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## COOPERATION BETWEEN ASEAN MEMBER STATES IN HANDLING COVID-19 IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIA REGION

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### ABSTRACT

The outbreak of the covid-19 outbreak is a significant threat in parts of the world, one of which is the Southeast Asia region. Facing these conditions, ASEAN as the largest regional institution that accommodates country cooperation in the Southeast Asia Region has agreed to work together to reduce the negative effects of the corona virus through a number of policies. Cooperation is carried out through ASEAN mechanisms to cooperation with other organizations. The various collaborations discuss a number of matters, including mitigation in the health sector, responses in the economic sector, as well as measures in the tourism and travel sector. However, in this cooperation there are a number of challenges for ASEAN regional cooperation in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic such as the lack of information regarding the handling of Covid-19 received by ASEAN members, the slow response of ASEAN in dealing with Covid-19, the different policies taken by each member country further encouraging ASEAN to continue working to find solutions in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. This research focuses on any efforts to deal with Covid-19. The methodology used is a qualitative research design. Researchers used the concept of the role of ASEAN and handling the pandemic to analyze this study. The results show that ASEAN member countries have a strategic role in tackling the spread of Covid-19 in a number of fields such as health, trade and socio-economy.

**Keywords:** cooperation, prevention, ASEAN, Covid-19

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### A. INTRODUCTION

The new type of corona virus, SARS-CoV-2, has rocked the world in early 2020. Its impact is still being felt today, even worse than the first time the virus broke out. Since January 2020, Corona Virus Disease-19 (Covid-19) has infected more than 2,245,872 people worldwide (WHO, 2020). More than

152,000 people have been confirmed to have died from this virus. (WHO, 2020). How could they not, based on worldometer data, 210 countries and regions have successfully contracted the virus that causes Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19).<sup>1</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared covid-19 a global pandemic.<sup>2</sup> This number can still

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<sup>1</sup> Gandhi, M., Beyrer, C., & Goosby, E. (2020). Masks do more than protect others during COVID-19: reducing the inoculum of SARS-CoV-2 to protect the wearer. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 35(10), 3063-3066.

<sup>2</sup> Sohrabi, C., Alsafi, Z., O'Neill, N., Khan, M., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., ... & Agha, R. (2020). World Health Organization declares global emergency: A review of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19). *International Journal of Surgery*.

continue to grow, considering that until now there are no signs of this global health crisis abating. Not only take many lives and threaten the health sector. This pandemic has also hit many sectors of life, especially the economy. As a result, the threat of an economic recession has become a reality and preparations for post-pandemic recovery are imperative.<sup>3</sup> The decline in gross domestic product or negative real economic growth during these two quarters is very threatening. A country with a strong economic level such as Singapore, for example, has even entered the abyss of recession, in the second quarter of 2020 the economy was minus 41.2 percent.<sup>4</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic has also shown that no country can handle a pandemic alone. So that international cooperation is needed for any country to fight this deadly virus. Countries in the Southeast Asian region also did not escape the Covid-19 virus attacks. The disease outbreak has become one of the significant non-traditional security threats in the Southeast Asian region.<sup>5</sup> So it is necessary to prevent and control Covid-19 between ASEAN member countries. Considering that ASEAN has become a regional facilitator for its member countries to maintain relations between countries, mutually cooperative in various aspects including in overcoming general challenges and regional problems. With this, countries that have joined to

become part of ASEAN consider that their involvement with regional organizations does not shift the role of the domestic government, but instead helps the domestic government in dealing with a problem through regional cooperation. In facing the current pandemic, ASEAN continues to strengthen its process of institutionalizing itself by continuing various conferences as an important part of cementing their relationship. In addition, the rapid and ferocious spread of the Covid-19 pandemic certainly has implications for the practice of ASEAN regionalism. The extent to which countermeasures and challenges need to be discussed in this brief study, because it will affect the prospects for regionalism. This study also analyzes the cooperation of ASEAN countries in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. Given this pandemic has become a common threat in the Southeast Asia region.

