



**Keynote Address by H.E. S. Pushpanathan, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN
at the National Resilience Institute of the Republic of Indonesia Panel Discussion
on ASEAN Leadership Model to Strengthen ASEAN Community in the Context of
Regional Resilience, Jakarta, 23 September 2009**

“Leadership for a New ASEAN in the 21st Century”

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Excellencies, the Permanent Representatives to ASEAN

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is indeed a honour and pleasure for me to speak at this Panel Discussion on Leadership Model for ASEAN, attended by eminent scholars and distinguished participants. At the outset, let me thank H.E. Prof. Dr. Muladi and the National Resilience Institute for inviting me to this Discussion and convey the best wishes of H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, the Secretary-General of ASEAN for a successful meeting.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the National Resilience Institute for publishing the Indonesian National Leadership Index, which will serve as a guidepost in assessing national leadership in all sectors and levels in Indonesia. I recognise that a lot of work had gone into the formulation of this Index and I believe it is a good

precursor to the development of an ASEAN leadership index, which must cut across geographies, cultures, level of development in ASEAN Member States, among others. It will indeed be an exciting challenge to develop such a regional leadership index.

Changing Regional and Global Setting

The world we live in today and our region have gone through transformative changes since the establishment of ASEAN in August 1967. The “Cold War” politics during the formation of ASEAN had given way to a highly diffused and multi-polar politics of the day where multilateralism and regionalism are taking stronger roots. The reasons for this are obvious. The world has become a smaller place with the advent of high technology, information communication technology and movement of people. At the same time, the issues confronting the world are transnational and multifaceted requiring the cooperation of all countries to effectively address them. These include the current global financial and economic crisis, nuclear proliferation, terrorism and other transnational crimes, climate change, food security, widening development gaps, and poverty.

Southeast Asia has equally not been spared by the forces shaping the world being an outward-oriented region in terms of political and economic engagements. It has certainly undergone major changes due to the dynamic global changes and regional developments. The “big power politics”, “proxy wars” and “communist insurgency” of the 1960s and 1970s that led to the formation of ASEAN for national and regional resilience has given way to a period of continued economic growth and peace in the region resulting in dynamic economic and social development of the ASEAN Member States and the expansion of ASEAN for its original five Members States to ten by the turn of the last Century.

The financial crisis of 1997 did put a temporary halt to ASEAN’s progressive development but the bold initiatives taken by the Member States and collectively

ASEAN had helped the region to strengthen its macroeconomic fundamentals and banking systems. This has enabled it to better mitigate the current global financial and economic crisis. The maturity of ASEAN as a regional organisation has also enabled it to coordinate its policies, especially the stimulus packages, to better address the current financial crisis. The impact of the current crisis on ASEAN has been more due to the real sector in terms of declining exports, decreasing investments and falling consumption. Despite this, ASEAN continues to do relatively well compare to the global situation but we need to be vigilant.

The crowning glory for ASEAN in this new 21st Century has been its transformation from an “Association” to an ASEAN Community with the coming into effect of the ASEAN Charter in December 2008 as well as the adoption of the Community Blueprints for the three pillars of the ASEAN Community, namely the ASEAN Political and Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. New structures and mechanisms are now in place to ensure the development of a rules-based ASEAN Community by 2015. This includes the four ministerial councils to drive ASEAN's community building; the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN which is given the task of coordinating and managing ASEAN work; the Ambassadors to ASEAN facility for Dialogue Partners and friendly countries to promote closer engagements with the International Community; development of dispute settlement mechanisms for the rules-based ASEAN Community; the setting-up of the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights by end of the year; and the soon to be concluded ASEAN Agreement on Privileges and Immunities to facilitate the business of ASEAN by officials and others.

Past and Present ASEAN Leadership

ASEAN has shown leadership in the past and present despite the criticisms it faces from some quarters. This is sometimes due to misunderstanding of the nature of ASEAN and what it can do and cannot do.

The very fact that five founding countries of ASEAN came together on 8 August 1967 in Thailand to establish ASEAN is indeed a mark of diplomatic leadership in the fractious history of Southeast Asia, especially after several failed attempts at regionalism. Keeping the cooperation loose and informal for four decades based on the “ASEAN Way” of consultations and consensus but at the same time achieving notable progress in terms of maintaining peace and security in Southeast Asia was indeed a feather on the cap for ASEAN. Developments such as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Dialogue Partnership, the ASEAN Plus Three Process and the East Asia Summit are important contributions of ASEAN to regional peace, stability prosperity, development and progress. ASEAN also initiated two international treaties, which is the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and the Treaty on Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. In the economic side, the establishment of the ASEAN Free Trade Area, the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation, and in the socio-cultural side, combating infectious and emerging diseases, environmental protection, and poverty reduction are some of the key achievements of ASEAN.

