



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

Message

HON. S. R. NATHAN
(President of the Republic of Singapore)

My warmest greetings to the distinguished delegates of the 27th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation.

2. In the past year, ASEAN has taken bold steps forward in its integration efforts in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community. We are aiming to accelerate the timeline for the completion of the ASEAN Community from 2020 to 2015. The ASEAN Charter process also seeks to transform ASEAN's institutions and chart its future directions. These efforts are supported by our deepening and broadening cooperation with dialogue partners in key areas of the Vientiane Action Programme, in particular in trade and investment, managing transboundary challenges, capacity building and technical assistance.

3. Going forward, one key task for ASEAN is to foster a sense of common identity amongst our peoples. Our peoples must become more aware of our shared challenges and destinies. Only then will we truly be one community. So as we build up the network of links among ASEAN member countries, we must also keep in mind the broader goal of community building at the people-to-people level. ASEAN is not just a club of governments, but also an organisation that must be able to communicate that it is bringing about change for the man in the street, and a better future for our young. This is a great challenge for political leaders, community leaders and parliamentarians as representatives of the people.

4. AIPO can play a meaningful role in community building. By reflecting our people's aspirations, AIPO is an important conduit to ASEAN's leadership, through your newly formalised link to the ASEAN Standing Committee. Each delegate to AIPO, as an elected representative of your people, can also communicate ASEAN's values of diversity, multiculturalism, and regional unity with your constituents at home and an understanding of the challenges facing our region as a whole. Your efforts are important in fostering a strong regional identity in ASEAN.

5. I hope that you will find these reflections useful in your deliberations with your AIPO colleagues. I wish all delegates a fruitful and meaningful discussion at this meeting.