Philippines or South Korea. Moreover, China's undeclared economic embargoes of Australia, Japan, and several European countries serve as an effective deterrent to smaller economies in Southeast Asia, which have no illusions about what will happen to their investments and business interests should they confront Beijing over political differences.

### **Efforts for self-sufficiency**

In light of the above, ASEAN has cultivated the desire to reduce economic dependence on any single trading partner and distribute its external trade more efficiently, as to mitigate the risk of coercion and preserve their own sovereignty. Intra-ASEAN trade is currently quite low, accounting for just 23 percent of ASEAN's total trade in 2018. Therefore, efforts should continue to be made to diversify their trade and investment relationships in order to build resilience and contribute to the protection of each state's independence.

As a measure to promote cooperation in order to give birth to an intra-Asian market, the ASEAN Economic Community was created. ASEAN Economic Community can be traced back to 1992, when Asean Free Trade Areas (AFTAs) were created. Since its creation, one of ASEAN's main goals has been economic integration. The Economic Community envisions ASEAN as a single market and product base, a highly competitive region, with equitable economic development, and fully integrated into the global economy (ASEAN, 2024). However, ASEAN continues to face multiple challenges related to foreign dependency and limitations in strengthening an intra-ASEAN market.

### **Recent developments**

#### **Free trade areas (FTAs)**

ASEAN has been actively engaged in free trade agreements (FTAs) with several countries and regions, including China, Japan, and South Korea, as part of its broader economic integration efforts, as they aim to reduce trade barriers, promote economic cooperation, and facilitate trade and investment flows among member countries and their partners. However, in all of the cases these agreements have been bilateral, having concluded bilateral FTAs with the PRC (ACFTA, 2002), the Republic of Korea (AKFTA, 2006) and Japan (AJFTA, 2008).

Despite the undeniable benefits derived from these bilateral FTAs, evidence suggests that it would be more advisable to establish A+3FTA (ASEAN with the Big Three). According to the results of this research, ASEAN will gain the most from A+3FTA, which is by far the largest



FTA among East Asian countries. It is also consistent with economic intuition since a larger FTA generates more trade opportunities and larger dynamic efficiency gains, which is why multilateral WTO liberalization is always preferable to regional liberalization. Moreover, this agreement would cause an increase in welfare gains for both parties to the treaty. In light of the above, ideally, ASEAN and the Big Three would be working together to establish A+3FTA, which would bring together virtually all the major economies of East Asia into a single free trade area (Estrada et al., 2011).

As straightforward as it might seem, in reality, there are lots of obstacles preventing these agreements from taking place and thus, standing in the way of freer trade. Some interest groups oppose it due to the comparative disadvantage in the international market and their unwillingness to adapt to the fierce international competence. For example, farmers in Japan and Korea, which have a comparative disadvantage in agriculture, are likely to oppose trade liberalization that would expose them to competition from cheaper foreign products. It must also be taken into account that multiple actors involved in negotiations further limit the possibilities of reaching an agreement. Negotiating A+3FTA requires reconciling the interests of ASEAN and the Big Three, which are complicated by historical and geopolitical factors.

### **The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**

In light of the article composed by Ing (2023), ASEAN is not a self-contained region, meaning that member states rely heavily on investment and technology from countries such as Japan, South Korea and China, as previously stated. And while the bloc functions as a united group, member states may engage with other countries or blocs on their own, enabling them to freely pursue their own interests while maintaining the cohesion within the ASEAN community.

In fact, this is reflected in agreements such as the RCEP, which includes all 10 ASEAN countries, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand and entered into force in 2022. The RCEP is the world's largest free-trade area, as it represents one-third of global GDP and one-quarter of the world's total trade and investment (Ing, 2023). Its aim is to foster greater trade integration by reducing tariffs on 90% of product lines.

The recent ratification of the RCEP will open the way for further trade integration but there is scope for more policy initiatives. A resounding example could be the reduction of non-tariff barriers in line with the Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) Guidelines which have been defined by the UNCTAD as: "Policy measures other than tariffs that can potentially have an economic



effect on international trade in goods. They are increasingly shaping trade, influencing who trades what and how much.” Additionally, regional trade integration could be enhanced by:

- facilitating free trade agreements in line with the initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan (2021-2025)
- eliminating non-tariff barriers
- strengthening Global Value Chains (GVC) in the region, through the promotion of the different stages of production being carried out within the borders of the territories of ASEAN member states.
- further advancing progress on the digital economy, including to facilitate cross-border e-commerce and financial flows.

