

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROADMAP FOR TIMOR-LESTE'S FULL MEMBERSHIP IN ASEAN (JULY 2024-JANUARY 2025)

A. Introduction

1. Since the adoption of the *Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN* by the 42nd ASEAN Summit in May 2023, substantial progress has been made. This report provides updates from July 2024 to January 2025, highlighting Timor-Leste's efforts and achievements in meeting the Criteria outlined in the Roadmap. A *Monitoring Matrix on Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN in 2024*, which details more information regarding Timor-Leste's admission to ASEAN, is appended to this report as an additional reference, as ANNEX 1.

1: Demonstrate ability and readiness to implement and abide by the ASEAN Charter and carry out the obligations of ASEAN membership - IMPLEMENTED

2. Timor-Leste has continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to ASEAN through the implementation of several key initiatives. The "Timor-Leste Integrated Measurement of Progress, Action, and Transformation for Development" (TL IMPACT) serves as the reporting template to monitor progress and track the implementation of the ASEAN Roadmap, with a focus on capacity-building programmes and the alignment of national policies with ASEAN standards. In addition, Timor-Leste has incorporated the Roadmap into the annual action plans of the respective ministries and agencies. To ensure cohesive implementation, the "Inter-Ministerial Technical Working Groups on ASEAN Integration" have been established through Government Resolution No. 15/2024, which provides mandate for the Vice Minister for ASEAN Affairs to coordinate, supervise and monitor the three ASEAN Community Pillars - the Political-Security Community, Economic Community and Socio-Cultural Community – and provides regular progress reports to the Council of Ministers. These concerted actions underscore Timor-Leste's efforts towards the implementation of a clear plan to implement the criteria for full ASEAN membership.

3. During the reporting period, Timor-Leste has continued to demonstrate its institutional capacity to implement and abide by the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, as well as prepare for the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, by actively attending ASEAN meetings. Notably, Timor-Leste attended 484 ASEAN meetings in 2024, achieving an overall attendance rate of 83.6%, with strong engagement in all Pillars and at all levels, including at the Leaders' and Ministerial levels. The active attendance of Timor-Leste in ASEAN meetings under all three Pillars has enabled its officials to

Version 1

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1	26/02/2025	ASEC's draft	ASEC

build technical expertise as well as a greater understanding of ASEAN's institutions, processes and procedures. The data below shows Timor-Leste's participation in ASEAN Meetings in 2024 (as of 31 December 2024):

	APSC	AEC	ASCC	CCAD	Connectivity	Audit	Overall
Leader's Level	13	0	0	0	0	0	13
Ministerial Level	27	19	23	0	0	0	93
Senior Officials' Level	58	25	47	0	3	0	109
Invited	256	185	117	11	9	1	579
Attended	226	139	98	11	9	1	484
Percentage of attendance	88.3%	75.1%	84%	100%	100%	100%	83.6%

4. On Timor-Leste's participation during ASEAN meetings, it should be noted that the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) on 21 August 2024 in Luang Prabang, tasked the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) to revise the *Guidelines for the Implementation of Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste in ASEAN*. The Revised Guidelines, which were adopted by the 35th ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) Meeting on 8 October 2024 in Vientiane, enabled Timor-Leste's enhanced participation in ASEAN meetings, including in substantive discussions under various agenda items. The *Revised Guidelines for the Implementation of Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste in ASEAN* appear as **ANNEX 2**. Since the implementation of the Revised Guidelines, Timor-Leste has contributed more actively and substantively throughout meetings, demonstrating its institutional capacity to participate in ASEAN meetings. The Revised Guidelines have also enabled Timor-Leste more opportunities to articulate its views, positions and support for ASEAN's purposes and principles during ASEAN meetings, which in turn have reflected the country's readiness to implement and abide by the ASEAN Charter. This enhanced participation has also positioned Timor-Leste in a ready position to contribute and benefit from the future work towards realising the ASEAN Community Vision 2045.

