

Keynote Address

“The ASEAN Spirit of Unity in Cultural Diversity and Social Harmony”

At “SPUC Say Hi to ASEAN”

By Ms. Lada Phumas

Acting Secretary to the Department of ASEAN Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand

Sripatum University (Chonburi Campus)

16 March 2016

Dr. Busaba Chaijinda, Vice President of Sripatum University, Assistant Professor Dr. Suthep Usaha, Assistant to the President, Dear all participants to the special event “SPUC Say Hi to ASEAN”,

It is my great honour to be here this morning and deliver a keynote address on “the ASEAN Spirit of Unity in Cultural Diversity and Social Harmony”, on behalf of H.E. Mr. Jakkrit Srivali, Director-General of the Department of ASEAN Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, at this special event.

The convening of “SPUC Say Hi to ASEAN” is very timely since Thailand, along with other nine ASEAN Member States, just officially launched the full establishment of ASEAN Community at the end of last year. This provides more impetus for all different sectors and stakeholders in Thailand to engage deeper with and learn how to make full use of the Community to which we belong.

The development of ASEAN

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations or “ASEAN” began with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration on 8 August 1967 by five Ministers. Early this month, we were all saddened by the passing of H.E. Dr. Thanat Khoman, former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand, who was the last of ASEAN's Founding Fathers. His active role in bringing together Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore, to form the ASEAN-5 49 years ago, was historical and laid a solid foundation of the ASEAN Community as it is today.

ASEAN was set up to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region with joint endeavours to promote regional peace and stability. By 1999, we had grown from a loose grouping of five countries in Southeast Asia into a fully-fledged association comprising of ten ASEAN Member States with a combined population of 625 million and a combined GDP of approximately two and half trillion US dollars, being the third largest economy in Asia and the seventh largest in the world.

A journey of ASEAN Community

From the initial integration in 1967, ASEAN leaders adopted ASEAN Vision 2020 in 1997 to create ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian Nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in a dynamic development and in a community of caring societies. Six years later, the leaders issued the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II) to establish an ASEAN Community comprising three pillars, namely political-security community, economic community and socio-cultural community.

At the 12th ASEAN Summit in Cebu, the Philippines, ASEAN agreed to accelerate the establishment of the ASEAN Community by five years from 2020 to 2015. This led to the official announcement of the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015.

ASEAN Community building is a continued process and we look forward to deepening ASEAN integration after 2015. At the last ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, the leaders adopted ASEAN Vision 2025 and laid out details of the three blueprints for all ASEAN Member States to further implement for the next ten years from 2015 to 2025.

From the very beginning, ASEAN puts its heart to create a Community which centered around its people. It introduced "ASEAN Connectivity" initiative to improve the lives of the citizens, providing more opportunities, enhancing economic and social development, bridging the development gap and uniting the ten countries to leverage their power as a whole. ASEAN has further been deepened and well-connected through physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity. We promote education, human resources management, ASEAN culture and tourism, mobility and welfare in the region.

ASEAN Community : the opportunities for all

Distinguished guests and participants,

With a successful implementation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Roadmaps in 2015, ASEAN will bring about more opportunities and benefits to all ASEAN peoples. It has been estimated that 15 years into the Community, by 2030, ASEAN will become the fourth largest economy in the world. Intra-ASEAN trade will increase from less than 25 per cent of the total at present to 30 per cent five years after the AEC was launched, by 2020.

ASEAN is a region of bright future prospects. It has a great potential to attract more businesses and economic development in its ten Member States. ASEAN has also worked towards the conclusion of the Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) on professional skilled labour, namely, on engineering services, nursing services, architectural services, framework for surveying services, medical practitioners, dental practitioners,

the framework for accounting services and tourism professional, to facilitate a freer movement of the skilled professionals in the region. ASEAN is the third largest labour market in the world and by 2025, it is expected that more than 14 million jobs will be created for ASEAN peoples in the Community.

The ASEAN Community would further enhance peace, stability, economic growth and prosperity in the region, and bring about closer social and cultural cooperation among the peoples. ASEAN unity will be further forged with its unique characteristic of diversity.

Roles of the peoples with an ASEAN spirit

The success and future of the ASEAN Community also depends on the involvement of the peoples and all stakeholders. Each and everyone has significant and unique roles to play in order to strengthen this Community as well as to ensure the sustainability of the Community's development.

While education is to empower the peoples with strength and readiness to live in the ASEAN Community with pride and success, the peoples in particular the students have even bigger responsibility to shoulder in adjusting themselves and take full advantage from the Community building process.

With ASEAN being a politically, economically and culturally diverse region, we have already created the ASEAN Community which has subscribed to a common set of values, goals and objectives. As the primary goal of the ASEAN Community is to be people-oriented, people-centred and socially responsible, it is necessary for all to actively take part in and uphold those common values to ensure solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN.

As we all know, to build a strong family is to start at home. At the heart of ASEAN's efforts are the peoples. ASEAN's success will ultimately be measured by how the Community building efforts have benefited the lives of its citizens.

The Department of ASEAN Affairs as the ASEAN National Secretariat would therefore like to congratulate Sripatum University for organizing this special event to welcome the realization of the ASEAN Community and make the participants get acquainted with ASEAN. We look forward to working closely with the University and all relevant stakeholders to bring a brighter future for the Community and the peoples.

I wish the event a great success.

Thank you.
