

"Towards an ASEAN Economic and Security Community" -- Opening Remarks at the First Session, 9th ASEAN Summit (8:30-11:15)

Nusa Dua, Bali, 7th October 2003

I would like to express my heart-felt thanks to the Government of Indonesia for the excellent arrangements for the 9th ASEAN Summit and the hospitality extended to my delegation and me. I wish to take this precious opportunity to express the solidarity of the Government and People of Cambodia to the Government and the People of Indonesia in the fight against terrorism.

In the past year, we were able to establish a cohesive ASEAN framework for combating terrorism by taking concerted efforts to crack down and dismantle terrorist organizations, implement regional capacity building programs and establish ASEAN focal points on counter-terrorism. However, at a regional level, there is an urgent need for enhancing collaboration on how to prevent terror attacks by analyzing and solving the root causes of terrorism and tailoring responses to specific circumstances.

In this regard, I believe that what is needed is an "axis of stability" among ASEAN countries. Indeed, we cannot neglect a need for focusing on improving the efficiency of both multilateral and regional policy implementation in combating the manifestations of terrorism. In this spirit, May I suggest to the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN to task our Ministers concerned to elaborate an Action Plan on Strengthening Security in ASEAN.

The security issue on the Korean peninsula is of serious concern to ASEAN. I believe that a peaceful Korean peninsula is important for peace and stability in East Asia. I am therefore convinced that the current engagement policy would be beneficial to all parties concerned, as it would increase mutual understanding and strengthen peace and stability in the region. Moreover, there is no doubt that the inter-Korean dialogue is key to reducing tensions and improving the situation on the Korean peninsula.

We believe that the ARF can and should play an active supporting role to the solution of the nuclear issue and the peace process in the Korean Peninsula. Cambodia welcomes the Six-party talks held in August 2003 in Beijing and appreciates efforts by all concerned parties. We hope that future dialogue will break the deadlock so that we can find ways to defuse the tension in the region.

In the past recent years, Cambodia has taken all its efforts to obtain the accession to the WTO at the recent ministerial meeting in Cancun. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the ASEAN members to provide all kinds of supports to Cambodia in our active campaign for WTO membership. Cambodia will use all the opportunities of the membership to enhance the implementation of a comprehensive policy reform agenda in order to achieve sustainable development.

ASEAN has taken serious strides to deepen economic integration, possibly leading to the formation of an ASEAN Economic Community by the year 2020, as we have discussed in Phnom Penh. Indeed, the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II) at the current summit will provide a roadmap for achieving these noble objectives. In this sense, I fully support the recommendations of the High-level Taskforce on ASEAN Economic Community, especially the degree of flexibility that enable those member states that are ready to proceed the first step to the Regional Economic Community. But concurrently, in order to ensure that such implementation will not let to widening and deepening the development gaps inside ASEAN, which constitute our main impediment, I would suggest that we all should give top priority to the mobilization of resources both within and from outside ASEAN to expedite the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration including the expansion of the coverage of the ASEAN Integration System of Preferences (AISP). This will allow least developed member countries to be able to fully and effectively participate in the Regional Economic Community and to benefit from the integration process.

Cambodia welcomes the efforts made by some ASEAN countries aimed at intensifying sub-regional cooperation. As part of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), in Phnom Penh last year, we have taken a step further to intensify GMS development, which will greatly contribute to the diminution of the gaps among the ASEAN economies. Moreover, Cambodia is also keen to strengthen economic cooperation with neighboring countries such as Cambodia, Vietnam and Lao PDR Development Triangle, and Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand Development Triangle. In this context, I welcome the first meeting of Foreign Ministers on the *Economic Cooperation Strategy* (ECS) between Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand (CLMT), recently held in Bangkok on 1 August 2003. We are convinced that this initiative will provide us with unique opportunity to increase trade and investment, enhance competitiveness and generate more employment and improved income and quality of life of the peoples in the sub-region.

I am pleased to notice that at the 9th ASEAN Summit we will discuss the Maritime Cooperation in ASEAN. Cambodia supports the proposal to establish an ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) in order to address maritime-related issues in a comprehensive manner. However, I propose that we should clearly establish a Term of Reference for the AMF, and also provide flexibility for some issues, which require bilateral discussion on a confidential basis, since we all know that not all issues can be resolved on a multilateral basis.