



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

Message

HON. DATO' SERI ABDULLAH HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
(Prime Minister of Malaysia)

On the occasion of the 27th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO), allow me to convey my warmest regards to H.E. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines and H.E. Jose de Venecia, Jr., President of AIPO and Speaker, House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines, and to all Parliamentarians and distinguished delegates attending this AIPO General Assembly in Cebu Island.

It is important for us to remind ourselves that ASEAN is almost 40 years old today and capable of growing stronger. It is important to do this because we should never take for granted the fact that ASEAN has served the people of Southeast Asia well. It has kept the peace between its members, enabling regional cooperation to flourish and contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the people

As sovereign countries committed to regionalism in Southeast Asia, we have demonstrated our determination to chart our own future when we adopted, in 2003, the ASEAN Concord II. That act was a solemn commitment to transform ourselves from an Association into a community of nations by a certain date in the future. We have since decided to start work on writing an ASEAN Charter. We have to move to become a true community because we cannot change our geography. We should never allow our countries to be divided again as they once were 40 years ago. We must be steadfast in keeping our solidarity and remain focused on achieving our common mission of fostering greater and greater regional integration.

Thus, after nearly four decades of evolution, ASEAN is now engaged in a crucial stage of its development of transforming itself from being an Association since 1967 into an integrated and harmonious Community by the year 2020. We in Malaysia are preparing for that day. This year 2006, we launched our 9th National Development Plan for the next five years, as the first of a three-part National Mission of making Malaysia a fully developed nation by the year 2020. This is Malaysia's contribution to the strengthening of the regional economic order.

There is one additional reason why ASEAN countries must integrate more and integrate quickly. ASEAN has declared its wish to promote the growth of a larger community of East Asian countries, preferably anchored on the ASEAN plus Three process. East Asian economic integration can be the first line of defense against regional economic crises such as the one we had in 1997. It will also help to lock-in greater predictability and transparency with regard to the economic policies of regional countries. We must therefore strengthen further the ASEAN plus Three cooperation process which pertinently began in 1997. We should also continue to build upon our success of convening the East Asia Summit which we did at the end of last year, 2005.

I also wish to emphasize that every sector of the society has a role to play in moving ASEAN towards an integrated community. As the representatives of the people, AIPO is encouraged to play its role in generating a higher level of awareness of ASEAN among the people through their greater involvement. I sincerely hope that fellow parliamentarians would also take on the responsibilities to help tackle among others, issues such as poverty, unemployment and strengthening of the family institution within their society.

I am confident that the outcome of the deliberations at the 27th AIPO will be constructive, fruitful and contribute further to the ASEAN's goal of building the ASEAN Community. I wish the 27th AIPO General Assembly a successful outcome, promoting political interaction and economic development in the region.

Thank you.