

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT  
7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ASEAN DIRECTORS-GENERAL OF  
IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENTS AND HEADS OF CONSULAR  
AFFAIRS DIVISION OF THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
(DGICM)

15-17 September 2003, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

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1. 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (DGICM) was held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2003. It was chaired by Mr. Trieu Van The, Director-General of the Immigration Department, Ministry of Public Security, Viet Nam. The Meeting was attended by Heads of the Immigration and Consular Affairs Authorities from All the Ten ASEAN Member Countries and the Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN.
2. The Meeting reviewed and considered measures to further accelerate the implementation of the Work Programme to implement the ASEAN Plan of Action on Immigration Matters adopted in 2002.
3. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitments to further promote regional cooperation on immigration and consular matters and stressed the important role of the Immigration and Consular Authorities in the fight against transnational crimes, especially trafficking in persons.
4. The Meeting considered and agreed on various specific measures to further promote the regional cooperation on immigration and consular affairs, such as information exchange, capacity building, appointment of "24 hours Liaison Officer" and website linkage.
5. The Meeting welcomed and shared the experiences of various delegations in their efforts to improve the effectiveness of immigration management and to enhance cooperation on these issues and other related matters, such as transnational crimes, frequent travelers card ("MyKad") in Malaysia, and the formation of the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority in Singapore.
6. The Meeting welcomed the offer by the Philippines to hold the first Meeting of a Technical Working Group to explore further the feasibility of establishing an Information Exchange Centre on immigration and consular matters.
7. The Meeting stressed the importance of capacity building on immigration and encouraged the ASEAN Member Countries to further enhance their efforts in this field, and encouraged the pursuit of beneficial activities such as technical training courses and workshops. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed the results of the Immigration Intelligence Workshop held in 2002. It also welcomed the offer by Indonesia to host further ASEAN Tactical Immigration Intelligence Workshop in Jakarta on 13-17 October 2003.

8. The Meeting put a special emphasis on the harmonization of immigration and consular-related policies and legislation, thus facilitating in particular the travel of ASEAN nationals, regional tourism, social and economic activities in the common interest of peace, stability and sustained development in the region. The Meeting also recognized the need to work towards regional minimum standards for national policies and legislation dealing with immigration matters and for travel documents.

9. The Meeting agreed to work, within the jurisdiction of the immigration authorities, towards the goal of Visa-free travel in ASEAN. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed Viet Nam's proposal on a draft ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption. The Meeting discussed and agreed to submit a revised version of the Framework Agreement to the ASEAN Standing Committee for consideration and approval.

10. The Meeting recognized the importance of the issue of providing greater information access. The Meeting welcomed the measures adopted by various Member Countries on Websites-linkage via the ASEAN Secretariat based in Jakarta.

11. The Meeting noted the experiences of the Member Countries in their respective cooperation with UNHCR and IOM, and encouraged the continuation of this cooperation on the existing bilateral basis.

12. The Meeting welcomed the offer by Brunei Darussalam to host the 8<sup>th</sup> DGICM in September 2004.

13. The Meeting was held in the traditional spirit of ASEAN solidarity and cordiality and enjoyed the warm hospitality offered by the Government of Viet Nam.