



Remarks by Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN, at the *Civil Society Organizations and the Agriculture and Forestry Sector in the*

ASEAN Region: A Brown Bag Session

Jakarta, 16 February 2012

H.E. Heinz Walker-Nederkoorn, Swiss Ambassador to ASEAN

Dr. Harry Santoso, Director General of Watershed Management and Social Forestry Development, Ministry of Forestry of Indonesia (MOFRI), Host Country of ASFN Secretariat,

Dr. Tahlim Sudaryanto, Senior Advisor to Minister of Agriculture of Indonesia

Dr. Iman Santoso, Director General of Forest Utilization, Ministry of Forestry,

Ms. M. C. Guerrero, Executive Director (ED), NTFP-EP and CSO Representatives

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues from the ASEAN Secretariat,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and warm greetings from the ASEAN Secretariat.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here and welcome all of you at the ***“Civil Society Organizations and the Agriculture and Forestry Sector in the ASEAN Region: A Brown Bag Session”*** today.

At the outset, I would like to extend my utmost appreciation to the co-organizers with the ASEAN Secretariat - the **Non-Timber Forest Products-Exchange Programme for South & Southeast Asia** together with the **ASEAN Social Forestry Network** under the ASEAN Social Forestry Network-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC).

Second, I would like to acknowledge the participation of representatives from the Embassies, CPR, our Dialogue Partners and Development Partners, government from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forestry, and CSOs who are working to create

opportunities for Civil Society Organizations across Southeast Asia to complement initiatives with the ASEAN governing bodies and its Member States.

ASEAN embraces Civil Society participation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Things have changed a lot since ASEAN was founded in 1967 until we have the ASEAN Charter in 2008.

The ASEAN Charter clearly specifies the duties of a people centered ASEAN, which include the following provisions:

- i. “To alleviate poverty and narrow the development gap within ASEAN through mutual assistance and cooperation (Section 6);”
- ii. “To strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law, and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, with due regard to the rights and responsibilities of the Member States of ASEAN (Section 7);”
- iii. “To promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of ASEAN integration and community building (Section 13);” and

The Vientiane Action Plan (VAP) on the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) represents ASEAN’s aspirations for a people-centered ASEAN including the provision:

- “iv. Increasing the effective participation of family, civil society and the private sector in tackling poverty and social welfare issues through the establishment of networking and exchange programmes, and promoting the professions involved in poverty and social welfare issues; and etc.

Impact areas in Agriculture and Forestry Sectors

CSOs in this field have provided first and foremost an awareness of issues and trends to the basic sectors: farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, forest-dependents. It is their interest that with improved knowledge generation, capacity building and connectivity, that these basic sectors can improve their welfare.

CSOs have helped in the field of sustainable agriculture, and introducing farmers to safer, cleaner forms of farming. They have assisted in post harvest technology, marketing of agricultural and forest products.

CSOs have also provided critical insight to policy makers and proposed safeguards and social protection measures to provide a safety net for farmers, fishers and forest-dependents with regards to national and international trade policies in order to ensure the welfare, rights and continued viability of these sectors and their economies.

Experiences of CSO engagement in ASEAN

There have been great advancements in the participation of CSOs within the Pillars of ASEAN, particularly on Agriculture and Forestry, including:

- The ASFN Conference on “Social Forestry Role in Contributing to Food Security and in Addressing Climate Change” held at Yogyakarta, June 2010;
- ASFN Conference on “Social Forestry Role in REDD+ and Forest Conservation” and the KNOWLEDGE FAIR OF ASFN Conference on “Social Forestry Role in REDD+ and Forest Conservation” held at in Brunei Darussalam, June 2011;
- The ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry (ASOF) International Seminar and the 14th ASOF Meeting, July 2011, Chiang Mai; and
- The PREPSOM-33rd AMAF and the 33rd AMAF Meetings, 3-7 October 2011, Jakarta.

These are examples and building blocks for CSO engagement in the ASEAN agriculture and forestry sector.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN is committed to realising the ASEAN Community by 2015. ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forestry is an integral part of this Roadmap. Current efforts of ASEAN Member States to collectively address common issues and challenges in agriculture and forestry provide the foundation for future cooperation. Achieving ASEAN Community Building and Millennium Development Goals will require stronger cooperation and partnership, including with the CSOs.

I do hope that the Brown Bag Session today will also provide an excellent opportunity to exchange of insights between the panelists and participants on perspectives on CSOs and points regarding government engagements with CSOs, and explore key issues where ASEAN-CSO engagement and constructive dialogue in the forestry and agricultural sector.

Finally, on behalf of the ASEAN Member States, I would like to once again express my sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Forestry of Indonesia, CSOs in Southeast Asia, and particularly the ASEAN Social Forestry Network-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC) for the funding support for making this event possible.

I wish the Session today a success and your active participation would contribute to encouraging greater cooperation and opportunity for engagement of civil society voice in the ASEAN Sectoral Body and its Member States.

Thank you.