

Jakarta, August 24, 2023

Ref. Number : 316/CIN/HBS/VIII/2023  
Attachment : Term of Reference  
Subject : Invitation Letter  
**Regional Press-Conference “Going into the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023: A Reality Check on ASEAN Centrality”**

To,  
**Ms. Tulus Yuniasih**  
**Budi Luhur University**

For over 56 years we have been blessed with a stable relationship among neighbors in Southeast Asia. Potentials for political divisions and open conflicts during the Cold War were averted. Conflicting major powers join ASEAN meetings and become Dialog Partners. Activities to discuss intents for cooperation, to produce framework and plans of actions, and to generate regional stakeholders’ dialogs bloom. Every issue that is considered strategic will be pulled in as an ASEAN activity and processed “the ASEAN way”. Economically, the member states appear to be going into a direction of stronger economic profiles and thus the claim on ASEAN playing a central role in the global arena, or the so-called ASEAN Centrality, is on the table again.


While eager to believe that the Southeast Asian nations are solidly central in its engagement with the world, **we cannot escape checking the reality that there is a serious gap between what ASEAN claims to have been doing as stipulated in the ASEAN Charter.** Therefore, going into the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023 Synergy Policies welcomes journalists, youth, thinkers, think-tanks, business professionals and civil society activists in the region to reflect on the reality of ASEAN Centrality as we see it per August 2023. **We will start by laying down findings on how ASEAN operates since the ASEAN Charter from all non-state stakeholders, and then raise the joint statement for the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit.**

We are delighted to invite **Ms. Tulus Yuniasih, Budi Luhur University**, to attend as participant in the **Regional Press-Conference “Going into the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023: A Reality Check on ASEAN Centrality”** that will be held on:

Venue : Harmoni A, Sofyan Hotel Cut Meutia,  
Jl. Cut Mutia No.9, Cikini, Kec. Menteng, Kota Jakarta Pusat,  
Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 10330  
Date : Thursday, August 31, 2023  
Time : 09.30 - 13.00 WIB (Half-Day)

Please confirm your presence by contacting us at **0822-2343-8392 (Joana)**. We very much appreciate your contribution to this meeting.

Sincerely,

  
**Assoc. Prof. Dinna Prapto Raharja, Ph.D.**  
Executive Director  
Synergy Policies

## Terms of Reference

### **“Going into the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023: A Reality Check on ASEAN Centrality”**

**31 August 2023  
A Hybrid Regional Press-Conference**

#### **Introduction**

For over 56 years we have been blessed with a stable relationship among neighbors in Southeast Asia. Potentials for political divisions and open conflicts during the Cold War were averted. Conflicting major powers join ASEAN meetings and become Dialog Partners. Activities to discuss intents for cooperation, to produce framework and plans of actions, and to generate regional stakeholders’ dialogs bloom. Every issue that is considered strategic will be pulled in as an ASEAN activity and processed “the ASEAN way”. Economically, the member states appear to be going into a direction of stronger economic profiles and thus the claim on ASEAN playing a central role in the global arena, or the so-called ASEAN Centrality, is on the table again.

ASEAN Centrality has multiple meanings, but several aspects of the Centrality indicators can be noted as the following:

- (1) The ASEAN Charter article 1.15 said that the ASEAN Centrality is the aim of ASEAN. The indicator is when ASEAN “maintains a proactive role as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture that is open, transparent and inclusive”.
- (2) ASEAN's success in “living with the giants” within its macro-region, that is managing the powerful external actors, primarily China, the United States, but also Japan, and increasingly Australia, India, South Korea, and the European Union (Beeson 2013).
- (3) ASEAN as “the leader, the driver, the architect, the institutional hub, the vanguard, the nucleus, and the fulcrum” of East Asian institutions, that ASEAN lies and must remain at the core of Asia (or Asia-Pacific) regional institutions, especially the ASEAN Plus Three, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the East Asian Summit (Acharya 2017).

