

Keynote Speech
by H.E. Le Luong Minh,
Secretary-General of ASEAN
at the International Conference on the Prospect of ASEAN-ROK Relations
“Ushering in a New Era of Collaboration and Co-prosperity:
ASEAN Community and its Implications on ASEAN-Korea Relations and
East Asia Cooperation”
26 February 2014, Seoul

Excellency Mr. U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Chair of ASEAN,
Excellency Mr. Kyung-soo Lee, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea,
Excellency Mr. Chung Hae-Moon, Secretary-General of the ASEAN-ROK Centre,
Excellencies, Ambassadors,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we are celebrating 25 years of the ASEAN-Republic of Korea partnership, I thank the ASEAN-Korea Centre for the initiative of organizing this International Conference and giving us the opportunity to discuss ways to further strengthen the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Five years of implementation of the measures defined in the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community since it was adopted, to date, less than two years before the deadline of December 2015, overall about 80% of the measures due under the three ASEAN Community Blueprints have been implemented. The result of the implementation of the Blueprints over the past 5 years has changed fundamentally the landscape of ASEAN in each of the 3 pillars of the Community. With enhanced political cohesion, economic integration, social responsibility, the narrowed gap of development within and amongst Member States and the fact that ASEAN has become more connected not only physically but also institutionally and people- to-people, the standing of ASEAN in the region and in the world has been elevated to a highest level ever. Politically, with peace, security and stability in our region basically ensured, ASEAN has been increasingly speaking with one voice on regional and global issues of common interest such as the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East, counter-terrorism, pandemics and climate change. Economically, substantial gains have been achieved in eliminating tariffs, facilitating trade and investment, integrating capital and aviation markets, enhancing food security, narrowing development gaps and promoting cooperation with external partners, all this contributing to ASEAN's ability to sustain growth in the region despite the volatile external environment resulting from the recent global and Eurozone crisis. Socially, with the promotion of education and youth and cultural exchanges, progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, greater attention to disadvantaged groups such as disabled people, elements of a caring and sharing society are emerging. With approximately 20% of the measures left for

implementation in the next 2 years, we are basically on track in Community building.

Such progress has strengthened ASEAN itself as a platform for dialogue and cooperation to preserve and enhance peace and security, a locomotive for open trade, investment and economic growth in the region while maintaining its unity in diversity and its central role in regional mechanisms.

Positive impacts of such progress in the process of Community building on external relations are reflected in the number of non-ASEAN countries having acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia or the TAC, which is 22 of late, 2 applications pending approval, and in the number of countries having appointed their envoys to ASEAN, which is 78. Those positive impacts also find their expression in the fact that ASEAN's relations with all major partners have moved far beyond trade, investment economic cooperation to more comprehensive partnership encompassing joint projects and activities in all major spheres.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In that context, with confidence in the prospect of a three-pillared Community established by 2015, ASEAN has already started work on a Post-2015 Vision with a view to setting a firm foundation for a stronger ASEAN Community.

While concrete elements of such a vision are still to be developed, there has been broad agreement between Member States on its thrust. Member States shared the view that since Community-building is a process, a work in progress rather than an event, the Post-2015 Vision should be one to enhance and consolidate the ASEAN Community through a continued but deeper and more comprehensive process of integration. The ultimate objective is to build an ASEAN that is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible, an ASEAN that is people-oriented, people-centred and rules-based, an ASEAN Community that is well integrated into the global community nations. It should build upon the achievements recorded in the implementation of the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009-2015) and addressing the needs of ASEAN in the new phase of development. While integration and peace and stability will remain the preconditions for the region's economic growth, the Post-2015 Vision would lay a greater focus on improving the living conditions of the 600 million people of ASEAN. Thus it should set concrete goals in economic growth, poverty reduction and narrowing development gaps with a view to ensuring equitable and sustainable development for all Member States.

As ASEAN continues developing and strengthening an ASEAN identity reflecting its unity in diversity, further promoting ASEAN cooperation in such areas as culture, people-to-people connectivity, tourism, education, sports, ASEAN would continue to strengthen its existing Dialogue Relations and, at the same time, reach out to new potential partners. In this process of global integration, ASEAN's Post-2015 Vision will need to be aligned to the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda.

For it to effectively carry out such an ambitious Community building and strengthening agenda, ASEAN institutions and mechanisms would need to be strengthened.

