

## **Joint Communiqué**

### **THE FIFTH ASEAN MINISTERS MEETING ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION**

**31 JANUARY 2007, BANGKOK**

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1. The 5th ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE) was convened on 31 January 2007 in Bangkok, preceded by a preparatory Senior Officials Meeting on 29 January 2007 and a Preliminary ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication on 30 January 2007. The 5<sup>th</sup> AMRDPE carried the theme “Community Empowerment: A Crucial Path to Rural Development and Poverty Eradication”.
2. The 5<sup>th</sup> AMRDPE was opened by H.E. General Surayud Chulanont (Ret.), Prime Minister of the Royal Kingdom of Thailand. In his keynote address, the Prime Minister cited the Cebu Declaration towards One Caring and Sharing Community, signed at the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit, where the ASEAN Leaders emphasized the need to further the ASEAN Plan of Action on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. The Prime Minister added that rural development and poverty reduction are cross-cutting issues that need to be addressed in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community, namely economic, political and security, and socio-cultural cooperation.
3. In highlighting the Meeting’s theme on community empowerment, the Prime Minister exemplified Thailand’s development approach, which adhered to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy initiated by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The Prime Minister noted that this philosophy is a means towards community empowerment and strengthening communities as a foundation of local economy with three components, namely moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity system. The Prime Minister also emphasised on the need for ASEAN to operationalise its action plan on rural development and poverty eradication through concrete actions focusing on: 1) the enhancement of good governance at the national level to enable the long term stability and sound economic development of ASEAN; 2) empowerment of woman with economic opportunities through education, skill training, and career advancement; 3) promotion of life-long learning and development of life-skills to compete in the era of globalised economy.
4. The Meeting was attended by ASEAN Ministers responsible for rural development and poverty eradication or their representatives. The Secretary-General of ASEAN also attended. The list of the ASEAN Ministers or their representatives is attached.

### *Community Empowerment*

5. Re-affirming the commitment of the ASEAN Leaders at the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit to reduce poverty and inequality by improving the standard of living and quality of life for the ASEAN people, the Ministers acknowledged the importance of community empowerment as critical to the success of a rural development and poverty eradication strategy. The Ministers emphasised that community empowerment, together with education, employment and income generation, reduction of expenses, capacity building for local stakeholders and resource mobilisation at local level, is a self reliance principle, based on which rural development and poverty eradication efforts would be sustained. The Ministers recalled that the basic elements of a self-reliance principle in tackling poverty had also been well mentioned in the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (2004-2010).

6. The Ministers acknowledged the completion of two projects that highlighted the importance of community empowerment in rural development and poverty eradication. The project on “Sharing Best Practices on Empowering Rural Communities to Utilise ICT as a Tool to Enhance Income” implemented by Malaysia in 2004 exemplified an innovative effort to empower the rural community. The Workshop on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication in December 2005 had been an opportunity for Thailand to share its experience in implementing a poverty eradication strategy through community empowerment efforts such as “One Tambon One Product”, saving groups, and integrated farming. The Ministers also noted with interest the on-going ASEAN joint learning programmes with the World Bank. The programmes have been assisting ASEAN countries in building capacity to involve greater participation of local communities and stakeholders in poverty reduction endeavours.

### *Coordination and Synergy of Efforts*

7. The Ministers stressed the importance of community empowerment efforts made under the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication and it should be hastened through closer consultation and synergy of cooperation. The Framework Action Plan remains to serve as the key strategic plan for ASEAN to address more effectively the huge challenges of poverty alleviation arising from the changing economic and social environment in the ASEAN region.

8. Coordinating and synergising initiatives with other sectoral bodies would be the approach to deepen ASEAN cooperation in rural development and poverty eradication by generating employment and ensuring economic growth with equity. Mindful of this, the Ministers supported the convening of the Coordinating Conference on the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOC-COM) that had been held from 20-21 November 2006 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, and a workshop on Strengthening Social Protection Systems in ASEAN held from 27 February to 1 March 2006 in Jakarta. At these

two forums, there was recognition that different parties/sectors/communities come with different strengths in addressing priority issues and concerns, and thus creating a synergy of efforts.

#### *Millennium Development Goals*

9. Recognising the commitment made by the ASEAN Leaders at the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-UN Summit in 2005 where they declared their collective efforts in realising the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Ministers tasked the Senior Officials to review programme implementation of the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication to further accelerate the achievement of the MDGs in ASEAN.

#### *The Future of Rural Development and Poverty Eradication within the ASEAN Community*

10. The Ministers recalled that high on the AMRDPE agenda since 2002 has been the need for ASEAN cooperation on rural development and poverty eradication to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges of globalisation and closer economic integration.

11. In this context, the Ministers noted with satisfaction the continued progress made in addressing the priorities under the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication through numerous capacity development activities involving government officials. Since the Ministers last met in 2004, the Senior Officials have engaged in consultation and dialogue on priorities such as social protection systems; community empowerment; poverty definition and measurement; and generating rural employment strategies through small and micro-enterprise development.

12. Recognising that ASEAN cooperation in rural development and poverty eradication is an integral component of the economic and socio-cultural pillars of the ASEAN Community, the Ministers agreed to accelerate the implementation of three areas under the Framework Action Plan, namely: i) Narrowing the Digital Divide; ii) Employment and Income Generation; and iii) Partnership, Decentralisation, Local Participation.

#### *Partnerships with Plus Three Countries*

13. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the Preliminary Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on 30 January 2007, signalling closer cooperation and stronger partnership with Plus Three countries to address similar issues of concern in rural development and poverty eradication. The Ministers acknowledged the efforts of Lao PDR and China in convening high-level meetings on rural development and poverty eradication issues involving ASEAN countries, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) in 2005 and 2006 respectively. These meetings served as platforms to increase mutual

understanding building on accumulated extensive experience of ASEAN, China, Japan and the ROK in rural development and poverty eradication.

14. The Ministers tasked their Senior Officials to explore future cooperation strategies in poverty eradication among the ASEAN Plus Three countries to be endorsed at future ministerial meetings in areas of information and knowledge sharing, training and development of poverty eradication personnel.

*Sixth AMRDPE*

15. The Ministers agreed that the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE) would be held in Viet Nam in 2009.

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**LIST OF MINISTERS OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES  
ATTENDING THE 5<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN MINISTERS MEETING ON RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION,  
31 JANUARY 2007, BANGKOK**

1. **H.E. Pehin Dato Adanan Yusof**  
Minister for Home Affairs  
Brunei Darussalam
2. **H.E. Lu Lay Sreng**  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Rural Development  
Cambodia
3. **H.E. Muhammad Yusuf Asy'ari**  
State Minister for Public Housing  
Indonesia
4. **H.E. Dr. Ty Phommasack**  
Vice Minister for Agriculture and Forestry  
Lao PDR
5. **H.E. Dato' Seri Abdul Aziz B. Shamsuddin**  
Minister for Rural and Regional Development  
Malaysia
6. **H.E. Colonel Tin Ngwe**  
Deputy Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and  
Development Affairs  
Myanmar
7. **H.E. Domingo F. Panganiban**  
Secretary/Lead Convenor, National Anti-Poverty Commission  
Philippines
8. **H.E. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon**  
State Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports  
Singapore
9. **H.E. Paiboon Wattanasiritham**  
Minister of Social Development and Human Security  
Thailand
10. **H.E. Ho Xuan Hung**  
Vice Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Viet Nam
11. **H.E. Ong Keng Yong**  
Secretary-General of ASEAN