

On the occasion of the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN Day which was celebrated on 8 August 2012 in Phnom Penh with participation of **Dr. Surin Pitsuwan**, ASEAN Secretary General,

Samdech Techo Hun Sen

, Prime Minister of Cambodia, delivered a Keynote Address as follows:

Keynote Address

by

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

At

The **ASEAN Day Celebration**

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 8 August 2012

- *Excellencies Members of the Royal Government,*

- *Excellency Secretary-General of ASEAN,*

- *Excellencies Ambassadors and Chargé d' Affairs a.i,*

- *Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is with great pleasure for me to join all of you to celebrate the ASEAN Day today, 8 August 2012. This is a very special day for all the ASEAN people as we all commemorate the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN in all ASEAN Member States.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my high appreciation for your kind presence at this auspicious occasion. My special thanks also go to Dr. Surin Pitsuwan for being here with us today and for his outstanding stewardship of and contribution to ASEAN, and through him, I would also like to thank all staff members of the ASEAN Secretariat for the hard work and dedication they have continuously contributed to advancing ASEAN cooperation.

Indeed, August 8th has been observed as the critical starting point of ASEAN's achievements as it has brought about the importance of building an ASEAN identity, promoting ASEAN awareness and bringing ASEAN into the consciousness of its people, with the sacred aim to nurture the sense of "We Feeling and We Belonging to ASEAN". After 45 years from its inception, ASEAN today has become a closely-integrated political and economic entity, an influential player in Asia and an indispensable strategic partner of major countries and organizations in the world. Cambodia is certainly proud of having made positive contribution to ASEAN according to its capacity and ability in bringing about such progress since it became a full member of ASEAN in 1999.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been more than four decades journey of ASEAN, from a loosely organization in 1967 to a rules-based, people-oriented, and more integrated entity. The entry into force of the ASEAN Charter on 15 December 2008 has opened a new chapter in the history of ASEAN. In conformity with the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Coordinating Council, the three community councils, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community Council, the ASEAN Economic Community Council and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council have been put in place so as to streamline the process of ASEAN integration and community building.

I am also pleased to learn that 64 non-ASEAN Ambassadors have, so far, accredited to ASEAN and 33 ASEAN Committees have been established in Third Countries/International Organizations around the world. The accreditation of such a number of non-ASEAN Ambassadors to ASEAN signify that the international community values ASEAN as a well progressed politically, economically and socio-culturally regional organisation.

The establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) is also another landmark decision in ASEAN's recent history. During the 21st ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh in November this year, the ASEAN Leaders will adopt the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, which will further demonstrate ASEAN's strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights in the region. The Leaders will also officially launch the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) with the objective to promote a culture of peace as well as respect for diversity and tolerance in order to create the conditions necessary for sustainable regional peace and reconciliation.

On the economic front, ASEAN has also achieved remarkable progress in its efforts to deepen regional economic integration. In 2011, we witnessed a combined GDP of USD 2.2 trillion up from USD 1.9 trillion in 2010. Our commitment to free trade saw our total trade soaring to a record USD 2.4 trillion up from USD 2 trillion in 2010. The year 2010 also saw a strong rebound of our economic growth, which showed that ASEAN became one of the fastest growing regions of the world, with a combined economic growth of 7.5%.

Moreover, I am pleased to note that despite the global economic uncertainties, the building of an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 has remained on track. By end-March 2012, ASEAN has completed 67.9% of measures due under Phase I and Phase II of implementing the AEC Blueprint, and will soon implement the AEC Scorecard Phase III for the period 2012-2013.

Steady progress has also been achieved in the socio-cultural fields of cooperation, notably cooperation in Disaster Management, Environment, Health, Culture as well as the Promotion of People-to-People Connectivity. However, to effectively address cross-cutting issues including Climate Change, Disaster Management, Energy and Food Security, Pandemic Disease and Poverty Alleviation, there is an urgent need for us to improve coordination of efforts of all relevant sectoral bodies across the three community pillars. In addition, there is also an important need to actively engage ASEAN peoples, in particular, the youth and the private sector in the community building process.

Considerable progress has also been made in ASEAN's external relations. ASEAN continues to maintain its centrality and proactive role as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its Dialogue Partners and external parties in the evolving regional architecture, namely, the ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, ADMM Plus, the ARF, and the EAS.

This year 2012, is also a special year for ASEAN and some of its Dialogue Partners as it marks anniversaries of ASEAN's Dialogue Relations with several Dialogue Partners, namely the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, the 35th

Anniversary of ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue Relations, the 35th Anniversary of ASEAN-Canada Dialogue Relation, and the 15th Anniversary of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the afore-mentioned great achievements, we all have to recognize that ASEAN still continues to face many challenges. And the immediate challenge for us today is to realize an ASEAN Community building by 2015, which is only more than two years ahead. As ASEAN turns 45 this year, ASEAN must be ready to effectively address new challenges in the years ahead and beyond 2015.

To ensure that our common goal of ASEAN Community by 2015 is attainable, ASEAN has to double its efforts at all fronts. These include the important needs for ASEAN to fully and effectively implement the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015, the IAI Work Plan II 2009-2015, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, the Bali Concord III, in particular, the Phnom Penh Declaration on ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny and the Phnom Penh Agenda adopted by the Leaders at the 20th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, in April 2012. Those documents serve as important tools for deepening and accelerating the ASEAN integration process while strengthening external relations and ensuring ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture. Indeed, all these will lead to narrowing development gaps among ASEAN member countries, which is not only a pre-condition for ensuring ASEAN competitiveness and reducing poverty of our peoples but also for helping ASEAN achieve real

regional integration and promoting its centrality in broader regional and world affairs.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although, the ASEAN Member States still have some differences on some issues, I believe that we shall strongly commit ourselves to move ahead as one united organization. We should be able to solve our differences or divergent views in the spirit of unity and solidarity and to remain united as a cohesive family, setting aside the issues that we could not yet reach consensus to be solved in accordance with the ASEAN spirit and in conformity with the ASEAN practice. This will enable ASEAN to maintain its central role in the evolving regional architecture as well as to firmly position its place in the world. This is also in line with the theme of Cambodia's Chairmanship of ASEAN 2012 "ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny".

I strongly believe that the ASEAN Member States will continue to work closely together with a strong and collective determination and close cooperation. With this, I am confident that ASEAN will be able to overcome all the challenges and prove once again to the world that ASEAN has the adequate capability to further strengthening and promoting peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region, as it has done more than four decades.

I would like to stress that Cambodia will continue to fulfill her noble task and highly responsible role as the Chair of ASEAN this year to contribute to the realization of a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious ASEAN Community, a Community which will truly serve the interest of all the

peoples of ASEAN namely, sustainable development, people-oriented as well as the enhanced rights protection and human dignity.

In conclusion, I am pleased to inform you that on 10th July 2012, the ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers supported Cambodia's proposal to designate Siem Reap City as the "Cultural City of East Asia 2012" and to designate the year 2012 as the "Visit ASEAN Plus Three Year". And today, I am delighted to officially launch "Siem Reap City: Cultural City of East Asia 2012" and the year 2012 as the "Visit ASEAN Plus Three Year".

May I now propose a toast for the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN and express my best wishes for a good health, greater success in your noble endeavor, longevity and happiness in your life to all of you present here as well as to all the people of ASEAN in the years to come. Cheers!