### **Investment promotion**

Direct foreign investment (DFI) inflows are essential in order to establish an outward-looking development strategy. DFI brings in new capital flows (without creating debt), foreign exchange, easy access to foreign markets, and technology transfer. For this reason, ASEAN countries have increasingly been placing a stronger emphasis on technology transfer in their multilateral and bilateral relationships, as it has been proven that DFI has played a key role in Southeast Asia’s economic development (Hew, 2006). Moreover, DFI inflows into the region have led to a high level of cross-border integration of production value chains and rapid growth in intra-industry trade (Hew, 2006).

According to Naya & Plummer (1997), “Regional economic integration accords such as AFTA can promote DFI inflows through reductions in transaction costs. In doing so, they establish an attractive business environment within which multinationals can easily profit from a vertical division of labor, as well as facilitating the emergence of multinationals within the developing region itself. In fact, some have argued that the most important benefit of AFTA is not its effects on trade but rather its ability to attract more DFI to the region at a time when competition for such flows is increasing.”

### **Bloc positions**

While ASEAN as a bloc promotes regional economic integration through initiatives like the **ASEAN Economic Community** (AEC), individual member countries may have differing priorities and approaches when it comes to pursuing FTAs based on their specific economic circumstances and political considerations. The member countries that have proved to be





more interested in widening their international commercial relations and thus, have been more involved in creating and signing **FTAs**, are the following:

- **Singapore:** Singapore is known for its proactive stance on FTAs and has one of the most extensive networks of FTAs globally. It has FTAs with numerous countries and regions, including the United States, European Union, China, Japan, Australia, and many others.
- **Malaysia:** Malaysia has actively pursued FTAs as part of its economic strategy. It has FTAs with key trading partners such as Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, and India, among others.
- **Vietnam:** Vietnam has been increasingly engaged in FTA negotiations and has signed several significant agreements, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA).
- **Thailand:** Thailand has also been involved in various FTAs, including agreements with Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, and India.

While perhaps not as visibly active in pursuing FTAs as some of the aforementioned countries, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other ASEAN members have also participated in FTA negotiations and have signed agreements with various partners. However, there might be instances where certain member states express reservations or concerns about specific aspects of FTAs. Their positions might vary based on the particular agreement, its terms, and its perceived implications for their national interests. For instance, we can take a closer look at the cases of Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia or Myanmar.

While Vietnam is generally supportive of FTAs and has actively pursued numerous agreements previously stated, there have been occasions where concerns about certain provisions, such as labor standards, have been raised by this country. As well as Vietnam, Malaysia has been active in negotiating FTAs. Nonetheless, it has sometimes faced internal opposition, especially related to concerns about sovereignty and protecting certain sectors. Issues such as government procurement and investment protection have been points of contention in some agreements. Moreover, Indonesia is known to be selective in its engagement, despite having participated in various FTAs. Indonesia has expressed concerns about protecting its domestic industries and sovereignty, particularly in sensitive sectors such as agriculture. The Philippines has a similar position regarding FTAs. While it has been party to several agreements, there have been instances of domestic opposition,



particularly concerning agricultural imports and their potential impact on local farmers. Lastly, Myanmar's engagement with FTAs has historically been limited due to its internal political and economic challenges. While it is an ASEAN member, its participation in trade agreements has been constrained by factors such as its political transition and internal conflicts.

**Economic dependence** is a key concern for ASEAN countries. Therefore, it is important to take into account this concept when defining the position of each bloc. Economic dependence can be understood in various ways, including dependence on exports, reliance on specific sectors or industries, or vulnerability to external shocks. In the context of ASEAN, economic dependence can vary across member countries based on factors such as the size of their economies, the diversity of their industries, and their level of integration into regional and global markets.

In relation to the different degrees of economic dependence, we can observe that the countries most reliant on exports to sustain their economy are the following, which coincide with the list of countries more involved in FTAs up until today:

- **Singapore:** Singapore is highly dependent on international trade and investment due to its small domestic market. Its economy relies heavily on exports, particularly in sectors such as electronics, financial services, and transportation.
- **Malaysia:** Malaysia has a significant reliance on exports, particularly in the manufacturing sector, including electronics, palm oil, and petroleum products. It is also a major exporter of natural resources.
- **Vietnam:** Vietnam's economy has become increasingly dependent on exports, with a focus on manufacturing, textiles, and electronics. It has emerged as a major exporter in these sectors and has attracted significant foreign investment.
- **Thailand:** Thailand has a diverse economy, but it heavily depends on exports, particularly in sectors such as automotive, electronics, and agriculture. Its economy is susceptible to external factors such as global demand and currency fluctuations.

