

Remarks by H.E. Le Luong Minh
Secretary-General of ASEAN (2013 – 2017)
Handover Ceremony for the Transfer of Office of the Secretary-General of
ASEAN
Jakarta, 5 January 2017

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. First, let me congratulate His Excellency Dato Paduka Lim Jock Hoi on his assumption of office as the 14th Secretary-General of ASEAN. I would also like to thank Her Excellency Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi of Indonesia for joining us today to grace and witness the inauguration. I thank all of you, Ambassadors, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, ASEAN Secretariat colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen for your presence.
2. In my first-ever remarks as Secretary-General of ASEAN in this very ASEAN Hall five years ago, I mentioned how when I entered the ASEAN Secretariat building for the first time I was struck by a feeling of togetherness that has made ASEAN a strong and proud organisation. Five years later, this feeling of mine remains and is even stronger.
3. Serving ASEAN the past five years as we were in a critical period in our Community building and integration process has been a privilege for me. I carried out my responsibilities with sincere beliefs and conviction in the goals of our organization.
4. During the past five years we have seen our Association continue to grow, especially with the establishment of the ASEAN Community conceptualized decades ago. The launch of the Community on 31 December 2015 was a historic milestone, a testament to ASEAN's resilience and dynamism as well as the political will and solid commitment of all Member States to become a more cohesive and credible entity. It was a big step forward in realizing the aspirations of the people of Southeast Asia enshrined in ASEAN's founding document - the Bangkok Declaration- for regional

peace, stability, harmony and prosperity as well as the purpose enshrined in the ASEAN Charter of promoting an ASEAN identity.

5. Further ASEAN Community consolidation efforts are clearly articulated in the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and its three corresponding Community Blueprints, which by nature of forward-looking documents have in them the power to bring ASEAN to a truly resilient, rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred Community, one that will play still greater roles regionally and internationally in all political-security, economic and social-cultural spheres, becoming a more worthy community in the Global Community of Nations.
6. Through the concerted efforts, including the implementation of various recommendations by the High-Level Task Force on Strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat and Reviewing ASEAN Organs, coordination is better across departments of the Secretariat and with national secretariats. Monitoring and evaluation work has been enhanced; discipline tightened. The Secretariat's budget has steadily increased and its manpower has been boosted with new divisions and many new positions added to its structure during the past years.
7. I have also had the honour of serving ASEAN as we celebrated the Association's auspicious 50th Anniversary, an opportune occasion for both reflection and creation of ideas. While accolades on ASEAN achievements and future directions keep coming, we have been able to bring to the public the knowledge of the challenges ASEAN is facing. One challenge we continue to face is to bring ASEAN closer to the hearts of its people. By doing so we would greatly enhance our feeling of togetherness, a key foundation of the success of the ASEAN project. In the context of current complex regional and global developments, the maintenance and strengthening of ASEAN centrality will be more critical. Not only the gap in levels of development within and among Member States, but also that between the conclusion of regional commitments and their implementation must be further narrowed through development of a culture of implementation.

8. In further strengthening the coordination body for ASEAN cooperation and integration, I would also expect the Secretariat staff to be more analytical in their reporting, and sharpen their policy analysis. ASEAN would benefit from a more professional Secretariat with sufficient expertise and confidence to inject frank and objective inputs. The Secretariat can be more proactive and innovative in helping ASEAN think through and formulate new ideas. It should also be allowed to be bold and robust in monitoring and reporting the implementation of ASEAN agreements, and making recommendations accordingly.
9. As a people-centred community can only be built at every level, people-centred must also continue to be the central theme for strengthening this central ASEAN coordination body.
10. As I am handing-over my responsibility to Dato Lim Jock Hoi, the seasoned diplomat from Brunei Darussalam that I have known for years working together at different ASEAN platforms, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ASEAN Member States and Dialogue and all other partners and friendly countries and their representatives for the support and cooperation extended to me during my tenure of duty. I specially thank all my staff at the Secretariat, most of them have been with me during my entire past five years, for their dedication and hard work which has made my job serving the organization much easier, or less difficult. As Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi will lead you in a not less critical time for ASEAN, I wish you will render him your full support and cooperation.
11. Until we may cross each other again, I wish you all the best in your professional and personal life.

Thank you!
