

# 1996 JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE 29<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING

*Issued in Jakarta, Indonesia on 21 July 1996*

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## **1996 JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE 29<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING**

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1. The 29<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held in Jakarta from 20-21 July 1996.

### **5<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN SUMMIT**

2. The Foreign Ministers underlined the significant achievements of the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit held in Bangkok from 14–15 December 1995. As part of Summit's agenda, the ASEAN Leaders held a meeting with the Leaders of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, pursuant to the Summit's theme 'ASEAN towards One Southeast Asia'. All ten leaders signed the Treaty on Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and agreed to launch a new pattern of regional development cooperation involving the development of the Mekong Basin, the establishment of a rail link running from Singapore through Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and on to Kunming and a network of 91 pipelines linking the ASEAN Countries. The Summit elevated functional cooperation to a higher plane and called for the further strengthening of the ASEAN identity, spirit and sense of community. Focusing on the theme "Greater Economic Integration" the Summit resulted in the acceleration and deepening of the commitments under AFTA, expansion of ASEAN economic cooperation in new sectors as well as increased linkages with other countries in Southeast Asia. The Foreign Ministers looked forward to the convening of the Informal Meeting of the ASEAN Heads of Government to be held in Indonesia in December 1996 as agreed upon during the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit.
3. The Foreign Ministers accepted the formal applications of Cambodia and Laos to become members of ASEAN in 1997. They also granted Observer status of ASEAN to Myanmar. The vision of ASEAN's founders of all ten Southeast Asian countries living in harmony under a single root is now closer to realization. In this connection, the Ministers reiterated their continued determination to enhance cooperation with Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to assist them in preparing for their eventual membership in ASEAN.

### **POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION**

4. The Foreign Ministers noted the increasingly important role of ASEAN in the maintenance of peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia and Pacific region. In this regard, they reaffirmed their commitment to work closely with others, particularly with ASEAN's Dialogue Partners and Observers.
5. The Foreign Ministers welcomed China, India and Russia as the new Dialogue Partners of ASEAN. The Ministers looked forward to the broadening of the scope and intensity of cooperation between ASEAN and its three new dialogue partners.
6. In reviewing the development of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Ministers expressed satisfaction with the progress made thus far through Track I as well as Track II activities, in promoting confidence-building measures among its participants. They also took cognizance of the increasing degree of comfort in the interactions among the ARF participants, demonstrating that ARF is Chairman's Paper on Criteria for Participation in the ARF would reinforce the foundation of the ARF process. Conscious of the increasingly significant role of the ARF in the maintenance of peace and stability in the region, the Ministers reiterated that ASEAN should continue to be the driving force of this forum.

7. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the closer cooperative relations between ASEAN and non-governmental bodies such as the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and the Council for Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). They also noted that these bodies had continued to provide ASEAN with useful ideas and proposals with regard to political and security cooperation in the region.
8. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of ASEAN's Programme of Action on ZOPFAN. In this regard, the Foreign Ministers cited the signing of the SEANWFZ Treaty by all Heads of Government of Southeast Asian countries on 15 December 1995 as another contribution of the countries of Southeast Asia to the strengthening of the security of the region and to the maintenance of world peace and stability. In this connection they stressed the importance of expediting the process of ratification of the Treaty by the signatory states so that it will be completed, if possible, before the Informal ASEAN Summit in Indonesia In December 1996. For the effectiveness of the Treaty, they reiterated their call on all nuclear weapons states to extend their cooperation by acceding to the Protocol of the Treaty. They agreed that the review process of the Protocol as agreed by the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Summit should commence immediately. They also agreed to consider tabling a draft resolution on the SEANWFZ Treaty in the United Nations General Assembly at an appropriate time.
9. Aware of the increasing interest of non-Southeast Asian states in associating themselves with the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), the Foreign Ministers agreed to expedite the work on the appropriate modality for association.
10. The Foreign Ministers had a wide-ranging exchange of views on the current regional and international situations. They noted that the political and security situation in the Asia Pacific region was relatively stable and peaceful. They expressed their belief that the relative peace and stability in the region could be largely attributed to the endeavours of ASEAN to cultivate the habits of dialogue, consensus and cooperation among the countries in the region and to encourage the solution of disputes through negotiations and other peaceful means. However, they acknowledged that tensions exist in the region as well as in other parts of the world In the face of longstanding disputes which, if not successfully managed, could erupt into conflicts that could threaten regional as well as international stability.
11. The Foreign Ministers expressed their concern over the situation in the South China Sea, and stressed that several outstanding issues remain a major concern for ASEAN. In the spirit of the Manila Declaration on the South China Sea, the Ministers called for the peaceful resolution of the dispute and self-restraint by parties concerned. The Ministers were pleased to observe that the parties concerned have expressed their willingness to resolve the problem by peaceful means in accordance with recognized international law in general and the UNCLOS of 1982 in particular. The Ministers also reiterated the significance of the on-going informal workshop series on Managing Potential Conflict in the South China Sea, and welcomed the continuing bilateral cooperation and discussions among the claimant countries. They endorsed the idea of concluding a regional code of conduct in the South China Sea which will lay the foundation for long term stability in the area and foster understanding among claimant countries.

