

World Economic Forum on ASEAN

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 10-12 May 2017

Media Briefing – Highlights and Key Topics

The meeting in numbers

- More than **700 participants** from **40 countries**
- More than **450 business leaders** from more than **15** industry sectors
- More than **90 public figures**, representing all 10 ASEAN nations, including the **Prime Minister of Cambodia**, **President of the Philippines** (also the Chair of ASEAN 2017), **Prime Minister of Lao PDR** and **Prime Minister of Viet Nam**
- More than **140 women leaders**
- More than **80 participants** are leaders in media, civil society and academia
- More than **70 young leaders**, including Global Shapers, Social Entrepreneurs and Young Global Leaders
- Over **40 public sessions**, including 10 sessions webcast live at <http://wef.ch/asean17>

Fast facts on the meeting

- The 2017 World Economic Forum on ASEAN is taking place in Phnom Penh on 10-12 May under the theme *Youth, Technology and Growth: Securing ASEAN's Digital and Demographic Dividends*.
- It is the first time the Forum is hosting a regional meeting in Cambodia.
- The Forum will convene more than 700 leaders from business, public sector, science, arts, civil society, media and international organizations.
- Cambodia will be represented by Prime Minister Hun Sen and senior members of his cabinet.
- The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is turning 50 this year, marking an opportunity to reflect on past achievements as well as the future of the region.

Benchmarking ASEAN and Cambodia

- ASEAN comprises 10 member states, forming the world's third-largest population of more than **700 million people**. The combined GDP of ASEAN countries makes it the **sixth largest economy** in the world worth \$2.6 trillion, according to the ASEAN statistics.
- At the start of 2016, ASEAN launched the ASEAN Economic Community. The AEC is built around four pillars: regional integration into a single market and production base; a competitive economic region; equitable economic development across ASEAN; and full integration of ASEAN into the global economy.
- **Cambodia's GDP reached \$18.2 billion** in 2015 and a per capita GDP at \$1,168 (International Monetary Fund). The country has just over 15 million people.

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- With **7% growth in 2015 and 2016** (World Bank), Cambodia outgrew expectations of analysts.
- Cambodia is ranked 89th in the world in terms of competitiveness, according to the Forum's [Global Competitiveness Report](#). Among Asian nations, it is the one that has posted the largest score improvement since 2007 (In 2005, the country was ranked 111).
- Despite the positive trend, the challenges are many and significant. Cambodia ranks no better than 50th in any of the 12 pillars of the Global Competitiveness Index; in half of them, it sits beyond the 100th mark. With a median age of 23.8, Cambodia is home to one of the youngest populations in Asia. Ensuring access to quality of education for all should, therefore, be a policy priority.

Why is the Forum holding a meeting in Cambodia?

This year marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN and is an occasion to reflect on past achievements. The world is well aware of Cambodia's turbulent history but is perhaps less knowledgeable about the country's promise for the future. While the economy is consistently growing at above 7% a year in real terms, and the number of people living in extreme poverty falling sharply, many challenges remain. For Cambodia, this meeting is an opportunity to share its vision for the ASEAN bloc and to consider how the country contributes to and connects with the wider region. The meeting will engage over 700 global leaders from the public and private sector, academic and civil society to learn first-hand from ASEAN-based peers about the opportunities and lessons of regional integration.

For more information, [Justin Wood](#), Head of Asia Pacific, World Economic Forum will be available for interviews.

More about the theme: *Youth, Technology and Growth: Securing ASEAN's Digital and Demographic Dividends*

The ASEAN region has a population of 630 million people, with more than half under the age of 30. In Cambodia, the median age is just 24. This young demographic profile has the potential to drive already high rates of economic growth for years to come. As the working-age population grows in number, it will not only boost the region's spending but also increase its savings and hence its capacity to invest.

Just as important, the transformative impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has the potential to deliver a potent digital dividend. As digital technology takes hold, it will stimulate powerful new industries and development models.

