

1999 PRESS STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SPECIAL JOINT MINISTERIAL MEETING

Adopted in Manila, the Philippines on 26 November 1999

1. The Foreign Ministers, Economic Ministers and Finance Ministers of the ASEAN Member Countries of Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, met together for the first time, on 26 November 1999 on the eve of the 3rd ASEAN Informal Summit.

2. The Meeting was co-chaired by the Hon. Domingo L. Siazon, Jr., Secretary of Foreign Affairs; Hon. Jose T. Pardo, Secretary of Trade and Industry; and, Hon. Edgardo B. Espiritu, Secretary of Finance, of the Republic of the Philippines.

3. The Ministers found it necessary to meet jointly because, as the recent financial crisis has shown, the utmost consultation and coordination must be undertaken among themselves and their ministries in order for the ASEAN Member Countries and governments to effectively meet the challenges facing the region.

4. In this context, the Ministers resolved to ensure closer cross-sectoral consultation and coordination in developing regional responses to the financial crisis and its economic, social and political consequences, even as the efforts are now shifting from crisis management to economic recovery management. They likewise affirmed the need to advance the integration of ASEAN's economies, and to address the challenges and opportunities of the time, some of which are increasingly transnational in scope.

5. They recognized the need to work more closely together and to support one another in making sure that the Hanoi Plan of Action is implemented, particularly in areas in which cross-sectoral coordination is essential, and thus contribute to the realization of ASEAN Vision 2020. They also noted the importance of a timely review of the progress of implementing ASEAN activities.

Exchange of Views on Regional and International Issues

6. The Ministers exchanged views on regional and international issues that will be discussed among ASEAN Heads of State/Government at the 3rd ASEAN Informal Summit, namely: (a) current security environment; (b) economic resurgence, financial issues and future competitiveness; (c) social issues including social safety nets; and, (d) the future direction of ASEAN.

7. The Ministers expressed their support for sustaining reforms and regional economic and financial cooperation, and encouraged a further deepening of the integration of the ASEAN market. In this regard, they resolved to give joint impetus to the acceleration of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the ASEAN Investment Area (AIA), as well as to the second round of negotiations on trade in services, with a view to ensuring its successful conclusion by 2001.

8. The Ministers acknowledged the need to promote and articulate shared and common positions in various international fora, particularly on the reform of the international financial architecture, the enhancement of regional support mechanisms, and the promotion of the region as an investment destination.

9. The Ministers stressed the important role played by the ASEAN Surveillance Process in promoting stability and in preventing the recurrence of future crises.

10. Deeply aware of the necessity to develop the region's human resources, the Ministers agreed to coordinate programs designed to provide the knowledge and skills to take advantage of the opportunities of the future. In this respect, they agreed to allocate US\$100,000 from the ASEAN Fund as seed capital for the e-ASEAN initiative. They also acknowledged the need to pursue programs that would benefit the newer members of ASEAN.

11. The Ministers agreed to work together in building the institutional capacity of ASEAN Member Countries to provide social safety nets in cooperation with ASEAN Dialogue Partners and international organizations where necessary, to alleviate the lingering social impact of the crisis on the vulnerable sectors of society. Collaboration was also sought on developing training and counseling programs for those displaced by the crisis. The Ministers agreed to consider the proposal for an ASEAN coordinating mechanism for enhancing social safety net programs and instructed their Senior Officials to work out the details of its implementation. They also welcomed the commitment of the Asian Development Bank to devote 40 percent of its resources to poverty-alleviation programs. This decision coincides with ASEAN's own resolve to channel more resources toward enhancing the protection for the poor and other vulnerable sectors of society.

12. The Ministers agreed to coordinate policies affecting environmental protection and management in a manner that promotes sustainable growth and development, and public health.

13. The Ministers agreed on the need to pursue an effective partnership with the private sector in the various areas of cooperation, with the end in view of encouraging their substantive participation in regional development priorities, obtaining their active support for regional integration efforts and promoting burden-sharing in activities designed to cushion the effects of globalization.

14. Aware of the asymmetry between economic/functional cooperation and political cooperation, the Ministers endeavored to nurture an environment of goodwill and solidarity to enable these two spheres to keep pace with each other.

15. The Ministers encouraged one another to pursue, in their respective development efforts, the strengthening of the rule of law and the improvement of governance by promoting transparency, accountability, participation and predictability.

16. The Ministers had a useful exchange of views on the current security environment. They recognized the need to engage key players on matters of political and security concerns. They also noted that ASEAN has drafted a code of conduct on the South China Sea to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

17. The Ministers agreed to pursue regional cooperation in support of a more active involvement in world affairs, thereby enhancing global understanding of positive developments in the region. The Ministers stressed the need to intensify further the coordination of ASEAN's participation in various regional and multilateral fora, especially in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in the annual consultations with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). In this regard, they viewed the forthcoming WTO Ministerial Conference to be held in Seattle, United States of America on 30 November 1999 as an opportunity to express the interests and concerns shared by ASEAN member countries on the impending new round of multilateral trade negotiations including those pertaining to anti-dumping, agriculture and special and differentiated treatment for developing countries.

Preparations for the 3rd ASEAN Informal Summit, ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+1 Summits

18. The Ministers looked forward to the convening of the 3rd Informal Meeting of the ASEAN Heads of State/Government on 28 November 1999, particularly its significance as their last meeting this century.

19. The Ministers also looked forward to the convening of the ASEAN+3 and the ASEAN+1 Summit Meetings with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea on 28 November 1999, particularly in affirming ASEAN's position as a leading partner for regional peace and security, economic vitality and social development in East Asia.

20. They endorsed the initiative to enhance political, economic, financial, social and cultural cooperation with the rest of East Asia, particularly in such areas as social safety nets, science and technology, human resources development, people-to-people exchange and modalities like dialogues on regional economic and financial issues and shared security concerns.

21. The Ministers welcomed the forthcoming Meeting between the ASEAN Heads of State/Movement and the Global Information Technology (IT) Representatives on 28 November 1999 as a concrete step in hastening the establishment of the ASEAN Information Infrastructure (AII) and the realization of an e-ASEAN community. The said Meeting will also have a catalytic role for deepening collaboration between the public and private sectors, in various areas of regional cooperation.