12. The Foreign Ministers stressed the importance of freedom of navigation and aviation in the South China Sea.
13. The Foreign Ministers discussed the situation in the Korean Peninsula. They reiterated their belief that the resumption of dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea was extremely important for peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. The Ministers emphasized the need to establish a peace mechanism and also emphasised that the 1953 Armistice Agreement should remain valid until then. They noted the significant role of Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) in the framework of the resolution of the nuclear issue in the region.
14. The Foreign Ministers on one hand, welcomed the progress achieved in the Middle East peace process since August last year, particularly the implementation of the PLO-Israeli Declaration of Principles on Interim Self Government Arrangement of 1993 as well as the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995, the first Palestinian elections on 20 January 1996 and the beginning of the final status negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis in Taba in May 1996. On the other hand, the Ministers viewed with concern the current critical phase of the Middle East peace process following the recent general elections in Israel. In this regard, they stressed the importance of continuing the peace process to restore the rights of the Palestinians, the return of the occupied Arab territories, as well as ensuring balanced and equal security in the region consistent with the principles agreed upon at the Madrid Conference of 1991, particularly the reciprocal principle of land-for-peace and the assurance given to all parties.
15. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the Dayton Peace Accord and the signing on 14 December 1995 at the Paris Peace Conference for the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other parties thereto. In this regard, they also welcomed the International "train and equip" programme for the Army of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to establish a military balance in the country and ensure enduring peace and stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Ministers recognized the challenges attendant to the implementation of the Agreement and in this regard, underlined the importance of full compliance by the parties concerned with the provisions of the Agreement. They emphasized the need for the parties and all states to cooperate with the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and its organs in the discharge of their mandate. In this regard, the Ministers supported the international call for the arrest of those who have been indicted for war crimes, and their removal from Bosnia-Herzegovina as an important condition for the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord. The Ministers also stressed the importance of the creation of conditions necessary to the reconstruction and development of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the support of the international community in this regard. They paid tribute to the women and men of UNPROFOR and IFOR for their services to the cause of peace in the former Yugoslavia.
16. The Foreign Ministers were encouraged by the successful outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries in Cartagena held from 18-20 October 1995. They reaffirmed their conviction that the fundamental principles of the Non-Aligned Movement will continue to be valid under current circumstances. They emphasized in particular, the commitment adopted by the Movement to work towards cooperation and a sense of full partnership in the international field for the promotion of peace and economic development. In this regard, they commended the constructive approaches by the Movement to promote its objectives through dialogue on the basis of mutual interest and benefit, genuine interdependence and shared responsibility.

17. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the establishment of the UN Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation and urged donor countries to land their full support for such a fund. In this context, they emphasized the importance of the speedy implementation of the decision by the Non-Aligned Summit in Cartagena on 18-20 October 1995 to establish the NAM Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation in Indonesia, and recognized that its activities would complement those of the UN Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation. The Ministers reiterated the vital role of collective self-reliance for promoting and accelerating development in a world economy undergoing fundamental change.
18. The Foreign Ministers emphasized the importance of full and effective implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in promoting International peace and security. Bearing in mind the objective of general and complete disarmament as set out in the Treaty, the Foreign Ministers while noting the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT, stressed the need for all state parties to strive to achieve the objectives set out in the final document of that Conference. In this regard, the Foreign Ministers called on the nuclear weapons states to refrain from conducting nuclear weapons tests and the Conference on Disarmament to conclude the negotiation on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996. The Foreign Ministers emphasized further the importance of convening the 4<sup>th</sup> United Nations Special Session devoted to disarmament to set the future course of actions in the field of disarmament and related security matters before the turn of the century. The Foreign Ministers expressed the hope for the conclusion of the International Convention on the Prohibition of Use and Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons and the International Convention Against the Production and Stockpiling of Fissile Materials. In this context, they emphasized the importance of multilateralism in the process of disarmament and the historical significance of the final document of SSOD 1, including the principles, guidelines and priorities envisaged therein as well as the need to preserve and build upon its achievements.
19. The Foreign Ministers reiterated the importance of reforming and restructuring the United Nations including the Security Council so as to democratize its workings and strengthen its effectiveness. In this context, they reaffirmed the role of the General Assembly as the highest deliberative and decision-making organ of the UN system, stressed the importance of the work of various open-ended working groups to enhance the effectiveness of the organization including the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council and the Open-ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. They welcomed the significant measures that have been adopted to revitalize the General Assembly including the decision to continue using existing mechanisms and establishing new bodies as deemed necessary and affirmed that these measures should be fully implemented. Furthermore, they underlined the need to establish more effective relations between the General Assembly and the Security Council on the basis of greater accountability by the Security Council to the General Assembly. They also attached the highest priority to reforming the UN in the economic, social and related fields in order to effectively meet the challenges and development priorities of developing countries in this area of globalisation.
20. The Foreign Ministers expressed their satisfaction over the significant contribution made by the countries of origin, the countries of first asylum, and the countries of resettlement toward the conclusion of the CPA on 30 June 1996. They noted however, the fact that there are still sizable numbers of remaining boat people in some first asylum countries who have not been repatriated or resettled would require further common efforts and cooperation for their immediate repatriation. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the continued coordination between the first asylum countries and countries of origin as well as relevant international organizations and donor countries in completing the repatriation of the remaining non-refugees from the first asylum camps in the region and their reintegration in the countries of origin.

## ECONOMIC COOPERATION

### PROGRESS ON AFTA AND OTHER RELATED ISSUES

21. The Foreign Ministers were pleased to note the rapid increase of 21% in intra-ASEAN exports of CEPT products from US\$49.1 billion in 1994 to US\$59.3 billion in 1995. The Ministers also noted with satisfaction the progress made on the decision of the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Bangkok to accelerate the CEPT-AFTA whereby tariffs of items in the CEPT Inclusion List will be reduced to the 0–5 % range by the year 2000, thus enabling ASEAN to achieve the AFTA even before the targeted date of 2003. The Foreign Ministers noted that for new members, the schedule for the Implementation of CEPT for AFTA will be carried out in accordance with the agreement and commitment between ASEAN and new members.
22. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the substantial progress made in the negotiations to liberalise trade in unprocessed agricultural products and welcomed the decision to phase-in these products into the CEPT Scheme by the year 2010. The Ministers encouraged member countries to intensify their efforts to realise this decision.
23. The Foreign Ministers called for continued efforts to reduce the impediments to trade and investment in ASEAN. The Ministers were pleased to note that customs surcharges affecting identified CEPT products will be removed by 1996, and called upon member countries to intensify their efforts to eliminate Non-Tariff Barriers. The Ministers also noted with satisfaction the rapid developments made in customs cooperation to support AFTA, especially the establishment of the Green Lane System for CEPT products which expedites the customs clearance for these products. The Ministers welcomed the decision for ASEAN to come up with an Agreement on Customs which will enhance regional cooperation in customs. They expressed optimism that trade facilitation measures under AFTA as provided in the agreement, particularly the harmonization of tariff nomenclature, customs procedures and customs valuation would be fully implemented.
24. The Foreign Ministers called for the active participation of the private sector in ASEAN economic cooperation programmes and activities and to take advantage of the business opportunities arising therefrom. They encouraged the private sector to come up with specific proposals especially those pertaining to trade facilitation measures, SME development programmes, industry-specific projects and promotion-oriented activities.
25. The Foreign Ministers noted the progress made in the areas of food, agriculture, forestry, energy, transport and tourism. They supported the recommendations of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers that further measures be taken to facilitate travel in ASEAN countries. In this respect, the Ministers noted that some member countries have established the special lanes for ASEAN nationals. The Ministers welcomed the decision of the 15<sup>th</sup> AMAF to continue to focus on cooperative endeavour in the seven priority areas identified in the Ministerial Understanding on ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry. The Ministers also noted that the private sector is now more involved in cooperative efforts and activities with the signing of the MOU on ASEAN Cooperation and Joint Approaches in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme by the AMAF in 1994. They expressed their support of the decision of the AEM to accelerate the negotiations in services so as to enable ASEAN Member Countries to come up with initial commitments by September 1996.
26. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the signing of the Basic Agreement on ASEAN Industrial Cooperation (AICO) which broadens the scope of industrial cooperation in ASEAN. They expressed confidence that this new scheme will encourage more industrial cooperation projects and further enhance the attractiveness of ASEAN as an investment site.

