

## ASEAN

Ans: **ASEAN** officially the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations**, is a political and economic union of 10 member [states](#) in [Southeast Asia](#). It was established on 8th August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration ( ASEAN Declaration) by the founding fathers of the countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. The preceding organisation was the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) comprising of Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Five other nations joined the ASEAN in subsequent years making the current membership to ten countries. In 2003, ASEAN moved along the path of the [European Union](#) by agreeing to establish an ASEAN community comprising three pillars: the ASEAN security community, the ASEAN economic community, and the ASEAN socio-cultural community. The ten stalks of rice in the ASEAN flag and insignia represent the ten southeast Asian countries bound together in solidarity, a stable, peaceful, united and dynamic.

( ASEAN brings together ten Southeast Asian states- Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam)

### **Objectives of ASEAN:**

- i. To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours.
- ii. To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law.
- iii. To encourage active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in Economic, Social, Cultural, Technical, Scientific and Administrative fields.
- iv. To provide assistance to each other in terms of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative areas.
- v. To work together for a greater utilisation of agriculture and industries in order to expand the trade both locally and internationally.
- vi. To study the problems of international community trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of the nations.

vii. To promote Southeast Asian studies.

### **Fundamental Principles:**

The ASEAN member countries by the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South East Asia (TAC) signed in 1976, have adopted the following fundamental principles:

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

### **Structure**

The organisational structure of the ASEAN consists of the Ministerial Conference, the Standing Committee, the Secretariat and a number of permanent and ad-hoc committees.

**The Ministerial Conference** consists of the Foreign Ministers of the member states. The Conference holds periodic consultations with regard to various matters of mutual interests.

**The Standing Committee** meets as and when required and between the meeting of the conference, it holds consultations among members. It consists of the Foreign Minister of the host country where the meeting is held and the ambassadors of other member countries.

The meetings are held in all the countries by rotation. In 1976, a secretariat was added to its organisation. Its headquarters are at Jakarta which looks after the administrative affairs of the ASEAN. Further, the ASEAN has nine permanent and eight ad-hoc committees.

### **Achievements:**

The ASEAN has been able to achieve in economic and political areas leading to some of the major agreements and accords in these areas. Some prominent political accords are:

- 1) ASEAN Declaration, Bangkok  
8 August 1967

- 2) Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration, Kuala Lumpur  
27 November 1971
- 3) Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, Bali  
24 February 1976
- 4) Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, Bangkok  
15 December 1997
- 5) ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism (ACCT)  
11 January 2007
- 6) Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an  
ASEAN Community by 2015
- 7) Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defence Ministers on Promoting  
Defence Cooperation for a Dynamic ASEAN Community  
25 May 2016

In the economic sphere, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was launched in 1992. It aims at promoting the region's competitive advantage as a single production unit. A series of economic agreements followed, to ultimately reach the ASEAN Vision 2020 of ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. Some of the important agreements are:

- 1) Framework Agreements on Enhancing ASEAN Economic  
Cooperation, Singapore, 28 January 1992.
- 2) Protocol to Amend the Agreement on ASEAN Preferential Trading  
Arrangement, Bangkok, 15 December 1995.
- 3) Protocol on Notification Procedures, Makati, Philippines, 8  
October, 1998.
- 4) Protocol on the Special Arrangement for Sensitive and Highly  
Sensitive Products, Singapore, 30 September 1999.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, issues shifted to involve a more environmental perspective. The ASEAN member states became concerned with environmental issues. On December 15, 2008, the organization officially adopted the new ASEAN Charter, which establishes ASEAN as a legal entity and pushes the region closer to becoming a unified free trade sector. The Charter stresses peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for each state's sovereignty and internal affairs. While this may signal that ASEAN is indeed moving towards reaching the status of the EU, the organization's inability to impose sanctions and lack of judicial power puts its power of influence in question.

