



ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATION
27TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Statement delivered by

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Honorable President Jose de Venecia, and distinguished delegates!

It gives me great honor and pleasure to address the 27th General Assembly of AIPO on behalf of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for your warm hospitality and offer my deepest respect to President Venecia, the Philippines Parliament and the organizers for all the efforts in successfully preparing for this meeting.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend my deepest condolences to the victims and bereaved families of tsunamis, volcano eruptions and earthquakes in ASEAN countries and to pay tribute to those working day and night to rehabilitate the affected areas. Korea has shared the sufferings of our friends and provided unsparing assistance.

Mr. President,

The number of Korean people visiting ASEAN countries in 2005 passed 1.84 million and 620,000 citizens of ASEAN countries came to visit Korea in the same year. ASEAN is Korea's No.5 trading partners and No.3 investment destination.

Considering the abundant natural resources, high-quality labor forces and growth potential, I'm confident that trade and human exchanges between ASEAN and Korea would continue increasing substantially.

Korea-ASEAN FTA negotiations are underway smoothly. There is little doubt that the trade pact, once signed up, will prove to be a win-win solution thanks to the expected market opening effect. The National Assembly of Korea, therefore, would provide strong supports for the Korea-ASEAN FTA. I should not fail to mention that Korea would continue making vigorous efforts to assist ASEAN nations in strengthening SOC and developing human resources through ODA and EDCF for co-prosperity with ASEAN.

Distinguished delegates!

I think that Korea and ASEAN should go beyond economic cooperation to bolster the partnership. We need to have in-depth discussions and formulate consensus for cooperation in information and communication technology (ICT), environmental regeneration, prevention of communicable diseases around the world and security.

In this 21st century of knowledge/information society, ICT has become a main driving force behind economic growth. Korea has strived to lead regional cooperation initiatives in the industry, build world-class ICT infrastructure, and promote e-business in East Asia thereby taking the lead in related global market. It now works to stimulate exchanges of experiences in ICT development, successfully positioning itself as an IT hub in East Asia.

Korea has also been committed to the ICT development in ASEAN. More specifically, Korea has invited around 500 IT experts from ASEAN countries to offer training programs, sent 348 Internet volunteers to seven countries, and established Information Access Center in four nations in order to bridge the digital divide between countries.

Korea is also ready to share our experiences with ASEAN in resolving environmental issues including soil and water pollutions in the aftermath of a rapid economic development for the last 30 years.

In the meantime, Korea considers AIDS and bird flu significant global health threats and closely cooperates with UN's HIV/AIDS program and related nations. In an effort, it opened the AIDS Prevention Center for Foreigners to help expatriates, especially migrant workers, diagnose and treat the disease and, if they want, return to their home countries.

Lastly, I would now like to turn to one of the most important tasks lie ahead: security. As the six party talks to resolve North Korean nuclear issue broke down and North Korea test-fired missiles in July, the Korean Peninsula is currently faced by security challenges. I would like to ask for your interests and supports in the issue, reiterating that a peaceful resolution of the security issues on the Korean Peninsula through the six party talks or ARF will be certainly conducive to the co-prosperity of ASEAN and Asian-Pacific region.

Distinguished delegates!

Let me reaffirm that the National Assembly of Korea has fully supported Korea-ASEAN cooperation and is doing its part by improving related budgets and legislations. It also puts great significance on parliamentary diplomacy with ASEAN to back up the government's efforts.

For example, the Korean National Assembly formed parliamentarians' friendship association with all the ASEAN nations and has been an active participant in the general assemblies and meetings of AIPO. Korean delegations led by the Speaker of the National Assembly visited the parliaments of six ASEAN member nations including Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore for the last two years. We extended official invitations to the speakers of the parliaments of Laos, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia during the same period thereby maintaining close cooperation with the parliaments of ASEAN countries.

As such, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea stands firm in its hopes for and belief in ASEAN as a close partner for our collective endeavors and remains as committed as ever to fully playing its part in all areas of its noble work. Thank you.