

# 1996 PRESS STATEMENT OF THE FIRST INFORMAL ASEAN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING

*Adopted in Jakarta, Indonesia on 30 November 1996*

The First Informal Meeting of the Heads of Government of ASEAN was held in Jakarta, Indonesia on the thirtieth of November 1996. This Meeting was a follow-up of the decision adopted by the Fifth ASEAN Summit that took place in Bangkok, Thailand in December 1995.

The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Soeharto, President of the Republic of Indonesia and consisted of two sessions. The morning session was attended by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan dan Yang di-Pertuan Brunei Darussalam; The Honourable Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia; His Excellency Mr. Fidel V. Ramos, President of the Republic of the Philippines; His Excellency Mr. Goh Chok Tong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore; His Excellency Dr. Amnuay Viravan, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand; and His Excellency Mr. Vo Van Kiet, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The afternoon session was joined by His Royal Highness Norodom Ranariddh and His Excellency Mr. Hun Sen, First and Second Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia respectively; His Excellency Mr. Khamtay Siphandone; Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and His Excellency Senior General Than Shwe; Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council and Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar.

In assessing the development and progress relating to ASEAN affairs since the Fifth Summit in Bangkok, the Heads of Government of ASEAN expressed their satisfaction with the implementation of various decisions taken at the Summit. They were of the view that these encouraging achievements have contributed to a greater commitment of countries in Southeast Asia to strengthen their cooperation in various fields towards the enhancement of peace, stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia. However, the Heads of Government of ASEAN agreed that efforts should be continued and strengthened to complete the remaining tasks which have been undertaken in pursuit of the objectives of ASEAN.

The Heads of Government of ASEAN discussed three clusters of topics, namely the issues relating to ASEAN, regional issues, and international issues of common concern to the ASEAN countries.

The Heads of Government of ASEAN agreed to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN in Malaysia in 1997 on the occasion of the Second ASEAN Informal Summit. In this regard, they agreed to develop ideas on the establishment of ASEAN Foundation to promote ASEAN awareness, people-to-people contact through scholarships, fellowships and other exchanges. The Heads of Government of ASEAN believed that the establishment of such a foundation would further improve the quality of life of its peoples through human resources development.

The Heads of Government reaffirmed their strong commitment to the speedy realization of an ASEAN comprising all ten Southeast Asian countries. They agreed that Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar be admitted as ASEAN members simultaneously. To this end, they agreed to request the relevant ASEAN bodies to continue with the necessary technical and procedural steps. As to the actual timing of the admission of the three countries, this will be announced in due time. In the mean time, as in the case of Cambodia and Laos, Myanmar will be participating in ASEAN activities.

The Heads of Government agreed to expedite the ratification of the Treaty on the SEANWFZ and requested the relevant ASEAN Body to finalize the revision of its Protocol by the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN.

While recognizing the importance of ASEAN-EU relations which have developed over the past two decades, the ASEAN Heads of Government noted with increasing concern the efforts of one member country of the EU to introduce extraneous issues such as the question of East Timor in the economic cooperation and interaction between ASEAN and the EU. They believed that the introduction of such an extraneous issue would only lead to unwarranted aggravation in ASEAN-EU relations, while at the same time jeopardizing the tripartite process on East Timor presently taking place under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. The Heads of Government reiterated their full support for the Indonesian position on East Timor and rejected the introduction of such an extraneous issue into ASEAN-EU relations by a certain member of EU.

The Heads of Government exchanged views on the proposed ASEAN Vision beyond 2003. Taking into account that by that time ASEAN Free Trade Area would come into being, they requested the Ministers to develop an ASEAN Vision toward 2020 and submit their report to the Second ASEAN Informal Summit to be held concurrently with the celebration of the 30th ASEAN Anniversary.

On the ASEAN Common Time Zone, the Heads of Government agreed to review the matter during the period of 2000-2003.

The Heads of Government also discussed regional matters such as the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the South China Sea.

The ASEAN Heads of Government endorsed the Basic Framework of the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation as adopted by the Ministerial Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in June 1996. They reaffirmed their commitment to this initiative. They expressed the view that the realization of such a development cooperation would promote the economic integration and interconnection between economies of the ASEAN and the non-ASEAN Mekong Riparian States.

The ASEAN Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to seek an early peaceful solution to the overlapping claims in the South China Sea in accordance with the provisions of the TAC, the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea of 1992 as well as international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982.

The Heads of Government agreed to request the economic ministers to develop the possibility of ASEAN cooperation on the facilitation of goods in transit.

On transnational issues, the Heads of Government agreed to request the relevant ASEAN body to study the possibility of regional cooperation on criminal matters including extradition.

In the afternoon session, the Chairman informed the Heads of Government of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar on the relevant issues discussed during the morning session. The Heads of Government of the Ten Southeast Asian countries also exchanged views on various issues of common interest, especially the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation.