

FRAMING THE ASEAN CHARTER

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FRAMING THE ASEAN CHARTER

AN ISEAS PERSPECTIVE

Compiled by
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FOREWORD

Southeast Asia in the 1960s was a turbulent region as regional countries were faced with managing the effects of de-colonization, confrontation with the forces of communism, and separatism. These newly independent countries were also pre-occupied with building their economies and national identities. ASEAN provided a regional framework of peace, stability and security. From its tentative beginnings in 1967, ASEAN has in the last four decades evolved into one of the most successful experiments in regionalism. It has served the region well in meeting and managing the numerous challenges that have confronted Southeast Asia and in the process has contributed to global peace and harmony.

However, member countries recognize that the world today is far different from the one that confronted the ASEAN founding fathers in 1967. They realize that ASEAN as an organization is at a crossroad. With the rise of China and India and the recovery of Japan, and the challenges of enhanced trade liberalization and the need to build a socio-political regional architecture, ASEAN would have to make itself more cohesive and integrated. ASEAN also has to address unprecedented non-traditional security challenges like SARS, avian flu and environmental hazards that demand expedient cross-border solutions.

In recognition of the difficult challenges facing the region, ASEAN governments have invited an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to dwell on the issues and to advise on the policies to be taken into account in the framing of an ASEAN Charter. Such a charter would not only give ASEAN a much-needed legal

personality but also serve to make it a more responsive, dynamic and integrated regional organisation.

Against this background, ISEAS would like to offer to the EPG and the wider community the ideas contained in this publication.

K. Kesavapany
Director
ISEAS