Remarks
by
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Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community
at
Closing Event of EU-ARISE Programme
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Excellency Francisco Fontan, EU Ambassador to ASEAN
Committee of Permanent Representative
EU Ambassador to Indonesia
Paul Mandl and Team Members of ARISE Programme
Distinguish Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon.

On the outset, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the family of the innocent victims and those who are still recovering from their injuries following the recent tragic incidents in Manchester, London, Melbourne and Paris. It is important for all of us to stand up in solidarity and in defiance against such incidents and continue with our lives.

Today, it is a pleasure for me to say a heart-felt appreciation to the ARISE team - Paul Mandl, Rajinder Raj Sud, Glyn Evans, Keith Atkinson and Paolo Vergano - who have made such a major contribution to ASEAN. Personally, I found this a bit overwhelming to think back on the road we have traveled together.

It is hard to believe that four years have elapsed, full of events, memories, and accomplishments. I remember vividly when I was first introduced to the team in 2013. I was less than a year into my role - full of determination - to advance ASEAN economic integration notwithstanding the limited resources we have to make do with.
The timely launch of ARISE was wholeheartedly welcomed by all of us as it provided the much needed resources and expertise to tap on while discharging the responsibilities entrusted to us by our stakeholders, ASEAN Member States. And indeed, looking back at what ASEAN has achieved during these past four years, I can personally vouch that some of these achievements would not have been possible without ARISE’s support.

As you may be aware of, the purpose of ARISE is to support the objective of AEC Blueprint 2015 to establish a single market and production base characterised by free flows of goods, services, investment, skilled labour and freer flow of capital. ARISE help us to advance in this overarching goal on three fronts by strengthening our institutional arrangements, supporting the implementation of trade facilitation and liberalization measures, and also providing additional project staff to advance regional integration agenda.

In this regards, ARISE have designed, developed and supported the implementation of several initiatives which constitute key deliverables and milestones in our community building process. Amongst others, this include:

- The National as well as ASEAN Trade Repository
- The ASEAN Customs Transit System
- The ASEAN Solutions for Investments, Services and Trade
- The ASEAN Trade Facilitation Framework
- The ASEAN Food Safety Policy and Regulatory Framework
- The AEC Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- The Development of Sectoral Work Plan for the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality
- The Establishment of ASEAN Risk Assessment Centre for Food Safety
These are just a selection of a longer list of accomplishments contributed directly by ARISE and later this afternoon, you will get to listen to a more comprehensive overview of these achievements.

Distinguish Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Legacy seems to be an over-worked word these days. However, when it comes to what ARISE has achieved, this is one of those occasions when it is truly justified. Indeed, ARISE is one of the best project teams that I have worked with during the past thirty years of my career.

It has set the benchmark of how cooperation programme should be run and managed to ensure that it responds to the needs and aspirations of ASEAN while taking into consideration the limitations and challenges that ASEAN faces.

Beyond the undoubted abilities as well as the dedication of the team members, I personally appreciate the flexibility shown by ARISE in accommodating our requests which at time, I have to admit, may come at the very last minute. This was notably the case as we embarked into our final leg of the implementation of the measures under the previous AEC Blueprint 2015.

Having ARISE housed in the ASEAN Secretariat premise also helps in building up a harmonious working relationship among us as it creates the sense of belonging and common purpose in pursuit of the same vision and objectives. And it is this working relationship as well as the friendship which will be among the finest memories that I will take away from our collaboration during these past four years.

My sincere gratitude also goes to the European Union for their continuous support to ASEAN not only for the ASEAN Economic Community but also for the other pillars of ASEAN Community.

This support reflects the importance that the European Union places on ASEAN integration process and its contribution towards peace, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.
With this, I would like to conclude with some parting words for ARISE team members as well as all others who have been directly or indirectly involved in this project:

*May the road rise up to meet you*
*May the wind be ever at your back*
*May the sun shine warm upon your face*
*And the rain fall shortly on your fields*
*And until we meet again*
*May God hold you in the hollow of his hand*

Thank you.