



## ASEAN and EU Stakeholders Exchange on How to Accelerate Southeast Asia's Shift to Circular Economy

**Bangkok, Thailand – 8 October 2024 – The ASEAN Circular Economy Forum 2024 (ACEF2024)** brought together around 200 onsite and 150 online stakeholders from the private sector, start-ups, governments, academia and civil society from ASEAN and the EU as well as multilateral organisations last week. The participants celebrated achievements, shared key challenges and discussed opportunities for collaboration in advancing circular economy in Southeast Asia. The regional forum emphasised the vital role of **cross-sector collaboration** in driving ASEAN's green transition and overcoming the hurdles faced by circular innovators.

A shift to circular practices can unlock significant economic value while addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Circular solutions could cut 45% of global greenhouse gas emissions by transforming how products are made and used, making the need for a circular transition urgent for policymakers.

**H.E. Paisan Rupanichkij, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Thailand** stated at the forum held on 2 October 2024: *'While ASEAN has made a significant effort in promoting circular economy practices, much more remains to be done, especially in terms of policy framework, capacity building and applications of digital technologies in business models. Circular economy practices require a holistic approach to address the opportunities and challenges from the supply and demand side.'*

**H.E. Ekkaphab Phanthavong, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Socio-Cultural Community** emphasised: *'ASEAN has long recognised the potential of circular economy practices to drive innovation and entrepreneurship, fostering a transformative pathway that prioritises sustainability, maximises resource efficiency, and strengthens our economies' resilience. The Second ASEAN Circular Economy Forum continues this momentum, highlighting ASEAN and EU approaches to circular innovation, and offering a vital platform for showcasing progress, addressing challenges, and seizing opportunities to accelerate the circular economy across the region.'*

Discussions at the forum underlined how **government policies** can drive circular innovation and entrepreneurship. ASEAN Member States showcased initiatives, including Indonesia's Circular Economy Framework, Thailand's private sector collaborations, and Viet Nam's partnerships between city governments and businesses. Malaysia's upcoming **2025 ASEAN Chairmanship** and the new Centre of Excellence for Green Transition (CoE) were also noted as vital for regional sustainability.

EU panellists shared best practices and the next EU five-year priorities under the new European Commission, focusing on advancing the EU Green Deal. Private sector engagement programmes, such as the [Circularity Coalition](#) and the [ASEAN Circular Economy Business Alliance \(ACEBA\)](#), were emphasised too.

**Ms Renita Bhaskar, Minister Counsellor, Head of Trade and Economic Section, Delegation of the European Union to Thailand** remarked: *'In the EU, recycled materials met 11.5% of EU demand for materials in 2022, and EU efforts on circular economy helped to reduce waste generation by almost 3% over the last decade, while the economy kept growing. Meanwhile, they created jobs, spurred innovation and competitiveness, and saved critical raw materials, avoiding harmful dependencies on supply chains which are vulnerable to geopolitical tensions. These are the tangible benefits of circularity we are keen to share with interested ASEAN Member States here in the ACEF 2024.'* She highlighted further: *'We are truly eager to work with such a dynamic region that has seen a 40% rise in circular start-ups, demonstrating the commitment to affordable yet profitable sustainability solutions.'*



The event explored how **existing regional initiatives**, such as the [ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform \(ACESP\)](#), can be harmonised to strengthen the region's circular ecosystem further. This focus comes at a pivotal time as Malaysia prepares for its **2025 ASEAN Chairmanship**, with stakeholders proposing policies and frameworks to boost circular economy efforts.

Reflecting on these initiatives, **Mr Anthony Pramualratana, Deputy Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue** that hosts the ACESP stated: *'The progress we have seen, particularly through initiatives like the ACESP and the ACEBA, is a strong indicator that Southeast Asia is on the right path.'* He continued: *'However, harmonising these efforts across the region will be key to addressing our immense challenges. This forum demonstrates that by working together — governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector — we can create lasting change for both the environment and the economy.'*

Finally, the forum spotlighted **existing circular economy practices**, such as repair, reuse, and recycling activities, and discussed ways to expand these practices. **ASEAN's cultural traditions and values** were acknowledged as important drivers of circularity, further reinforcing the region's commitment to a sustainable future.

The **ASEAN Circular Economy Forum 2024** was jointly organised by the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue, ACESP, C-asean, the regional Green Team Europe Initiative, and the European Union through the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI) and the Technical Assistance Facility to the Green Team Europe Initiative (TAF-GTEI).

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The **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. On 31 December 2015, the ASEAN Community was formally established. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta.

The **European Union (EU)** is the economic and political union of 27 Member States with a population of 447 million. Together, the EU has built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development while maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedom. In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for advancing the goals of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe. The EU is the world's largest trading bloc, and the world's largest source and destination of foreign direct investment. Collectively, the EU and its Member States are the largest donors of Official Development Assistance (ODA), providing more than half of ODA globally. The 27 Member States of the EU (in protocol order) are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

The **Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI)** is an EU-financed programme that facilitates cooperation and dialogue between the EU and ASEAN in policy areas of joint interest. Drawing on the EU's experience of regional integration, E-READI further strengthens both the ASEAN regional integration process as well as the overall ASEAN-EU strategic partnership.

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