## B. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research in the writing of this article is a type of normative juridical research, which is a scientific research to find the truth based on the logic of legal science based on its normative side.<sup>6</sup> This article uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to gain a deep, authentic, and basic understanding of the phenomenon being observed. The

<sup>3</sup> Rudnicka, L., Gupta, M., Kassir, M., Jafferany, M., Lotti, T., Sadoughifar, R., & Goldust, M. (2020). Priorities for global health community in COVID-19 pandemic. *Dermatologic therapy*, 33(4), e13361.

<sup>4</sup> Ezmale, S. Covid-19 Pandemic Impact On Free Zones. *Journal of Regional Economic and Social Development No, 1*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> ASEAN. 2020. Asean Health Sector Responds 2019 Novel Coronavirus Threat. Diakses dari :<https://asean.org/asean-health-sector-responds-2019-novel-coronavirusthreat/>, pada tanggal 06 Desember 2020, pada pukul 08.30 WIB.

<sup>6</sup> Soekanto, Soerjono, 2015. Pengantar Penelitian Hukum. UI-Press: Jakarta, p. 12

descriptive analysis method is used because the data and information collected focuses attention on the actual phenomenon or problem through the process of data collection, preparation, processing, and drawing conclusions. The results of all of these attempt to describe an objective empirical state of the phenomenon or problem being studied. While the data collection technique used is literature study. This was done because of the limitations of directly interviewing authoritative sources at the time of writing. The literature study referred to in the context of this article is the author's attempt to find, collect, and study written material in the form of books, journal articles, online news related to the phenomena and problems being studied.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Cooperation between ASEAN Member States in the Prevention and Control of Covid-19

Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, Heads of State / Government of ASEAN member countries held a special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19 which was conducted via online video. The summit was chaired by the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, in his capacity as Chair of ASEAN this year (ASEAN Declaration 2020).<sup>7</sup> This

summit is held virtually by all ASEAN members, bearing in mind that social distancing must be applied and besides that ASEAN country leaders cannot meet in person at this summit meeting in order to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus among state leaders.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, on the same day the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit was also held which was also held virtually, and was attended by the three partner countries, namely, China, Japan and South Korea. The result of the virtual meeting was a commitment to tackling the outbreak and preparing for post-outbreak recovery both socially and economically.<sup>9</sup> Within ASEAN itself, the ten members agreed on several important points regarding the handling of COVID-19, namely strengthening cooperation against COVID-19 by exchanging information, best practices, research development, epidemiological development, and others.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, providing protection for ASEAN citizens in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening public communication and efforts to combat stigmatization and discrimination, committing to taking collective action and coordinated policies to mitigate economic and social impacts, the importance of a comprehensive approach that involves multi-stakeholders and multi-

<sup>7</sup> Akbar, Bayu Norvantry. 2020. ASEAN Bersinergi Atasi Pandemi. Diakses dari <http://infopublik.id/kategori/sorot-politik-hukum/449441/asean-bersinergi-atasi-pandemi>, pada tanggal 06 Desember 2020, pukul 13.45 WIB.

<sup>8</sup> AAcOm. 2020. KTT ASEAN Digelar, Bahas Pemulihan Pasca-Pandemi. Diakses dari <https://www.aa.com.tr/id/regional/besok-ktt-asean-digelar-bahas-pemulihan-pasca-pandemi-/1889718>, pada tanggal 07 Desember 2020, pukul 18.43 WIB.

<sup>9</sup> Aseanorg. 2020. "Declaration of the Special ASEAN

Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)". Diakses dari <https://asean.org/declarationspecial-asean-summit-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/> pada tanggal 05 Desember 2020, pukul 09.34 WIB.

<sup>10</sup> CSIS. 2020. Center for Strategic and International Studies. "National Responses to COVID-19 in Southeast Asia. Diakses dari <https://www.csis.org/programs/southeast-asia-program/southeast-asia-covid-19-tracker-0>, pada tanggal 06 Desember 2020, pukul 17.51 WIB.

sectorals, assigning ASEAN economic ministers to ensure supply chain connectivity so that trade can continue, as well as supporting the reallocation of the ASEAN Trust Fund to tackle the COVID-19 virus pandemic.<sup>11</sup>