In contrast, countries such as **Indonesia** or the **Philippines** have more import-oriented economies. Indonesia's economy is characterized by its abundant natural resources, such as oil, gas, coal, and palm oil and has a growing manufacturing sector, so it increasingly depends on exports, though nowadays it continues to depend mainly on imports. In the case of the Philippines, it relies on imports for a variety of goods, including petroleum products,



raw materials, machinery and equipment, consumer goods, and agricultural products. Other ASEAN countries have more balanced levels of imports and exports.

Finally, it might as well be useful to take into account these two divisions when classifying ASEAN member states:

### **Economic Development:**

- Developed Block: composed by countries with relatively higher levels of economic development, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.
- Developing Block: composed by countries with emerging economies or lower levels of economic development, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

### **Political Systems:**

- Democratic Block: Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand (prior to the 2014 coup), and Malaysia.
- Authoritarian or Semi-Authoritarian Block: Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

All of these factors will be relevant for delegations to positionate in favor or against certain agreements, and shall be taken into consideration for signing alliances with other member states.

## **Connections with SDGs**

### **SDG 1: No poverty**

In Southeast Asia, SDG 1 ("No Poverty") is highly relevant due to widespread poverty. The region faces challenges like extreme poverty in rural areas and among indigenous communities, as well as urban poverty in rapidly growing cities with inadequate housing and services. Addressing inequality, particularly regarding income and wealth disparities, is also crucial. Regional cooperation through organizations like ASEAN is key to addressing poverty's complex issues and promoting inclusive, sustainable development for all in Southeast Asia.



## **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth**

SDG 8 ("Decent Work and Economic Growth") is crucial for Southeast Asia due to its economic diversity, rapid industrialization, and sizable labor force. It promotes full employment, protects labor rights, fosters inclusive economic growth, advocates for sustainable industrial practices, supports SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), and enhances global partnerships. In relation to the latter, regional cooperation frameworks like ASEAN facilitate collective action to address challenges related to decent work and economic growth, including promoting trade, investment, and labor mobility. Overall, SDG 8 aims to ensure inclusive and sustainable economic development while prioritizing decent work opportunities, labor rights, and social protection for all in the region.

## **SDG 16: peace, justice and strong institutions**

SDG 16 ("Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions") is vital for Southeast Asia, given its political diversity and historical conflicts. It aims to foster peace, ensure access to justice, build effective institutions, protect human rights, combat organized crime, and promote inclusive decision-making. SDG 16 puts the focus on sustainable development and prosperity through peace-building, human rights protection and institutional strengthening.

## **Questions a Resolution Should Solve**

- What measures could encourage a deeper economic integration in ASEAN?
- Would it be advisable to sign an accord such as the A+3FTA with the Big Three altogether?
- Should ASEAN move towards a customs union?
- Would it be a wise strategy to reduce imports in order to foster domestic consumption?
- Is the diversification of industries a good economic measure for ASEAN's situation?
- How can the promotion of commercial relations with powerful neighbors while avoiding excessive economic dependence be balanced?
- How can ASEAN attract more DFI?
- To what extent is it possible to achieve economic self-sufficiency if political instability within the region is not eradicated?



## **Topic B. Political Instability and its Effects in Sustainable Development and Disaster Management**

### **Introduction**

The Political-Security Community of ASEAN is aimed at ensuring that its Member States live at peace with one another and with the rest of the world, fostering a just, democratic and harmonious environment. The main priorities of this community include political development; shaping and sharing norms; conflict prevention; conflict resolution; post-conflict peace-building; and implementing coexistence mechanisms (ASEAN, 2024). In order to pursue such objectives, however, political stability is needed to facilitate the coordination among and within countries in the Southeast Asian region.

Although there is not a clear definition of what political stability is due to the wide variety of factors that affect it –such as political structures or behaviors–, we can perceive it as the regularity of the flow of political exchanges, with absence of violence and with certain circumstances that facilitate an effective governance. In contrast, political instability refers to all those aspects that hinder the governance of a country and that, in extreme situations, can cause mass violence and/or the emergence of a failed state (Adebayo et al., 2022). One of the most urgent consequences of political instability is governance ineffectiveness in multiple areas, which can lead to worrying or even extreme crises such as failure in disaster management or on policy-implementation that favours sustainable development.