5. With regard to Timor-Leste's demonstrations of ability and readiness to carry out the obligations of ASEAN membership, it is noted that the country made a voluntary contribution of USD 200,000 towards the establishment of the Timor-Leste Unit, as conveyed through a *Note Verbale* (NV) dated 16 July 2024, appended as **ANNEX 3**. The ASEAN Secretariat subsequently notified the confirmation of receipt of funds to the Permanent Mission of Lao PDR to ASEAN, copying all Permanent Missions of ASEAN Member States to ASEAN, through an NV dated 26 August 2024, appended as **ANNEX 4**. The voluntary contribution was a proactive initiative by Timor-Leste that underscored its readiness to invest in strengthening ASEAN's institutions as well as to take on financial commitments as a future member of ASEAN. The

voluntary contribution also signals a very high level of commitment from Timor-Leste towards the timely implementation of the Roadmap. Moreover, it should be noted that Timor-Leste's agreement with seconding officials to the Timor-Leste Unit shows its readiness to enhance its technical and institutional capacities and to take on greater responsibilities within the ASEAN Secretariat.

6. Taken together, all the efforts above illustrate that Timor-Leste has not only implemented the Criterion for demonstrating its ability and readiness to abide by the ASEAN Charter but has also shown a clear trajectory toward deeper integration into ASEAN's processes and values by carrying out its obligations. This establishes a strong foundation, reaffirming Timor-Leste's preparedness to undertake all obligations of ASEAN membership. As it continues to engage actively, deepen its participation, and build its institutional capacity, Timor-Leste has implemented this Criterion.

II: Ability to implement and abide by all ASEAN treaties, conventions, agreements, and instruments under the three ASEAN Community Pillars -
ONGOING

7. During the reporting period, Timor-Leste has formally expressed its readiness to accede to the 11 legal instruments under the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), six (6) under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Pillars, and 10 Over-arching Enabling Legal Instruments identified under the Priority One Accession of the ASEAN Economic Agreements (AEAs) of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Pillar, as well as the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) / ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA), as reflected in **ANNEXES 5-7**. Additionally, Timor-Leste had submitted their initial Market Access Offer (MAO) on Goods (ATIGA), and a Modalities Negotiating Document for Services (AFAS/ATISA).

8. Timor-Leste submitted a Self-Assessment Report on its Readiness to Accede to the AEAs in the Priority One list of the AEC Annex to the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN (TL-SAR) in August 2024. Subsequent to this, Timor-Leste sent additional information on the TL-SAR regarding agreements on energy cooperation in November 2024. The 56th ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Meeting and 24th AEC Council Meeting, held on 17 September 2024 and 7 October 2024, respectively, instructed the relevant AEC Sectoral Bodies to start comprehensive technical consultations/engagement with Timor-Leste to assess the TL-SAR with a view to identifying Timor-Leste's regulatory gaps and capacity needs, particularly on the AEAs identified in the Priority One List. The technical assessment by the AEC Sectoral Bodies has been undertaken particularly in three dimensions, namely: (i) policy alignments with AEAs, (ii) regulatory framework compatibility, and (iii) institutional capacity.

9. To follow up on Timor-Leste's notifications of readiness to accede to the various ASEAN legal instruments, the 35th ACC Meeting on 8 October 2024 in Vientiane, tasked the ASEAN Secretariat to communicate this development to the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Ministerial Bodies (ASMBs) under the APSC and ASCC Pillars in order to initiate the process of negotiations of the accession to the specific ASEAN legal instruments by Timor-Leste under their respective purviews. The Meeting further agreed that upon receiving Timor-Leste's readiness to accede to ASEAN legal instruments under the AEC Pillar, the ASEAN Secretariat would also communicate to all relevant ASMBs to initiate the process of discussion and negotiations of the accession to the ASEAN legal instruments under the AEC Pillar by Timor-Leste.

10. As mandated by the ACC, the ASEAN Secretariat has conveyed Timor-Leste's readiness to the relevant ASMBs and is currently facilitating the process of negotiations for each specific agreement. Through letters signed by the Secretary-General of ASEAN, the ASEAN Secretariat sought the relevant ASMBs' consideration, with the support of its relevant working groups, to initiate negotiations with the respective Timor-Leste counterparts in order for the latter to accede to the relevant ASEAN legal instruments. The ASEAN Secretariat also underscored that it remains fully committed to supporting all ASMBs and relevant subsidiary bodies in the negotiation and accession by Timor-Leste to ASEAN legal instruments.

