

## JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

### THIRD MEETING OF ASEAN DIRECTORS-GENERAL OF IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENTS AND HEADS OF CONSULAR DIVISIONS OF ASEAN MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 13-14 December 1999 Yangon, Myanmar

The Third Meeting of ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Divisions of ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs was held on 13-14 December 1999 in Yangon, Myanmar. The Meeting was chaired by U Maung Htay, the Director-General of Immigration and National Registration Department of the Union of Myanmar.

The respective ASEAN delegations were led by Awang Sa Bali bin Abas, Acting Director, Immigration and National Registration, Brunei Darussalam; General Prok Saroeun, Director of Immigration Department, Ministry of Interior, Cambodia; Mr. H.B. Lopian, Director of Immigration Information, Directorate General of Immigration, Department of Law and Legislation, Indonesia; Colonel Khammouane Savaivanh, Deputy Director-General of General Security Department and Director-General of the Immigration Department, Ministry of Interior, Laos; Dato' Aseh bin Haji Che Mat, Director-General of Immigration, Malaysia; U Maung Htay, Director-General, Immigration and National Registration Department, Myanmar; Atty. Rufus B. Rodriguez, Commissioner, Bureau of Immigration, the Philippines; Mr. Lu Cheng Yang, Director, Immigration and Registration, Singapore; Mr. Chaisiri Anamarn, Director-General, Department of Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand; Mr. Le Van Thinh, Acting Director-General of Consular Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam and Mr. Immanuel Robert Inkiwang, the Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN.

In his Welcoming Address, H.E. U Saw Tun, the Minister for Immigration and Population of the Union of Myanmar emphasised the need for easy communication and access to all ASEAN Member Countries to strengthen regional unity and identity, enhance economic cooperation and facilitate closer economic integration. He also stressed the importance of modernisation to spur regional development and to keep pace with technological advances in the developed countries.

#### Framework for ASEAN Cooperation on Immigration Matters

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs fully recognised the urgent need for greater cooperation on immigration matters to support ASEAN initiatives including efforts towards closer economic integration, the move to facilitate greater intra-ASEAN tourism and the fight against transnational crime. They agreed to meet on an annual basis to coordinate regional cooperation on immigration matters so they could effectively contribute to the achievement of ASEAN goals. In this regard, they welcomed and supported the ASEAN Vision 2020 and the Hanoi Plan of Action adopted by the ASEAN Heads of Government/State, which would guide the future directions of ASEAN.

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs agreed to establish an Ad-hoc High-Level Experts Group on Immigration Matters to undertake the following:

- a. To develop an institutional framework for ASEAN cooperation on immigration matters;
- b. To develop a plan of action on immigration matters encompassing the objectives, scope, strategies, mechanisms, modalities and funding arrangements; and
- c. To establish a directory of immigration focal points to establish a network among the immigration authorities in ASEAN, especially in the area of law enforcement.

The Meeting of the Ad-hoc High-Level Experts Group on Immigration Matters will be convened in 2000 in the Philippines.

## **Visa Free Entry Offered by Member Countries to ASEAN Nationals**

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs were pleased that most countries in ASEAN had already instituted visa free arrangements for ASEAN nationals and encouraged Member Countries that had yet to provide the facility to consider extending it.

## **Use of the Smart Cards as Travel Document in ASEAN**

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs agreed to continue discussion on the use of smart cards to facilitate travel within ASEAN.

## **Harmonisation of ASEAN Immigration Disembarkation Cards**

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs appreciated the need to harmonise the disembarkation/embarkation card to facilitate business, investment and tourism, and to create an ASEAN identity. They agreed, as a first step, to implement as soon as possible the use of the ASEAN logo on the front page of disembarkation/embarkation card beside the emblem of respective Member Countries.

## **ASEAN Lanes at ASEAN International Airports**

The ASEAN Director- General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs supported the Visit ASEAN Millennium Year (VAMY) 2002 campaign to be implemented by the ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and agreed to consider establishing ASEAN lanes to facilitate the increase in tourist arrivals from ASEAN Member Countries as soon as possible.

## **Regional Approach in Combating Trafficking in Persons**

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Divisions of ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs agreed to discuss on a regional approach to combat trafficking in persons at the Ad-hoc High-Level Experts Group Meeting in the Philippines.

## **Combating Transnational Crime**

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs welcomed the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime and the ACTC adopted at the Second ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and agreed to work closely with the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime on transnational crime matters.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held in 2000 in the Philippines.

## **Acknowledgements**

The ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and the Heads of Consular Divisions of the ASEAN Ministries of Foreign Affairs expressed their deepest appreciation to the Government and people of the Union of Myanmar for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the meeting.

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