

THE 48TH ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING "CONNECTING TO THE WORLD"

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MALAYSIA

Venue : Tun Hussein Hall, Level 2, PWTC

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The Honourable Dato' Sri Anifah Haji Aman

Chairman of the 48th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting,

Your Royal Highness and ASEAN Foreign Ministers,

Invited Guest Foreign Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to be here today to address the 48th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting. This is one of the most important events during Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2015, and it gives me great pleasure to welcome you back once again to Kuala Lumpur, after we last met in April.
2. This ministerial meeting has always been one of the key gatherings throughout ASEAN's history, going right back to August 1967, when the First ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held in Bangkok. So much so that the five foreign ministers who met then to sign the Bangkok Declaration - Adam Malik of Indonesia, my father Tun Razak Hussein for Malaysia, Narcisco Ramos of the Philippines, S Rajaratnam from Singapore and Thanat Koman of Thailand - are widely thought of as being the founding fathers of ASEAN.
3. It was then a new structure for peace and cooperation in the region, and it has since had an admirable record in preserving harmony in one of the most diverse

parts of the world. The work of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers has been vital in that, and I commend past and present holders of those offices for building and strengthening our regional cooperation and taking bold steps when necessary - such as when they acted swiftly to deal with the recent crisis of irregular migration in Southeast Asia. This was a considerable test for ASEAN, but all parties concerned managed to handle it in a timely and effective manner.

4. This year provides another kind of test. At the 27th ASEAN Summit in November we will adopt the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, which provides us with a roadmap for the next ten years, and by the end of December we are due to establish a single community for our ten nation association. This will be a huge step towards making the ASEAN motto “One Vision, One Identity, One Community” a reality.
5. It is undoubtedly a milestone, and I would like to thank the High Level Task Force for all their efforts in drafting the Post-2015 Vision. For it to be a reality, however, the masterplans and the intergovernmental meetings are central - but they are not in themselves enough. As I said in April: “A People-Centred ASEAN is one in which our citizens feel that they are not just part of ASEAN - but that they are ASEAN, and its future is their future.”
6. Through travel and tourism, we can reach out and know each other better - which is why in June Malaysia launched Goasean - a 24/7 travel channel dedicated to showcasing the kaleidoscope of natural beauty and rich cultural heritage our region has to offer. We can come together through sporting tournaments and sharing our delicious cuisines. And, of course, through trade.
7. Deepening business integration and taking advantage of our youthful, talented and increasingly skilled population of over 600 million people has potentially huge rewards. It has been estimated that if intra-ASEAN trade was boosted from 24 percent to 40 percent, the incremental impact on the ASEAN economy could be 2.5 trillion dollars annually.

8. But being a community also means placing appropriate emphasis on the development agenda. Our ten member states are at different stages - and narrowing these gaps is not optional. It is essential if we are to build a truly integrated ASEAN, which is why inclusiveness and sustainability must be at the heart of our policies going forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. An increasingly integrated ASEAN is on course to be the world's fourth largest economy by 2050. Some even estimate that we could be the fourth-largest market after the EU, US and China by 2030 - only 15 years from now. We already have the third biggest workforce, after India and China, and it is entirely realistic for us to see ourselves as a "Third Force" in Asia.
10. Others are aware of this. A JP Morgan report referred to "ASEAN's bright future". It called us "an emerging hotspot located at the heart of the Asia-Pacific region and situated across major trade routes", and concluded, "in spite of challenges, ASEAN's economic performance continues to outpace the rest of the world."
11. A report by the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group published this April was even more upbeat. It said:

"The numbers behind ASEAN's transformation are truly astonishing:

Greater ASEAN integration and the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community could drive annual regional GDP growth of 6-8 per cent.

Over the same period, annual intra-regional trade could reach US\$1 trillion and G4 trade - trade with the US, Europe, Japan and China - could reach US\$3.7 trillion.

Foreign direct investment into ASEAN from the G4 will continue to grow strongly to around US\$106 billion as companies look to expand production bases in the region."

12. The report also observed that our “potential is greater than is commonly understood”. That is true. And if ASEAN is sometimes underestimated, we must be careful that we are not guilty of that ourselves. We should be confident about our future, and we should be vocal about our confidence.
13. We believe it is timely, therefore, for ASEAN’s united voice to be heard more frequently at multilateral fora. As you are aware, one of the eight priorities set by Malaysia as Chair this year is to enhance ASEAN’s role as a global player, and with an increasingly durable regional architecture in place, there is no reason why ASEAN should not take a more active role in the international community. We need to look beyond our borders, and do so together.
14. This is partly because there are many issues today, such as climate change, transnational crime, the threat of extremism, and migration, that cannot be resolved by individual nations alone. Region-to-region cooperation and dialogue is more effective at dealing with issues of such magnitude.
15. But it is also because it is time for ASEAN to fulfill its potential. Let me share with you some more assessments of what we are now and what we could be. One recent study declared that “the smart manufacturing money is on ASEAN”. The Financial Times thinks that ASEAN’s FDI prospects are looking bright.
16. David Lipton, the Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, said earlier this year that ASEAN was “a magnet for foreign direct investment and portfolio flows”. He described ASEAN as “one of the success stories of the modern era. In two generations you have risen from poverty to prosperity. In doing this ASEAN has set an example for developing countries around the globe that aspire to economic progress.”
17. And the US Council on Foreign Relations says that “ASEAN is the most significant multilateral institution in Asia” and that ASEAN has the capacity “to firmly establish itself as the essential regional organisation in Asia.”

18. Shouldn't "the essential regional organisation in Asia" be a well-recognised and respected voice in all global settings, and one that is heard on every important issue - from the environment, to security, to development priorities, legal disputes, and even the future of great international institutions such as the UN, the World Bank and the IMF?

19. ASEAN should not be shy about reaching out and connecting with the world. That is why it is entirely appropriate that this week of meetings and discussions includes those between ASEAN and Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, Australia, the EU, America, China, Russia and India, as well as the East Asia Summit, which consists of 18 members, and the ASEAN Regional Forum, which brings together 27 member states.

20. The fact that these are not new relationships shows that ASEAN has a history of participating and collaborating with neighbours and friends from across the continents. The creation of the ASEAN Community is, however, an opportunity to transform our ten nation group and forge a new place in the world. To connect in a new way, with a new sense of identity born of having become a community.

21. For that transformation to take place it must begin at home, in the countries of ASEAN. We need to raise awareness of what ASEAN is doing and of how the ongoing changes will be of benefit to all - we must make ASEAN a tangible reality to all our citizens. If outside investors and banks can see our potential, we need to ensure that our peoples can too.

22. That is what lies behind the theme for Malaysia's chairmanship for this year: "Our People, Our Community, Our Vision." It is a vision to be shared at home and with the world so that we all play our part in making the Asian Century also the ASEAN Century.

23. And with that, it gives me great pleasure to declare the 48th Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations and the related meetings open.

Thank you.

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2