Southeast Asia is globally considered one of the most vulnerable regions to the effects of climate change. Countries across the region are currently facing rising sea levels, heat waves, floods and droughts, and increasingly intense and unpredictable weather events (USAID, 2020). The region faces a dual challenge, since it not only must adapt to climate change largely caused by greenhouse gases emitted over decades, but it must also alter development strategies that are increasingly contributing to global warming (IMF, 2017). Currently, the region's growing reliance on coal and oil, along with deforestation, are undermining national pledges to reduce emissions and embrace cleaner energy sources. Hence, effective sustainable policies are urgently needed in order to mitigate and deal with climate change consequences, and political stability is essential to be able to do so.



In general terms, political instability tends to generate negative effects when it comes to managing disasters and sustainable development. This can be due to multiple variables that hinder an effective governance of a country. Consequently, the maintenance of political order and harmony becomes more difficult to handle. In the present Study Guide, the aim is to deal with the current effects that political status of ASEAN countries have on sustainability and disaster management.

### **Contextualization of the topic: the relationship between political instability and development**

Regarding the correlation between political instability and development, the former negatively affects the latter due to multiple factors. Firstly, political instability enhances the fragmentation of a society based on ethnic, religious or ideological divisions, which consequently creates higher insecurity among different groups that can further escalate into conflict dynamics. Political instability also generates an unequal distribution of resources among social groups, causing general dissatisfaction, civil unrest or even mass violence (Ejaz, 2019: 77). This is related to deficient governance capacities, where the government undermines the provision of basic services and loses its legitimacy and public authority. Most of these aspects are present in the majority of humanitarian crises, and they contribute to accelerating the risk of conflict escalation.

Digging deeper into sustainable development and political instability, a study realized by R. Ejaz empirically proved the interdependence among corruption, political instability and sustainable development for a panel of 28 developing economies. The main conclusions are that overall, political instability impedes sustainable development, while at the same time sustainable development reduces political instability and corruption. In other words, those countries or economies that are moving towards sustainable development and effective disaster management tend to be more politically stable due to the decrease in corruption, ethnic conflicts, civil wars and polarization (Ejaz, 2019: 77).

Another way in which political instability affects sustainable development and disaster management is through irrational political and economic decision-making processes that reduce private investment, public sector programs, patterns of public spending and economic growth (Ejaz, 2019: 57). Hence, the lack of investment hinders the presence of effective resources that enhance sustainable development and help to deal with disaster



management. This is why sustainable development reflects lower levels of poverty, higher education, health facilities and pollution free environments.

Applying the same logic, natural disasters generate political instability, and political instability affects the way in which such disasters are managed. Disaster events amplify scarcities in basic resources and intensify individuals' grievances over access to public goods. As a result, this weakens the state in terms of its ability to satisfy public demands. Natural disasters also change the balance of power between individuals, groups, and organizations that serve them, creating new opportunities for political mobilization (Omelycheva, 2011: 4).

## **History of the topic**

ASEAN was created at a time when regional organizations were bound to fail due to interstate conflicts, superpower interference in regional affairs, internal political instability, lack of common identity, and mutual distrust among neighbors. However, with the foundation of the organization, since there had not been any intra-regional contact, a regional framework was believed to be a catalyst for cooperative relations among the newly independent states (Nem Singh, 2008: 145-146).

When ASEAN was initially founded, national security was the main purpose of all Member States. However, Tun Dr. Mahathir, ex-Prime Minister of Malaysia, had once said that "security is not just a matter of military capability. National security is inseparable from political stability, economic success and social harmony. Without these, all the guns in the world cannot prevent a country from being overcome by its enemies, whose ambition can be fulfilled sometimes without firing a single shot". Hence, ASEAN is a regional organization with a target to establish economic cooperation, political stability, and a harmonious society and culture, with a final purpose of embracing national development and nation-building (Kelig et al., 2011: 171-172).

In order to pursue the goals of living in a just, democratic and sustainable environment, political stability among ASEAN member states has always been required, while instability has not been conducive to the achievement of such objectives. According to some authors, political instability has historically been a result of structural problems, such as an unequal distribution of power, but nowadays climate-induced disruptions are also considered a key variable. These explain why responses to disasters are crucial determinants of when and where tensions may occur, even if they do not end up with violence (Dalby et al., 2018).



Nevertheless, according to the United Nations, conflicts now tend to be less deadly and often waged between domestic groups rather than states. This does not imply that political instability disappears, though, since it is still engendering concerning effects, such as organized crime (UN, 2020). According to some studies of civil conflict, it is the features of a state's political regime, specifically, the robustness and adaptive capacity of its political institutions, that determine the degree of the state's vulnerability to instability and political crises (Omelicheva, 2011: 5). Therefore, states need capabilities, competence, and credibility to cope successfully with disasters.