11. During the reporting period, the ASEAN Secretariat has communicated Timor-Leste's readiness to accede to the relevant ASEAN legal instruments to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting (AFMM), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Minerals (AMMin), Meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers (M-ATM), ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM), Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment (AMME), ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) and ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM).

12. At the request of respective Chairs of ASMBs, the ASEAN Secretariat has developed draft guidelines outlining the specific steps required for accession for each individual agreement. The ASEAN Secretariat has thus far developed the draft guidelines for Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN legal instruments, particularly under the purview of the AMM¹ and the AMMTC.² These draft guidelines were subsequently shared upon the requests of the Chair of the SOM and the Chair of the ASEAN Senior

¹ Namely, the Protocol to the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms and its Instruments; Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of ASEAN; Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat and its Amending Protocols; Agreement for the Establishment of an ASEAN Development Fund; and the Revised Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the ASEAN Foundation and its Amending Protocols.

² Namely, the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism and SEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), respectively. Notably, for the agreements under the AMM, Thailand, Singapore and Myanmar have provided comments and edits to the draft guidelines, while other ASEAN Member States have requested for an extension to the deadline to provide inputs until 28 February 2025. At this stage, the next steps in the process will depend on SOM's response to ensure the continued progression of the accession negotiations.

13. Meanwhile, the negotiations among ASEAN Member States on the accession of Timor-Leste to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty are also ongoing. Following Timor-Leste's expression of readiness in September 2023 to accede to the SEANWFZ Treaty, the SEANWFZ Working Group had convened four times in 2024 to discuss the following draft documents: (i) Addendum to the SEANWFZ Treaty; (ii) Instrument of Accession; and (iii) Information Paper on the Procedural Steps for the Amendment of the Treaty and its Accession by Timor-Leste. The SEANWFZ Working Group had finalised the draft Addendum at their Meeting in September 2024, while discussions on the remaining two documents are still ongoing.

14. Under the AEC pillar, SEOM requested the drafting of a *Background Paper on Timor-Leste's Accession to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Legal Instruments*, incorporating indicative procedural steps to guide ASMBs and their subsidiary bodies in initiating discussions and negotiations with Timor-Leste. Subsequently, regarding Timor-Leste's accession to the five (5) overarching AEAs under the purview of SEOM/AEM, it was agreed in principle that Timor-Leste is ready to accede to two AEAs, namely the Framework Agreement on Enhancing ASEAN Economic Cooperation and the ASEAN Protocol on Enhanced Dispute Settlement Mechanism.

15. To brief Ministers on the status of Timor-Leste's accession to the AEAs identified as Priority One Accession in the AEC Annex to the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN, SEOM drafted a report for submission to the AEM Retreat on 28 February 2025, for guidance. The draft report includes an assessment of the 66 AEAs in the Priority One list, evaluating their legal effects and outlining AEM's recommendations to ASEAN Leaders. Given that the Roadmap and its Annexes were adopted during the 42nd ASEAN Summit, any proposed adjustments should be elevated for ASEAN Leaders' consideration and decision.

16. While Timor-Leste has not yet acceded to any of the legal instruments stipulated in the Roadmap, it should be noted that it has expressed its readiness for most of the agreements, demonstrating a clear commitment to ASEAN integration and a signal of its ability to implement and abide by ASEAN treaties, conventions, agreements and instruments under the three ASEAN Community Pillars. In particular, Timor-Leste's readiness to accede to all legal instruments stipulated in the Roadmap for the APSC and the ASCC Pillars reflects strong political will and a commitment from

the country, while greater momentum from ASEAN and Timor-Leste could accelerate economic integration. The next critical step under all ASEAN Community Pillars is dependent on ASEAN's timely response and/or action to advance the necessary discussions and negotiations, so that the process can be implemented efficiently.

*III: Establish a dedicated diplomatic mission to ASEAN in Jakarta -
IMPLEMENTED*

17. The Mission of Timor-Leste to ASEAN in Jakarta is fully operational, with officials actively engaging in ASEAN's three Community Pillars. The addition of Economic and Socio-Cultural Officials in October 2024, as informed through a Circular Note appended as ANNEX 8, has enhanced Timor-Leste's capacity to participate effectively in all ASEAN activities.