### Cooperation of ASEAN Member States in the Health Sector

In the health sector, ASEAN has activated various health cooperation mechanisms at the regional level to respond to Covid-19. To date, there are at least twenty-seven existing and newly developed ASEAN mechanisms in dealing with Covid-19. Progress from the efforts that have been made by the ASEAN health sector, including by sharing information and experiences in handling Covid-19, including with ASEAN talk partners through the ASEAN Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Network webinar platform, informing each other in real time via short messages regarding cross-border travel Confirmed suspect / patient countries, periodic Risk Assessment for International Dissemination of Covid-19 ASEAN Region through ASEAN, risk communication efforts through the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Center and support for strengthening laboratory capacity.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, various implementation

strategies of a number of new initiatives, such as the development of the ASEAN health protocol in facing the New Normal era, the establishment of the ASEAN Plus Three Pharmaceutical Industries Network, the establishment of the ASEAN Plus Three Task Force on Pandemic and the development of cross-border contact tracing and rapid outbreak investigation protocol.<sup>13</sup> There is an agreement on new initiatives in the preparation for development, for example the establishment of the ASEAN Center for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, an information platform for the public, the ASEAN Portal for Public Health Emergency, the development of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework to prepare for the recovery of the region's security and socio-economic conditions due to the impact of the pandemic, the preparation of a multisectoral ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System (APHECS),<sup>14</sup> the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies (RRMS) and the ASEAN Covid-19 Response Fund to ensure the availability of essential medical devices and funds in emergency situations, and the preparation of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Public Health Emergencies so that there are uniform and standardized procedures in

<sup>11</sup> Matamatapolitik. 2020. KTT ASEAN dan Tantangan Mengatasi COVID-19. Diakses dari <https://www.matamatapolitik.com/ktt-asean-dan-tantangan-mengatasi-covid-19-analisis/>, pada tanggal 08 Desember 2020, pukul 12.45 WIB.

<sup>12</sup> Purwanto, Antonius. 2020. Strategi ASEAN Merespons Dampak Covid-19. Diakses dari <https://kompaspedia.kompas.id/baca/paparan-topik/strategi-asean-merespons-dampak-covid-19>, pada tanggal 07 Desember 2020, pukul 11.31 WIB.

<sup>13</sup> PSDR. 2020. Tantangan Kerja Sama Regional

ASEAN dalam Melawan COVID-19

Diakses dari <http://psdr.lipi.go.id/news-and-events/opinions/tantangan-kerja-sama-regional-asean-dalam-melawan-covid-19.html>, pada tanggal 4 Desember 2020, pukul 12.14 WIB.

<sup>14</sup> Sinaga, Lidya Christin. 2020. ASEAN dan Solidaritas Regional Menghadapi COVID-19. Diakses dari <http://www.politik.lipi.go.id/kolom/kolom-1/politik-internasional/1359-asean-dan-solidaritas-regional-menghadapi-covid-19>, pada tanggal 07 Desember 2020, pukul 18.31 WIB.

handling health emergency situations. This strategy emerged when ASEAN held a meeting to cooperate and exchange information related to handling Covid-19 in the health sector, including inviting several dialogue partners, such as the US, China, Australia and the European Union. One of them was the meeting of the ASEAN Health Ministers with the United States via a video conference on April 30, 2020. The meeting was attended by the Ministers of Health from ASEAN member countries and the United States as well as the ASEAN Secretary General.<sup>15</sup>

The meeting aims to establish ASEAN health cooperation with the United States in handling Covid-19. Regarding furthermore, there will be a meeting of high-level ASEAN health officials via video conference on July 22-23, 2020. Which aims to map and synergize a number of new initiatives from health and non-health sectoral bodies that need follow-up by the ASEAN health sectoral bodies as a concrete effort. handling Covid-19 in the ASEAN region.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Indonesia as one of the ASEAN member countries conveyed the progress and challenges of handling COVID-19 in the region, and encouraged the importance of health sector cooperation between ASEAN and Australia. Then it was also conveyed that

in facing the COVID-19 pandemic, in the short term, ASEAN and Australia need to collaborate in the field of providing and distributing medical equipment and funding for pandemic management. And also the importance of ASEAN and Australia to support similar efforts made by expert groups at the World Health Organization (WHO). Regarding the long term, ASEAN-Australia needs to focus on economic recovery, one of which is through accelerating the digital economy and Industry 4.0. In the field of capacity building, human resource development in the health sector is a concrete matter that needs to be a priority for ASEAN countries and Australia in the future.<sup>17</sup>

