



ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATION
27TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
10 - 15 SEPTEMBER 2006 ▲ CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES

Message

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It is with great pleasure that I join the Leaders of ASEAN in conveying my message to the 27th ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) General Assembly, convened from 10 to 15 September 2006 in Cebu City, the Philippines.

We are indeed delighted to witness that our peoples live in a relatively peaceful and stable condition. A peace and stability that is so much longed for by other peoples in other regions. This, of course, does not come all of a sudden and without any effort. It has been the fruit of hard work in building confidence and habit of cooperation among countries in the South East Asia Region initiated and fostered by ASEAN. Since long ago, ASEAN member countries resolved to put aside their differences and committed themselves to a mutually beneficial cooperation. A cooperation that has created a peaceful and stable environment required for the economic development towards the prosperity of its peoples.

In the attempt towards durable peace, stability, and shared prosperity in the region, I am also proud to say that ASEAN is steadily working towards the achievement of an ASEAN Community resting on the three pillars of an ASEAN Security Community, an ASEAN Economic Community, and an ASEAN Socio-cultural Community. Hence, we have formulated the Vientiane Action Programme to serve as a roadmap for our journey to becoming the envisioned ASEAN Community, within a six-year period, beginning in 2004.

An ASEAN Community will require us to move from a political regime into a legal regime. For this purpose, ASEAN is now in the process of developing an ASEAN Charter as its legal personality. The Charter will define the goals and objectives of ASEAN as well as the principles that serve as the bedrock of ASEAN cooperation.

The road ahead, however, is not free from challenges and uncertainties. Among the challenges that we must address together is terrorism. Terrorist attacks have shown the extent of the destructive power terrorism could inflict and, at the same time, our vulnerability to it. We condemn in the strongest terms any use of violence against innocent people no matter for what purpose.

ASEAN did not stand still against this challenge. It has even gone beyond its own margins. The signing of the Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism with ASEAN's dialogue partners is seen to further strengthen the existing capacity in waging an even more effective fight against terrorism. I would also like to welcome the initiative to establish the ASEAN extradition treaty and elaborate the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism. I believe these could further boost our cooperation against terrorism.

We must also consider the ways and means in which we can address terrorism to its root causes. Employing hard power would only be detrimental to these efforts. I am therefore of the opinion that Interfaith dialogues would not only have more long-lasting effect, but they would also promote better understanding between our peoples.

Another challenge confronting ASEAN is the spreading of communicable diseases. A possible influenza pandemic alarmed the international community because of its capacity to kill entire populations and to rapidly cross national borders. I am happy to learn that the AIPO Ad-Hoc Committee on the Transformation of AIPO into a more effective institution has addressed this issue and agreed that it becomes the first test case in AIPO common legislative initiative in order to effectively address this threat.

Furthermore, in the last two years, we have been afflicted by the adverse effect of earthquakes, towering tidal waves, and volcanic mountain eruptions that have caused a major number of fatalities in this region. Several natural disasters that occurred in their wake may further underscore the fact that disaster management has to be integrated into mainstream issue in our cooperation. ASEAN has responded to these challenges accordingly by establishing an ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response which earmarks personnel and resources for instant mobilization in the event of natural disasters. We, therefore, must endeavour to ensure its implementation by legislating it nationally. This immense task will certainly require the AIPO member parliaments' support and cooperation.

In this context, we could all concur to the idea that ASEAN integration process towards an ASEAN Community should not merely fall under the responsibility of governments of ASEAN Member Countries, but also involve its parliaments. AIPO could align itself with the ASEAN integration process by promoting the initiative of harmonizing policies, regulation, and laws of ASEAN Member Countries. Each and every parliament member of AIPO should therefore exert its pivotal legislative role domestically in facilitating various ratification processes of the agreements already reached at the ASEAN level. This would be AIPO's most valuable contribution towards the realization of the vision of an ASEAN Community.

In view of the above, ASEAN and AIPO shall better interact with each other so the work both sides conducted would be in tandem rather than in cross purposes. In this effort, we welcome the inaugural consultation between the Chairman of the 38th ASEAN Standing Committee and the President of AIPO, held on 13 April 2006 in Kuala Lumpur. This initiative would be indeed of great benefit to our efforts to better integrate ASEAN and AIPO.

Besides those challenges above, complexity in other region persists to exist. ASEAN shall therefore be actively engaged in the peacemaking process in other parts of the world. We could then share our experience with others in attaining the durable peace and security they long for.

In this vein, we, in Indonesia, keenly follow developments of the conflict in the Middle East and are against any disproportionate, indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon. The recent successful adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution could hopefully provide a window of opportunity for the revival of the peace process.

With respect to the issue of Iraq, we support the process of transition in Iraq, so that the people of Iraq can regain their right and sovereignty to manage and develop their country.

In the face of the complexities and challenges posed by the global and regional situation, we must continue to commit ourselves to strengthening our cooperation. We must also be persistent in exploring new and promising opportunities for our cooperation and contribution toward regional and international peace.

By doing so, we will be able to open up opportunities for the achievement of our shared goals, which is to bring about a stable and secure regional environment in which our peoples will prosper and attain a better standard of living. At the same time we will also be contributing to the shaping of a better world of peace, social justice and prosperity.

And may this Conference be exceedingly fruitful.