

## **UN Top Leaders Attend ASEAN Day Reception At Malaysian Mission**

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**By Manik Mehta**

NEW YORK, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- In an unprecedented gesture, the top leadership of the United Nations, led by secretary-general Ban Ki-moon and his wife Ban Soon-taek, attended a joint ASEAN reception on Wednesday night at Malaysia's permanent mission in New York to celebrate the 2015 ASEAN Day.

Besides Ban, the new president of the 70th session of the General Assembly, Mogens Lykketoft, and UN deputy secretary-general Jan Eliasson attended the event.

The guests, including the permanent representatives and senior diplomats of most missions, descended on the Malaysian mission to extend their greetings to Malaysian permanent representative Datuk Ramlan Ibrahim and his counterparts from the other nine ASEAN member states.

Welcoming the guests, Ramlan said ASEAN "continues to be one of the fastest growing and most dynamic regions of the world".

"Indeed, 2015 is a historic year for ASEAN. At the 27th ASEAN Summit in November, the ASEAN leaders will adopt the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 which provides us with a roadmap for the next 10 years, and by the end of December this year, ASEAN's transformation into a single community will be accomplished," he said, adding that this will be a "huge step" towards making the ASEAN motto "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" a reality.

Ramlan said ASEAN would be moving up the integration ladder to become the ASEAN Economic Community, driving annual regional GDP growth of six to eight per cent. It will have a common market of 630 million people forming the world's seventh largest economy.

According to OECD projections, Ramlan said, the ASEAN region would become the fourth largest economy by 2050.

"This bodes very well for one of the eight priorities set by Malaysia as chair to enhance ASEAN's role as a global player," he said.

Ramlan also said that the ASEAN New York Committee had played an "indispensable role" in helping ASEAN attain this aspiration.

"We are pleased to note that the cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations has been very successful for ASEAN to achieve the three pillars of ASEAN Community," he said.

The establishment in Jakarta of a dedicated UN liaison office to the ASEAN region signifies the importance of the Southeast Asian region in the global landscape, "and we strongly

believe that this cooperation is heading towards the right direction and could pave the way for greater cooperation between ASEAN and the UN in the future."

Ramlan told Bernama that ASEAN, since its establishment in 1967, has become a dynamic and outward-looking regional organisation that plays an active role in the international fora.

"Under Malaysia's chairmanship, ASEAN will continue to raise its profile at the UN and other multilateral fora," he said.

Responding to Ramlan's remarks, Ban welcomed the guests using the Malaysian greeting "Selamat Datang", and elicited ripples of gentle laughter among the guests.

"I am impressed with the 1Malaysia concept which promotes unity in diversity. The UN will fully support ASEAN and I am looking forward to bilateral meetings with ASEAN leaders (expected to arrive in the latter half of September in New York for the 70th General Assembly session). Our two organisations are working together closely and constructively," Ban said.

Ban praised Ramlan's reference to the "ASEAN way of doing things" which could serve as a model.

The "ASEAN way of doing things" pertains to the group members' informal, friendly yet effective way of getting things done.

A surprise guest spotted at the reception was Vitaly Churkin, the Russian permanent representative to the UN, who had a few weeks back cast Russia's veto against a move made by the Netherlands, Malaysia, Australia and others in the Security Council to set up an enquiry tribunal to investigate the shooting down of the Malaysia Airlines MH17 flight last year in eastern Ukraine.

An ASEAN diplomat, speaking to Bernama on the condition of anonymity, said Churkin's presence at the reception suggested that all sides - those who had proposed and those who had opposed the enquiry tribunal - wanted to move on with their other professional work.

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