

## NEWS RELEASE

### **The Asia Foundation and the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) Co-Hosts Regional Economic Cooperation Forum on ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) & Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

**Bangkok, Thailand, March 19, 2014** — On March 28, 2014, The Asia Foundation, together with its local partner the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), will host a one-day regional economic cooperation forum on “Making AEC Work for SMEs.” The bilingual forum will highlight the important role that SMEs play in the ASEAN economies and will address key potentials and challenges in light of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)’s goal of regional economic integration by 2015. The forum is designed to be interactive with active exchange of information from relevant speakers and audience.

The Asia Foundation is committed to enhancing SMEs’ activities in the ASEAN region and making their business environment more conducive under the framework of the AEC. With this objective in mind, the forum will gather representatives of the ASEAN member states from the government agencies, SMEs, and representatives of business associations, as well as international organizations, diplomatic missions, and academics to provide participants with critical and practical information and relevant experiences toward full utilization of AEC potentials.

Through panel discussions with expert panelists, participants in the forum will contribute to knowledge-sharing and engage in interactive and inspirational discussions on some of the most compelling issues for SME business operations in ASEAN. With SMEs playing an increasingly important role in ASEAN economies especially in terms of the number of enterprises, employment, and value-added to GDP, the forum will highlight four key SMEs topics relevant to the AEC: 1) Trade Expansion in AEC; 2) Investment Opportunities in AEC; 3) AEC Oriented SME Development; and 4) Successful SMEs in ASEAN: Overcoming Constraints and Challenges. As SMEs manage and prepare themselves for the unprecedented challenges and opportunities arising from the emergence of AEC, the forum will be an important step in the path towards regional economic cooperation for SMEs.

For more information about the forum, please visit [www.tdri.or.th](http://www.tdri.or.th). There will be a live broadcast of the forum at [www.tdri.or.th](http://www.tdri.or.th) and [www.asiafoundation.org/country/overview/thailand](http://www.asiafoundation.org/country/overview/thailand) and a summary of the forum will be provided once it is concluded on both websites

#### **About The Asia Foundation**

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our programs address critical issues affecting Asia in the 21st century—governance and law, economic development, women’s empowerment, environment, and regional cooperation. In addition, our Books for Asia and professional exchange programs are among the ways we encourage Asia’s continued development as a peaceful, just, and thriving region of the world.

Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals. In 2013, the Foundation provided nearly \$114 million in direct program support and distributed textbooks and other educational materials valued at over \$10 million.

#### **Thailand Development Research Institute**

The Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) was established as a public policy research institute in 1984. Its legal form is that of a private non-profit foundation. It provides technical analysis (mostly but not entirely in economic areas) to various public agencies to help formulate policies to support long-term economic and social development in Thailand