### **Cooperation between ASEAN Member States in stimulating the economy**

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was also responded to by ASEAN countries with various economic policies. Until the end of July 2020, ASEAN policies in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the economic sector<sup>18</sup> have been summarized into three groups, namely economic stimulus, monetary and fiscal policies, and trade policies. The portrait of ASEAN countries' policies in launching various economic stimulus packages is summarized in the ASEAN Policy Brief 1 published in April

<sup>15</sup> Mangku, D. G. S. (2012). Suatu Kajian Umum tentang Penyelesaian Sengketa Internasional Termasuk di Dalam Tubuh ASEAN. *Perspektif*, 17(3), 150-161.

<sup>16</sup> Djalante, R., Nurhidayah, L., Van Minh, H., Phuong, N. T. N., Mahendradhata, Y., Trias, A., ... & Miller, M. A. (2020). COVID-19 and ASEAN responses: Comparative policy analysis. *Progress in Disaster Science*, 8, 100129.

<sup>17</sup> Hinjoy, S., Tsukayama, R., Chuxnum, T., Masunglong, W., Sidet, C., Kleeblumjeak, P., ... &

Iamsirithaworn, S. (2020). Self-assessment of the Thai Department of Disease Control's communication for international response to COVID-19 in the early phase. *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 96, 205-210.

<sup>18</sup> Mangku, D. G. S., & Itasari, E. R. (2015). Travel Warning in International Law Perspective. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, 6(4), 33-35.

2020. To mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in the economic sector, ASEAN countries have launched various economic stimulus packages since February 2020. In general, The policies carried out by ASEAN countries can be classified into five things, first, tax incentives for affected businesses, especially MSMEs. Furthermore, subsidies such as cash assistance, discounts on electricity bills, to additional incentives for those working in the health sector, third, deferral of tax payments or loans. For the fourth, exemption from fees or implementation of lower fees from the government and the Central Bank implementing a policy of lowering interest rates and buying government securities / bonds.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, there are also special policies taken by several ASEAN countries. Several countries target the main sectors of society. Brunei allows suspension of pension contributions. Meanwhile, Malaysia has a policy to reduce pension contributions. On the other hand, Singapore has suspended loans and school fees (student loan and charges). And in Vietnam the banking sector created a credit package worth 12.3 billion US dollars aimed at business activities. Countries affected by the Covid-19 pandemic were also supported by international financial institutions. In addition, the IMF promised to increase the lending capacity for members to US \$ 1 trillion and also seek debt reduction for low-income countries through the

Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) program. In addition, there is a stockpile of funds amounting to US \$ 160 billion for long-term financing over the next 15 months from the World Bank. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has also announced an aid package of US \$ 6.5 billion to support the Covid-19 crisis response. Several ASEAN countries that have received grant approval from ADB are the Philippines and Indonesia. The Philippines launched a US \$ 5 million Rapid Emergency Supplies Provision Project to provide temporary food assistance to vulnerable households and workers in Luzon. Meanwhile, Indonesia utilized a US \$ 3 million grant to purchase essential medical equipment and supplies, such as ventilators and personal protective equipment.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, there is the ASEAN Policy Brief 1 which provides six recommendations for ASEAN member countries, namely maintaining productive economic capacity, strengthening safety nets, increasing response to pandemics at the regional level, keeping supply chains running, moving all macro policy tools, financial and structural availability, leveraging technology and digital commerce, and increasing the determination to advance regional integration.

### **Cooperation of ASEAN Member States on Fiscal and Monetary Policy**

<sup>19</sup> Mangku, D.G.S., Purwendah, E.K., Itasari, E.R., Nurhayati, B.R., (2020), Compensation for Oil Pollution Due to Tanker Accidents in the Indonesian Legal System in a Justice Value Perspective, International Journal of Criminology and Sociology, 9, pp. 662-669

<sup>20</sup> Purwanto, Antonius. 2020. Strategi ASEAN Merespons Dampak Covid-19. Diakses dari <https://kompaspedia.kompas.id/baca/paparan-topik/strategi-asean-merespons-dampak-covid-19>, pada tanggal 07 Desember 2020, pukul 11.31 WIB.