And such an ambitious agenda will have significant implications for ASEAN's external relations, including and especially its relations with its immediate East Asian partners. A strong, united and prosperous ASEAN Community will certainly be an important factor for ensuring peace, stability, prosperity and cooperation in East Asia and the Asia-Pacific. As ASEAN is embarking towards these goals, we acknowledge the need to deepen and enhance ASEAN's dialogue partnership and external relations.

The ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations have come a long way since the establishment of our partnership 25 years ago. Our relations have expanded to cover a wide range of areas of political-security, economic and social-cultural cooperation. The Republic of Korea has been one of the most active and important partners of ASEAN in regional cooperation mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three, the East Asia Summit (EAS). Trade between ASEAN and the ROK continues to grow steadily. The ROK is now the fifth largest trading partner of ASEAN while ASEAN has become the second largest trading partner of the ROK. The ROK has extended continuous support for ASEAN's Community-building efforts and ASEAN's central role in the regional mechanisms.

The commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations is a good opportunity for us not only to reflect on past achievements but also to explore new ways to further promote and strengthen our cooperation on the

basis of the many common interests that we share. The commemorative activities to be undertaken this year culminating in the ASEAN-ROK Special Summit which will be held in December will be a series of meaningful events to highlight further the significance of our Strategic Partnership and map out direction for ASEAN-ROK relations in the years to come.

At this important juncture, we need to seize the new opportunities, build upon the current momentum and tap our potentials to further strengthen and deepen ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership. Looking ahead, ASEAN-ROK cooperation should be aligned with, and in support of, the ASEAN's Post-2015 vision so as to enhance complementarity between them. The future ASEAN-ROK Plan of Action, in furtherance of the current one which will expire in 2015, should identify measures/activities corresponding to the needs of ASEAN in the new stage of the ASEAN Community.

In so doing, there are a number of areas that ASEAN-ROK relations should focus on, among others:

The first is to intensify economic cooperation in pursuit of a shared prosperity between ASEAN and the ROK, and contributing to the overall economic growth and prosperity in East Asia. It is important to maintain the growth momentum of trade towards achieving the target of US\$ 150 billion by 2015 by fully utilizing and further liberalizing and improving the ASEAN-ROK Free Trade Area (AKFTA). Meanwhile, we should aim towards the timely conclusion of the negotiations of a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) by 2015, which would make the RCEP the second largest trade agreement

framework after the WTO further strengthening the role of the East Asian region in the global economy.

Second, in continuing to strengthen political-security dialogue and cooperation, we will need to enhance mutual understanding and contribute to the maintenance of peace and security in the region. We should promote cooperation on areas of mutual concern such as combating terrorism and transnational crimes, maintenance of maritime security and safety, disaster management and relief, and humanitarian assistance, fighting piracy and cyber-crime, etc.

Third, ASEAN looks forward to the ROK's support for enhancing ASEAN Connectivity as well as connectivity between ASEAN and the ROK and in East Asia, through the consultation mechanism that the ROK has established to work with the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC). We look forward to exploring potential cooperation in infrastructure, information and communication technology (ICT), mobilisation of innovative financing for connectivity, including through public-private partnership (PPP).

Fourth, ASEAN looks forwards to the ROK's continued support for narrowing development gaps and enhancing regional connectivity, particularly through the Mekong-ROK cooperation framework.

Fifth, nurturing the friendship between ASEAN and the ROK should always be a focus, through promoting two-way cultural and people-to-people exchanges especially among the younger generation and in the areas of academic, intellectual, arts, sports and tourism.

Six, we should enhance cooperation on addressing major global and trans-boundary challenges such as climate change and the environment, including through close cooperation on low carbon green growth policy and the use of environmentally-friendly technology, water management and forestry cooperation, in which ASEAN is interested to learn from the ROK's experiences.

Finally, while pursuing the objectives of ASEAN-ROK relations, we should also ensure that they are placed in the broader context of East Asia in the interests of our region and beyond. Therefore, we should continue to enhance collaboration and coordination in the broader regional frameworks, including in the ongoing work of the East Asian Vision Group 2 (EAVG 2) to promote cooperation in East Asia in which the ROK has been playing an active role.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a key channel for enhancing trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the ROK, the ASEAN-ROK Centre has been playing and will continue to have an important role to play in promoting ASEAN-ROK cooperation. I believe that this Conference, with its distinguished audience and the exchange of views and discussions, will be another meaningful platform to build our common desire and joint efforts to bring ASEAN-ROK relations to new heights.

With that, I wish you all a successful Conference! Thank you very much!