

ASEAN- Association of Southeast Asian Nations

[UPSC Notes]

What is ASEAN?

ASEAN is the short form for the association of Southeast Asian nations. In order to establish a peaceful cultural and economic growth development of Southeast Asian territory, several authorities coming from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore founded the ASEAN in 1967. The headquarters of ASEAN is situated in Jakarta, Indonesia.

It is an organization made to establish social and political stability amidst the rising clashes in the Asia Pacific Postcolonial States. The working motto of ASEAN is 'One Vision, One Identity, One Community. ASEAN greatly influences the Asia Pacific trading political and security-related matters. The secretariat of ASEAN is situated in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. The Chairmanship of ASEAN rotates annually, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.

The purpose of establishing such a group was to boost economic growth along with the social, cultural, and prosperous security and peaceful community of Southeast Asian nations. Brunei, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, and Cambodia are the countries that joined ASEAN later.

ASEAN Members

Following is the list of Members of ASEAN:

Members	Year Joined
Thailand	Founding member
The Philippines	Founding member
Malaysia	Founding member
Singapore	Founding member
Indonesia	Founding member
Brunei	1985

Vietnam	1995
Lao PDR	1997
Myanmar	1997
Cambodia	1999

History of ASEAN

On 8 August 1967, five leaders, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand at Bangkok, Thailand signed a document. By virtue of that document, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) came into effect. The five Foreign Ministers who signed it – Adam Malik of Indonesia, Narciso R. Ramos of the Philippines, Tun Abdul Razak of Malaysia, S. Rajaratnam of Singapore, and Thanat Khoman of Thailand – would subsequently be hailed as the Founding Fathers of probably the most successful inter-governmental organization in the developing world today.

The document, known as the ASEAN Declaration, declared the establishment of an Association for Regional Cooperation among the Countries of Southeast Asia to be known as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and spelled out the aims and purposes of that Association.

The ASEAN Declaration stipulated that the Association would be open for participation by all States in the Southeast Asian region subscribing to its aims, principles and purposes. It proclaimed ASEAN as representing the collective will of the nations of Southeast Asia to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity.

Ministerial Bodies of ASEAN

The ASEAN Charter established four important new Ministerial bodies to support the ASEAN Summit, viz.:

- ASEAN Political-Security Community Council.
- ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council.
- ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC).
- ASEAN Economic Community Council.

Institutional Mechanisms of ASEAN

Let's discuss the institutional mechanism of ASEAN for the upcoming IAS Exam

Chairmanship

The chairmanship of the ASEAN countries keeps on rotating every year based on the alphabetic chronology of English names of the member countries. The ASEAN 2021 meeting was held in Brunei and 2022 was held in Cambodia.

Ministerial Council

The Ministerial Council involves four major and new bodies-

1. ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council
2. ASEAN Economic Community Council
3. ASEAN Political-Security Community Council
4. ASEAN Coordinating Council

Decision Making

The decisions made at the summits among the members is purely consensual and based on consultations among the member countries of the group.

ASEAN Summit

ASEAN Summit is the supreme policy-making body. ASEAN summit is the highest level of authority for policy and objectives within the region. In accordance with the charter, this ASEAN Summit is organised twice a year.

ASEAN-X

The ASEAN-X formula allows member states who are ready to participate to take the initiative; those who require additional time can apply for a flexible timeline if all members of states agree to it.

Objectives of ASEAN

The prime objective of ASEAN is to induce the proactive engagement of the countries on the basis of cultural economic scientific administrative subjects. Other objectives of ASEAN include:

- To maintain a strong bond and mutual relationship with the Global countries and territorial organizations.
- To work together efficiently and enhance and increase the use of the agriculture industry, expand commerce and transportation and raise the quality of life of the citizens of the country.
- To work in the favour of fostering regional harmony and security through adherence to maintaining proper rules and regulations and confirming its UN charter ideals.
- ASEAN also assists the member countries in the field of education, administration, and technical and professional domains.