18. The Mission is currently structured as follows:

- i) H.E. Natércia Cipriano Coelho da Silva, Ambassador
- ii) Mr. Crisogno Leandro de Araújo, Counsellor, Deputy Head of Mission
- iii) Ms. Deolinda Rosa Barreto, Third Secretary
- iv) Ms. Lizete Xavier Sequeira, Third Secretary
- v) Mr. Marcio João Casimiro Rosa Lay, Economic Official
- vi) Ms. Estela Goreti da Silva Gusmão, Socio-Cultural Official

*IV: Designate national implementing agencies, focal points, and
representatives for ASEAN sectoral meetings and working groups -
IMPLEMENTED*

19. It is observed that within its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MNEC), Timor-Leste has streamlined the relevant structure with that of ASEAN's structure, namely through the appointment of H.E. Ms. Milena Rangel as the Vice Minister for ASEAN Affairs, who also serves as Timor-Leste's ASEAN SOM Leader. The Ministry has also appointed H.E. Ms. Elisa da Silva as Director-General for ASEAN Affairs, and one Director for each ASEAN Community Pillar.

20. Timor-Leste has designated relevant officers-in-charge of the various working groups/meetings under AEC. A *List of Meetings under the ASEAN Economic Community* with the corresponding relevant officials from Timor-Leste who should be invited has been compiled and is regularly updated by Timor-Leste. To ensure that the participation of Timor-Leste officials at AEC meetings is well coordinated, all invitations for Timor-Leste to attend any meetings under AEC are to be sent to the relevant officers and copied to the Indicative SEOM of Timor-Leste and National Directorate for ASEAN Economic Affairs of MNEC.

21. A list of Focal Points for the ASCC has also been developed and continue to be updated by Timor-Leste to ensure proper communication is established and maintained between all parties involved, including the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Member States.

22. The designation of high-level officials to oversee ASEAN-related matters, along with the consistent updating of national focal points and sectoral meeting representatives, ensures efficient coordination and communication. This demonstrates that Timor-Leste has fully implemented this Criterion.

V: Establish bilateral agreements on the mutual recognition of official and diplomatic passports with ASEAN Member States and agreements to grant visa-free facilities to ASEAN citizens in accordance with the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption - IMPLEMENTED

23. Timor-Leste has proactively sought to establish mutual recognition of official and diplomatic passports with all ASEAN Member States. In this regard, Timor-Leste sent an NV dated 18 September 2024, appended as ANNEX 9, informing the ASEAN Secretariat that Timor-Leste has successfully established bilateral agreements on visa exemptions for holders of Diplomatic and Official passports with nine (9) ASEAN Member States. Timor-Leste has also signed visa agreements on ordinary passports with Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Work is ongoing to finalise the visa agreements for ordinary passports with Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. Through the NV, Timor-Leste also expressed its readiness to accede to the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption and sought guidance from the ASEAN Secretariat on the necessary steps and procedures in this matter. The ASEAN Secretariat circulated an NV to the Permanent Missions of ASEAN Member States to inform them of this update, as reflected in ANNEX 10. However, it should be noted that the ASEAN Secretariat has not prepared draft Guidelines for the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption, which is under the purview of the AMMTC, because this agreement has not yet come into force, and therefore, Timor-Leste cannot accede to this agreement at this time.

24. While the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption is not yet in force, the bilateral agreements on mutual recognition of official and diplomatic passports between Timor-Leste and nine (9) ASEAN Member States are significant towards ensuring free movement between Timor-Leste and ASEAN Member States. In this regard, Timor-Leste's proactive efforts to seek bilateral visa exemption agreements with all ASEAN Member States, its successful agreements with most ASEAN Member States, and its readiness to accede to the ASEAN Framework Agreement, encapsulates the implementation of this Criterion.

VI: Prepare a financial scheme to meet all financial obligations of ASEAN Membership - IMPLEMENTED

25. On 6 December 2024, Timor-Leste submitted an NV to the ASEAN Secretariat referring to Criterion No. 6 for Timor-Leste to prepare a financial scheme to meet all financial obligations of ASEAN membership, and subsequently affirmed Timor-Leste's readiness to the financial scheme under the Roadmap. The NV is appended as **ANNEX 11**. Furthermore, Timor-Leste requested the ASEAN Secretariat's guidance on when it should fulfil this obligation. To this end, the ASEAN Secretariat is compiling additional details on the timing and contribution mechanism for each fund listed in Annex 4 of the Roadmap, so that when Timor-Leste is admitted into ASEAN, it can commence these financial contributions.

