

海底ケーブルの強靱化および復旧に関する ASEAN 強化ガイドライン：枠組みと実施の展望

Enhanced ASEAN Guidelines for Strengthening Resilience and Repair of Submarine Cables: Framework and Implementation Outlook

【要約】

2026 年に採択された「海底ケーブル強靱化・復旧に関する ASEAN 強化ガイドライン」は、2019 年版を改訂し、急増するデータ通信需要に対応するための地域協力枠組みを示したものである。海底ケーブルを重要インフラと位置付け、損傷防止、許認可手続きの簡素化、規制透明性の向上、船舶規制の緩和、関係者連携の強化を方針として掲げる。

具体的には、保護区域設定や申請情報の標準化、許可取得期間の短縮などを推進するが、非拘束的枠組みのため各国で実施度合いに差が生じる可能性がある。ASEAN のデジタル基盤強化を支える重要な指針であり、通信・海洋関連分野での事業機会拡大につながる。

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Title: Enhanced ASEAN Guidelines for Strengthening Resilience and Repair of Submarine Cables: Framework and Implementation Outlook

Country/Region: ASEAN, Indonesia

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Lead Paragraph

The Enhanced ASEAN Guidelines for Strengthening Resilience and Repair of Submarine Cables were [adopted](#) on January 16, 2026, at the ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting (ADGMIN) in Vietnam. The Guidelines update and replace the original [2019 version](#), which was endorsed at the ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting to set out best practices for streamlining submarine cable protection, maintenance, and repair across ASEAN member states. The enhancement was recommended by the Mid-Term Review of the ASEAN Digital Masterplan (ADM) 2025, which was endorsed at the 4th ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting in 2024, and reflects the rapid expansion of the region's submarine cable industry, with Internet bandwidth usage across ASEAN having grown substantially since the original Guidelines were issued. As most international data is transmitted through submarine fiber optic cables, these systems are recognized as critical infrastructure underpinning ASEAN's digital economy and the goals of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Vision and Strategic Objectives

Overall Vision:

"To promote regional cooperation and harmonisation in the protection, maintenance, and repair of submarine cables across ASEAN, minimising permit requirements and costs, and expediting repair processes."

Five Guiding Principles confirmed in the Guidelines, consistent with the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):

- **Strengthen Cable Resilience** — Prevent damage to submarine cables across the region through coordinated protection measures and best practices
 - **Streamline Permit Processes** — Simplify and harmonize the application of permits required to conduct repairs and maintenance across multiple ASEAN jurisdictions
 - **Promote Regulatory Transparency** — Publish clear guidelines on application requirements, permit processes, and contact points; appoint a single point of contact per member state where possible
 - **Simplify Vessel Regulations** — Streamline and, where possible, apply exemptions to national regulations for vessels working on submarine cables
 - **Establish National Multi-Stakeholder Forums** — Encourage the creation of national forums comprising regulators, cable owners, and operators to coordinate and harmonize repair and maintenance procedures
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Key Provisions of the Enhanced Guidelines

The Guidelines are **non-binding** and serve to promote regional cooperation and harmonisation, consistent with ASEAN member states' obligations under international law. They are structured around three operational areas confirmed in Annex A:

1. Best Practices for Submarine Cable Protection

- Demarcating submarine cable protection zones on nautical charts, with sufficient separation from human and marine activities, using information shared with licensed cable operators only
- Requiring submarine cable operators to notify authorities of their cable's Route Position List (RPL) after installation and repair operations
- Deploying geospatial monitoring and alert systems to warn ships from entering submarine cable corridors and protection zones
- Maintaining updated nautical charts made available to all stakeholders engaged in the marine environment
- Coordinating early between submarine cable operators and relevant marine activity operators when planning marine projects

2. Information Requirements for Permit Applications

- Permit applications should contain only relevant information, standardized across ASEAN member states, covering: applicant and cable system introduction; project description; operations overview and Work Method Statement; work methodology including hydrographic survey, ROV survey, grappling, splicing, laying, and burial; vessel and crew particulars; communication plan; work schedule; safety of navigation plan consistent with IMO conventions including MARPOL 73/78 and COLREGs; contingency and emergency plans; and contact details of responsible personnel
- A daily progress report may be submitted to relevant government authorities in accordance with each member state's regulations

