

## *Foreword*

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of ASEAN economies. They generate jobs and contribute to inclusive economic growth and prosperity of households and communities.

Despite their contributions and importance to the region's economy, SMEs continue to face significant barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential. This is particularly true for women entrepreneurs who are a vital piece of ASEAN's economy.

The Government of Canada is firmly committed to addressing these barriers together with our ASEAN partners. We believe that unlocking the region's entrepreneurial potential will help build more inclusive economies and grow the middle class.

Establishing a strong empirical foundation on which to build entrepreneurship is a critical first step and we are pleased to support ASEAN's efforts in this area.

This is consistent with Canada's approach as we rely strongly on evidence-based policymaking. We believe that through sound analysis and research, policymakers are better positioned to identify and implement relevant and effective policies and programs. They are also better equipped to monitor and measure progress, and make adjustments to achieve greater success.

For this reason, we are pleased to support the development of the ASEAN SME Policy Index 2018: Boosting Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth in partnership with internationally recognized policy institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA).

This instrument is an important call to action for ASEAN policymakers and supports a culture of learning, innovation and partnerships that is consistent with the ASEAN way. It also contributes to realising ASEAN's strategic goals and desired outcomes on SMEs as laid out in the Strategic Action Plan for SME Development 2016-2025.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring ASEAN SMEs, particularly women entrepreneurs, are competitive, resilient and able to achieve their full potential.

H.E. Marie-Louise Hannan  
Ambassador of Canada to ASEAN





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