

**Concept note:**  
**“Better Local Business Environments for Pandemic Recovery in Southeast Asia”**  
**Regional Webinar: Wednesday 29 June 2022 08:30 – 10:30 (VTE time)**

## **1. Background**

Almost two years after the pandemic started, Southeast Asia is slowly beginning to recover.<sup>1</sup> The extent of the recovery, however, remains tentative, uneven, and sensitive to the volatile path of the pandemic. The pandemic has exposed many of the region’s economic and social vulnerabilities and delayed progress on the sustainable development goals. It has also intensified efforts to build back better, which many governments in the region are supporting through initiatives to improve local business environments for enterprises.<sup>2</sup> This regional webinar aims to provide a venue for policymakers in the region to discuss national and subnational policies aimed at building better local business environments for supporting enterprises in Southeast Asia recover from the pandemic with senior ADB officials and thought leaders in the region.

This regional webinar builds on outcomes and policy dialogue of the (i) Southeast Asia Development Symposium (SEADS) 2022 “Sustainable Solutions for Southeast Asia’s Recovery” 16-17 March 2022<sup>3</sup> and (ii) the release of the Provincial Facilitation for Investment and Trade (PROFIT): Measuring Economic Governance for Business Development in the Lao PDR, Second Edition 2022 on 31 March 2022.<sup>4</sup> The outcomes from these events highlighted the importance of improving the business environment to bolster post-pandemic recovery of enterprises. Policymakers noted that the quality of the investment climate at national and subnational levels influenced private sector performance, with more favorable investment climates and quality service delivery likely to translate into enterprises being able to build back more competitive and productive operations after the COVID-19 crisis.

Understanding local business environments and how firms interact in these environments is an important part of defining policy interventions for promoting post-pandemic recovery and supporting progress on the sustainable development goals. To deepen policy dialogue in this area, this webinar will discuss the situation of firms in Southeast Asia, including regulations on businesses and their implementation by national and subnational authorities, to understand how to provide a more conducive local business environment for promoting effective and efficient private sector recovery. The regional webinar will invite representatives from Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam to participate in the dialogue. The webinar is guided by the following critical questions: How to improve the local business environment for strengthening the viability of SMEs? What are the constraints that these enterprises encounter? What solutions have deployed address the constraints? What worked?

## **2. Objective**

Under the branding of SEADS, this webinar seeks to create a venue for policy dialogue at the regional level on national and subnational policy on the business environment. This includes (i)

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<sup>1</sup> ADB. 2022. Asian Development Outlook. Manila.

<sup>2</sup> Asia SME Monitor 2021 Vol.1: In Southeast Asia, MSMEs accounted for an average 97.6% of all enterprises, 67.0% of the total workforce, and 40.5% of a country’s GDP during 2010-2020.

<sup>3</sup> In line with its objectives to provide a steady stream of insights on new solutions, technologies, innovations, and best practices that can help countries address pressing development challenges, SEADS is organizing a series of webinars that will focus on current and relevant topics for ADB’s Developing Member Countries and stakeholders. The webinar series will also build upon the discussions that take place during the annual SEADS event.

<sup>4</sup> The PROFIT report is an ADB partnership with the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) which was supported by technical assistance (KSTA 9387) on “Strengthening Institutions for Localizing Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development”. There are several other countries in Southeast Asia, namely Viet Nam, Myanmar and Cambodia have similar reports on subnational implementation of national policy on the business environment.

scene setting presentations on better local business environments for pandemic recovery in Southeast Asia; (ii) Southeast Asia regional panel discussion on better local business environments for pandemic recovery, including what has been done and future directions; and (iii) Regional dissemination of the Lao PDR PROFIT reports and sharing of SEADS reports.

### 3. Proposed Event's Details

- Date: Wednesday, 29 June 2022, 09:30 - 11:30 (MNL time) / 08:30 – 10:30 (BKK time)
- Venue: Online
- Format: Zoom [https://adb-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_1kx7d146QAObdTw2DSNpDA](https://adb-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1kx7d146QAObdTw2DSNpDA)

### 4. Agenda of the webinar

<b>DATE: Wednesday, 29 June 2022</b>	
09:30 – 10:00	<b>Webinar Live</b> Registration and log in
<b>Session I: Scene Setting</b> <i>Moderator: James P. Villafuerte, Senior Economist, ADB</i>	
10:00 – 10:10	Better Local Business Environments for Pandemic Recovery in Southeast Asia <b>Ramesh Subramanian</b> , Director General, Southeast Asia Regional Department, ADB
10:10 – 10:20	Keynote address <b>Ming Tan</b> , Founding Executive Director, Tech For Good Institute
10:20 – 10:30	Recent trends and Policy Directions for Building Better Local Business Environments for Pandemic Recovery in Southeast Asia <b>Michael Schaper</b> , Senior Visiting Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
<b>Session II: Panel discussion</b> This session engages policymakers and representatives from the business community in the Southeast Asia region in a dialogue on how to provide a more conducive local business environment for promoting effective and efficient private sector recovery in Southeast Asia. It focuses on (i) what has been done and (ii) future directions. <i>Moderator: James P. Villafuerte, Senior Economist, ADB</i>	
10:30 – 11:30	<b>Panelists:</b> 1. Mr. Penn Sovicheat, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia (Confirmed) 2. Mr. Aphisid Sengsorivong, Director General, Enterprise Registration Department, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR (Confirmed) 3. Mr. Oudet Souvannavong, President, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lao PDR (Confirmed) 4. Mr. Pham Ngoc Thach, Deputy General Director of Legal Department, VCCI, Viet Nam 5. Mr. Hoan Tran, Senior Official, Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT), Viet Nam 6. Michael Schaper, Senior Visiting Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore 7. Ming Tan, Founding Executive Director, Tech For Good Institute
11:30	<b>Webinar Closes</b>

### 5. Roles and responsibilities

LRM will cooperate with SERD's SEADS team and SERD's economist network to prepare the regional webinar. LRM will contract a resource person under technical assistance (KSTA 9387) on "Strengthening Institutions for Localizing Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development" to prepare the keynote address. SERD's SEADS team will identify a speaker to provide a keynote address, a moderator for the event, prepare the panelist questions, and the moderator run sheet. SERD's SEADS team will coordinate event logistics on invitations and participants.

### 6. Participants

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this will be an online webinar event. Participants include high-level government officials and representatives from the central government and provincial authorities as well as bilateral and multilateral development partners, and private sector stakeholders,

academe, and media. Selected representatives will make short presentations, followed by commentaries from panelists and questions from the audience. The event will be in English.