3. Best Practices for Streamlining Permit Approval

- Appointing a single government agency per member state to coordinate across all relevant agencies and facilitate permit issuance
- Streamlining approval processes to issue necessary permits within 7 to 10 working days where possible, without requiring additional information beyond what is already provided
- Offering annual pre-clearance of repair vessels and crew in the event of cable repair works
- Clarifying importation requirements and customs duty obligations for ships entering territorial waters for repairs
- Not requiring port entry for submarine cable ships conducting repairs beyond territorial waters
- Simplifying customs duties on submarine cable equipment to facilitate quick access to spare parts
- Not imposing customs duties, taxes, or fees on repair activities conducted beyond territorial waters or on vessels transiting through the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)
- Not defining submarine cable repairs as cabotage, and exempting such activities from national cabotage laws to avoid delays

- Not applying flag or crewing restrictions that obstruct foreign cable repair vessels from operating in territorial sea, archipelagic waters, EEZ, or continental shelf where such restrictions would conflict with international obligations
 - Exchanging data on submarine cable incidents to identify damage patterns and gaps in protection and repair efforts
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Jurisdictional Framework

The Guidelines recognize the different legal regimes applicable under UNCLOS across maritime zones – the Territorial Sea (up to 12 nautical miles), Archipelagic Waters, Exclusive Economic Zone (up to 200 nautical miles), Continental Shelf, and High Seas – and direct that permit requirements and operational constraints for submarine cable projects be guided accordingly. Each ASEAN member state is required to designate a national Implementing Body responsible for coordinating, implementing, and managing activities under the Guidelines.

Alignment with Broader Frameworks

The Enhanced Guidelines are directly embedded within ASEAN's broader digital infrastructure agenda:

- Operationalize Enabling Action 2.2 of the [ASEAN Digital Masterplan \(ADM\) 2025](#), which calls for moving toward best practice permission and access rights for submarine cable repair across ASEAN
 - Respond to the ADM 2025 Mid-Term Review recommendation to establish an ASEAN Working Group to enhance the original 2019 Guidelines and strengthen inter-member state cooperation through sharing of best practices and information
 - Support the goals of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to reduce developmental gaps and enhance competitiveness through improved regional Internet connectivity
 - Reference international best practices from the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) Government Best Practices for Protection and Promoting Resilience of Submarine Telecommunication Cables, and the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP) Good Practices for Subsea Cables Policy
 - Connect directly to the ASEAN Power Grid Financing Initiative (APGF) Subsea Power Cable Development Framework, as both initiatives address governance gaps for subsea infrastructure across ASEAN's archipelagic geography
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Final Assessment

The Enhanced Guidelines represent a meaningful but deliberately calibrated step forward in ASEAN's approach to submarine cable governance. Their non-binding nature reflects the political reality of member states with different domestic legal frameworks, maritime jurisdictions, and regulatory capacities. The 7 to 10 working day permit target, the single-agency coordination model, and the explicit exemption of cable repairs from cabotage laws are practically significant provisions that, if implemented, could meaningfully reduce the cost and delays that currently characterize multi-jurisdictional submarine cable repair operations in the region.

However, the non-binding character is also the Guidelines' central limitation. Uniform implementation across all eleven member states is not guaranteed, and the degree to which individual Implementing Bodies actually streamline processes will vary significantly based on national regulatory capacity, policy priorities and the sensitivity of cabotage and vessel access rules, which touch on national sovereignty concerns that have historically been difficult to harmonize in Southeast Asia.

For Japanese companies, the Enhanced Guidelines open structured opportunities across three areas:

1. **Submarine Cable Operations and Repair (immediate: 2026)** — Japanese cable operators and marine engineering firms (including those with established cable repair vessel fleets) stand to benefit directly from clearer permit processes, pre-clearance of vessels, and the explicit exemption of repair activities from cabotage restrictions. Firms should engage with national Implementing Bodies early to map each member state's actual implementation of the Guidelines against the published best practices
2. **Infrastructure Investment and Technology Supply (near-term: 2026-2028)** — The Guidelines' focus on geospatial monitoring, nautical chart modernization, and alert systems creates demand for Japanese maritime technology providers and hydrographic survey companies, particularly in member states with lower existing cable protection infrastructure
3. **Subsea Connectivity and Digital Infrastructure Projects (ongoing: 2026-2030)** — As ASEAN scales up both its digital infrastructure agenda under ADM 2030 and its energy interconnection agenda under the APGF, demand for new submarine cable installations (alongside the repair and maintenance capacity to support them) will grow substantially. Japanese trading houses and infrastructure developers with presence across ASEAN are well-positioned to participate in this build-out, provided they engage with national regulatory contact points early and track member state implementation of the Guidelines over time.