ASEAN has been adopting compromising actions to combat climate change and facilitate a sustained economic and social development. The formation of the Economic Community (AEC) contributed to a large proportion of the population being economically conscious, demanding quality goods and services, prospects of inclusive growth, and market integration. However, there are some constraints that need to be surpassed, such as poor infrastructure, which should be fixed through investment that enables the access of markets in services and improvements in social welfare (ASEAN, 2021).

Regarding climate risks, ASEAN joins the rest of the world in standing at a historical turning point in combating climate change. Greenhouse gas emissions in the region have been increasing in line with industrialisation based on fossil-fuel energy and associated land-use change resulting in the loss of tropical forest and peatland rich in biodiversity (UNEP, 2020). Although the region has been rapidly integrating in economy and culture, this has provided immense economic and social opportunities for the region while also having implications for transboundary climate risks that have inhibited full effective sustainability and proper disaster management.

Nevertheless, the role of the organization has not been passive during the last decades. ASEAN member states have historically addressed sustainable development and disaster management through various initiatives. In 2005, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was established, focusing on strengthening disaster risk reduction, resilience and response mechanisms (ASEAN, 2021). Also in 2005, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) was created as a non-governmental organization tackling the conservation and protection of the region's natural heritage, and paying attention to multiple areas that affect biodiversity both directly or indirectly, such as public awareness, knowledge-sharing, species conservation, and global warming.





Later on, in 2009, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint focused on sustainable development and disaster management in order to achieve regional integration and community-building within the organization (ASEAN, 2021). This contributed to planning and implementing disaster management initiatives, such as sharing knowledge, resources, and best practice methods that enhanced cooperation.

From 2004 to 2014, ASEAN was the most natural disaster-prone region in the world with more than 50% of global disaster mortalities occurring in the region. This led to a great economic loss and an increase in the rate of disaster mortality and environmentally displaced persons. These factors awakened the countries to act more rigorously and to develop further initiatives that will be explained at “Recent Developments”.

## **Recent developments**

### **Capacity building and governance**

Since its creation, the Southeast Asian association has been developing measures that have strengthened its capacity building and governance regarding sustainable development and disaster management issues. For instance, the updated ASEAN Capacity Building Roadmap for Competition 2021-2025 recommends capacity building initiatives in support of ASEAN member states by efficiently introducing, implementing, collaborating and coordinating on competition policies and laws in the period 2021-2025 (ASEAN, 2022).

Despite its initiatives, however, ASEAN has many weaknesses when it comes to effective cooperative governance among its member states. One of the main setbacks of ASEAN in politics remains on the non-interference principle. Although it is related to sovereignty and most of the Member States prioritize it, non-interference can also hinder effective common or regional governance in issues such as human rights violations or political instability, which can create tensions and make it more difficult to reach a common agreement on controversial aspects.

Another important political flaw is ASEAN’s weak institutional structure. Due to the diversity of culture and history of each member state, sometimes it is difficult to effectively implement agreements and resolve disputes. This is also related to the fact that ASEAN lacks binding enforcement mechanisms, being unable to coerce its member states in some urgent matters. Moreover, the challenge remains on the incapacity to reform this institutional structure to respond to various crises, especially to issues that have regional implications.



One of the main institutional features of ASEAN is that there is a delicate balance between respecting national sovereignty and empowering regional autonomy at the same time. According to a study, regionalization will only be achieved through attempts to institutionalize democratic norms as well as enhanced mechanisms pooling sovereignty. Also, it is believed that although the political and economic reforms might be intertwined, they should be tackled as two separate efforts (Nem Singh, 2008).

However, according to the association, as disasters affect all aspects of development, deeper cross-sectoral collaboration will be needed to fully implement a comprehensive disaster management strategy. It is essential that disasters are approached holistically across the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Political-Security Community and coordinated through the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEAN, 2024).

### **Climate change and disaster risks**

In regards to climate change, ASEAN has adopted many compromises to ensure a common response to sustainability and disaster management. For instance, the Declaration on “One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region” (2016) laid out high-level and solid political commitments of ASEAN to achieve faster response, mobilize greater resources and establish stronger coordination to ensure a collective response to disasters (ASEAN, 2024).

Moreover, we find the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, aimed at adopting proactive measures to address climate change at the national and regional level. The ASEAN Joint Statement Climate Change to the COP25 to the UNFCCC reaffirmed countries’ commitment to implement measures to address climate change and disasters, such as the Plan of Action of the ASEAN Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance; launch specific plans for sustainability, such as the ASEAN Regional Strategy on Sustainable Land Transport; and promote collaboration with regional and sectoral dialogue; among others (ASEAN, 2019).

