

**CAPACITY BUILDING ON PEACE AND RECONCILIATION:
PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES**

Address by AKP MOCHTAN, PhD
Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN

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Their Excellencies, Members of the Governing Council and Advisory Board of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation,

Distinguished Participants, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

First of all, I would like to thank the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation and the Institute for Peace and Democracy of Udayana University for inviting ASEAN Secretary-General, H.E. Le Luong Minh, to this important Symposium. Due to his prior engagement, I am entrusted to address the Symposium on his behalf.

The theme of this Symposium, namely “Capacity Building on Peace and Reconciliation: Principles and Best Practices,” provides a timely opportunity for the fledging AIPR to learn from the principles and best practices on peace and reconciliation, thereby substantiating its work in the future. Importantly, the theme strongly echoes ASEAN’s efforts to maintain and enhance peace and reconciliation in the region.

ASEAN is, first and foremost, a work of and for peace. The most important foundation for ASEAN’s success is the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. Building and preserving peace has been a core value and major contribution by ASEAN to Southeast Asia. The birth of ASEAN in 1967, despite all the fractures and constraints of history at that time, is a telling story of our aspiration for peace and reconciliation.

Currently, ASEAN is intensifying its efforts to realize an integrated, well connected ASEAN Community by 2015 and develop a vision beyond 2015. Throughout these endeavors, ASEAN never loses sight of the cardinal importance of peace.

The right to peace has been enshrined in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration – the first regional human rights instrument to do so. Since peace is the right of all people, preserving peace is therefore the responsibility of all. It cannot be the work of governments alone. I am gratified that the symposium here today invites broad participation including from academia and expert practitioners.

For nearly half a century, ASEAN has built up its capacity to pursue peace and promote reconciliation, not only in terms of conceptual, normative and institutional development but also in its real-time, on-the-ground engagement in preventing and resolving conflicts in the region. Through these home-grown efforts and experiences, we have developed key norms, principles and best practices as important assets for us in our work for peace in the future.

In peace-building, a major component of ASEAN's initiative is developing and sharing norms through instruments of peace. Herein, lays the premises and principles of peaceful co-existence and pacific settlement of disputes. One such instrument is the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Concluded in 1976 by five original ASEAN members, the TAC now has 32 High Contracting Parties in its fold, including all five members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Apart from the TAC, the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) is another important instrument of peace between ASEAN and China - which sets out the fundamental principles for peace, stability and maritime security in the South China Sea. The DOC also lays down the basic rules and norms for the conduct of parties in the South China Sea such as exercising self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability. However, the DOC is not an end in itself and a code of conduct (COC) is seen as the instrument that would pursue the purposes and principles of the DOC further. ASEAN is intensifying efforts to make sure that the on-going consultations with China on the COC be further expedited to lead to early substantive negotiations on the actual instrument.

In terms of institutional building, ASEAN has set up the ASEAN Troika as an *ad hoc* body comprising the Foreign Ministers of the present, past and future ASEAN Chairs. The ASEAN Troika would be constituted as and when the situation warrants it, therefore enabling ASEAN to address urgent and important political and security issues in a timely manner.

Apart from the Troika, the Chair of ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretary-General are also entrusted to provide good offices, conciliation, or mediation. This role is further substantiated in the ASEAN Charter whereby the ASEAN Chair shall ensure an effective and timely response to urgent issues or crisis situations affecting ASEAN, including providing its good offices and such other arrangements to immediately address those concerns.

Another prominent peace initiative of ASEAN is confidence building and preventive diplomacy. This is being done by nurturing the culture of dialogue, consultation and cooperation through a web of regional mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, and the ASEAN Defense Minister Meeting-Plus, among others. ASEAN takes up central role in these mechanism and processes, actively engaging partners from within and beyond the region. As such, preventive diplomacy is practiced in a gradual and incremental manner.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN is firmly committed to reinvigorate its efforts in conflict prevention and resolution. The quick response of ASEAN to the Cambodia-Thailand border dispute in 2011 and the “shuttle diplomacy” by Indonesia - the then ASEAN Chair represent a breakthrough in ASEAN’s conflict management capacity. This engagement received strong support of the UNSC as well as the International Court of Justice, which manifests the UN’s confidence in ASEAN’s ability to help settle disputes among its Member States through amicable regional solutions.

It is also heartening to note the efforts by individual ASEAN Member States in resolving conflicts and disputes in their countries. These include the recent signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and the “Peace Dialogues” between the Government of Thailand and the representatives of the Muslim communities in the southern border provinces.

While ASEAN is not directly engaged in these efforts, the spirit of ASEAN's good neighbourliness and mutual support is imbued through the constructive role of Malaysia as the Facilitator in both processes as well as the contributions of Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia in the former.

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The livelihood, health, prosperity, and realization of dreams of more than 600 million people in ASEAN are dependent on our ability to maintain peace within states and in the region. Although we are all blessed by the prevailing peace in the region, peace must not be taken for granted.

Conflicts in today's world have taken on new dimensions and complexities. They are unfolding not only among States but increasingly within a State's boundaries. They are driven by not only historical legacy, territorial disputes, religious and ethnic divides but also are due to resources competition, failed governance and ultra-nationalism. Some recent conflicts and tensions in the region are of great concern and drive home the complex realities facing ASEAN and its Member States. They challenge us to keep finding ways to nurture and enhance peace.

The establishment of the AIPR will hopefully help ASEAN to identify more innovative, creative means to promote peace, reconciliation, and conflict prevention in the region. The task before us now is to operationalize the AIPR in an effective and sustainable manner. The AIPR should also establish collaboration with relevant institutions and partners.

In this regard, the AIPR should tap on the wealth of experience and expertise of all the distinguished participants at this Symposium, thereby enriching our knowledge and understanding on a wide spectrum of approaches, practices, mechanisms and instruments for reconciliation, conflict prevention and peace building. On that note, I wish you a lively and fruitful discussion.

Thank you.