In many ways, these two engines of future growth will feed off each other. ASEAN's young demographic profile means a greater appetite to embrace new technology, to leapfrog legacy business models and to drive fresh approaches to everything from banking to healthcare to retail to manufacturing. Conversely, the adoption of new tech will make it easier for ASEAN economies to harness the power of their youth and to make growth more inclusive.

However, nothing is guaranteed, and for these two dividends to pay up as fully as possible, much work must be done today in areas such as education, entrepreneurship, digital regulation, cross-border trade, governance and institutional effectiveness, and much else besides.

Programme highlights

The programme aims to address three major pillars:

- **ASEAN in the New Global Context**
- **ASEAN and the Connectivity Agenda**
- **ASEAN and the Youth Agenda**

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The World Economic Forum on ASEAN will also engage leaders and experts in the 10 [System Initiatives](#) most relevant to the region, including Shaping the Future of Production, Shaping the Future of Education, Gender and Work, and Shaping the Future of Economic Growth and Social Inclusion. Click [here](#) to find out the relevant sessions that are linked to each system.

Inspiring Young Leaders

The World Economic Forum on ASEAN will focus heavily on the region's young population. The meeting will feature 15 inspiring young ASEAN leaders under the age of 40 from fields as diverse as business, politics and the arts, including **Nurul Izzah Anwar**, a Malaysian politician from a leading political family. She is current, second-term Member of Parliament for Lembah Pantai, Malaysia; **Francis Sollano**, a self-made Filipino social entrepreneur, turns rubbish into wearable art; and **Geena Rocero**, a transgender model and Co-Founder of GenderProud, pushes for greater visibility for the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, 23 Global Shapers (aged between 20-30), 35 Young Global Leaders and six Social Entrepreneurs will also participate in the ASEAN meeting to share their insights and discuss the opportunities and challenges they face in the region. Click [here](#) to see the full list. Please contact Dai Di at di.dai@weforum.org for interview requests.

Open Forum

The 10 countries of ASEAN together represent the fastest-growing internet population in the world. On 10 May, for the first time in the region, the Forum will host an Open Forum session for the student community in Phnom Penh. The 90-minute session, titled The ASEAN Dream, will feature speakers from the meeting. They will convene in a local university (the Institute of Technology of Cambodia), where over 2,000 students are expected to engage in discussions about the future of the region. Click [here](#) for more information and sign up for this session.

Grow Asia Forum

By 2050, the world's population will have risen to 9 billion, posing a challenge to production, distribution and consumption of sufficient, and sustainably produced, food. The Forum is addressing food security through the [New Vision for Agriculture](#) and partnerships in 16 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The work on agriculture has reached 3.6 million farmers to date and mobilized \$10 billion so far; \$1.2 billion has been invested already.

In the ASEAN region, the [Grow Asia](#) initiative is working with Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam as well as with over 100 local organizations, reaching 95,000 farmers. In Cambodia, the Forum has set up a country partnership with the Government of Cambodia to help the country's smallholder farmers improve their livelihoods. The annual Grow Asia Forum 2017, taking place on 10 May, will bring together 120 leaders from ASEAN governments, the global and regional private sector, civil society and farmers' organizations to explore solutions and make strategic decisions that will strengthen and help ensure the sustainability of food systems. Please contact growasiaforum@growasia.org for more information. Please contact Dai Di at di.dai@weforum.org for interview requests.

Sustainable Development Investment Partnership

The Sustainable Development Investment Partnership (SDIP) aims to address financing challenges from a regional perspective to strengthen project pipelines, mobilize capital for infrastructure projects and contribute to local capacity-building. SDIP members are committed to mobilizing blended finance for \$100 billion worth of projects supporting sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure. At the ASEAN meeting, a formal announcement of the SDIP ASEAN Hub is expected to be announced. Please contact Dai Di at di.dai@weforum.org for interview requests.

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Notes to Editors

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