

**Welcoming Remarks**  
**by H.E. Thongloun SISOULITH, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR**  
**at the Opening Ceremony of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and**  
**Related Summits**

**6 September 2016, National Convention Centre, Vientiane**  
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- Your Excellency Bounnhang VORACHITH, President of the Lao PDR,
- Your Majesty,
- Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
- Secretary-General of ASEAN,
- Excellencies,
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and on my own behalf, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all ASEAN Leaders, Secretary-General of ASEAN, and all distinguished guests and delegates to Vientiane and to this Opening Ceremony of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and Related Summits.

Taking this opportunity I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to His Excellency Bounnhang VORACHITH, President of the Lao PDR for honouring us with his presence here at the Opening Ceremony today.

Your Majesty,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the most important goals of ASEAN since its inception in 1967 is to maintain and promote peace, stability and development cooperation in the Southeast Asia region and the world at large. Towards this end, ASEAN has continued to strengthen its internal cooperation and broaden its relations with external partners. Over the past 5 decades, ASEAN has contested against various challenges and continued to progress. Most significantly, ASEAN has become a region of peace and stability which provides favorable condition for sustainable regional economic development and as a result, ASEAN has become the 6<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world in 2015. Another historic event for ASEAN was the establishment of the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015. Moreover, throughout the past half century, ASEAN has initiated cooperation mechanisms which are not only providing a platform for ASEAN's engagement with Dialogue Partners and external parties, but also creating an opportunity for the dialogue partners to

engage with one another on important regional and global issues in order to find ways and means to address the common challenges together. Therefore, non-ASEAN countries have recognised and supported ASEAN's centrality in the evolving regional architecture that is built upon the ASEAN-led mechanisms.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This morning, a signing ceremony for accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) by 3 countries, namely Chile, Egypt and Morocco has been organised. In addition, more countries have also expressed their interests in acceding to the TAC as well as in expanding cooperation with ASEAN in various forms. This has demonstrated that ASEAN continues to play an important role in the region and its relevance has been and will continue to be well recognised and supported by non-ASEAN countries.

While being proud of the success we have achieved thus far, we must continue to enhance our concerted efforts to further strengthening and advancing the ASEAN Community through the effective implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 as well as the three community Blueprints, among others, thereby contributing to the common cause of maintaining and promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the region and the world at large.

In this spirit, the Lao PDR has adopted the theme: ***“Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community”*** for its 2016 ASEAN Chairmanship and identified 8 priorities covering the 3 pillars of the ASEAN Community in order to realise it. In this regard, ASEAN's sectoral bodies and Dialogue Partners have deployed tireless efforts to translate these 8 priorities into various Frameworks and Declarations, such as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan III, Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, ASEAN Trade Facilitation Framework, ASEAN Institutional Framework on Access to Finance for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Enabling Environment for SMEs Establishment and Development, Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN, Vientiane Declaration on Reinforcing Cultural Heritage Cooperation in ASEAN, ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region, Declaration on Promoting Cooperation for Sustainable Development, and Vientiane Declaration on Promoting Cooperation for Infrastructure Development in East Asia and others.

Your Majesty,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and Related Summits are taking place not only at a time when ASEAN is focusing its efforts on the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and strengthening its cooperation with external partners, but also amidst the rapidly changing and complex regional and international environments. Therefore, the Summits provide a good opportunity for ASEAN Leaders to discuss and provide guidance for the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, consider the adoption of the above-mentioned Frameworks and Declarations as well as exchange views on regional and international issues of common interest and concern with aiming at ***“Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community”***.

Taking this opportunity I would like to express my sincere thanks to all ASEAN Member States, ASEAN’s Dialogue Partners as well as external parties, friendly countries, and regional and international organisations for extending their cooperation and support to Lao PDR’s ASEAN Chairmanship, particularly in translating the 8 priorities into various Frameworks and Declarations as mentioned above.

I am convinced that with good cooperation and support from all Leaders, ASEAN Member States and ASEAN’s Dialogue Partners, the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and Related Summits will be crowned with great success.

On this auspicious occasion, I have the honour to invite His Excellency Bounhang VORACHITH, President of the Lao PDR to deliver his Keynote Address. Please Your Excellency.