

ASEC PROMOTES SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN ASEAN FORUM

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ASEC Founder Dr. Benjamin Quiñones Jr. speaking at the 2019 ASEAN Community Leadership & Partnership Forum, Bangkok.

In conjunction with the 34th ASEAN Summit hosted by Thailand on June 20-23, 2019 with the theme “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability”, the Kingsley Strategic Institute (KSI) organized the ASEAN Community Leadership and Partnership Forum (ASEAN-CLPF) on 23 & 24 June in Bangkok with the collaboration of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC), the ASEAN Studies Centre, Nation Building Institute, and The Asia Centre. Around 300 leaders from Government, Business, Academia, Think Tanks, and Civil Society.

With Thailand taking the Chairmanship of ASEAN 2019, the ASEAN Summit affirmed the leadership role of ASEAN in the Southeast Asia region. The ASEAN leaders agreed to work together on the region’s economy and security to strengthen their position to face growing U.S.-China tensions. Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan emphasized that ASEAN needs its collective economic strength – with combined population of 650 million, the largest regional bloc in the world - for bargaining power globally, especially amidst the trade tensions between the U.S. and China. ASEAN leaders also agreed on a common approach on a U.S.-led Indo-Pacific initiative.

Building Partnerships for a Sustainable and Inclusive ASEAN

Delivering the keynote address on the theme “Building Partnerships for a Sustainable and Inclusive ASEAN, Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and former Director-General of the World Trade Organization, emphasized that the level of

prosperity should not be measured by the total growth of the country, but by the living quality of the poorest 40 percent. He said partnerships will help achieve the 17 sustainable development goals.

Pichet Durongkaveroj, Thailand's Minister of Digital Economy and Society, said transformation is the key word for the ASEAN economies towards the future. He added that Thailand is gearing up for a digital economy through the SIGMA framework, which focuses on digital applications, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure, digital government, and digital manpower.

Tan Sri Dr. Michael Yeoh, President of Kingsley Strategic Institute and Chairman of ASEAN-CLPF remarked that digital economy will drive the future growth of ASEAN. "With the growth of the internet of things, big data, artificial intelligence and virtual reality, ASEAN needs to make a quantum leap to compete in the digital era," he said/

The Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC, also called RIPESS Asia), is a regular invitee to the Forum and among the role players in the discourse of the forum's thematic issues. ASEC was represented in the Forum by its founder Dr. Benjamin Quiñones Jr. who served as panel speaker on the theme "Prioritizing the Sustainable Development Goals – Partnership between Government, Business, and Civil Society". Facilitated by Ms. Deborah Biber, Board Director of Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC), the other panel speakers on the theme included Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Mr. Viyay Poonosamy, QI Group Director of International & Public Affairs, Prof. Dr. Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, Chairman of National Building Institute (Thailand) and Adviser to ASEAN-CLPF, and Ms. Mia Mikic Director of Trade, Investment and Innovation Division at United Nations ESCAP.

In his intervention, Quiñones briefly introduced ASEC as an advocacy group that promotes the development of "transformative" community-based social enterprises" (CBSEs). He said transformative CBSEs are concrete representation or a business model of Social Solidarity Economy (SSE). He explained that transformative CBSEs are characterized by 5 dimensions: Edifying Ethical Values, Socially Responsible Governance, Contributions to Social Protection of the marginalized/socially excluded, Contributions to ecological conservation, and contributions to economic well-being.

Citing a few cases of CBSEs established and operated by ASEC partner organizations in Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand Quiñones showed that transformative CBSEs are contributing voluntarily to the achievement of SDGs. "By supporting transformative CBSEs – thru preferred procurement of their products and services at fair prices- private companies will not only fulfil their corporate social responsibility (CSR) but also support the development of local economies", Quiñones said

In concluding, Quiñones enjoined the organizers of ASEAN-CLPF to deepen and broaden the dialogue between private companies, government and civil society on the development of CBSEs and the social solidarity economy.