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Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Report No. 4

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ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT

PUSTAKA PERDANA



1007870

INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Singapore



First published in Singapore in 2009 by
ISEAS Publishing
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 119614
E-mail: publish@iseas.edu.sg
Website: bookshop.iseas.edu.sg

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ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

ASEAN Economic Community blueprint.
(ASEAN Studies Centre report, no. 4)

1. ASEAN.
 2. Regionalism—Southeast Asia.
 3. Southeast Asia—Economic integration.
- I. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. ASEAN Studies Centre.
II. Series

JZ5333.5 A9A85 no. 4

2009

ISBN 978-981-230-932-7 (soft cover) ✓

ISBN 978-981-230-915-0 (PDF)

Typeset by Superskill Graphics Pte Ltd
Printed in Singapore by Seng Lee Press Pte Ltd

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337.159
651.733

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INTRODUCTION

On 28 July 2008, the ASEAN Studies Centre and the Regional Economic Studies Programme, both of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung organized a roundtable on “The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint”. The brainstorming session gathered Southeast Asian experts from the region to discuss the AEC Blueprint, which ASEAN’s leaders had adopted at their summit meeting in November 2007, and the prospects of any obstacles to its implementation by the target year, 2015. The roundtable started with a progress report on the AEC Blueprint given by S. Pushpanathan, Principal Director of Economic Integration and Finance, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta. Thereafter, the sessions examined the various aspects of the Blueprint — tackling the non-tariff barriers, designing a comprehensive ASEAN Investment Agreement, a regional framework for competition policy, the role of infrastructure development in economic integration, the importance of international production networks in economic integration, etc.

The roundtable concluded that ASEAN had made progress on the road to an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). However, ASEAN still has to overcome a number of obstacles, and individual member countries will have to implement difficult domestic and regional measures to facilitate freer movement of goods and services. These measures involve eliminating non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to intra-ASEAN trade. Other important issues include the participation of ASEAN business in regional economic integration,

national investment regimes, competition policy, infrastructure development, and international production networks.

The roundtable's programme and a list of the names and contact data of the participants are at the end of this book.

The book begins with a brief background and summarizes the important observations made during the discussions. It includes the recommendations made. This is followed by short papers by Myrna S. Austria, Soy Martua Pardede, Biswa N. Bhattacharyay and Ikuo Kuroiwa.

We hope that the summary and the chapters will help both policy-makers and the interested public in understanding the blueprint adopted for the ASEAN Economic Community.