



ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ORGANIZATION
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Statement delivered by

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Your Excellency, Jose de Venecia, Jr., President of AIPO, distinguished delegates and dear friends.

Mr. President, may I congratulate you on the excellence of your speech this morning, of the richness of its content and of its philosophical insight.

It is a privilege to be here in the Philippines in this splendid location for the 27th ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary General Assembly and to have the opportunity of making a brief statement on behalf of New Zealand.

This year the Philippines celebrated 108 years as an independent republic. New Zealand salutes the Philippines for its vision in 1898 and for the way its people have cherished its democracy over the years since then.

Diplomatic relations between the Philippines and New Zealand are now in their 40th year.

Recently Prince Albert the II, the Sovereign Prince of Monaco spoke to the distinguished Ambrosetti Forum. Monaco is the second smallest country in the world. In the course of that speech the Prince recalled the words of his father who said:

“It is not necessary to be a big country to have big dreams, nor to have a large population to make them come true.”

Monaco is a small country which punches above its weight. I would like to think New Zealand is similarly regarded.

In our country we have 4 million people and 40 million sheep.

A lot has happened since the ASEAN – New Zealand meeting in Vientiane. We said then that New Zealand wanted to re-energize its relations with ASEAN – to deepen our political and security dialogue with ASEAN, to strengthen our economic and trade relations, and to ensure that our cooperative links bring practical benefits to ASEAN.

We are making progress on all fronts.

As you know, we have signed ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. This is a very tangible demonstration of our commitment to closer ties with ASEAN.

We are implementing the package of initiatives announced by our Prime Minister at the ASEAN - New Zealand Commemorative Summit in Vientiane in 2004. Activities over the past twelve months have included media visits, academic exchanges and visits to New Zealand by the ASEAN Prime Minister's Fellows. A well-received symposium on New Zealand/South East Asia relations took place in Singapore earlier this year.

At the highest political level, we were pleased to be invited to participate in the first East Asia Summit, hosted by Malaysia last December. The EAS is the most exciting development in the region's architecture for many years. We are grateful for ASEAN's support for our inclusion in the EAS. We look forward to participating in the second Summit in the Philippines at the end of the year.

On the economic front, solid progress is being made in negotiations on an ASEAN-Australia/New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. My colleague from Australia has spoken about that.

New Zealand has actively contributed to efforts to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development in the ASEAN region for over 50 years. This year New Zealand will deliver an estimated NZ\$48 million directly to ASEAN countries under bilateral, multilateral, NGO and regional programmes.

Close cooperation on security matters has become increasingly important. We value our participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum.

At this year's ASEAN/New Zealand Dialogue meeting in Manila, officials discussed a draft ASEAN - New Zealand Framework for Cooperation. This is an excellent initiative. The framework will, I believe, provide impetus and structure to strengthening ASEAN/New Zealand relations within the three key areas of the Vientiane Action Program - economic development cooperation; political and security cooperation; and people to people, education and cultural links. The Framework also includes recognition of the desirability of holding a regular New Zealand - ASEAN leaders meeting.

Let me conclude by saying that New Zealand greatly values its partnership with ASEAN. It is a partnership fundamental to our economic, political and security interests. We have recognized for a long time that our engagement with you can contribute to a more stable region; and a more peaceful, harmonious and prosperous neighbourhood in which to live. There is now a real sense of collective commitment in Southeast Asia. At the same time, there are major challenges that collectively we face. The President of AIPO has spoken of these issues this morning. All of this makes cooperation more important than ever.