While eager to believe that the Southeast Asian nations are solidly central in its engagement with the world, **we cannot escape checking the reality that there is a serious gap between what ASEAN claims to have been doing as stipulated in the ASEAN Charter.**

**While the claim is to implement the spirit from ASEAN Charter, the practice exercised has been the spirit of a state-centric ASEAN. There is minimal evidence of people-centered ASEAN that is responsive to people and to the nuances of challenges faced by people in the region. The dominant view is of selecting, managing, even controlling civil society, placing civil society in a participatory role during ASEAN**

**meetings rather than engaging civil society as subject of ASEAN policies. What we are witnessing is that the ASEAN Leaders have been “centering ASEAN” to find consensus among leaders only without fulfilling the indicators of ASEAN Centrality.**

**ASEAN Leaders should recall that ASEAN is not formed for the sake of having dialogs among government officials and invited civil society representatives. ASEAN Leaders should be mindful that the Bangkok Declaration of 8<sup>th</sup> August 1967 have been progressed to the ASEAN Charter, born on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008 where the spirit is people-centered:**

1. “We, the PEOPLES of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),...” (see Preamble).
2. At least 10 of the 15 “purposes” of ASEAN are directly related to the peoples of ASEAN (see Article 1.4, 1.6-1.14).
3. People at the center of the ASEAN community-building process
4. “To promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN Integration and community building (see Article 1.13).

**Furthermore, the leaders also have committed to be people-centered in these documents:**

1. The ASEAN Community Vision 2025 saying that “We, the Heads of State/Government representing the peoples of the Member States of the ASEAN...”
2. The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration point thirty-nine (39): “ASEAN Member States share a common interest in and **commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms which shall be achieved through, inter alia, cooperation with one another as well as with relevant national, regional, and international institutions/organizations**, in accordance with the ASEAN Charter.”

Synergy Policies have organized at least seven events throughout 2023: on August 9, 2023 (discussing the non-state regionalism ASEAN People Centrum), July 13, 2023 (discussing synergies among different sectors of civil society works in ASEAN), June 26, 2023 (consolidating perspectives towards the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit), June 21, 2023 (what’s real and what’s quasi reality in ASEAN), May 4, 2023 (on inputs for the High-level Task Force on ASEAN Post 2025), March 18, 2023 on ASEAN’s Five Point Consensus), and March 1, 2023 (ASEAN and the next phase for ASEAN’s Five Point Consensus according to various elements of civil society). **The following is the summary finding from civil society elements on ASEAN practices on matters pertaining to people in the region:**

- (b) ASEAN member states continue to work in silo rather than through ASEAN mechanisms to generate investment, trade, tourism opportunities. The purpose “to create a single market and production base which is stable, prosperous, highly competitive and economically integrated with effective facilitation for trade and

investment, facilitated movement of business persons, professionals, talents and labour, and freer flow of capital” that the ASEAN Charter article 1.5. promised remains minimal.

- (c) ASEAN people continue to move across borders of Southeast Asian countries and other parts of the world without “effective response” from states against all forms of threats, transnational crimes and transboundary challenges that the ASEAN Charter article 1.8 promised.
- (d) ASEAN people continue to struggle in their own national boundaries “to alleviate poverty and narrow the development gap”, despite the promise of the ASEAN Charter article 1.6. that ASEAN as an institution will provide mutual assistance and cooperation. Labour in certain ASEAN member state may receive certain standards of wage, social protection and human rights recognition at home but it is not portable in other ASEAN member states.
- (e) ASEAN people including women, youth, persons with disability remain left behind with less than equitable access to opportunities for human development, social welfare and justice as promised by the ASEAN Charter article 1.11.
- (f) ASEAN creates exclusive mechanisms for participation rather than inclusive engagement for civil society in its dialogs and interface with officials.
- (g) ASEAN mechanisms for civil society engagement is placed in a separate track from the main organ track. Dialogs become superficial and mundane. There is no mechanism to work together to solve problems faced on daily basis among people in the region.
- (h) Journalists are placed in the point of focusing only on matters stated and done by the state officials rather than the substantive works inside of ASEAN main organs. There has been minimal information available for all journalists on ASEAN work for people.

**In other words, ASEAN’s claim of working according to the ASEAN Charter remains a work in process rather than a work in progress.**

**No doubt, the implementation of the ASEAN Charter spirit is central to ASEAN Centrality. And it demands endorsement from all stakeholders within the region and operating in the region from all sectors. Let’s discuss the reality of ASEAN as seen by stakeholders.**

Synergy Policies going into the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023 welcomes journalists, youth, thinkers, think-tanks, business professionals and civil society activists in the region to reflect on the reality of ASEAN Centrality as we see it per August 2023. **We will start by laying down findings on how ASEAN operates since the ASEAN Charter from all non-state stakeholders, and then raise the joint statement for the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit.**

