

**Welcome Remarks by the Secretary-General of ASEAN
Visit of Thailand's Prime Minister to the ASEAN Secretariat
ASEAN Secretariat, 21 February 2009**

Excellency Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand; Chair of ASEAN of the year 2009;
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning and a very warm welcome to all of you to the ASEAN Secretariat.

Prime Minister Abhisit, ASEAN, my Secretariat staff and all of us representing the Diplomatic Corps and international organisations based in Jakarta are greatly honoured by Your Excellency's visit this morning.

I am pleased to note that Your Excellency's visit is the third by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand to the ASEAN Secretariat; the first being the visit of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai back in 1993.

Speaking as a Thai, I believe these historic visits underline the unwavering support of Thailand for ASEAN and the consistent Thai foreign policy of supporting regionalism in Southeast Asia. Since Bangkok was the birthplace of ASEAN in 1967, successive royal Thai governments have always felt a special obligation to see to it that ASEAN will grow up to be a successful regional organisation in our part of the world. This is almost the maternal instinct of Thailand.

Today, we will have the benefit of hearing from the Prime Minister of Thailand first-hand about his vision of ASEAN and his government policy for the Thai Chairmanship of ASEAN, which will last until the end of this year. Moreover, Prime Minister Abhisit is going to host the 14th ASEAN Summit in Cham-am, Hua Hin, next, at the end of this month. I believe we are all very interested in hearing from him what he intends to achieve at the upcoming Summit.

Mr Prime Minister,
Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a lot of anticipation to get to know you. You have been described by none other than the Financial Times over the weekend that "Mr Abhisit's CV makes him sound more like a potential Prime Minister of Britain than Thailand". You earned a first class honours in politics, philosophy and economics from Oxford. Before that, you went to Eton College, and one of your classmates at Oxford was none other than Boris Johnson, the Mayor of the City of London, who called you "Vejji" during his time with you - but I know that you are not a vegetarian.

We are here anxiously waiting to hear from you. Boyish and young you may be but I think the international community only in the past few weeks has been given a chance to get to know you - your eloquence, rhetoric and your wisdom. I think ASEAN is in good hands, in the hands of a young Prime Minister but a very mature person intellectually.

Mr Prime Minister, the floor is yours.