



**ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATION**  
**27<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
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**Statement delivered by**

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*Your Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great honour and a great pleasure for me to convey to the 27th general assembly of AIPO the warmest greetings of the European Parliament. Just like AIPO the European Parliament is not representing a single state but a community of states. We define common goals which we follow not in the framework of national politics, but on a supra-national level of co-operation.

In our global world, regional co-operation is the only way for medium-sized states to make themselves heard and represent their interests besides great powers such as the United States, China, and in the future possibly India. At the same time, regional co-operation is an important contribution to a multi-polar, and thus better world. A multi-polar world offers better chances for peace and the establishment of a balanced order, in contrast for example to the former model of a bi-polar world in which an Eastern bloc and the Western powers were facing each other highly armed.

You will understand that the European Union is following the development of ASEAN with the greatest interest for a variety of reasons. ASEAN and the European Union face the same questions.

Firstly, which aims to follow under the conditions of globalisation on the level of the nation-state, and which aims to pursue on a supra-national level?

Secondly, what are the methods we choose to organise the co-operation of states in order to meet these aims?

The aims which ASEAN and the European Union follow as such are almost identical, or at least comparable. In the basic documents - I refer to the European treaties on the one hand and the ASEAN declarations on the other - you will find the hope for peace and security, the safeguarding of national independence against interference from external actors, the quest for economic prosperity and social security, and more and more the preservation of the national competitiveness in the age of globalisation. In most recent times, the fight against terrorism is increasingly seen as a challenge best met by co-operating on a supra-level. Other aims which are named include the fight against poverty and illnesses, the promotion of education, and cultural exchanges.

Nonetheless, the methods used by ASEAN and the European Union are different. From the very beginning the European Union has chosen the so-called "community method". This means that the member states do not co-operate as such, but delegate national competencies to a new supra-state

level, which exercises these competencies in its own right and independent of the member states. The community method thus founds a new institution besides the member states, which is not a state in itself, but nonetheless exercise state rights and disposes of state competencies. In the framework of this new model there exist what could almost be called a European government - the European Commission - as well as a parliament - the European Parliament -, directly elected by the citizens of Europe. Besides the community method the intra-state co-operation amongst member states remains. But the core element of the EU is the Community with its own competencies independent of the member states. This method has shown to be extremely successful in organising the common market.

Please let me point out that ASEAN and the EU do not only have common interests as regional organisations, which try to co-operate in order to find voice in the concert of the great powers. The European Union and ASEAN have many economic interests in common. Basis for the economic interests with the European Union is the common market, which is organised around the community method. In this common market there are no more borders between the member states. The freedom of movement not only applies to people, but also goods, services and capital. All companies in EU can offer their products in every member state without any tariffs, quotas, or other obstacles. The European Union thus has an internal market without borders, covering 450 million people.

In contrast to the EU the ASEAN since its foundations concentrates on an intra-state co-operation. Its actors are exclusively the governments or those institutions charged with this task. Community institutions such as the Commission or the European Parliament are missing.

At this point I want to oppose the misleading idea which we as Europeans often encounter in meetings with representatives from ASEAN. It is often asked whether the EU can be a model for ASEAN. The question can only be answered with yes in the sense that the Europeans were able to realise their aims. Since 1945, there is peace in Central Europe. We managed to work towards a high level of security and prosperity, and we try to withstand international economic competition. However, meeting these aims is not directly linked to the community method. The intra-state co-operation preferred by ASEAN, without a transfer of competencies, does not have to be less effective than the method chosen by the European Union.

The intra-state co-operation is founded on consensus. As long as there is agreement amongst the partner states of ASEAN on certain aims, the intra-state co-operation is at least as effective as the community method of the European Union. One only has to think of the time it takes to enact a European law. This process sometimes takes years of complex negotiations. As long as the ASEAN member states agree on an aim, all that is required is a decision by the representatives of the member states to form the foundation for the creation of a law on national level. The geographical and historical conditions of the European integration are also different from the conditions under which the members of the ASEAN are looking for closer co-operation. Therefore we can only offer our experiences to the ASEAN members in fostering co-operation. We Europeans have realised that we can also learn from the experiences of the ASEAN states. We are looking closely at the work to draw up an ASEAN charter and we have of course noted with great interest the use of the word "integration" in ASEAN document, as well as the development of ideas up to the introduction of a common currency. With great sympathy the Europeans therefore note that the search of the ASEAN states to come to a closer co-operation - and therefore a greater capacity to act - is accelerating. An ASEAN more capable to act will also be more successful in meeting its common aims such as the preservation of peace and independence, the promotion of prosperity and the fight against poverty. Therefore we Europeans - in view of our own development - have a lasting interest in the common success of the ASEAN states.

Besides our common interests as regional associations of states, ASEAN and the EU share their economic interests. For the EU, the 10 ASEAN countries represent collectively one of the largest trading partners after Japan. Currently the EU is ASEAN's second largest export market and third largest trading partner. Trade with these regions continues to grow at a fast pace and is likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. South East Asia therefore offers substantive and rapidly expanding market opportunities for EU businesses, while EU foreign direct investment in the region is key to its global competitiveness. The EU's market of 450 million consumers will continue to attract ASEAN at a time when it is keenly interested in expanding and developing its existing ties with major trading partners.

It is therefore in our mutual interest to support economic co-operation. An example would be exploring the feasibility of an EU-ASEAN free trade agreement.

Therefore, relations between the European Union and ASEAN have grown into a political and economic partnership on the basis of a mutual understanding and the willingness of both sides to learn from each other.

Speaking from the perspective of the European Parliament, our decisive support is aimed for all attempts to strengthen the role of parliamentarism. From the very beginning we have supported the proposals by the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines, Jose del Venecia.

Deputies which are elected in free, equal and secret elections are the legitimate representatives of the people. It is important to remind that it is the parliaments which appoint the governments. A better integration of parliaments into the supra-state policies of the governments is an excellent way of bringing state co-operation in ASEAN and the European Union closer to the people.

It seems incomprehensible that the ASEM process which accounts for many of the most important ties between ASEAN and the European Union is taking place solely on the basis of the representatives of governments. The European Parliament has been continuously demanding that ASEM meetings be accompanied by ASEP meetings of the parliamentarians.

These are just some of the points which I hope we might discuss in the course of this meeting. I wish all of us many fruitful discussions!

Thank you very much.