In May 2020, ASEAN Policy Brief 2 published various monetary and fiscal policy strategies for ASEAN member countries in dealing with the impact of Covid-19 in the economic sector. The three major sectors targeted for monetary and fiscal policy are the aviation, health and agriculture industries. Monetary policy is one of the earliest things implemented to ensure the availability of liquidity and increase confidence in the economy when concerns arise about supply chain breakdowns and trip cancellations. Since the beginning of the pandemic, central banks in ASEAN countries have implemented policies of cutting interest rates, reducing reserve ratios, and purchasing assets to maintain financial stability, ensure liquidity in the system, and lower the cost of credit.<sup>21</sup>

These measures in the monetary sector are also intended to convince the public that the government is willing to do whatever it takes to steer the economy out of the crisis and to maintain banking sector stability. Various countries in ASEAN encourage the banking sector to encourage loans without damaging the health of banks. The Central Bank of Vietnam is urging commercial lenders to reduce payment costs to a minimum of 50 percent through electronic interbank systems and limit dividends and operating costs to maintain a sufficient capital stock. On the other hand, the Lao Central Bank issued guidelines encouraging lenders to restructure the financing of affected debtors, providing a grace period of

one year for affected debtors, and lowering the required interest rates. The objectives of these various measures are intended to increase liquidity and market confidence. In addition, it is also to maintain a stable monetary and financial system. Apart from internal coordination, ASEAN also held discussions with partners in cooperation to face the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of financial cooperation, ASEAN + 3 has strengthened the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM), in which the CMIM is a multi-currency exchange regulatory mechanism to provide short-term liquidity to members when needed.<sup>22</sup>

Governments in ASEAN are implementing a stronger fiscal stimulus to increase capacity in the health sector and reduce the wider economic impact in the sectors most affected, such as MSMEs and tourism in response to the widespread impact of the pandemic. There are three categories of fiscal interventions carried out by ASEAN countries, namely household subsidies. Second, exemption or moratorium on taxes, fees, including rental fees. The third is a moratorium or loan restructuring for businesses affected by the pandemic, including individuals. ASEAN countries' fiscal policy is the fiscal package with a total budget of US \$ 318.2 billion which is equivalent to 10.1 percent of ASEAN GDP in 2019. Thailand is the country with the largest stimulus package with a total of US \$ 88.8 billion. This was followed by Indonesia with 81.8 billion US dollars, of which 43 billion

<sup>21</sup> Tang, H. C., Liu, P., & Cheung, E. C. (2013). Changing impact of fiscal policy on selected ASEAN countries. *Journal of Asian Economics*, 24, 103-116.

<sup>22</sup> Sangsubhan, K., & Basri, M. C. (2012). Global Financial Crisis and ASEAN: Fiscal Policy Response in the Case of Thailand and Indonesia. *Asian Economic Policy Review*, 7(2), 248-269.

US dollars in the economic recovery stimulus package that had been approved. Apart from targeting the industries that were the most affected, the stimulus was also allocated to the health sector and household subsidies. In addition, there are recommendations for the ASEAN Policy Brief 2, namely that there are four recommended systematic interventions, namely ensuring that companies can return to production and employment levels as before the pandemic, continue to implement a wide range of fiscal stimulus and targeted economic measures, revive multilateralism to ensure post-Covid-19 global resilience and sustainability as well as formulating a post-Covid-19 regional socio-economic recovery plan to facilitate regional growth.<sup>23</sup>

#### 1.4 Cooperation of ASEAN Member States in the Trade Sector

ASEAN takes a strategy in other economic fields with trade policies. This is in accordance with the ASEAN Policy Brief 3 which was published in July 2020. To overcome the impact of the pandemic in the trade sector between countries, ASEAN countries maintain and rebuild trade relations by keeping markets open. ASEAN countries have also implemented export restrictions and relaxed imports of goods and services related to Covid-19. There were 38 trade measures taken by ASEAN countries during the pandemic. Of the 38 trade steps, 23 were a form of liberalization, such as reducing tariffs or entry fees and trade facilities. Meanwhile, 15 steps are restrictions, one of

which is export restrictions. Indonesia is the ASEAN country that has implemented the most trade measures, namely five liberalization steps and two restriction steps, followed by Vietnam with three liberalization steps and three restriction steps. To keep the market open, at least four times the cooperation was carried out by ASEAN countries. First, the ASEAN economic ministers issued a joint statement regarding strengthening ASEAN economic resilience in response to the Covid-19 pandemic on March 10, 2020. This affirms ASEAN's commitment to maintaining economic openness and integration policies.<sup>24</sup>

