

KLEMUN 5.0 – CONCORDIA ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST- ASIAN NATIONS[ASEAN]

AGENDA:

*Developing a Unified ASEAN Response to South China Sea
Militarization and Regional Economic Stability*

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Letter from the Executive Board

To all Esteemed Delegates of ASEAN,

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the ASEAN Committee at KLEMUN 5.0 – Concordia. I speak of Glorious purpose having to witness every voice that would echo in the committee and that speaks of true reason. What lies ahead is not just a model simulation — it is a reflection of what diplomacy demands in today’s increasingly complex and divided world.

ASEAN is not simply a regional body; it is a living example of how consensus, compromise, and quiet strength can shape the fate of millions. In a world where brute power often overshadows reason, ASEAN stands for dialogue — and this committee, through every speech and negotiation, must carry that legacy forward.

Our agenda, “*Developing a Unified ASEAN Response to South China Sea Militarization and Regional Economic Stability*,” is one of the most urgent and defining geopolitical challenges of our time. The South China Sea is not just a map with dotted lines. It is where sovereignty, security, trade, and diplomacy all collide — and where ASEAN’s future is being quietly tested every day. How do we, as a bloc, preserve peace while protecting national interests? How do we stabilize economies in the face of militarization? These are questions that demand more than knowledge — they demand *leadership*.

And leadership begins with discipline.
The speeches that matter will be built on preparation.
The resolutions that pass will be written with purpose.
And the voices that rise will be those that are not loudest — but most informed.

I do not expect you to know everything. But I do expect you to *care enough to learn everything you can*. Bring your passion into this room like it belongs here. Let every delegate see that you came not just to participate — but to leave a mark. In this committee, half-hearted will not be enough. Come with fire. Come with facts. Come with the desire to lead.

This is your space to shine — not with arrogance, but with understanding. Not with aggression, but with vision. Your legacy will not be written in words alone, but in the way you choose to rise above comfort and mediocrity.

I stand ready to guide, but this committee is yours to define. Make it exceptional.

With purpose, pride, and anticipation,
Abhishek Manjunath
Chairperson, ASEAN Committee
KLEMUN 5.0 – Concordia

Introduction to Committee and Agenda

1. About the Association of South East Asian Nations [ASEAN]

The **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, formed in 1967 stands as one of the world's most influential and dynamic regional organizations — a collective built not on uniformity, but on unity amidst diversity. Comprising ten nations with distinct cultures, economies, and political systems, ASEAN has defied the odds of fragmentation by choosing consensus over conflict and diplomacy over dominance. It is a forum where the soft power of negotiation meets the hard realities of geopolitics — and where even silence is a form of strategy.

The Ten Nations that Constitute ASEAN are:

- 1.Brunei Darrusalam
- 2.Kingdom of Cambodia
- 3.Republic of Indonesia
- 4.Lao People's Democratic Republic
- 5.Malaysia
- 6.Republic of the union of Myanmar
- 7.Republic of Philippines
- 8.Republic of Singapore
9. Kingdom of Thailand
10. Socialist Republic of Vietnam

ASEAN was born out of a desire for regional stability, peaceful cooperation, and mutual economic progress during a time of Cold War tensions and internal instability in Southeast Asia. What sets ASEAN apart from other regional organizations is its unique principle of "non-interference in internal affairs" and *consensus-based decision-making*, often referred to as the "ASEAN Way". While sometimes seen as slow or cautious, this approach has helped avoid internal conflicts and allowed member states to cooperate without compromising sovereignty.