Hence, there are many plans of action, strategies and agreements that specifically deal with climate change. However, the role of non-governmental organizations is essential on this matter. The ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC) was established in 2009, and it is a consultative platform to promote collaborations with ASEAN members, stakeholders and international partners. Its role is to implement relevant actions set out in



the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2009-2015 and the ASCC Blueprint 2025 in order to coordinate and integrate efforts when dealing with climate change (AWGCC, 2019).

When tackling disaster management, mitigating disaster events is one of the main priorities of the organization in order to comply with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), which addresses three dimensions of disaster risks to prevent the creation of a new one, reduce the effects of an existing one, and increase resilience (UNDRR, 2024).

To foster policy coordination and regional cooperation on the matter of climate change, ASEAN promotes Ministerial Meetings about the Environment and about Disaster Management. This format favours a dynamic functionality among member states, since they can discuss common challenges and coordinate regional responses to address sustainable development and disaster management.

Other examples that have a great influence in the organization are the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), which aims to build disaster resilience in the Asia-Pacific region based on disaster risk reduction, inclusive governance and knowledge sharing (ADPC, 2024), or the ASEAN Foundation, which fosters regional cooperation and integration but it also deals with sustainable development and disaster management issues.

However, it is important to bear in mind that despite the existence of multiple forums and agreements, disaster management and sustainable development still need much more compromise and compliance, not only for all ASEAN members, but for its neighbors as well. Considering that climate change is a global issue, fostering international collaboration among different regional entities might be the best mechanism to truly mitigate its effects.

### **Cooperation between governmental and non-governmental institutions (NGOs)**

Nowadays, political stability is highly influenced by the cooperation and engagement of both states and non-governmental institutions, who act as a pressuring actor that somehow force governments to be aware and act in a friendly-sustainable way. This affects the governments' prestige and how states are internationally perceived. ASEAN Member States and their neighbors are in charge of ensuring political stability in order to effectively provide sustainable development and disaster management.



For that, governments need political stability, which is based on multiple factors. Governments need to ensure an effective policy implementation, since sustainable development needs long-term planning, consistent policies, and a stable governance. Investment and economic development are also key in order to receive foreign and domestic resources to finance such projects. Moreover, environmental conservation and natural resource management efforts need strong governance structures and much cross-border cooperation in order to be coordinated. Hence, regional cooperation and integration is essential to solve disputes or tensions between member states and their neighbors (Ejaz, 2019: 79).

To avoid social tensions and conflicts, it is important that governments promote social cohesion and inclusivity, and this is inconceivable without the presence of NGOs. Actually, the effectiveness of the majority of these aspects will highly depend on the cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations. The role of NGOs in capacity building and awareness raising is crucial, at least in the case of ASEAN. They promote advocacy and lobbying efforts to influence ASEAN policies related to integration and ensure that governments comply with democratic principles, but at the same time they respect their national sovereignty based on the priorities of local communities.

NGOs also form partnerships and coalitions with other civil society organizations. Many initiatives have progressed thanks to partnerships between ASEAN and civil society organizations when tackling emergency response. For instance, the AADMER Partnership Group (APG) contributed to the institutionalization of AADMER and in supporting the capacity building program (ASEAN, 2023). NGOs also conduct policy analysis and research in terms of sustainable development, such as the ASEAN Center of Biodiversity (ACB) or international NGOs like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) or Oxfam.

## **Bloc Positions**

From a historical perspective, in the 1990s and early 2000s, the Southeast Asian region seemed to enjoy a process of democratization that served as a model for other developing countries. However, the region's political evolution has been somewhat disappointing, and according to the Council on Foreign Relations, it is a long way from that promising period, with Timor-Leste as the only “fully free” democracy according to Freedom House's rankings



(Kurlantzick, 2023). This can be related to the effectiveness of each country to contribute successfully to sustainable development.

### **Affected countries**

The countries that are exponentially more affected by the existing interrelation between political stability and sustainable development are Myanmar, the Philippines, and Cambodia.

On the one hand, **Myanmar** has experienced political instability during the last years, especially after the military coup d'état in February 2021. Its democratic transition began in 2011 and it became more solid in 2015, but with the massive killings of the Rohingya, military dominance continued. This situation caused uncertainty and multiple setbacks in promoting sustainable development through the obstaculization of programs that tackled environmental and social issues. In fact, Myanmar's government keeps promising and postponing their own sure-to-be-sham elections and it is still engaged in a civil war where armed forces are intensifying massive human rights abuses (Kurlantzick, 2023).