Second, on April 15, 2020, ASEAN agriculture and forestry ministers stated that they had agreed to refrain from implementing export controls, ensure markets remain open, minimize disruption to food supply chains in the ASEAN region and restrictions / restrictions, as well as tariff and non-tariff barriers. Furthermore, the leaders in ASEAN are committed to continuing to open markets for trade and investment, as well as enhancing cooperation among ASEAN countries. Also cooperation with ASEAN partner countries on April 14, 2020. The fourth, namely on June 4, 2020, the ASEAN Economic Ministers agreed to strengthen ASEAN economic cooperation and supply chain connectivity in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic through the Hanoi Plan of Action. Where the result of the agreement is that there are cooperative steps in the field of trade facilitation of important goods such

<sup>23</sup> Zen, F., & Kimura, F. (2020). Maintaining Fiscal Sustainability During the Pandemic Crisis.

<sup>24</sup> Akrasanee, N., & Stifel, D. (1992). The political economy of the ASEAN free trade area. *AFTA: the way ahead*, 27-48.



as medicines, food, medical equipment and other related products, besides that there is production facilitation and access to medicines and vaccines. Covid-19 through strengthening supply chain connectivity.<sup>25</sup>

The Hanoi Plan of Action is expected to be able to encourage ASEAN member countries to be more proactive in implementing concrete steps, such as the use of Affixed Signature and Stamp (ASnS) to maintain the smooth flow of trade amidst social restriction policies, optimize the ASEAN Single Window as a trading administration document exchange platform, and improve utilization of digitalization technology and the Industrial Revolution 4.0 in the face of a new normal era. In addition, ASEAN is committed to keeping the market open by continuing to implement the trade agenda, namely phasing out tariffs and maintaining cooperation with partners outside ASEAN.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from G to G / cooperation between governments, the private sector plays a role in responding to the pandemic in the economic sector. The ASEAN Business Advisory Council and its members have offered recommendations to ensure that the production and supply chains of food, beverages and essential medical equipment are uninterrupted. There are also recommendations for ASEAN Policy Brief 3 regarding priority trade measures that ASEAN countries can undertake. Where the first is the realization of a commitment to ensure supply chain relationships, especially

goods that are considered valuable. The second recommendation is to pay attention to the role of trade in post-epidemic economic recovery. Then the third, encouraging the implementation of a digital agenda in an effort to respond to the impact of the pandemic. Fourth, the need to affirm broad multilateral cooperation. The final recommended step is to ensure supply chain connectivity, instill market confidence, and facilitate post-pandemic recovery by the private sector and other stakeholders.

### **1.5 Cooperation of ASEAN Member States in Tourism and Travel Recovery**

The Covid-19 pandemic has had the greatest impact on the tourism and travel sector in ASEAN due to the comprehensive travel ban across the region. In fact, from another point of view, the tourism and travel sector contributed 12.6 percent to the ASEAN economy in 2018. Where the countries that experienced the greatest impact of Covid-19 in the tourism sector were the countries with the largest GDP contributor in the tourism sector. These countries are Cambodia, the Philippines and Thailand. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is experienced by all ASEAN countries in the aviation industry sector, one of which is Indonesia and Thailand which are the countries most affected in this sector. The volume of airplane passengers in Indonesia decreased by 59.8 million, while in Thailand it fell to 55.6 million due to flight restrictions. This of course has an impact on the potential

<sup>25</sup> Acharya, A. (1997). Ideas, identity, and institution-building: From the 'ASEAN way' to the 'Asia-Pacific way?'. *The Pacific Review*, 10(3), 319-346.