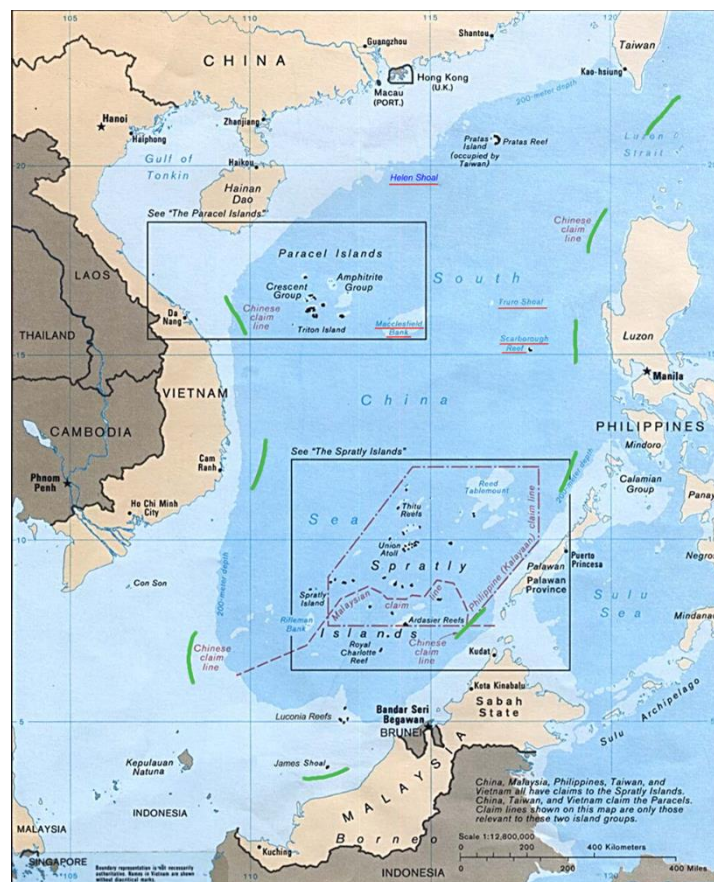
2. About the Agenda:

Developing a Unified ASEAN Response to South China Sea Militarization and Regional Economic Stability

The South China Sea is not merely a body of water — it is a stage upon which the future of Southeast Asia's sovereignty, economy, and diplomacy is being tested. Within its waves lie **some of the world's busiest shipping lanes, abundant fisheries, and untapped reserves of oil and natural gas**. But beneath its surface, tension is rising. The aggressive militarization of the region, spearheaded largely by the People's Republic of China, has turned the South China Sea into a **maritime powder keg** — and the stability of the entire ASEAN region is at stake.

This committee seeks to address this challenge from two urgent standpoints: first, how to construct a **unified ASEAN approach** to the growing military presence and coercion in these contested waters; and second, how to protect and promote **regional economic security** in the face of these evolving threats.

The South China Sea is bordered by several ASEAN members, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia — all of whom have partial claims within the Exclusive Economic Zones granted by international law. However, China's assertion of the **Nine-Dash Line**, claiming nearly 90% of the sea, **directly conflicts** with these legitimate claims.



ASEAN's greatest strength — its principle of consensus and non-interference — now doubles as its greatest limitation. While unity has long been its defining trait, the bloc's inability to adopt a singular voice on the South China Sea has emboldened external actors. With some member states economically reliant on China for trade, aid, and infrastructure through mechanisms like the *Belt and Road Initiative*, there is a persistent tension between national interest and collective responsibility. This fracture is exactly what external powers exploit, weakening ASEAN's leverage in both diplomatic negotiations and security dialogues.

Furthermore, the South China Sea is not just an ASEAN-China matter. It is a flashpoint in a larger geopolitical contest. *The United States, India, Australia, and Japan* have all increased their regional engagements through naval patrols, joint exercises, and strategic partnerships — many of which ASEAN members participate in. The risk here is clear: the South China Sea may evolve into a proxy arena for global power projection, where ASEAN is no longer a participant in shaping outcomes, but merely a passive observer suffering the consequences. ASEAN's future relevance lies in its ability to lead from within, rather than be pulled from outside.

