



THE ASEAN CHARTER: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

2nd edition

4 January 2008

FACT SHEET

2008/APSC/001

Why does ASEAN need a Charter?

ASEAN needs a Charter to move from a loosely-organised regional body towards a more rules-based inter-governmental organisation in order to better meet the challenges posed by community-building, regional integration, expansion of its external linkages and rapid globalisation, and in so doing, remain an effective player on the international stage. In this context, the ASEAN Charter will put in place a new legal and institutional framework for ASEAN to improve its implementation, coordination, and decision-making process. The Charter will also provide ASEAN with a legal personality.

Who drafted the Charter?

The Charter was drafted by a High Level Task Force (HLTF) consisting of 10 representatives from the 10 Member States of ASEAN. The Secretary-General of ASEAN supported the HLTF as its resource person.

How long did the HLTF take to draft the Charter?

The High Level Task Force (HLTF) completed the drafting work in 13 meetings between January and October 2007.

What were the sources of inputs for the HLTF to draft the ASEAN Charter?

The HLTF took into account inputs from five major sources: recommendations from the Report of the Eminent Persons Group on the ASEAN Charter (EPG); directives from ASEAN Leaders; existing commitments in ASEAN milestone documents and agreements since 1967; guidance from ASEAN Foreign Ministers; and consultations with ASEAN senior economic and sectoral officials, ASEAN Parliamentarians, representatives of the business sector, the civil society, the academia, and the human rights institutions in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

What are the key institutional changes brought about by the ASEAN Charter?

The ASEAN Charter will create an improved structure to ensure greater efficiency and prompt implementation of ASEAN agreements and decisions; convene an ASEAN Summit twice a year; create an ASEAN Coordinating Council (consisting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers); have single Chairmanship for key high-level ASEAN bodies; appoint Member States' Permanent Representatives to ASEAN to form a Committee of Permanent Representatives in Jakarta; and establish an ASEAN human rights body. The Charter will also give the ASEAN Chair and the Secretary-General a new role in dispute settlement. The Secretary-General will also have an enhanced role in monitoring progress (including reporting non-compliance).

When was the ASEAN Charter signed?

The ASEAN Charter was signed by the ASEAN Heads of State and Government of the 10 Member States on 20 November 2007, at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore.

When can we expect changes to take place?

All the 10 ASEAN Member States must ratify the Charter before it can enter into force. In order to expedite the process, the ASEAN Leaders have signed the Singapore Declaration on the ASEAN Charter pledging to ensure the timely ratification of the ASEAN Charter by Member States and fulfil the rights and obligations contained in the Charter. The Charter enters into force 30 days after the deposit of the 10th instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General. -

For more information on the ASEAN Charter, contact Mr. Termsak Chalermphanupap (termsak@asean.org) of the Office of the Secretary-General at the ASEAN Secretariat.

Please visit www.asean.org/AC.htm for the full text of the ASEAN Charter and www.asean.org for related information.