<sup>26</sup> Henry, L. (2007). The ASEAN way and community integration: two different models of regionalism. *European Law Journal*, 13(6), 857-879.

loss of revenue of US \$ 8.2 billion in Indonesia and Thailand, respectively. In addition there is the ASEAN National Tourism Organization which states to provide input on preventive measures and the situation in each ASEAN member country on February 13, 2020 at the regional level. Meanwhile, at the country level, Singapore has a tax reduction policy on the tourism and aviation sectors. On April 29, 2020, the statement was followed by a meeting where the tourism ministers of ASEAN countries produced seven agreements.<sup>27</sup>

First, there is ASEAN coordination in accelerating the exchange of information about travel, particularly regarding health standards and other steps needed by ASEAN member countries in controlling the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak through increased operations of the ASEAN Tourism Crisis Communication Team (ATCCT). Second, there is a collaboration between the ASEAN National Tourism Organization (NTOs) with other relevant ASEAN sectors, such as in the fields of health, transportation, information, immigration and ASEAN external partners, in an effort to implement comprehensive measures together, besides There is also transparency and fast response in mitigating and reducing the impact of Covid-19 and unexpected crises in the future. Third, there is an agreement by the ministers to enhance closer cooperation in sharing information and best practices among ASEAN member countries and with ASEAN dialogue partners

in an effort to support the tourism sector. Fourth, this cooperation also includes implementing appropriate policies and measures to increase trust between domestic and international visitors to Southeast Asia, such as the development of standards and guidelines in improving safety and health factors with the aim of protecting workers and the public in the hotel industry and other tourism-related industries. Fifth, there is an agreement from the tourism ministers to support the development and implementation of the post-Covid-19 crisis recovery plan and strive for ASEAN tourism and tourism promotion and marketing efforts with the aim of advancing ASEAN as a single tourism destination. Sixth, there is an agreement by the ministers to provide technical support and financial stimulus, reduce taxes, accelerate the implementation of micro and macroeconomic policies, increase capacity and capabilities, especially digital skills for travel and tourism industry stakeholders. Seventh, accelerate cooperation with ASEAN dialogue partners, international organizations and relevant industry to build a resilient Southeast Asia and ready to effectively implement and manage sustainable and inclusive tourism after the crisis.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. Challenges of ASEAN Member Countries in Combating COVID-19

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the city of Wuhan and spread outside of China, it has become one of the significant non-traditional

<sup>27</sup> Purwendah, E. K., & Mangku, D. G. S. (2018). The Implementation of Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution in The Southeast Asia Region for ASEAN Member Countries. *International Journal of Business, Economics, and Law*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Yoshimatsu, H., & Trinidad, D. D. (2010). Development Assistance, Strategic Interests, and the China Factor in Japan's Role in ASEAN Integration. *Japanese journal of political science*, 11(2), 199-219.

security threats in the Southeast Asian region. To respond to that, countries in the region who are members of the ASEAN community, decide on their respective attitudes and policies. As some countries took policies to cover cross-country human migration. On the other hand, the Indonesian government adopted another policy that seeks to attract tourists and businesses from countries that are closing their countries to visit. This has become a controversy in ASEAN regarding the actions of member countries, between saving lives or saving conflicting economies.<sup>29</sup> Differences in mitigating Covid-19 have also appeared, such as in Indonesia and Laos which formed a task force to deal with the virus, while other countries chose to mobilize troops and policies to enforce public compliance with quarantine. Their national policies are tolerant and cooperative, and mutually supportive, but some seem to show more selfishness and national interests. Given the mutual influence, whatever policies are taken will determine the failure or success of efforts to deal with the pandemic effectively in the region and at the global level. This has certainly led to critics questioning whether any government can handle this virus well enough and on time. Some member countries also experience difficulties in collaborating between institutions due to sectoral egos at the government level. Hierarchical coordination, power struggles can also

complicate an effective response in dealing with Covid-19. Indeed, in ASEAN itself there is a principle of non-intervention that prevents every member from interfering with other countries regarding policies on handling Covid-19. This is certainly a factor in the difficulty of unifying against the Covid-19 pandemic between ASEAN countries.<sup>30</sup>

