

# ASEAN Single Window Preparedness Survey

## Executive Summary



ASEAN Member Countries have agreed to implement an ASEAN Single Window whereby traders will be able to submit all required information for imports and exports in one location for electronic processing by government agencies. This will streamline import and export transactions, provide for more transparency, and improve data collection and cargo tracking. Businesses will benefit from lower trade costs and better cargo security, and governments will realize improved tariff collections and stronger enforcement of trade laws.



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ASEAN Economic Ministers have set 2008 for the introduction of an ASEAN Single Window in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand (the ASEAN 6), and 2012 for Burma, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam. Operation of the ASEAN Single Window, the first such regional facility, will depend on (1) implementing national single windows (NSWs) for processing import and export information in each ASEAN Member Country; and (b) the ability of the NSWs to operate and transmit information between each other.

To help secure timely implementation of the ASEAN Single Window, ASEAN conducted a survey of the current status and preparedness of Member Countries to implement NSWs and integrate them into an ASEAN Single Window. The survey provides an understanding of achievements and challenges in designing, implementing, and operating a single window facility. It will also assist the ASEAN Single Window Steering Committee and its working groups on technical matters and on legal and regulatory matters to prioritize work in addressing shortcomings and overcoming obstacles.



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## Key Findings

The survey's key findings include the following:

- Customs administrations are the lead agency for organizing work in most countries.
- All but three member countries have steering committees composed of representatives of agencies that require information on imports and exports.

- Funding arrangements for single windows include public-private partnerships, direct government budget support, or contributions from the international donor community.
- Most single windows would provide for information exchanges between business (traders) and governments and between government agencies. In Brunei, Singapore, and Thailand the objective is also to allow businesses to transmit information to other businesses (e.g., banks or freight forwarders).
- The ASEAN 6 should have pilot NSWs in operation by the end of 2007; five of these member countries are planning to have ASEAN Single Window pilots among one, two, or more other member countries in 2008, with only Brunei's intentions unclear.

## Challenges and Recommendations for Action

The survey notes challenges and potential problems and recommends actions that will address them. Recommendations include the following:

1. Enact an adequate legislative and regulatory framework for cross-border transactions and for mutual recognition of information transmitted in electronic or digital format.
2. Adopt regulations and operational procedures for electronic information processing based on international standards and best practices.
3. Harmonize national legal and regulatory frameworks, to the extent possible.
4. Implement outreach, including practical workshops, to explain the functions, benefits, and legal requirements of the NSWs and ASEAN Single Window.
5. Improve cooperation among agencies to plan and implement NSWs.
6. Strengthen technical capacity to plan, implement, and operate single windows by providing training, engaging technical experts, and securing technical assistance from donors.
7. Encourage government agencies that still use manual processes to issue licenses and permits in cargo processing to adopt electronic systems.
8. Translate political commitments of ASEAN Member Countries into concrete measures and proper budgetary resources.
9. Elaborate in the ASEAN Single Window Implementation Technical Guide on such issues as data harmonization; streamlining business procedures; technical specifications on messaging, interfacing, user recognition framework for the exchange of data; and the operational scope of the ASEAN Single Window.
10. Increase the dissemination and coordination of information, such as through issuing information sheets that are updated every three months.
11. Conduct a detailed gap analysis in each Member Country to determine what must still be done to implement NSWs.

12. Adopt a business model to finance the single window in order to ensure sustainability.
13. Create an ASEAN Single Window Gateway to serve as the entry point for intra-ASEAN and extra-ASEAN single windows.
14. Establish a Central Repository in the ASEAN Single Window that serves as an “interface block” for various systems.
15. Encourage sharing of programs among countries to expedite implementation of the ASEAN Single Window in all countries.