

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

4TH MEETING OF ASEAN DIRECTORS-GENERAL OF IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENTS AND HEADS OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS DIVISIONS OF THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DGICM)

Davao City, Philippines, 16-18 October 2000

The 4th Meeting of ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs was held in Davao City, Philippines on 16-18 October 2000. The Meeting was chaired by Hon. Rufus B. Rodriguez, Commissioner of Bureau of Immigration, Philippines.

The respective ASEAN delegations were led by Mr. Sa Bali Bin Abas, Director, Department of Immigration and National Registration, Brunei Darussalam; Mr. Yun Chhunhy, Director of Immigration Department, Ministry of Interior, Cambodia; Mr. M. Mudakir, Director-General of Immigration, Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, Indonesia; Colonel Khammouane Savaivanh, Director-General of the Immigration Department, Ministry of Interior, Lao PDR; Mr. Mohd. Jamal Kamdi, Deputy Director-General of Immigration, Malaysia; U Maung Htay, Director-General of Immigration, Ministry of Immigration and Population, Myanmar; Atty. Rufus B. Rodriguez, Commissioner, Bureau of Immigration, Philippines; Mr Lu Cheng Yang, Director, Singapore Immigration and Registration; Pol. Maj. Gen. Sothorn Vanitsthian, Deputy Commissioner, Immigration Bureau, Royal Thai Police, Thailand, Mr. Trieu Van The, Director-General, Immigration Department, Ministry of Public Security, Viet Nam, and Dato' Ahmad Mokhtar Selat, the Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN.

In his Opening Remarks, Hon. Rufus B. Rodriguez, Commissioner, Bureau of Immigration, Philippines noted that the meeting comes at a time when the ASEAN region is currently confronted with greater challenges arising from globalisation and transnational concerns. "The substantive discussions that we will be undertaking in the next couple of days will again put in the limelight the crucial role that immigration and consular authorities play in the new millennium," said Commissioner Rodriguez. The discussions will contribute to the concerted and continuing efforts to attain the shared goals and objectives for regional peace, security and prosperity, he added.

According to Commissioner Rodriguez there is now an urgent need for greater ASEAN cooperation on immigration and consular matters to complement regional efforts for closer economic integration, enhanced intra-ASEAN tourism and the fight against transnational crime.

The Heads of Delegation, in their statements at the Meeting, also reiterated their commitment to further enhance regional cooperation on immigration and consular matters.

Institutional Framework for ASEAN Cooperation on Immigration Matters

The 4th Meeting of the ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (DGICM) approved and adopted the institutional framework for ASEAN cooperation on immigration matters.

The institutional framework adopted makes the DGICM, which comprises Directors-General representatives of ASEAN Member Countries responsible for immigration matters as the highest policy making body on ASEAN cooperation on immigration matters.

The DGICM will meet at least once a year and informally in between, when necessary, with the chairmanship rotating in alphabetical order among the ASEAN Member Countries. The DGICM will report to the ASEAN Heads of Government Summit through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) and the ASEAN Standing Committee (ASC).

ASEAN Plan of Action on Immigration Matters

The 4th DGICM also adopted the ASEAN Plan of Action on Immigration Matters. The objective of the Plan of Action is to forge and strengthen immigration cooperation with a view to establish an effective network to promote the modernisation of immigration facilities, systems and operations, upgrade human resource capabilities and the capacities of immigration officials to support the economic aspirations of ASEAN and support in combating transnational crime especially in trafficking in persons.

The Plan of Action further aims to enhance and streamline region-wide immigration procedures to facilitate intra-ASEAN commerce, tourism and travel.

The Plan of Action also lays out several initiatives and measures to achieve the objectives and these will be further discussed by the ASEAN

Member Countries at the next DGICM.

The 4th DGICM also adopted the ASEAN Directory of Immigration Focal Points which identifies the key office holders in the immigration establishments of ASEAN Member Countries which is expected to lead to greater efficiency of the immigration authorities especially in the area of enforcement.

Use of Smart Card to Facilitate Travel Within ASEAN

The 4th DGICM agreed to the proposal of a Technical Working Group on the Use of Smart Card to Facilitate Travel Within ASEAN on adopting a common ASEAN Standard Smart Card. This concept and issue will be further discussed in detail at the next Technical Working Group Meeting in Thailand in 2001.

Common ASEAN Entry Visa for Tourists Coming to ASEAN Countries

The 4th DGICM agreed to continue discussing this issue at the next DGICM.

Exchange of Views on Irregular Migration and a Regional Approach in Combating Trafficking in Persons

The 4th DGICM held an Exchange of Views on irregular migration and a regional approach for combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The next Meeting will further study these issues.

Next Meeting

The 5th DGICM will be held in Singapore in the second half of next year.

Acknowledgements

The 4th DGICM expressed their deepest appreciation to the Government and people of the Philippines, especially the officials and people of Davao City, for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

The Meeting was held in the traditional spirit of ASEAN solidarity and cordiality.