Conflicts of interest and differences in views in dealing with Covid-19 occurred at various levels of domestic government, such as in Indonesia, Cambodia and Myanmar which also created problems for ASEAN leaders. Failure to communicate, values, political identities and weak mandates can undermine efforts to achieve a collective crisis response. This is one of the reasons why many ASEAN member countries do not receive valid information about this outbreak, both on the scale of the social and economic impact in each ASEAN country. So that it caused several member countries in ASEAN to make the wrong policies. For example, Myanmar ignores the spread of the Covid-19 virus, when it was discovered that the virus had spread, the Government of Myanmar offered policies that were ineffective in curbing its spread.<sup>31</sup>

This also happened in Indonesia. Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world, the Indonesian Government's response to the crisis has been very slow and has the potential to become the world's

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<sup>29</sup> Stubbs, T., Kring, W., Laskaridis, C., Kentikelenis, A., & Gallagher, K. (2020). Whatever it takes? The global financial safety net, Covid-19, and developing countries. *World Development*, 137, 105171.

<sup>30</sup> Fauzi, M. A., & Paiman, N. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic in Southeast Asia: intervention and

mitigation efforts. *Asian Education and Development Studies*.

<sup>31</sup> Bashir, M. F., Benjiang, M. A., & Shahzad, L. (2020). A brief review of socio-economic and environmental impact of Covid-19. *Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health*, 1-7.

epicenter after Wuhan. Unresponsive and erroneous policies certainly endanger millions of Indonesians. In addition, there is also a lockdown policy that has been carried out seriously by Singapore since the beginning of the country being exposed to Covid-19, which has been followed by a number of other ASEAN member countries, such as the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam. As a result of this policy, significant disruption occurred in the industrial sector. In several decades, Southeast Asia has become a major export market destination for oil and gas and non-oil and gas commodities for fellow ASEAN member countries and this has become one of the sectors that has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>32</sup> With the Covid-19 pandemic, ASEAN regionalism has faced challenges and its existence has been questioned again. The commitment of member countries and the influence of external threats, especially the issue of non-traditional security threats from the Covid-19 pandemic, appear as factors that influence the development of regionalism in the region. Since WHO announced Covid-19 as a global pandemic, many critics have said that the response taken by ASEAN is slow and seems to underestimate the spread of Covid-19 because the Covid-19 special summit was only held after more than one month after WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic. Even new initiatives from the APT Summits and Summits, including regarding the establishment of the ASEAN Covid-19 Response Fund and the ASEAN Center for

Infectious Diseases, often do not answer substantial problems at the member state level and do not even escape criticism, because they are considered not transparent and the funders are not well detailed. This further reinforces that its effectiveness will obviously depend on the willingness of each member country.

#### D. CLOSING

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought immeasurable new dimensions, both to human life and to interactions between countries. The existence of the Covid-19 pandemic phenomenon certainly encourages ASEAN to take countermeasures. However, tackling the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be done independently or only by one country. Countermeasures must be carried out jointly between countries in Southeast Asia. Given that ASEAN member countries have a strategic role in tackling the spread of Covid-19 in a number of fields such as health, trade and socio-economy. However, the difficulty of collaboration between countries is a challenge for ASEAN in its efforts to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. Another biggest challenge is the existence of conflicts of interest and differences in views in dealing with Covid-19 that occurred in various ASEAN Member States. These differences in views, such as the response taken by ASEAN are slow and seem to underestimate the spread of Covid-19 because the Covid-19 special summit was only held after more than one month after WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic. So that ASEAN Member States

<sup>32</sup> Terada, T. (2003). Constructing an 'East Asian' concept and growing regional identity: from

EAEC to ASEAN+ 3. *The Pacific Review*, 16(2), 251-277.

need to put aside their egos in order to work together to handle it fairly well and on time. Some member countries also experience difficulties in collaborating between institutions because of their egos

In a crisis situation like this it has become a separate touchstone for ASEAN. Moreover, seeing the data that all ASEAN countries are almost certainly exposed to this global outbreak, although to varying degrees. But again, ASEAN must be able to show its unity as an organization that prioritizes cooperation to achieve a goal. ASEAN must be able to prove regional solidarity that can be realized by giving priority to countries in the region to rise together through various efforts to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

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