

**Welcome Remarks by
H.E. Le Luong Minh
Secretary-General of ASEAN
2016 ASEAN Day Celebration**

*Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen*

On 22 November last year, through a Declaration issued at its 27th Summit, ASEAN was proclaimed a politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible Community. This is a biggest milestone in the history of evolution and development of ASEAN since its founding in 1967.

I welcome you all representing ASEAN Member States, Dialogue Partners and other friendly countries and thank you for your attendance in this first ASEAN Day celebration in the newly established ASEAN Community. My

special welcome and gratitude to Excellency Retno Marsudi, Foreign Minister of Indonesia, who will also share with us her reflections on such a “Community of Opportunities”

And, opportunities are really there, accumulated and promoted through five decades of ASEAN cooperation and integration. Right from the beginning, ASEAN was committed to securing for the peoples and for posterity the consecrations of freedom and harmony. Anchored by the commitment to ensuring regional security and stability, ASEAN’s integration within and into the global economy has driven its robust growth and development.

Growth and development, in turn, strengthened integration. They enabled ASEAN to achieve remarkable success in reducing

poverty; improving basic human services, such as health, education and access to information; enhancing disaster preparedness, and narrowing development gaps within and among the Member States.

Over the years, such development has cemented ASEAN's position as a centre of growth in the Asia-Pacific region, allowing it to play a central role in the evolving regional architecture helping reduce tensions, maintaining peace, stability and promoting economic and cultural cooperation beyond Southeast Asia. Indeed, ASEAN has come a long way from the limited aspirations of trade and economic cooperation in its early days in divided Southeast Asia with serious security concerns. Peace, stability and security based on close political ties, friendship and unity among the Member States

and their peoples, as well as the maintenance of ASEAN centrality have been important factors ensuring an environment conducive to the promotion of shared prosperity of the region and the creation and promotion of such opportunities.

The adoption of ASEAN Community Vision 2025 also at the 27th ASEAN Summit in November 2015 provides a concrete platform for ASEAN to deepen and broaden the regional integration process to best serve the interests of its people and the region as a whole. As ASEAN aims to become a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred Community, the efforts to implement Vision 2025 in the first Community year have been all-encompassing. Most of outstanding measures from the previous Blueprints have been implemented or assessed to be completed this year with a small number of

them to be carried over 2016. Most of sectoral work plans have been adopted or being finalized for due endorsement at the forthcoming ASEAN Summits.

As we move forward in the Community consolidation process, with the efforts being undertaken to strengthen the ASEAN institutions and processes, coordination among, and support from sectoral and related bodies in the implementation of cross-cutting issues, as key to fully realizing Vision 2025, have been constantly improving.

With all such achievements, Community-building remains a work-in-progress whose success will ultimately be measured by how it benefits our populace. In the efforts to realize the vision of people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN Community, ASEAN will enhance

engagement with all stakeholders, including civil society, the academia, and the private sector.

With increasing numbers of non-ASEAN countries establishing formal relations with ASEAN and acceding to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and all major countries and economies having concluded free trade and/ or economic cooperation agreements with ASEAN, which reflect their political will and commitment to cooperate with ASEAN in the furtherance of peace, stability and prosperity in the region, in the efforts to realize the vision of a community playing increasing greater regional and global roles, ASEAN appreciates the contributions and looks forward to expanding and further strengthening engagement with Dialogue and other partners for mutual benefits on the basis of key principles of mutual respect, by firmly

upholding the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the ASEAN Charter and international law.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Celebrating the ASEAN Day today, we are moving on day closer to the 50th anniversary of ASEAN in 2017, an occasion for more comprehensive review. Success in the initial phase of Community consolidation will lay a solid basis for sound reflections and orientations. The support and contributions of you all which we look forward to enjoying will be critical.

Future talk may not be an exact science. I hope and I do believe that when they celebrate the next 50 years of our “Community of Opportunities”, the future generations of ASEAN

will say we have today given them, we have prepared for them the right launch pad.

I thank you once again for your presence and wish you a really joyful day.

