

NEAT MEMORANDUM NO. 22

NETWORK OF EAST ASIAN THINK TANKS (NEAT)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Network of East Asia Think Tanks (NEAT) is track two of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) that supports the goal of community building in East Asia. East Asian countries seek to promote the welfare and well-being of its peoples by realizing the East Asian Vision of Peace, Prosperity and Progress. To advance peace and prosperity in the region, the East Asia community building process is to be based on universal values, including good governance, the rule of law, democracy, human rights, international law and norms. East Asian countries should promote these values as common goals.

II. NEAT ACTIVITIES IN 2025

In 2025, the NEAT activities began with the 41st Country Coordinators' Meeting held virtually on June 5, where the agenda for the 42nd CCM was endorsed, and three (3) Working Groups were proposed. On July 22, NEAT China held its Working Group on *"Leveraging RCEP for Supply Chains Connectivity in East Asia"* in Huangshan, China. On July 30, NEAT Japan organized its Working Group on *"Disaster Risk Reduction for a Sustainable Society"* in Tokyo, Japan. A third Working Group by NEAT Korea on regional economic resilience was proposed. The proposal could not be pursued within the available timeframe and will be considered for future implementation. NEAT activities culminated with the 42nd NEAT Country Coordinators' Meeting, hosted by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies in Conrad Manila, Philippines from August 12 to 14, 2025.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcomes of the NEAT 2025 activities, NEAT submits key recommendations in the following two (2) areas to the APT Leaders for consideration:

1. Leveraging RCEP for Supply Chain Connectivity in East Asia

1. *Enhancing regional cooperation to lower tariffs and non-tariff barriers.* APT countries should work together to prevent protectionism and reduce tariffs, while harmonizing standards, implementing paperless trading systems, and eliminating non-tariff measures to strengthen the smooth flow of goods and services within East Asia.
2. *Strengthening the RCEP Support Unit within the ASEAN Secretariat.*
3. *Supporting targeted initiatives to increase RCEP utilization, particularly among Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through awareness campaigns, enterprise training programs, and enhancing the RCEP working mechanisms.*
4. *Upgrading RCEP provisions to meet new and emerging priorities.* RCEP should evolve to include stronger labor, environmental, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) standards, as well as updated rules on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), rules of origin, and technical barriers to trade—thereby enhancing the agreement's value for high-quality, sustainable supply chains.
5. *Considering the possible expansion of RCEP membership and inclusive regional participation that will bolster RCEP's relevance and reinforce the region's commitment to multilateral economic governance.*

41 2. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for a Sustainable Society

- 42 1. *Strengthening regional disaster cooperation frameworks.* APT countries should fully support
43 the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work
44 Programme 2026–2030 and associated ASEAN+1 Disaster Management Work Plans with
45 China, Japan, and Korea, while deepening collaboration with the AHA Centre to enhance joint
46 disaster response and resource coordination mechanisms.
- 47 2. *Promoting integrated, climate-resilient DRR strategies.* National and regional DRR strategies
48 should align with the Sendai Framework, the SDGs, and national climate adaptation plans,
49 with emphasis on nature-based solutions and the inclusion of vulnerable communities in
50 planning and implementation.
- 51 3. *Adopting and scaling of advanced technologies and early warning systems.* Satellite-based
52 tools, AI-driven warning systems, and secure digital infrastructure should be expanded and
53 shared regionally to ensure timely and inclusive dissemination of disaster-related information.
- 54 4. *Enhancing the inclusive education, capacity development and institution building in DRR.*
55 Disaster education should be mainstreamed from early childhood to higher education and life-
56 long learning, with regional certification systems and cross-border research and training
57 programs to professionalize and mobilize DRR practitioners across APT.
- 58 5. *Institutionalizing both the “Build Back Better” and “Build Better Before” principles by*
59 *establishing funding mechanisms to promote resilience of local communities.* Proactive
60 investments in resilient infrastructure, community-driven disaster financing, regional insurance
61 mechanisms, and inclusive local development planning are essential for transitioning from
62 reactive relief to anticipatory risk reduction.

63 The detailed working group reports with policy recommendations are found in the annexes.

64 IV. CONCLUSION

65 NEAT expresses its sincere appreciation to the ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials, Ministers,
66 Leaders, and all partners who continue to consider and act upon NEAT’s recommendations. This
67 year’s proposals emphasize concrete measures to strengthen regional supply chains through RCEP,
68 and to enhance disaster resilience through coordinated, forward-looking strategies. We look forward
69 to continued collaboration in advancing these shared priorities for a more connected and secure East
70 Asian community.

71 V. ANNEXES

72 **Annex I:** NEAT China’s Final Report on “*Leveraging RCEP for Supply Chains Connectivity in East*
73 *Asia*”

74 **Annex II:** NEAT Japan’s Final Report on “*Disaster Risk Reduction for a Sustainable Society*”