

Conference on the
**Regional Comprehensive Economic
Partnership (RCEP): A New Paradigm
in Asia's Trading Architecture**

3–4 May 2022 | Manila Time

D1: 11:00 A.M. – 16:45 P.M. | D2: 13:30 P.M. – 16:35 P.M.



As Asia embarks on its path of economic recovery in 2022, it gets a boost in regional cooperation as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement came into practice on 01 January 2022. The 15 member countries – 10 ASEAN (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam) and 5 others (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea) – promise to work together not only in areas of trade and investment liberalization but also in issues of regulatory coherence for better business environment.

RCEP was first conceptualized in November 2012. From the beginning, RCEP's objective was to attain a comprehensive and mutually beneficial economic partnership agreement that was expected to involve deeper engagement and improve over the existing ASEAN+1 Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). It was meant to give due consideration to the differing levels of development among the participating members. These led to many challenges during negotiation. RCEP was finally signed on 15 November 2020.

RCEP's fruition is truly a pathbreaking milestone for ASEAN. The region that embarked on the journey of regional integration through the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in the 1990s and moved on to a more comprehensive form in 2003, i.e., the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), has simultaneously strived to follow open regionalism by signing ASEAN+1 FTAs and more recently the RCEP. While these plurilateral agreements add an additional layer to the complexity of the "noodle bowl" of FTAs that came into being in the last decades, they also have the potential to reduce its effects depending on their coverage, depth of commitments, and degree of implementation.

The RCEP Agreement contains 20 Chapters that are spread across trade in goods, trade in services, investment, movement of people, and other cross-cutting issues of intellectual property, competition, small enterprises, e-commerce, among others. Though depth of each of the chapters remain debatable, the agreement includes built-in provisions and economic and technical cooperation measures that indicate possibility of improvement in the future. The agreement gets the participating countries' commitment to establish a separate Secretariat, which dovetail well with willingness for implementation and monitoring progress in national economies.

To delve deeper into RCEP, the Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department (ERCD) of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is convening a high-level meeting to share the main findings of its report "The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership: A New Paradigm in Asian Economic Integration?" and exchange views with senior government officials from RCEP member countries on the way forward in RCEP implementation.

The meeting will be followed by 2 half days of focused sessions bringing in government officials from RCEP member countries, representatives from international organizations, research institutes, and business community to share and deliberate on issues of interest in the RCEP agreement. Sessions mix of presentation and panel discussions will aim at identifying key areas where further inter-governmental work is needed for a successful RCEP implementation. These will serve as main basis for further research, dissemination and capacity building activities to support ADB developing members in the negotiations and development of the RCEP built-in agenda.

The event will be of interest to a large community within ADB and its member countries, both government and businesses alike, to learn and prioritize investment and policy implementation.