All these require leadership at all levels and sectors from the Heads of Government to Officials and from the more than 30 sectors of ASEAN cooperation. As such, we are not talking about individual leadership here but that of collective leadership where everyone has a stake in an issue, responsibility to ensure cooperation and readiness to implement the agreed regional commitments. Besides, history shows that ASEAN leadership is not confined to a particular mode of leadership but a mixture of trait, style, contingency, transformational, servant and multifaceted approaches of leadership depending on the issue, countries, and personalities involved. Equally, the style of leadership also differs as the issues differ from directive, participative, delegative, achievement-oriented, inspirational and external, and in many instances a combination of some of the styles have been utilised. This is because of the differences in history,

culture, development, and of course, the personalities of leaders and their deep beliefs and convictions.

Going forward, the ASEAN Charter and the Roadmap towards the ASEAN Community 2015 that contains the three Community Blueprints as well as the Second Work Plan of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration provide the direction for the ASEAN Community - building efforts. The Charter codifies the principles, norms and goals of ASEAN, which will serve as frameworks for the current and future ASEAN leaders at every level and sector in terms of shaping ASEAN policies and engagements. But the leadership approach and style have to be more adaptive since ASEAN is now building a Peoples' ASEAN where participation of the people in ASEAN integration will be crucial be it the business community, the civil society organisations, women, youths or other sectors of society. This participative approach has started to take roots in the form of private sector participation in the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community and increasing involvement of civil society organisations in ASEAN community building efforts.

Adapting ASEAN Leadership to the Global Setting

The global developments, such as the emergency of the G-20; the reforms of the international financial institutions, the ongoing discussion on United Nations reforms, the urgent need to work together to save the planet from the dangers of climate change and the dynamic development towards an East Asia community of the future makes it more compelling for ASEAN to look at how effectively it can play a decisive regional leadership role and contribute to global affairs. ASEAN's centrality and its relevance will depend on this. Hence, ASEAN internal integration is critical for it to speak in one voice and act in unison.

As I see it, first a regional leader, irrespective of the level or sector, should have a good grasp of the history, principles, norms and goals of ASEAN and the challenges that

ASEAN as a Community is facing and will be facing in the future. Second, he or she must be a consensus builder who is sensitive to the interests of the various Member States. Third, he or she must be a strategic thinker who is able to draw-up the plans to tackle an issue or support a new initiative. Fourth, he or she must be able to communicate and engage the various stakeholders in ASEAN to win trust and support. Fifth, he or she must be able to execute the plan with courage in a decisive manner as well as by mobilising the required resources. Sixth, he or she must be able to trouble-shoot and steer the plan to his rightful direction and destination should it be affected in any way. Seventh, he or she must be pragmatic and should monitor and evaluate the impact of the plan and take remedial actions to ensure the best outcomes for ASEAN, if necessary. Eighth, he or she must be discerning and a good listener to gather feedback and constructive suggestions from the stakeholders and incorporate them into ASEAN Policies.

In order for a regional leader to accomplish what I just enumerated, he or she must have the following qualities: self confidence, decisiveness, resilience, energy, motivation to achieve, willingness to accept responsibility, personal integrity, high tolerance and emotional maturity. More importantly, he or she must have the passion for and belief in ASEAN and empathy for the peoples of ASEAN.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the new era calls for a more differentiated form of leadership in ASEAN to engage the various stakeholders in integration; ensure peace and security, especially from emerging threats of transnational nature; build stronger bridges with ASEAN's Dialogue Partners and friendly countries; steer East Asia integration; advance economic integration and engagement with major trading partners and investors for regional prosperity and progress; and promote socio-economic development to bring about a caring and sharing society in ASEAN.

The task is not easy but ASEAN has shown it can rise up to challenges in its short history and I am sure, with the acceleration of its Community building efforts, ASEAN will be able to provide the leadership in line with its motto of “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”. In essence, the future of ASEAN rests on its leaders who ‘Think Regional, Act ASEAN’.

Thank you.