26. This initiative by Timor-Leste highlights its commitment to meeting its financial obligations and aligning with ASEAN's financial regulations as a rules-based organisation. This NV, combined with Timor-Leste's voluntary contribution of USD 200,000 towards the establishment of the Timor-Leste Unit, reflects Timor-Leste's commitment to ensuring it can share in ASEAN's financial responsibilities, including attending and hosting ASEAN meetings, contributing to the ASEAN Secretariat's annual operating budget, covering other obligatory annual contributions, as well as voluntary contributions. With the finalisation of the contribution timing and mechanisms underway, Timor-Leste has laid a solid foundation to align with ASEAN's financial framework, marking the implementation of this Criterion.

VII: Ensure the availability of required physical infrastructure and logistics to host ASEAN meetings – IMPLEMENTED

27. Timor-Leste has made progress in addressing Criterion 7 of the Roadmap, ensuring that its physical infrastructures and logistical readiness are aligned with this Criterion's requirement to host ASEAN Meetings. It should be noted that this work will be ongoing and evolving as more infrastructure continues to be built. As also reflected in **ANNEX 12**, the key developments are as follows:

- i) **Accommodation facilities:** Timor-Leste is in the process of developing essential accommodation infrastructure, such as hotels, resorts, and guesthouses, primarily in Dili. Additionally, the construction of the Dili Convention Hall is underway, which will provide state-of-the-art facilities for large-scale ASEAN events and meetings, including ASEAN Summits.
- ii) **Airport upgrades:** The ongoing upgrades to Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport are a priority for Timor-Leste and are aimed at

improving passenger capacity and security standards. The first phase of the upgrade is expected to be completed by 2027. Timor-Leste is also currently developing the Rota do Sândalo International Airport (also known as the Oecusse Airport), which was inaugurated in June 2019. Timor-Leste has also enhanced its immigration and customs processes through the Timor-Leste Electronic Single Window (TileSW) and the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS).

- iii) Security: Timor-Leste has demonstrated its growing capacity for managing high-level security arrangements through successful facilitation of major international events held during this reporting period, among others, the visit by Pope Francis in September 2024, 25th Anniversary of the Popular Consultation in August 2024 which was attended by H.E. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as visits by Heads of States/Government of some ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners.
- iv) Healthcare facilities: Timor-Leste's healthcare infrastructure comprises one national hospital and five referral hospitals, which continue to be upgraded to increase their capacity and medical services to handle large meetings and events. Timor-Leste has also developed emergency medical response plans and health protocols to address potential public health concerns during high-level meetings.

28. In addition to these infrastructure developments, Timor-Leste has invested in services and amenities critical for hosting ASEAN meetings. The installation of the Timor-Leste South Submarine Cable System (TLSS), expected to be operational by mid-2025, will significantly enhance the country's digital connectivity. Moreover, collaboration with international partners, such as Australia and Japan, is helping to strengthen cybersecurity measures, ensuring secure data transmission and responsible IT practices.

29. Timor-Leste has taken comprehensive action to meet the infrastructure and logistical requirements of ASEAN membership. Through ongoing developments in accommodation, transport, security, healthcare, and digital infrastructure, Timor-Leste has demonstrated its readiness to host ASEAN meetings and manage the complex logistics required for a rotating ASEAN chairmanship. It should be noted that this work will continue as Timor-Leste builds more infrastructure. These efforts demonstrate Timor-Leste's commitment to enhancing its preparedness to meet all physical and operational requirements for ASEAN membership. As the building of infrastructure is ongoing work for the country, this criterion should be considered as being implemented for the purpose of the Roadmap.

B. Provision of Capacity-Building Assistance for Timor-Leste

30. To streamline ASEAN's efforts channelled in supporting Timor-Leste's path towards full ASEAN membership, the ASEAN Secretariat has consolidated a *Matrix of Capacity-Building Assistance Provided by ASEAN Member States to Timor-Leste*, which is appended as ANNEX 13.

