

Press Statement

1st ASEAN-MERCOSUR Ministerial Meeting

Brasilia, 24 November 2008

1. The 1st ASEAN-MERCOSUR Ministerial Meeting was held on 24 November 2008, in Brasilia. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Ambassador Celso Amorim, Minister of External Relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil, *pro tempore* president of MERCOSUR (Common Market of the South) and H.E. Sompong Amornvivat, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, the current Chair of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). The Meeting was attended by the Ministers and high-level representatives of ASEAN and MERCOSUR Member Countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.
2. The Ministers recalled the informal meeting between MERCOSUR and ASEAN Foreign Ministers held in Brasilia on 22 August 2007 on the sidelines of the III Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for East Asia Latin-America Cooperation (FEALAC). On that occasion, ASEAN and MERCOSUR Ministers had expressed their common aspiration to explore ways to further strengthen inter-regional ties, including trade and investment cooperation.
3. The Meeting held an in-depth discussion and exchange of views on various international issues of common interest in the spirit of South-South cooperation, including the WTO - Doha Round and the international financial situation. It also considered developments in MERCOSUR and ASEAN as well as ways and means to enhance MERCOSUR-ASEAN cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, intellectual property, energy security, food security, agriculture, transportation, tourism, environment, people-to-people contacts, technical cooperation and other areas of mutual interest.
4. The Meeting stressed the constructive roles of both MERCOSUR and ASEAN in the promotion of peace, stability, prosperity, regional integration and sustainable development as well as community-building in their respective regions.
5. The Meeting reaffirmed MERCOSUR's and ASEAN's commitment to successfully concluding the WTO Doha Round, in a fair and balanced manner, and welcomed recent declarations of world leaders in this regard.
6. The Meeting recalled the importance of the elimination of all forms of export subsidies to agricultural products and substantial reduction of trade distorting agricultural support in major subsidizing countries, with a view to promoting rural development in developing countries.

7. The Meeting stressed the importance of incorporating a development dimension in international discussions concerning intellectual property, as a meaningful contribution to economic and social progress in developing countries, to preserve policy spaces necessary for ensuring access to knowledge and promoting public goals in the fields of health and culture, as well as sustainable environment.

8. The Meeting emphasized the strong commitment of ASEAN and MERCOSUR to the Bali Roadmap and the need to preserve momentum at the 14th COP of UNFCCC in Poznan so as to reach an agreed outcome on climate change at the 15th COP of the UNFCCC to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

9. The Meeting considered the international financial crisis and its effects on emerging economies and noted that due to their responsible economic policies, ASEAN and MERCOSUR countries are in a more favorable condition to face the crisis than in the past. They stressed the importance of preventing the crisis, originated in developed countries, from eroding recent achievements in both regions in terms of social inclusion and poverty reduction. Welcoming the Washington Declaration of the G-20 Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy, the Meeting noted that developing countries have been the main engine of world economic growth, a fact which gives them all the credentials for a more relevant role in the discussions on a new international financial architecture. In this regard, the Ministers underscored the need to reform the multilateral financial institutions, in order to make them more legitimate and effective.

10. The Meeting recognized the importance of inter-regional cooperation in order to improve energy security and expressed the view that ASEAN and MERCOSUR should work towards the identification of areas of cooperation in order to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, such as energy efficiency and alternative and renewable sources of energy. The Meeting noted the potential of alternative and renewable sources of energy in addressing the challenge of global energy security and in promoting economic development, including employment. Both regional groupings emphasized the need for more predictable and stable prices for energy commodities such as oil and gas.

11. To address the challenge of food security, the Meeting recognized the importance of developing agricultural productivity through, among others, greater investment, technology transfers, improvement on infrastructure, as well as research and development in our regions.

12. The Meeting emphasized the need to foster people-to-people ties at all levels through the promotion of cooperation in culture, tourism and sports, the exchange of visits of

students/youths, academicians, parliamentary members and journalists as well as the dissemination of relevant information among member countries of both regional groupings.

13. Recognizing the importance of international trade as an engine for economic growth and social development, and that bilateral and bi-regional economic partnership arrangements significantly contribute to the expansion of world trade, the Meeting agreed that closer region-to-region economic cooperation between ASEAN and MERCOSUR should follow a building-block approach. In this regard, both sides shall continue to engage in a process of dialogue as a platform for closer economic cooperation, with an initial focus on information exchange and sharing of experiences on regional economic integration and trade agreements, trade and investment promotion and facilitation, and promotion of cooperation between the two regions' business communities and economic research institutions.

14. Acknowledging the importance of enhancing linkages among the two regions, the Meeting expressed the view to explore additional areas for future cooperation in fields of common interest and mutual benefits, among others, in addressing poverty alleviation, health and communicable diseases, disaster management and security challenges.

15. The Meeting agreed that a SOM shall be held in Kuala Lumpur in March 2009 to prepare a region-to-region Roadmap and Action Plan on the issues of mutual interest discussed in the 1st ASEAN-MERCOSUR Ministerial Meeting.

16. The proposed Plan of Action will be submitted to an ASEAN-MERCOSUR Ministerial Meeting to be held at the margin of the next U.N. General Assembly.

17. The Meeting expressed its deep appreciation to Brazil for her hospitality and excellent arrangements for this Meeting. The Meeting also decided to hold the second meeting in an ASEAN country no later than June 2010.