### **FACILITATION OF GOODS IN TRANSIT**

27. The Foreign Ministers shared the view that the implementation of AFTA has made much progress. They believed however, that others related efforts should be undertaken by member countries to promote trade and the free movement of goods in the region. They therefore agreed to recommend to the ASEAN Heads of Government the appropriate ASEAN bodies to consider additional measures for facilitation of goods in transit.

### **AFTA-CER LINKAGES**

28. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress made in the establishment of trade and investment linkages between AFTA and countries of the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA) and encouraged the establishment of such linkages with other regional groupings and trading arrangements.

### **WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

29. The Foreign Ministers were pleased to note that the inaugural World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC) would be held in Singapore in December this year. The Foreign Ministers recognised the importance of the Singapore MC and reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring a substantial outcome at the MC.
30. The Foreign Ministers endorsed the position taken by the AEM regarding the framework of ASEAN's approach towards the agenda of the inaugural WTO MC in Singapore. The Foreign Ministers agreed that the Singapore MC should critically review the implementation of UR Agreements and seek a Ministerial mandate to start the preparatory work on the built-in agenda, including agriculture. The Foreign Ministers resolved that ASEAN Members should actively work towards a successful conclusion of the negotiations on basic telecommunications and maritime transport services and that other WTO Countries should be urged to also exert themselves with a view of achieving that end. The Foreign Ministers reiterated that ASEAN should oppose any attempt to include issues which were not trade-related, such as corruption and social clause at the Singapore MC. The Ministers noted that other issues, such as competition policy, may not be mature enough for inclusion at the MC. The Foreign Ministers also endorsed the AEM's position to oppose the inclusion of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, as it stands, into the agenda of the Singapore MC.

### **EAST ASIA ECONOMIC CAUCUS (EAEC)**

31. The Ministers reiterated their commitment toward the early realisation of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) which will intensify economic cooperation that is mutually beneficial to its members. In this regard, they were happy to note the increasing acceptance of the concept and the rationale for the establishment of such a caucus among the countries of the region.

### **ASIA PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION (APEC)**

32. The Foreign Ministers noted that in implementing Part One of the Osaka Action Agenda, the SOM chair will furnish a report on the overall progress of collective actions and IAP preparations to the APEC Ministers in-charge of trade at the Christchurch meeting which was held in July 1996. These Action Plans will be formulated in accordance with the general principles and framework of the Action Agenda so as to realize APEC's long term goal of free and open trade and investment in the region.
33. The Foreign Ministers noted that all 18 member economies of APEC have submitted their indicative Individual Action Plans (IAPS) during the APEC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM II) in Cebu city last May. The IAPs will be further refined in the coming months for submission to Ministers. These IAPs together with the Report on Collective Actions will be integrated into the Manila Action Plan for APEC (MAPA 196), a document to be adopted by the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November. The Foreign Ministers noted that APEC devoted attention to Part Two of the Osaka Action Agenda pertaining to the economic and technology cooperation (EcoTech), with the view of providing greater coherence and sharper focus to the activities of the Working Groups. They also noted the successful inaugural meeting of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in Manila, which further enhanced private sector participation in the APEC process. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the convening of the APEC Business Forum (ABF) on the occasion of the APEC meetings in November 1996 as a way of highlighting and making more effective the role of the private sector in the APEC process.
34. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers expressed full support for Vietnam's request for admission into APEC when the moratorium on new membership in APEC is lifted.

