

Prospects and Challenges for Environmental Cooperation in ASEAN

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The ASEAN region is endowed with rich natural resources. The region is also home to about 550 million people. The region comprises nations with different levels of economic and social development. The challenge for ASEAN therefore is to promote economic growth and social development, while ensuring environmental sustainability of the region.

ASEAN’s dynamic economic growth in the last two decades has heightened concern for sustainable development. Member countries have moved to protect the environment and to control the rate of exploitation of natural resources. ASEAN countries continue to cope with the challenge of balancing environmental concerns with the imperatives of development. Environmental degradation continues to roil the region. Increasingly such problems are exacerbated by external pressures beyond the region.

But while environmental conditions remain problematic, the socio-political setting in ASEAN has become friendlier and much more committed to bold approaches to environmental management. This paper highlights the prospects and challenges for environmental cooperation in ASEAN.