Agenda

| Day 1 – Tuesday, 3 May 2022 1100 - 1645, Manila time | |
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| Opening, 1100 – 1330 Manila Time Moderator: <i>Cyn-Young Park</i> , Director, ERCI, ERCD, ADB | |
| 1100 - 1105 | Welcome Remarks <i>Albert Park</i> , Chief Economist and Director General, ERCD, ADB |
| 1105 – 1125 | Keynote Presentation 1 <i>Trudy Witbreuk</i> , State Director, NSW State Office, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia Keynote Presentation 2 “RCEP - An ASEAN Initiative for New Trading Architecture” <i>H.E. Satvinder Singh</i> , Deputy Secretary-General, The ASEAN Secretariat |
| 1125 – 1215 | Setting the Stage for RCEP Implementation <i>Pramila A. Crivelli & Sanchita Basu Das</i> , ERCI, ADB Panel Presentation and Discussion 1. H.E. Sim Sokheng, Secretary of State, Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia 2. <i>Fukunari Kimura</i> , Chief Economist, ERIA 3. <i>Alfredo Perdiguero</i> , Director, <i>SERC</i> , ADB [Mix of questions based on the findings of the report and independent questions] |
| 1215 – 1225 | Q&A |
| | [Official announcement of the launch of the report] |
| 1225 – 1230 | Photo session |
| 1230 – 1330 | Lunch Break |
| Session 1: Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin (ROO), and Trade Facilitation Moderator: <i>Pramila A. Crivelli</i> , Economist, ERCI, ADB | |
| 1330 – 1335 | Introduction of speakers and panelists |
| 1335 – 1405 | Lead Presentations 1. Jamie Thompson, Principal Policy Analyst, New Zealand Customs 2. Stefano Inama, Chief of Technical Assistance and Enhanced Integrated Framework, UNCTAD |
| 1405 – 1455 | Panel Presentations and discussion 1. Tham Siew Yean, Professor Emeritus, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) 2. Kit Hickey, Group Customs Manager, Fonterra Cooperative Group, Ltd 3. Meng Yew Wong, Partner, Deloitte Singapore |
| 1455 – 1505 | Question and Answer |
| 1505 – 1507 | Photo Session |
| 1507 – 1515 | Break (8 mins) |
| Session 2: Trade in Services and Investment Moderator: <i>Jong Woo Kang</i> , Principal Economist, ERCI, ADB | |
| 1515 – 1520 | Introduction of the speakers and panelists |
| 1520 – 1545 | Lead Presentations 1. Witada Anukoonwattaka, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Investment, and Innovation Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) |
| 1545 – 1630 | Panel Presentations and Discussion 1. Piti Srisangnam, Director, ASEAN Studies Center, Chulalongkorn University 2. Manjiao Chi, Professor and Founding Director, Center for International Economic Law and Policy, School of Law, University of International Business and Economics 3. Nongchith Khambounheuang, Director, Trade in Services Division, Department of Foreign Trade Policy, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR |
| 1630 – 1640 | Question and Answer |
| 1640 – 1642 | Photo Session |
| 1642 – 1645 | Closing for the day and reminders for Day 2 |
| End of Day 1 | |

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| <p>Day 2 – Wednesday, 4 May 2022 1330 – 1635, Manila time</p> | |
| <p>Session 3: Cross-cutting Issues on E-Commerce and Digital Economy, Intellectual Property, and MSME Development Moderator: <i>Rupa Chanda</i>, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, UNESCAP</p> | |
| 1330 – 1335 | Introduction of speakers and panelists |
| 1335 – 1400 | <p>Lead Presentations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hideyasu Tamura, Senior Director, Economic Partnership and Regional Integration, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan Henry Gao, Associate Professor of Law, Singapore Management University (SMU) |
| 1400 - 1445 | <p>Panel Presentations and Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Carrie Suen, Senior Advisor, International Public Policy and Government Affairs, Ant Group Alpana Roy, Singapore's Senior Economic Official and Director (ASEAN), Ministry of Trade, Singapore Josef T. Yap, Former President, Philippine Institute for Development Studies Manh Hung Tran, Managing Lawyer, Baker McKenzie |
| 1445 – 1455 | Question and Answer |
| 1455 – 1457 | Photo Session |
| 1457 – 1505 | Break (8 mins) |
| <p>Session 4: RCEP Implementation, Lessons Learned and Way Forward Moderator: <i>Ronald Antonio Q. Butiong</i>, Chief, RCI TG, SDCC, ADB</p> | |
| 1505 – 1510 | Introduction of speakers and panelists |
| 1510 – 1535 | <p>Lead Presentations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Luong Hoang Thai, Director of the Multilateral Trade Policy Department, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam |
| 1535 – 1620 | <p>Panel Discussion (What each is expecting to happen going forward and how ADB may help) and Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Anna Maria Rosario Diaz-Robeniol, Senior Advisor for ASEAN Economic Community and RCEP, The ASEAN Secretariat Anthony Robert Gill, OIC, Cambodia Resident Mission, ADB Pramila A. Crivelli, Economist, ERCI, ADB [Conference take-away and overview of ERCI research and capacity building activities] |
| 1620 – 1630 | Question and Answer |
| 1630 – 1632 | Photo Session |
| 1632 – 1635 | <p>Closing Remarks Cyn-Young Park, Director ERCI, ADB</p> |
| <p>End of Day 2 End of Conference</p> | |