This event is a continuation of past engagements among these civil society elements in Indonesia to discuss the various colors and nuances of views on ASEAN’s handling of

themes and groups. **The culmination of these engagements was the launching of the ASEAN People Centrum on 9 August 2023, in Jakarta, immediately after the 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN.** Synergy Policies connects and organizes the *ASEAN People Centrum*, which is a network of actions among thinkers, think-tanks, youth, journalists, and civil society organizations from all levels of engagements: local, national, regional, international. ***The ASEAN People Centrum is a non-state regionalism that explores and acts together to improve the achievements of our works and networking for people in Southeast Asia.***

Synergy Policies is an independent think-tank based in Jakarta, established in 2014 by a number of experts across disciplines, and now has a global reach. Leveraging a multi-sectoral network of thinkers and practitioners, Synergy Policies believes that when more stakeholders understand the process for creating synergies that will lead to constructive solutions for these problems, more people would participate to support the effort. Synergy Policies' works in the form of studies, policy evaluations, social impact analysis, videos, stakeholder engagement, and products resulting from community collaboration have been enjoyed not only in Indonesia by central and regional government circles, entrepreneurs, activists, media and youth but also at the international level by friendly countries and international institutions such as WHO Geneva, ITUC Asia-Pacific, ILO, and GIZ. Our profile can be found on [www.synergypolicies.com](http://www.synergypolicies.com).

### **Objectives**

1. To share a joint statement from non-state regionalism The ASEAN People Centrum to the Leaders of 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023.
2. To discuss the reality & hope for ASEAN Centrality.

### **Time/Date**

This event will be held in hybrid form:

- 1) Participation from journalists, selected youth and civil society representatives can join us from Sofyan Hotel Cut Meutia, Menteng.
- 2) Participation from journalists, youth, civil society representatives from across Southeast Asia can join us from zoom & YouTube “Dinna on Diplomacy”.

The zoom link is the following: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83618332833>

### **Rundown of Event**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Notes</b>
09.30 – 10.00	Registration for online & offline participants	
10.00 – 10.10	<i>Opening Remark</i> from Synergy Policies	Assoc. Prof. Dinna Prapto Raharja, Ph.D Executive Director

<p>10.10 – 11.30</p>	<p>The Reality of ASEAN Centrality: Statement for the Leaders of 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023</p> <p>Moderator: - Puri Lestari</p> <p>Talkshow findings on ASEAN Centrality:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Faisal Basri (the economic reality on ASEAN Centrality)</li> <li>2) Dinna Prpto Raharja (the diplomacy reality affecting youth, labour, social protection, migration, environment, women, persons with disability, journalists, and civil society activists)</li> <li>3) Marzuki Darusman (the underlying political dynamics in ASEAN)</li> </ol> <p>Comments from (each 5 minutes):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) Khin Ohmar, Burmese democracy activist active in Women’s League of Burma and the Burma Partnership</li> <li>5) Kobsak Chutikul, Former Ambassador &amp; Member of Parliament in Thailand</li> <li>6) Dr. Khoo Ying Hooi, Associate Professor of International Relations &amp; Strategic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia</li> <li>7) Wahyu Susilo (Migrant CARE)</li> <li>8) Timboel Siregar (BPJS Watch)</li> <li>9) Father Chrisanctus Paschalis (KKPPMP, representing the network to combat human trafficking in Batam)</li> <li>10) Tegar Pulung (Chair of KOMAHI Gadjah Mada University)</li> <li>11) Albert Julio (Vice President of ISAFIS)</li> </ol>	<p>It will start with a formulation of findings from Synergy Policies as a think-tank that connect &amp; organize the ASEAN People Centrum, followed by the reading of joint statement, and then comments from non-state regionalism personnel.</p>
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	<p>12) Dr. Sylvia Yazid (Associate Professor in International Relations, Catholic University Parahyangan in Indonesia)</p> <p>13) Ishaq Rahman (Lecturer in International Relations, Universitas Hasanuddin in Indonesia)</p> <p>14) Marcheilla Ariesta (journalist, medcom.id)</p> <p>15) Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI)</p> <p>16) Taufiq Hidayat (Yayasan Autisma Indonesia) (<i>labor and disability</i>)</p> <p>17) International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES)</p>	
	Q&A from media and youth via zoom	
11.30 – 11.50	Question & Answer	
11.50 – 12.00	Closing – Joint Statement to ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting in the 43 <sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit 2023 in Jakarta	Dinna Prapto Raharja & Marzuki Darusman
12.00 - 13.00	Lunch for offline participants	