This committee is called not merely to debate policy but to imagine and construct a regional doctrine of strategic clarity, resilience, and preparedness. This includes — but is not limited to — coordinated economic fallback strategies, a unified stance on international arbitration rulings, joint surveillance or resource-sharing agreements, and even a potential re-evaluation of the ASEAN Charter's consensus model in matters of collective security. The South China Sea crisis will not wait for ASEAN to catch up. It is already reshaping the map, militarizing diplomacy, and testing regional integrity. The only question is whether ASEAN will act — or be acted upon.

Major Timeline

1947 – China Releases the “Eleven-Dash Line” Map:

The origin of China's expansive claims over the South China Sea, later adjusted to the Nine-Dash Line, which overlaps multiple ASEAN nations' maritime zones.

2002 – ASEAN and China Sign the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DoC): A diplomatic effort to prevent conflict; although non-binding, this marks the first collective ASEAN-China agreement on managing South China Sea tensions.

2012 – Scarborough Shoal Standoff:

China takes control of the Scarborough Shoal after a tense naval standoff with the Philippines — a turning point in China's maritime assertiveness.

2013 – The Philippines Files a Case Against China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration:

This bold legal step challenges the Nine-Dash Line under UNCLOS, marking the beginning of a rules-based pushback.

2016 – PCA Ruling Favors the Philippines, Rejects China's Nine-Dash Line:

A landmark ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration that invalidates China's maritime claims; China refuses to recognize it, escalating the dispute.

Legal Frameworks & Instruments

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) – 1982

Defines maritime zones such as territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). It is the primary legal instrument invoked by ASEAN member states to contest China's Nine-Dash Line.

Permanent Court of Arbitration Ruling (The Philippines v. China) – 2016

A historic case under UNCLOS, where the tribunal invalidated China's Nine-Dash Line and ruled that China violated the Philippines' sovereign rights. China has rejected the ruling.

Proposed Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (CoC) – Initiated 2017

Still under negotiation, this aims to be a binding legal code that regulates behavior in disputed areas and prevents conflict escalation.

ASEAN Charter – 2008

The founding treaty of ASEAN, emphasizing respect for sovereignty, non-interference, regional peace, and a rules-based order.

Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) – 1976

A peace treaty committing signatories to non-aggression, peaceful dispute resolution, and mutual cooperation. China and several dialogue partners are signatories.

Conclusion

The agenda at hand requires not only diplomatic engagement but also a rigorous commitment to research, accuracy, and policy alignment.

Delegates are advised to prepare thoroughly, leaving no room for negligence in understanding their country's historical stance, legal arguments, and strategic interests. A sound grasp of geopolitical realities and international law is essential to meaningful participation in this committee.

Delegates must adhere strictly to their assigned nation's **foreign policy** throughout the sessions. While creative solutions are encouraged to address regional challenges, they must remain within the realm of political feasibility and legality. Innovation in committee is most effective when it is informed, balanced, and aligned with the country's established diplomatic posture.

Any form of **plagiarism**—in speeches, documents, or position papers—will be taken seriously and may result in disqualification from awards. Originality, integrity, and independent thinking are not only expected but are fundamental to a successful MUN experience.

Lastly, your **active engagement** in all committee proceedings, from formal debate to informal consultations, will be essential. Constructive participation and diplomatic conduct will shape the success of this simulation.

QARMA- Questions A Resolution Must Answer

- What existing ASEAN mechanisms address military coercion in contested maritime zones, and how can these be enhanced while upholding the bloc's foundational principle of non-interference in internal affairs?
- How can ASEAN use its dialogue partnerships (ASEAN+3, ASEAN Regional Forum) to generate external support for a rules-based maritime order, without escalating tensions?
- To what extent can ASEAN's soft-power diplomacy — like cultural exchanges, education diplomacy, or ASEAN+3 platforms — be weaponized as tools of de-escalation and unity-building?
- How Should ASEAN be pushed to establish a maritime monitoring mechanism that ensures accountability in contested waters?
- What role can ASEAN-led bodies (e.g., ADMM, ARF, APSC) play in establishing conflict-avoidance protocols or maritime confidence-building measures in the region?