

## ASIA CHALLENGE SIMULATION

### Ushering in the Asian Century: Implementing a Strategic Response to Global Climate Change and Democracy Protests in Asia

February 2022

The recently formed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) joined by fifteen nations on November 15, 2020, affirms its resolve and commitment to address the needs of our citizens during a period of both unprecedented challenges to the stability of our region and opportunities for greater cooperation, security, and prosperity. The threat of climate change presents one such urgent geopolitical crisis. According to the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change, the [IPCC](#) (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), climate change is reaching widespread, rapid, and intensifying levels. The IPCC projects “increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons” with heat extremes impacting “critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health.” The specter of global warming of “1.5 C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse emission[s]...threaten sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.” Additionally, according to the IPCC, climate change is intensifying the water cycle with more intense rain fall, flooding, and drought, and “coastal areas will see continued sea level rise throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century” with “extreme sea level events that previously occurred once 100 years” happening “every year by the end of this century.” The warming trends will further the crisis by quickening permafrost thawing, melting glaciers and ice sheets (leading to the loss of Arctic sea ice), and adversely impacting ocean ecosystems. Similarly, [The World Economic Forum](#) reports that “The [conservative](#) scientific consensus is that a 1.5°C increase in global temperature will generate a global sea-level rise of between 1.7 and 3.2 feet by 2100.” Around 90% of all coastal areas world-wide will be affected by this to varying degrees, with Asian cities being particularly vulnerable because “about four out of every five people impacted by sea-level rise by 2050 will live in East or South East Asia.” So called “delta cities” such as Guangzhou, Ho Chi Min City, Hong Kong, Manila, Melbourne, and Tokyo are particularly threatened by the reality of rising sea levels. Of further conce, according to [McKinsey](#), “by 2050, between 600 million and one billion people in Asia will be living in areas with a nonzero annual probability of lethal heat waves...[and] the probability of being exposed to a lethal heat wave at least once in the decade centered on 2050 could increase to 80 percent.” This statistic could lead to a loss of between “\$2.8 trillion and \$4.7 trillion of GDP in Asia annually” and “\$1.2 trillion loss in capital stock in Asia...[due to] riverline flooding in a given year by 2050.”

With such grave and urgent challenges facing us, we are committed to working with member states to ensure a coordinated and consequential response to climate change that utilizes all available RCEP resources to protect our planet and our collective well-being while also acknowledging that our economic viability depends on our ability to remain competitive in terms of productivity and trade policies.

Also central to the collective well-being of RCEP member states is the need to balance the intra and interstate political stability of our member nations with the protection of individual rights and civil liberties. Social unrest prompted by calls for the preservation or expansion of democratic freedoms has erupted across our region over the past several years and promises to continue and possibly increase if compromise by all parties is not achieved. RCEP has particular concerns about the economic impact of such unrest and heavy-handed government responses to it. According to the

[International Monetary Fund](#), “on average, major unrest events are followed by a 1 percentage point reduction in GDP six quarters after the event...unrest impedes growth.” As a trade partnership, RCEP has a vested interest the economic health of all of our member states. As such, political unrest is damaging to not only the member states experiencing it but to their trade partners and RCEP as a whole. At the same time, we recognize the importance of rule of law and the value of engaged citizen participation in politics. Our future economic, political, and social well-being is impacted by our success at achieving equity, liberty, and opportunity while maintaining the rules-based international order and stability. **To address these immediate and long-range policy matters, the following stipulations are proffered for collective consideration:**

## **PREAMBLE**

**WHEREAS** the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) seeks to deepen integration among member states and declare our shared commitment to promoting mutually beneficial policies, the following should be considered:

1. That we are a broad, diverse community historically divided by conflict and misgivings for centuries, now dedicated to jointly overcoming strategic challenges.
2. That RCEP is an institution that stands for mutually beneficial trade among our member states, support for the rule of law, and the upholding of each member state’s sovereignty.
3. That closer integration between member states will strengthen our shared values and create greater benefits for our citizens.
4. That this bloc will continue to build economic, political, and social partnerships that enhance Asia’s standard of living and expand RCEP’s global influence.
5. That we adopt policies that position Asia to withstand future economic, public health, and political crises through sound economic reforms, responsible foreign policies, technological cooperation, and investment in science and research.