31. Throughout 2024, various capacity-building assistance has been provided to Timor-Leste. This includes the following initiatives:

- i) The Government of Japan, through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) 3.0, which supports the Development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan, has also included the participation of Timor-Leste in project meetings and key activities.
- ii) The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (DFAT) through the Australia for ASEAN (Aus4ASEAN) Futures Initiative has included the participation of Timor-Leste in key activities under the following projects: End-Term Review of the Implementation of the ASCC Blueprint 2025, the Development of the ASCC Post-2025 Results Framework and Baseline, and the Regional Workshop on ASEAN Integration: Enhancing the IAI Work Plan IV (2021-2025) Implementation.
- iii) Some partners have considered and provided funding for Timor-Leste to participate in ASEAN training programs, such as the Disaster Risk Management Capacity-Building (D-CAB) Program for ASEAN Member States in the Republic of Korea (ROK).
- iv) The ASEAN Secretariat and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are planning to conduct the Capacity-Building Programme (CBP) Phase 2, which aims to address knowledge and process gaps within Timor-Leste's government to support Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN. It will be built upon the successful implementation of the CBP Phase 1 conducted from February 2023 to January 2024. The CBP Phase 2, which will be implemented during the first half of 2025, will cover new areas outlined under Priority One of the AEC Annex of the Roadmap, while also refreshing and strengthening the participants' understanding of topics covered in CBP Phase 1.
- v) The Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Task Force had reached a consensus to allow Timor-Leste to become a full beneficiary of IAI

Projects. The amended Annex C of the IAI Work Plan IV (2021-2025) on Guidelines for IAI Projects was endorsed *ad referendum* by the IAI Task Force on 11 October 2024. The Amended Guidelines was submitted by H.E Aung Myo Myint, Chair of the IAI Task Force 2024 and Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to ASEAN, through a letter dated 18 November 2024, to H.E. Saleumxay Kommasith, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR and Chair of ACC 2024 for ACC's information. The letter, including the Amended Guidelines for IAI Projects, appears as ANNEX 14. The Amended Guidelines will allow the ASEAN Member States and ASEAN Partners to provide support to Timor-Leste through IAI projects, along with Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (CLMV).

32. While Timor-Leste has received a range of capacity-building support from ASEAN Member States, external partners, and the ASEAN Secretariat, the capacity-building activities are often sector-specific or project-based, without a clear overarching strategy to ensure that Timor-Leste receives a broad, balanced range of capacity-building support across all ASEAN Pillars. As a result, while Timor-Leste benefits from individual programs, a more strategic, coordinated approach is needed to address the full spectrum of capabilities required for ASEAN membership. This would involve aligning capacity-building initiatives across all Pillars, ensuring that Timor-Leste's key areas of need are addressed in a more comprehensive and structured manner.

33. Moving forward, ASEAN may consider prioritising the development of a coordinated capacity-building framework for Timor-Leste that outlines clear priorities and timelines, ensuring that support is provided in a way that meets the country's immediate and long-term needs in preparation for full ASEAN membership. This would allow Timor-Leste to benefit from targeted interventions that build competencies across all relevant areas, from governance and policy-making to economic integration and regional cooperation.

C. Future Outlook

34. This Progress Report has shown that Timor-Leste has implemented six out of the seven Criteria of the *Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN*, reflecting Timor-Leste's strong commitment to becoming a full ASEAN Member State. From its active participation in ASEAN meetings, to expressions of readiness to accede to ASEAN legal instruments, to the establishment of its Mission to ASEAN and the development of critical systems and infrastructure, Timor-Leste has demonstrated commitment to ASEAN's purposes, principles and objectives. Moreover, its streamlined institutional structure and continuous engagement in ASEAN processes

exhibit the preparedness expected from Timor-Leste. With the above-mentioned implementation by Timor-Leste, the time and duration to complete the Roadmap is now mainly dependent on ASEAN Member States and ASEAN's own internal processes in response to Timor-Leste's readiness to accede to the ASEAN legal instruments as stipulated under the final Criterion.

This Progress Report is submitted for the information and consideration of the ASEAN Coordinating Council.

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