



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

Message

H. E. THAKSIN SHINAWATRA
(Prime Minister of Thailand)

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and the people of Thailand, I would like to congratulate the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines for hosting the 27th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) in Cebu City. I would also like to extend my best wishes to ASEAN parliamentarians and all observers attending this General Assembly.

Today, the countries of Southeast Asia face complex challenges, many of which are non-traditional in nature, including trans-boundary issues that affect environment; the spread of disease; natural calamities; and social problems such as human trafficking and small arms. Without ASEAN, and the collaboration and active exchanges and dialogues among us, and between ASEAN and its partners, our region might experience greater uncertainties and find it more difficult to address these important and pressing issues.

As ASEAN approaches its 4th decade, it is steadily moving towards greater regional integration through realization of the common goal of an ASEAN Community by 2020. To further this goal, ASEAN Leaders have mandated the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to consider an ASEAN Charter, which will be one of the cornerstones of an ASEAN Community. One of the aspects to be discussed will be a more holistic ASEAN, one that better expresses the voice and aspirations of the people, civil society as well as parliaments. This will enable ASEAN to remain a vibrant force in promoting the region's peace, stability and prosperity, as part of a dynamic Asia, in the years to come.

AIPO as the inter-parliamentary organization of ASEAN has the potential to act as a coordinating framework between our administrative and legislative branches. Indeed, I am glad that the EPG has engaged AIPO as one of the "pertinent stakeholders" in its consultative and inclusive work towards the strengthening of ASEAN and its institutions. In turn, I am gratified that AIPO has positioned itself for a greater role in legislative matters of ASEAN common concern. Through the comparative survey of member countries' national laws on issues of common concern, AIPO would support the process of harmonization of laws among Member Countries. Such an incremental approach to community building is one of the important contributions of AIPO.

Indeed, formal linkages between AIPO and ASEAN have already been initiated. The leveraging of their cooperation and coordination, including discussion of modalities for reciprocal attendance, will pave the way for a more sustained relationship.

As a founding member of ASEAN, Thailand is committed to cooperating and collaborating with fellow ASEAN countries in achieving concrete progress towards the establishment of an ASEAN Community.

AIPO's initiatives to transform its organization into a more effective and closely integrated institution will stand it in good stead to work more closely with ASEAN to reflect the voice of the people, for the sake of regional integration.

This annual AIPO General Assembly is a good opportunity for ASEAN Member Countries, Special Observer Countries and Observer Countries to share lessons and exchange experiences. I urge all to make the most out of it. On this note, I wish the 27th AIPO General Assembly success in meeting its goals and objectives. I am confident that your discussions will help us move closer to an ASEAN Community for the greater benefit of all our peoples.