## **Response to Global Climate Change**

### **Prioritizing Our Collective Response:**

**WHEREAS** RCEP decries the ever-increasing threat of global climate change, marked by untenable greenhouse gas emission levels and rising air and sea temperatures that threaten all life forms and ecosystems. The widespread, rapid and increasing intensity of climate change levels pose one of the greatest challenges to RCEP since its inception and has reinforced the need for enduring communication and cooperation between member states and their government agencies.

**WHEREAS** RCEP nations comprise many significant coastal populations that are and will continue to be severely impacted by climate change and RCEP “connects 30% of the world’s population and output, and “could add \$209 billion annually to world incomes, and \$500 billion to world trade by 2030.” ([Brookings](#)) Due to its outsized influence on global populations and the global economy, RCEP member states have the potential and responsibility to shape and impact an international response to climate change and ongoing mitigation efforts.

**WHEREAS** Article 1.3 of the RCEP agreement states the desire to “establish a modern, comprehensive, high-quality, and mutually beneficial economic partnership framework to facilitate the expansion of regional trade and investment and contribute to global economic growth and development,” member states recognize that intensifying levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and air and sea temperatures threaten the viability of the member states’ economic goals.

**WHEREAS** the RCEP agreement recognizes “the positive effect that regional trade agreements and arrangements can have in accelerating regional and global trade and investment liberalization, and their role in strengthening the open, free, and rules-based multilateral trading system,” these values and rules are thwarted by the failure or inability of member states to effectively address and take actionable steps toward mitigating the impending catastrophe of climate change’s effects.

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that we call on all member states to respond to the climate change crisis by calling for a collective series of actionable SDGs and other measures to address and reverse its catastrophic effects. By responding at both the national and RCEP level, we will maximize our effectiveness in halting and reversing the effects of climate change.

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that RCEP condemns those member states who have not taken an active, participatory role in the recent 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) convened in November, 2021. These states, in some instances, may lead the world in greenhouse gas emissions and should announce more aggressive emissions cuts targets.

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that member states, while acknowledging the importance of economic stability and growth for their citizens—especially in emerging RCEP member economies—we also acknowledge the long-term and in some instances irreversible harm that climate change has and will continue to unleash on the global economy, from supply chain disruption to population displacement. Member states will also acknowledge that real economic gain can be achieved through efforts to mitigate and reverse climate change, namely by investing in green, clean, and renewable energy.

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that member states reserve the right to respond to climate change outlier nations with trade sanctions, diplomatic censure, and other measures deemed appropriate.

## **Response to Democracy Protests**

### **Prioritizing Our Collective Response:**

**WHEREAS** the RCEP agreement seeks to “adopt policies that position Asia to withstand future economic, public health, and political crises through sound economic reforms, responsible foreign policies, technological cooperation, and investment in science and research.”

**WHEREAS** the RCEP agreement recognizes the desire “to broaden and deepen economic integration in the region, strengthen economic growth and equitable economic

development, and advance economic cooperation, through this Agreement, which will build upon existing economic linkages among the Parties.”

**WHEREAS** the RCEP agreement aspires to “to strengthen their economic partnership to create new employment opportunities, raise living standards, and improve the general welfare of their peoples.”

**WHEREAS** the RCEP agreement recognizes that “good governance and a predictable, transparent, and consistent business environment will lead to the improvement of economic efficiency and the development of trade and investment”

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that the member states address the adverse effects that social and political unrest and the obstruction of civil liberties have on the economic growth, public health, and equitable economic development of the region.

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that member states create opportunities for mediation between government entities and citizen groups in the interest of ensuring political stability and harmony. Without this stability, goals that are central to RCEP’s goals--new employment opportunities, higher living standards, and the general welfare of its citizens—are unachievable.

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that member states seek out trade and investment opportunities, including participation in regional and global supply chains, with those fellow member states who make good faith efforts and take practical steps to resolve political conflicts with their citizens through compromise and equitable treatment while reserving the right to limit collaboration and opportunities with those member states who fail to achieve these resolutions.