

Draft Message

H. E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
for
IDA – AEC Diary Note 2016 – 2018

The year 2016 will begin with a sense of accomplishment for ASEAN after the launch of the ASEAN Community at the end of 2015. ASEAN has been working towards the achievement of shared prosperity and sustainable development through the three pillars – the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Our citizens have been and will remain the centrepiece of ASEAN integration.

In serving our citizens, the AEC's role is crucial for attaining that shared prosperity. The AEC has made significant progress in economic integration, such as eliminating tariffs and facilitating trade in goods. The benefits to our citizens of a more integrated ASEAN are greater economies of scale in production, greater market access and reduced transaction cost, which will further enhance ASEAN's competitiveness.

The next key steps towards full realization of the AEC include liberalization of trade in services, investment and labour mobility. Looking ahead, there are positive factors for the AEC. Firstly, the AEC could generate 14 million jobs by 2025. Secondly, the middle class in ASEAN is projected to double by 2018 and rise to 65% of the population in 2030. Thirdly, growth of the services sector will add to ASEAN's growth momentum. Increased income and employment creation will further enhance ASEAN's attractiveness as a large consumer market of more than 600 million people or 9% of the world's total population. The AEC will build upon its achievements and continue to improve the lives of its millions.

Our citizens and institutions all have a stake in the AEC. Skills upgrading and labour productivity will be crucial to ASEAN's future competitiveness as well as the extent by which entrepreneurs can take advantage of the enlarged market. Through the AEC, Thai youths and citizens in all professions will have to strengthen their capacity building by enhancing knowledge and capabilities in order to reap the benefits as well as contribute to the dynamism of the AEC. I hope that IDA can play a role in strengthening human resources development and coordination of education and skills development required by industries and businesses for the years to come.

(Don Pramudwinai)
Minister of Foreign Affairs