



For immediate release

ASEAN CSR Network and Oxfam call for responsible business practice in the ASEAN Economic Community

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 12 October 2015 – With the haze affecting possibly up to five of the 10 ASEAN countries, there has been increased consumer, government, and civil society pressure, actions and media attention on errant agri-resources companies to intensify efforts in being more accountable for their business practices.

This year is also significant as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) comes into being and a new Post 2015 strategy and agenda is formulated. CSR is identified as a key component for Social Justice and Rights in ASEAN and to contribute towards sustainable socio-economic development.

With this current ASEAN situation and direction in mind, it is thus timely that ASEAN CSR Network, world-wide development organisation Oxfam, the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers and the ASEAN Foundation are organising the ASEAN Responsible Business Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 27 – 29 October.

The High-Level regional Forum will bring together close to 200 speakers, panellists and delegates from ASEAN and the global community. (For a list of speakers, organisations and details of topics, please refer to the agenda). The Guest-of-Honour is YB Senator Datuk Paul Low, Minister for Governance and Integrity, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia.

As ASEAN companies become global business leaders, they face new challenges and opportunities in their business operations. That is why the forum can address how CSR can help companies face these challenges and provide greater opportunities to be more profitable by doing the right thing. Dialogue at the forum will centre on the sustainability and economic viability of the AEC through responsible business practice in the agriculture sector, respect for human rights, assurance of decent workplace, and a path toward a corruption-free ASEAN business community

Given the increased importance of the private sector in all aspects of the ASEAN integration, especially in achieving sustainable economic growth, it is now time to turn the spotlight on what responsible business practice can mean for people, companies, governments and civil society in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Therefore, it is imperative for CSR to be recognised and further strengthened in the AEC post-2015.



“Being a responsible business has always been a critical element for corporate success. A business culture of integrity and responsibility improves productivity, strengthens corporate reputation and goodwill, and directly impacts the financial performance of companies. Integrity has a rippling effect, cascading from a company’s top management down to its employees, suppliers, customers and peers. Corporate integrity builds long lasting robustness and sustainable business,” said Alois Hofbauer, Chair of Ethical Business Practices Committee of Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM).

The forum will also be featuring smallholders in the discussion. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of ASEAN. According to ASEAN, SMEs account for more than 96% of all enterprises and 50% to 85% of domestic employment.

“As ASEAN builds a common economic community and strives to bring in investors into the region, we need to ensure that agricultural investments benefit smallholder agriculture and safeguard the environmental sustainability of the region’s land, water and other natural resources. This entails ensuring that companies develop and operate sustainable value chains. It also involves piloting and scaling up of farmer-led micro and small medium enterprises to so that small scale men and women farmers are able to secure equitable share of benefits from commodity value chains,” said Maria Dolores Bernabe, Oxfam’s Asia Regional Policy and Research Coordinator.

The ASEAN Responsible Business Forum is a follow up to ACN’s ASEAN Next-Gen CSR Forum, which appraised the role of business and discussed CSR implementation challenges for the private sector and its partners.

Yanti Triwadiantini, Chair of ASEAN CSR Network, added: “We organized the ASEAN Next-Gen CSR Forum in Bali in February this year and with this upcoming forum in KL, we want to move the dialogue further by encouraging businesses to incorporate CSR into their business strategy. The upcoming forum will provide an opportunity for practitioners to listen to experts and incorporate best responsible business practices in their operations. In the end, we have to realize that we are one major ASEAN region and that means we have to work together and collaborate for the better life of ASEAN as a community.”



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About ASEAN CSR Network

The ASEAN CSR Network (ACN) was established in 2011 to promote and enable responsible business conduct in ASEAN to achieve sustainable, equitable and inclusive social, environmental and economic development. Its vision is to encourage a responsible business community, making ASEAN a better place to live for ALL.

www.asean-csr-network.org

About Oxfam

Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 organizations networked together in 97 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from injustice of poverty.

www.oxfam.org

About FMM

The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) has and continues to be the voice of the Malaysian manufacturing sector since 1968. Representing the views and interests of over 2,600 manufacturing and manufacturing services companies, FMM is actively engaged with government and its key agencies at Federal, State and local levels. FMM is well-networked with international organisations, Malaysian businesses and civil society. Apart from benefitting from FMM's advocacy, FMM members enjoy value-add services, including training, business networking and trade opportunities as well as regular information updates.

<http://www.fmm.org.my/>