

**SPEECH BY H.E. MR. LE LUONG MINH
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN
AT 5th CAUCUS MEETING OF THE ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
(AIPA)
DA LAT CITY, LAM DONG PROVINCE, VIET NAM, 12 MAY 2013**

Excellency, Madam Tong Thi Phong, Vice-President of the National Assembly of Viet Nam representing the National Assembly of the host country,

Excellency, Mr. Nguyen Xuan Tien, Chairman of the People's Committee of Lam Dong Province,

Honorable Members of AIPA Delegations,

Observer Delegations and Special Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to express my appreciation to the National Assembly of Viet Nam for inviting me as Secretary-General of ASEAN to participate in this important Meeting of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Caucus.

I would like to commend AIPA for the continued support for the efforts to achieve ASEAN goals, especially those to build the ASEAN Community by 2015. Building the ASEAN Community requires the support from the ASEAN legislatures. As parliamentarians, you represent the voice and the aspirations of our citizens. Your role in ensuring that ASEAN's goals and regional commitments are reflected and transposed into national plans, strategies and legislations is essential in laying the foundation for the ASEAN Community.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the recent 22nd ASEAN Summit in Brunei, ASEAN Leaders were encouraged by the progress in the implementation of the ASEAN Charter and the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community. They agreed to further intensify work to realise an ASEAN Community that is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible in order to take advantage of current and future opportunities, and to effectively respond to regional and international challenges. I wish to share with you major of the developments of ASEAN towards achieving the ASEAN Community by 2015.

On the Political-Security pillar, creating an environment of peace and stability in the region remains a priority. The reaffirmation of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia as the key code of conduct governing inter-state relations in the region, the determination to strengthen cooperation in addressing the issues of terrorism and transnational crimes, as well as the commitment to the full operationalisation of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) are testimony to the efforts of ASEAN Member States to this end.

On the Economic pillar, 259 or 77.54% of the measures due under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint have been implemented. Commitment has been made to further progress the development of the Work Programme on ASEAN Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) and realising the ASEAN Single Window, the ASEAN Customs Transit System, as well as strengthening the Protocol on an Enhanced Dispute Settlement Mechanism. Furthermore, more efforts will be made to foster Small and Medium Enterprises, to the realisation of the

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and to the implementation of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Food Security.

With regards to the Socio-Cultural Pillar, a Mid-Term Review of the implementation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint is being undertaken. Our Leaders recognise the key role the young people and women of ASEAN play in building the Community. The importance of ensuring the development and sustainability of the region and to the- community building efforts cannot be understated. For 2013, among others, ASEAN is prioritizing its efforts to address climate change and disaster management. These are two important challenges for the region that have to be addressed as it's devastating effects can threaten our community.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

In their efforts to lay a roadmap for ASEAN's development, our leaders and officials had attached great importance to the need to ensure its sustainability. This -is laid out in the ASEAN Social and Cultural Community Blueprint, and it is embedded in the economic, political, security, and social strategies and actions of the three Community Blueprints. The Roadmap essentially spells out the efforts and means to ensure the achievement of a Green ASEAN.

At the 16th ASEAN Summit in Hanoi on 9 April 2010, the ASEAN Leaders adopted a Statement on Sustained Recovery and Development, which highlighted their determination to promote green growth, through, among others, investments in long-term environmental sustainability, and the sustainable use of natural resources with a view to ensuring economic diversity and resilience.

In implementing this commitment, ASEAN and its Member States have undertaken major initiatives, such as supporting the adoption of Incheon Declaration on Green Growth by the UNESCAP member countries, the establishment of several partnerships between Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam with the Global Green Growth Institute; Indonesia's recognition at the G20 Seoul Summit of the green growth as an inherent part of sustainable development; as well as all ASEAN Member States' agreement with the Republic of Korea on Forestry Cooperation on the sidelines of the 14th ASEAN-ROK Summit, which was aimed at ensuring sustainable forest management and preservation in ASEAN -countries.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

The path to a green ASEAN is not going to be easy. Even though ASEAN has laid out its ambitious goals and plans, the success of its Roadmap depends to a large extent on the ability of ASEAN to tackle challenges both inside and outside the region.

ASEAN must first **narrow the socio-economic divide** among, and within countries of the region. It must do this while balancing the demand for economic development with the need for environmental protection. Narrowing the development gap shall remain an important task to ensure the benefits of ASEAN integration are fully realized.

Secondly, ASEAN needs to step up efforts to minimise the **damage caused by natural disasters, and to reduce man-made disasters**. Recognizing that the region is exposed to typhoons, floods, droughts, landslides, tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015 calls for ASEAN Member States to strengthen effective mechanisms and capabilities to prevent and reduce disaster losses in lives, and in social, economic and environmental assets and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.

Third, ASEAN has to protect its **freshwater resources as well as marine and coastal ecosystems**. The ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on Water Resources Management will continue to be implemented. ASEAN, through the implementation of the ASEAN Criteria for Marine Heritage Areas and ASEAN Criteria for National Protected Areas, will establish a representative network of protected areas to conserve critical habitats by 2015. The ASEAN Leaders, together with their counterparts from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Timor Leste, have agreed to work together under the aegis of the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security to protect the rich biological resources in the region's seas.