Considering the fact that its citizens experience poor social conditions under military rule and political repression, Myanmar is also highly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions, such as floods, cyclones or rising sea levels. Along with **Laos**, they are trying to handle disasters and sustainable development issues with its National Disaster Management Committee, and they collaborate with international entities on humanitarian assistance. However, they are prone to suffer sharper natural events that will need an effective full development of SDGs, along with regional and international cooperation (UNDP, 2023). In fact, there have been some occasional reports of social dissatisfaction not only due to the political situation, but also related to issues such as the quality of education, environmental conservation and economic development projects.

On the other hand, the **Philippines** has also experienced multiple political threats. Since the rise to power of President Rodrigo Duterte (2016), democracy has floundered in the Philippines and it is becoming more autocratic (Kurlantzick, 2023). In the country, many political transitions, governance challenges and periods of political instability due to corruption, ethno-religious tensions and separatist movements took place. However, in terms of sustainable development there has been an overall increase of the wide majority of SDGs, but it is true that climate action remains the same, which is a great weakness, since the Philippines is highly vulnerable to typhoons, floods, landslides, and sea-level rise.



Regarding **Cambodia**, in 2020, Hun Sen, the ex-Prime Minister, announced that he was handing power to his son Hun Manet, making the country more equivalent to a dynastic transition. The case of the Cambodian government is even more sensitive now, since in 2023 they staged a sham election in which the main opposition party was banned and the ruling party took nearly every seat. When it comes to sustainable development, it seems that climate action is the only SDG that has been completely fulfilled. However, there are still many challenges that need to be overcome. For instance, although there has been an improvement in education, there needs to be more improvement in reducing hunger, promoting sustainable cities and communities, and ensuring equality through the provision of health services, clean energy, secure infrastructure, and strong institutions (Sustainable Development Report, 2023). This is why, although Cambodia has put effort on it, much more is needed to comply with UN SDGs, especially considering the circumstances of increasing temperatures and other extreme weather elements that impact food security and water resources.

### **Mainly affected countries**

Those countries that are considerably affected by their historical and current political and sustainable situation are Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

Since 2006, **Thailand** has experienced two coups d'état, the last of which (2014) led to a pro-military government led by the general Prayut Chan-o-cha. However, although the progressive party won a plurality of seats in May 2023 elections, military-aligned parties and royalist forces tried to block its leader from being named prime minister (Kurlantzick, 2023). Despite this, Thailand has the first position in the Southeast Asian region on the progress towards SDGs. However, according to the UNDP, there is little progress in reducing inequality, supporting good health and well-being, and providing affordable and clean energy, so sustainable development is still a goal that is not fully tackled. Also, Thailand is cited as one of the ten most flood-affected countries globally and is ranked 9th on the list of the top ten countries most affected by climate change from 2000-2019 (UNDP, 2023).

The case of **Indonesia** is not much different. As in the Philippines, the country has experienced political transitions, governance challenges and periods of political instability due to corruption, ethno-religious tensions and separatist movements. This has resulted in only a partial achievement of climate action policies. Some aspects such as poverty, quality education, and clean water have improved, while others such as hunger, affordable energy, promoting sustainable cities, or climate action, remain the same (Sustainable Development



Report, 2023). Considering the various climate change impacts that Indonesia suffers, including rising sea levels or forest fires, it is essential that it works more on sustainable development in order to be effective in disaster management.

In the case of **Vietnam**, many efforts towards more freedom-related principles were tackled in the 2010s. Unexpectedly, the country slowly returned to a harsh autocracy and since 2022 there is no guarantee of human rights protections (Kurlantzick, 2023). However, despite the existence of its non-democratic regime, Vietnam has been affected differently in terms of political stability and, consequently, in the development of the country. Generally speaking, in countries that have not experienced great political challenges and sharp changes, it seems that they show a greater capacity of overseeing impressive growth and development, which is the case of Vietnam. It is highly compromised in regional terms when it comes to sustainable development, mostly due to its vulnerable climate and geographic situation, similar to the Philippines.

### **Open countries**

Those countries that have remained more or less stable in political terms and, as a result, have adopted an open and more tolerable position towards sustainability are Singapore and Malaysia.

**Singapore**, despite having experienced some political tensions across time, is considered to be politically stable and, hence, more efficient in tackling sustainable development and disaster management issues. In fact, it is perceived as the most efficient country in economic and sustainable development terms, since it has a specific program –the Singapore Green Plan 2030– that tackles UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement based on nature, energy reset, sustainable living, green economy, and building a resilient future (Green Plan, 2024).