### **ASEAN COMMON TIME ZONE**

35. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the initiative of the ASEAN Economic Ministers to establish a working group to discuss the merits of the proposal of having an ASEAN Common Time Zone. The Foreign Ministers noted that while Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam have GMT plus 7 hours, the other countries, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines have GMT plus 8 hours.

### **FUNCTION COOPERATION**

36. Pursuant to the decision of the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit to elevate function cooperation to a higher plane to bring shared prosperity to all members of ASEAN, the Foreign Ministers adopted the Framework for Elevating Functional Cooperation to a Higher Plane. The Framework consists of the theme "shared prosperity through human development, technological competitiveness and social cohesiveness" and six measures to guide regional cooperation in science and technology, environment, culture and information, social development, drugs and narcotics control. The Ministers reiterated the need to encourage the effective participation of woman and youth in all levels of development.
37. The Foreign Ministers reiterated the importance of human resources development and of further strengthening the ASEAN identity and raising ASEAN awareness towards the realisation of a caring, cohesive and technologically advanced ASEAN community. In this regard, they welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN University Network by the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, the initiative of the ASEAN Labour Ministers to study the feasibility of establishing an ASEAN Regional Human Resources Development Planning Centre, and the decision of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information to further develop and expand the ASEANWEB and to explore the possibility of establishing an



ASEAN Satellite Channel which would enable ASEAN to present its views and culture more effectively to the world.

38. The Foreign Ministers emphasized the need to strengthen the family as a foundation for a strong caring and cohesive society. They expressed their support for the efforts of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare to establish an ASEAN Regional Mechanism for Family and Child Development.
39. The Foreign Ministers expressed serious concern as underlined by the ASEAN Labour Ministers, that attempts to link international labour standards and international trade would undermine the economic growth of developing countries which in turn would affect the economy of developed nations. They reiterated the view that the issue of international labour standards should be discussed in the ILO and not in other non-labour related fora. The Ministers supported the decision to urge the ILO to review the International labour conventions including the so-called fundamental workers' rights conventions.
40. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the completion of the Medium Term Programme on ASEAN Science and Technology Development (1996- 2000), the Medium Term Programme on ASEAN Drug Abuse Control (1996-1998) and the ASEAN Regional Programme on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control (1995- 2000) which further elaborated the respective Action Plans. They supported the vigorous implementation of these programmes to help achieve the goals of a technologically competitive ASEAN, and a drug-free and healthy ASEAN.
41. The Foreign Ministers recognized the need to raise the public profile of ASEAN's activities in the scientific, environmental, narcotics control, social and cultural fields through wider publicity and agreed that valuable contributions of individuals and organizations in these areas should be properly recognized with prestigious ASEAN awards and prizes.
42. The Foreign Ministers called for greater coordination among the various sectors involved in functional cooperation and agreed to strengthen the capability and resources of the ASEAN Secretariat in this area. They stressed the need to explore various funding modalities, including cost-sharing schemes, to ensure the effective and timely implementation of priority functional cooperation programmes.
43. The Foreign Ministers noted the progress made in the setting up of ASEAN Resource Centres in the different areas in ASEAN Member Countries, in accordance with the decision of the 8<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Conference on Civil Service Matters.

## **TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES**

44. The Foreign Ministers recognized the need to focus attention on such issues as narcotics, economic crimes, including money laundering, environment and illegal migration which transcend borders and affect the lives of the people in the region. They shared the view that management of such transnational issues are urgently called for so that they would not affect the long-term viability ASEAN and its individual member nations. The Ministers therefore agreed that all the works and projects of the existing ASEAN bodies in these areas should be urgently reviewed and recommendations be submitted to the ASEAN Heads of Government for consideration.

## **ASEANWEB**

45. The Foreign Ministers appreciated the initiative taken by the ASEAN Secretariat to launch the ASEANWEB on the Internet. The Ministers noted that the ASEANWEB has expanded to cover more ASEAN activities and that it has also established links to web sites in member countries. The Ministers encouraged all ASEAN countries to develop the ASEANWEB into an effective and useful channel of communication on all aspects of ASEAN and its activities, and to make full use of it to project ASEAN more effectively.