Fourth, ASEAN needs to proactively **reverse the trend of deforestation and loss of biodiversity** in the region which hosts an abundance of animals and plants that are unique to this region. The role and capacity of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity will be enhanced to enable it to function as a regional centre of excellence in promoting biodiversity conservation and management. The ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme will be strengthened, and it will be utilised as a platform for the management of ecosystem-based protected areas by 2015. The tri-country Heart of Borneo Initiative by Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia to protect the tropical rainforests on the island of Borneo, is an excellent example of how ASEAN Member States are working together to conserve some of the most important forests in the world.

Fifth, ASEAN has to **improve the air quality and reduce the threats from transboundary haze**. ASEAN has implemented the Sustainable Cities Award in 2008 and soon will start work on initiatives such as low carbon society, compact cities, eco-cities and environmentally sustainable transport. Protocols for the implementation and operationalisation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution will be developed, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control will be operationalised and the ASEAN Transboundary Haze Pollution Control Fund will be beefed up.

Sixth, ASEAN has to seriously address **climate change** through both mitigation and adaptation measures. Although the region is only a minor contributor to the problem, it is still vulnerable to the impact of climate change, particularly that from rising sea levels on human settlements, agricultural productivity, water resources and biodiversity.

Seventh, while addressing the pressing national and regional economic, social and environmental issues, ASEAN must also address **global environmental issues** at the same time. To date, most ASEAN Member States have also ratified several multilateral agreements concerning climate change, protection of the ozone layer, conservation of biodiversity and management of hazardous waste. But there is still a lot of work to be done.

Finally, ASEAN has to continue **strengthening and streamlining regional institutional arrangements**, to accelerate the establishment of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural community. The vision of a clean and green ASEAN Community will require the presence of strong institutions able to make binding decisions, mobilise resources and support worthwhile programmes and projects, engage other international and regional organisations, civil society organisations and the private sector in meaningful partnerships.

Excellencies;

Distinguished Delegates;

Regional cooperation on rural development and poverty eradication are also part of ASEAN's agenda in fostering its regional integration. As an ASEAN goal, the two concerns are being addressed by the ASEAN Ministers and Senior Officials Meetings on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. These two mechanisms were established in 1997 as a response to the economic crisis that hit the Southeast Asian region then. They are committed towards eradicating poverty, with particular emphasis on promoting the

development of progressive, prosperous and self-reliant rural communities, by improving access to productive natural resources, financial and support services such as microcredit, and social protection.

The ASEAN Ministers and Senior Officials Meetings on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication work with ASEAN Dialogue Partners, UN Agencies, international and regional organisations, and other stakeholders such as civil society organisations and the private sector. Their various contributions to rural development and poverty eradication goals in the region are building blocks towards the successful implementation of the Framework Action Plan. Since last year, Senior Officials Meetings on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication have started an annual dialogue forum consisting of Government officials and non-governmental organisations from the region to exchange views of various issues pertaining to poverty eradication and rural development.

Excellencies,

We are encouraged that historically, economic growth has accompanied rapid poverty reduction in ASEAN. But the pace and scope of development and growth is not identical. According to the 2012 ASEAN Community in Figures, ASEAN's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has reached an average Purchasing Power Parity or PPP) of US\$ 5,581. Intra-ASEAN Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) arose more than 30- fold during the decade, most notably from 2009 onwards, from around US\$0.9 billion in 2000 to around US\$26.3 billion in 2011. This increase is substantially larger than that of inward FDI from the rest of

the world (which increased five-fold). Real per capita GDP measured by PPP, also grew rapidly by 94 per cent from US\$2882 in 2000 to US\$5581 in 2011. This reflected rapid growth for 145 % of ASEAN-6 and 87 % for CLMV countries during the period. In addition, the 2012 ASEAN Brief and 2011 ASEAN Millennium Development Goals or MDG Report also highlighted remarkable progress of ASEAN in reducing poverty. The proportion of population living on less than PPP US\$1.25 a day in ASEAN declined significantly between 2000 and 2010, from approximately 45% to 16% in CLMV countries and from around 29% to 15% in ASEAN-6.

Excellencies;

Distinguished Delegates:

It has been one of the main concerns of ASEAN to narrow the development gaps among its Member States, particularly between the ASEAN-6 (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) and CLMV Countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam) to ensure the benefits of the ASEAN integration. Disparities however, still exist. For instance, according to the 2011 ASEAN MDGs Report, in 2010, the maternal mortality ratio for Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar are still above 200 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births while that for Singapore is 3 per 100,000 live births.

Having said that, we are also encouraged that the ASEAN's agenda of narrowing the development gaps has shown significant progress. While in 1990, the poverty rate in CLMV was about 1.64 times that of the ASEAN-6. By 2010, the ratio had gone down to 1.1 which led

to a reduced disparity in the region.

Mr. President;

Excellencies;

Honourable Members;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Our common aspiration is to improve the quality of life of our 600 million plus citizens, while sustaining the natural ecosystems within which they live. This requires the collaboration of all stakeholders. I am optimistic that the Caucus will be contributing to the enhancement of related legislative and policy initiatives in the region, as well as to the sharing of best practices in the areas of green growth and poverty eradication.

I wish the meeting fruitful deliberations-

Thank you.

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