Principles of ASEAN

The basic and fundamental principles of ASEAN include mutual respect for the sovereignty, equality, and national identity of all the countries. It focuses on:

- Giving the right to every state for leading their countries without any external interference or subversions.

- Settle down the disputes or differences among the countries in a peaceful and harmonious manner.
- Suhav a proper communication and cooperation among the participating and surrounding countries.

Significance of ASEAN

From the sight of a global marketplace ASEAN is the biggest player even bigger than the European Union and North America together. Because of this much significance, ASEAN has become the world's 4th most common location for investment. ASEAN is the 3rd largest market in the world, the 6th largest economy in the world and 3rd in Asia. The share of ASEAN has increased from 2% to 7% from 1967 to 2016 in the World Export system. This shows that trading is significantly increasing in ASEAN's financial possibilities.

ASEAN Led Forums

The important ASEAN-led forums include:

- **ASEAN Regional Forum-** It is a twenty-seven-member multilateral grouping that was developed to facilitate cooperation on political and security issues to contribute to regional confidence-building and preventive diplomacy.
- **ASEAN Plus Three-** ASEAN Plus Three was established in 1997. It is a consultative body that gathers along with the ten countries of ASEAN and China, Japan, and South Korea.
- **The East-Asia Summit-** The Summit is generally and mostly addressed by the big Nations like India, New Zealand, Russia, Australia, the US, etc. This summit works to enhance Regional Cooperation and development.

India and ASEAN

India is not a permanent member of ASEAN although it often participates in the ASEAN lead forums like the Defence Forum and East-Asia Summit. Being a non-member of Asian India still emphasizes and acknowledges the significance of ASEAN to the Indo-Pacific occasionally. India and ASEAN are natural partners in the desire to create free and inclusive regional architecture.

India's relationship with ASEAN is a key pillar of her foreign policy and the foundation of Act East Policy. India and ASEAN already have 25 years of Dialogue Partnership, 15 years of Summit Level interaction and 5 years of Strategic Partnership with ASEAN.

Economic Cooperation

ASEAN is India's fourth-largest trading partner.

- India and ASEAN share the trade worth approximately \$ 24 billion, which is 10% of total Indian trading.
- In terms of the total exports, 11.28% goes to the ASEAN. Founded in 2003, the ASEAN India-Business Council is a unified forum for private sector players from India and ASEAN countries.

Financial Assistance

India gains its Financial Assistance from different funds like-

- ASEAN- India Green Funds
- ASEAN- India Cooperation Fund
- ASEAN- India S&T Development Fund

Projects

Networking activities Research and advocacy will be undertaken with the Indian and Asian organizations and their think tanks.

Security

Keeping the Indo-Pacific growth and security vision in mind, India keeps ASEAN at the core of its political security Corporation.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

India takes care of the Socio-Cultural Cooperation and organizes various inter-national activities like boosting the interaction among the members, inviting the students of ASEAN countries to India, providing courses to the ASEAN diplomats, and interchanging the parliamentarians.

Delhi Declaration and Delhi Dialogue

The Delhi Declaration talks about the corporation in the Maritime Domain and is identified as one of ASEAN's India's key areas of Cooperation.

The Delhi Dialogue is an annual track 1.5 event to discuss the issues like economic, political, and security between ASEAN and India.

Challenges to ASEAN

The challenges associated with ASEAN are

- Several regional imbalances exist among its individual markets in terms of economics and social conditions.
- ASEAN member states have a mixed record on income inequality and a huge gap between the economically sound and poor States.
- The underdeveloped countries faced resource constraints and were unable to implement many regional commitments in their national plans.
- The communist and authoritarian states are equally represented at this platform along with the democracies in the world.

- Among all the rifts in the organisation the South China Sea is the most destabilising factor.
- Human rights have been a contentious issue within ASEAN. For instance, the crackdown against the Rohingyas in Myanmar.
- ASEAN faces difficulty in negotiating a unified response to China's maritime claims in the South China Sea.
- It has the disadvantage of awarding difficult problems rather than facing them. They focus more on consensus which is sometimes a major drawback.