## **CELEBRATIONS FOR ASEAN'S 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

46. Recognizing that the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN falls next year, the Foreign Ministers called on each member country to plan and organize year-long activities beginning from 8 August 1997. The Ministers also called on the ASC to coordinate these activities at the national and regional levels with the participation of all the ASEAN committees and bodies.

## **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

### **ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM)**

47. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting held in Bangkok from 1-2 March 1996 which successfully launched a new Asia-Europe Partnership for greater growth. The historic meeting, attended by the Heads of State and Government from ten Asian countries, consisted of seven ASEAN Member Countries, Japan, Republic of Korea and China, fifteen European nations and the President of the European Commission, ushered in a new era in relations between Asia and Europe by reinforcing political dialogue at the highest level and strengthening economic links and cooperation in other areas between the two regions. The Ministers agreed to work closely to ensure that ASEAN continues to play a central role in the evolution of ASEM and the implementation of follow-up actions agreed to by ASEM. The Ministers noted that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEM will be held respectively in the United Kingdom in 1998 and in the Republic of Korea in the year 2000.

### **COOPERATION WITH DIALOGUE PARTNERS**

48. The Foreign Ministers noted that the dialogue process continues to be the most important aspect of ASEAN's external relations. It has provided ASEAN with opportunities to promote its common interests and engage in dialogues on both regional and global issues with some of the most important countries in the world. The Ministers expressed the hope that the achievements in this area could be sustained through increased consultations and mutual understanding.
49. The Foreign Ministers noted in particular, that regular consultations with Dialogue Partners have facilitated greater cooperation in various areas. The Ministers called upon the Dialogue Partners to remain committed to the promotion of trade, investment, technological transfer and market access for ASEAN products. The Ministers continued to place importance on development cooperation and expressed appreciation for the continued support by the Dialogue Partners in the implementation of various development projects. They expressed ASEAN's readiness to work with Dialogue Partners in a trilateral approach to promote development cooperation with CLM countries.

50. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the initiative of H.E. President Kim Young Sam of the Republic of Korea which led to the establishment of an ASEAN-Republic of Korea Eminent Persons Group, and expressed the hope that the Group's report would contribute to a more dynamic ASEAN-Republic of Korea relations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Foreign Ministers took note with appreciation the ASEAN- EU EPG Report.

#### **ASEAN-MEKONG BASIN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

51. The Ministers noted the Record of the Ministerial Meeting on ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation held in Kuala Lumpur in June 1996 and expressed their satisfaction on the progress achieved towards implementing the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit decision on ASEAN cooperation in the economic development of the Mekong Basin.
52. The Ministers endorsed the basic framework for the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation as adopted by the Kuala Lumpur meeting. They also reiterated the decision in Kuala Lumpur to open the participation in the cooperation to countries other than the core group, who are currently engaged in development cooperation on a bilateral or multilateral basis in the Mekong Basin or have expressed Interest in the ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation and to international and regional institutions which are interested or engaged In assisting development of the area.
53. They recognised the need for ASEAN countries to establish appropriate modalities for funding the cooperation, and noted the agreement to establish under the Chairmanship of Thailand, an ASEAN and non-ASEAN Riparian States Experts Group to study the issue further and any other relevant matter connected with the mobilizing of funds and to establish under the Chairmanship of Malaysia, a special ASEAN and non-ASEAN Working Group to study all the issues on the proposed railway links between Singapore and Kunming.
54. The Ministers also supported the decision of the Kuala Lumpur meeting reconvene an annual meeting of Ministers which would be hold back-to-back with the Joint Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Foreign and Economic Ministers prior to the ASEAN Summit Meeting and that special meetings of Ministers could be held, as and when necessary, and to establish a Steering Committee for the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation.

#### **SECTORAL DIALOGUE RELATIONS AND LINKS WITH REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

55. On ASEAN-Pakistan relations, the Ministers noted the move by the ASEAN-CCI to initiate the formation of the ASEAN-Pakistan Business Council, and called for the further strengthening of the sectoral dialogue relations. The Ministers called for continued efforts to develop linkages and cooperation with other regional organizations mindful of the limited resources arid means available.