Along with Singapore, **Malaysia** is considered to be another key example of the region's efficiency. Although it has experienced multiple changes, its multipartidism system and pacific governmental changes have allowed achieving a no poverty status and it is improving in gender equality, infrastructure, sustainability, and social justice rights. However, when it comes to hunger, health, education, clean water, or climate action, the situation remains the same. This is why urgent action tackling such issues, but especially the environmental ones, is needed, adding to the fact that Malaysia is also vulnerable to rising sea levels, floods, landslides and heatwaves (Sustainable Development Report, 2023).





## Isolated countries

The countries that might be distinctive from the rest are Brunei Darussalam and Laos.

**Brunei Darussalam**, an established absolute monarchy, ruled by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, is a political regime characterized by high political stability, although it suffers from lack of freedom. Brunei has been adopting many national policies and plans that have contributed to great improvements in sustainable development, such as in education, health, industry and infrastructure, and affordable and clean energy. The main setback, however, still remains on equality, climate action and poverty. It is also vulnerable to sea-level rise, which is threatening their coastal areas and negatively impacting agriculture and their water resources (SDG Brunei, 2022).

In **Laos**, however, the government tends to be ruled by a single party, and this facilitates political stability (Política Exterior, 2021), although it has been criticized due to its poor democratic principles and human rights promotion. Lao PDR has improved its situation regarding sustainable development in clean water and sanitation, but its circumstances on poverty, hunger, education, or climate action remain the same, since it is not a rich state in many resources and it is less involved in regional initiatives compared to other ASEAN countries.

## General aspects to consider

Although having Early Warning Systems, working on infrastructure resilience, having Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction programs, and collaborating with international organizations, Southeast Asian countries still face challenges in effectively managing natural disasters due to limited resources, geographical difficulty, and especially the need for more public awareness and resilience.

In order to pursue such objectives, it is relevant to bear in mind that direct foreign investment is needed, and ASEAN has strong economic ties with China, United States, the European Union, and South Korea, who could potentially help the organization and its member states to deal with such important challenges. Also, the normative influence that its surrounding countries have in the organization, such as Bangladesh or India, are important aspects to consider when dealing with climate change effects, since they are especially vulnerable to it.





## **Relation with SDGs**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the main aspects in which this Study Guide is based on. In order to tackle sustainable development and disaster management, SDGs play a huge role as indicators that show improvements on poverty reduction, hunger, health, education, gender equality, industry, economic growth, among others. In this case, however, our main focus remains on four SDGs:

### **SDG 1: No Poverty**

This goal aims at eradicating poverty in all its possible forms. Although ASEAN Member States are not the poorest in the world, the fact that they are suffering from natural disasters is increasingly affecting social wealth and is limiting resources. This is why it is a main priority to tackle sustainable development.

### **SDG 13: Climate Action**

This goal in this topic is completely essential. Since the focus remains on sustainable development and disaster management, mitigating climate change effects and enhancing plans of action that tackle them are one of the main priorities of ASEAN, although its effectiveness might be questionable.

### **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**

In order to deal with sustainable development, it is important to establish solid institutional entities that allow better and easier cooperation between states through regional entities and other international organizations.

### **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**

The achievement of sustainable development and disaster management of ASEAN will be possible if the association establishes partnerships with other states or international organizations that provide resources and knowledge in order to improve the general wellbeing of societies. Multilateralism is key to ensure that states live under a regime of peace, justice and social welfare.

Bear in mind that, in order to develop an adequate Resolution, it is crucial to include these aspects, since they are the basis of how to simultaneously generate political stability and sustainable development.



## Questions a Resolution Should Solve

- Is ASEAN currently effective when dealing with sustainable development and disaster management?
- How does political stability relate to climate effects such as disasters?
- Which factors of political instability could be improved in order to pursue effective sustainable development?
- Should NGOs be more responsible in promoting sustainable development and disaster management in Southeast Asia?
- How important are the Sustainable Development Goals on this matter? How can they be addressed?
- Is there enough accountability to guarantee the compliance of SDGs?
- How relevant are observer states when referring to ASEAN's policies and decision-making processes regarding sustainable development?
- Considering the main unwavering principle of non-interference between ASEAN member states, which proposals could be raised to improve regional integration in sustainable development?
- Which are the main priorities to reach sustainable development through politics?
- To what extent could ASEAN be effective in tackling political instability?



## Recommended readings

In this section you will find some readings that could be useful for you:

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