Remarks by H.E. Mr. Truong Tan Sang,
President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam at the ASEAN Secretariat
Jakarta, June 28, 2013

Viet Nam - Consistency and Responsible Contribution
For an ASEAN Community of Strength and Unity

Excellency Secretary General Le Luong Minh,
Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of ASEAN countries in Jakarta,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming to the ASEAN Headquarters today I feel warm and indeed at home. At the very first sight, I am much impressed with the logo of ten glistening golden paddy stalks, the symbol of ASEAN, and the national flags of ASEAN countries flying together with those of its Partners, representing vividly an ASEAN Community of unity, unique identity and open vision. On display at the Gallery of the ASEAN Secretariat, there have been many important images and documents that reflect the more than four-and-a-half-decade development and the pride-worthy achievements of today’s ASEAN.

With that feeling, I would like to extend my welcome and gratitude to Excellency Mr. Secretary General, other leaders and staff of the ASEAN Secretariat and Excellencies Ambassadors and Representatives of ASEAN countries and partners present here.

Today, talking about Southeast Asia and the larger East Asia and Asia-Pacific region, one cannot fail to mention an ASEAN which is moving strongly toward a Community by 2015 and its indispensable role as a nucleus of the region’s cooperation processes and efforts for building common peace, stability and cooperation. The message that I would like to share today therefore is that of Viet Nam’s consistent policy to work responsibly with all other ASEAN members for a
strong, united ASEAN Community and for peace, stability and prosperous development of the region.

The 46-year-old history of ASEAN has given us valuable lessons, and one thing I wish to highlight here, that is the ASEAN’s thinking and approach: equal and mutually beneficial cooperation instead of confrontation; unity and consensus instead of division and imposition, one which has enabled ASEAN to overcome the barriers and challenges and expand itself to embrace all 10 Southeast Asia countries under a common roof of a caring and sharing community.

The realisation of ASEAN-10 laid a crucial foundation for a new ASEAN, one that represents the entire Southeast Asia. It also helped clear past barriers and build an environment of friendship and cooperation in the region and advance both intra-region integration and cooperation with outside partners. The decisions to institute the ASEAN Charter (2008) and the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009) have been the strategic policy and move to elevate the level of regional cooperation and integration, meeting the demands for the development of the Association in the new century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success of ASEAN, in my view, is attributable to the unique ASEAN approach and thinking, or in a broader sense, to the ‘ASEAN identity’. This is clearly evident in ASEAN’s way of work, called ‘the ASEAN way’, one which is based on unity, consensus, consultation, incremental progress, mutual respect and the ability to combine the interest of the region with that of individual member states by sharing the common goals of peace, development and prosperity, suitable for a region diversified in history, culture, language, political system and economic development.

Here I wish to further underscore the harmonisation of the interest of individual member states and the common interest of the region, a unique factor for the success and development of ASEAN. This is by no means simple. At times, ASEAN members may have been compelled to take on one side or the other, particularly in the cooperation and interaction with major powers, for the sake of their respective interest. This if it happens would benefit no one. Therefore, we need to always foster an ASEAN of unity and consensus, based on the common
denominator of harmonised interests of all member states, striving together for peace, stability and cooperation for common development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The regional and international contexts have been changing constantly, with opportunities and challenges intertwined. More than ever before, ASEAN must firmly uphold its traditional identity, and demonstrate its resilience and flexibility to be able to respond to emerging challenges. In that light, I wish to share more with you on some key directions for ASEAN in the time to come as follows:

First, the top priority of ASEAN is to accord highest political will and necessary resources for the successful building of the Community by 2015 and its further development in the decades that follow. We need to ensure that the Community Roadmap and its set targets be implemented fully and as scheduled by 2015, to achieve a genuinely strong and united ASEAN Community that is ‘politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible.’ ASEAN also needs a broader vision for the long-term development of the Community beyond its foundation in December 31, 2015. As an open process, the Community in 2015 is just a mark of a starting point.

Second, ASEAN should further maintain the momentum of dynamic development and bring into full play the advantages of an Economic Community of 600 million people and US$ 2,100 billion GDP. We welcome ASEAN’s efforts to expand and deepen economic, trade and investment relations, as well as the connection of its Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with other countries and the development of a region-wide FTA for East Asia. We support the goals of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) towards creating an open economic space in East Asia – a market embracing nearly a half of the world population and one thirds of the global GDP. Besides, ASEAN should continue to promote its role in other cooperation and regional integration frameworks such as the Asia – Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Asia – Europe Meeting (ASEM), etc.

Third, ASEAN should take initiative and better play its active role in ensuring regional peace, security and development. Accordingly, ASEAN needs to further enhance the values and effectiveness of the region’s forums and instruments to ensure peace and security in the region such as the Treaty of Amity and
Cooperation (TAC), the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty and the Declaration on the Conducts of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), etc. Maritime security and safety, and freedom of navigation in the East Sea (South China Sea) are important issues of common concern of the region and all countries. Therefore, ASEAN should proactively uphold and promote the common principles as have been enshrined in the ASEAN six-point statement on the South China Sea, including enhanced dialogue and confidence building, settlement of disputes by peaceful means, respect of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the early conclusion of the Code of Conduct (COC).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

With the realization of ASEAN-10, the Vietnamese Ao Dai (traditional long gown) is now seen swaying alongside the traditional Batik shirts of coastal countries along the Malacca Strait to further enrich the ASEAN cultural village. Embarking on the shared journey of ASEAN for the past 18 years, Viet Nam has always been a proactive, active and responsible member, doing its utmost to contribute to the ever growth and strength of ASEAN. ASEAN has been and will continue to be one of the important pillars in Vietnam’s foreign policy of openness, diversification and multilateralisation of external relations and proactive international integration.

A united and strong ASEAN, proactive in practical initiatives, is always a top priority and interest that we wish to share with other ASEAN Member States. Once again, we would like to further emphasise that Viet Nam is consistent in its policy and efforts to work responsibly together with other friends in ASEAN to further nurture and promote ASEAN’s traditional basic values and identity in order to successfully achieve the ASEAN Community by 2015, in the service of peace, common prosperity and the bright future of the people of the region.

On this occasion, I would like to express my appreciation for the efforts of H.E. Secretary General, officials and experts of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, for their active contributions to the smooth and effective operation of the entire ASEAN mechanism. In the new stage of ASEAN’s development toward a Community, involving further expanded and deepened cooperation and integration,
the role of the ASEAN Secretariat is of all the more importance. For that reason, we support an enhanced role and capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat as has been stipulated in the ASEAN Charter. Viet Nam, along with other ASEAN member countries will accord due attention and support to the Secretariat so that it could be able to best discharge its ever demanding tasks in the time ahead.

*I wish H.E. Secretary General the best of health and happiness.*

*May the ASEAN Community be a great success*

*Thank you very much for your attention.*