

**Statement
of
Her Excellency Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the
“Commitment to Connectivity--the U.S.-ASEAN Business Forum”
Siem Reap, 13 July 2012**

Samdech Techo Hun Sen,
President Thein Sein,
Secretary of State Hilary Clinton,
Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be at the U.S.-ASEAN Business Forum here in Siem Reap. I wish to thank Samdech Hun Sen, the current ASEAN Chair, for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation.

I also wish to thank Secretary Clinton for inviting me to share with you my thoughts on connectivity, which is one of the most talked about issue in ASEAN. My appreciation also goes to the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council and the U.S. Chambers of Commerce for organizing this timely event. Thank you for the friends who are gathered here -- we have known each other for a long time.

Connectivity is at the heart of the ASEAN Community. ASEAN will soon become a single market with production base of 600 million people and a combined GDP of over 2 trillion US dollars. Connectivity can help ensure that ASEAN becomes a high growth market with increasing opportunities.

ASEAN is also located at the key trade routes linking South Asia and East Asia. This connection to other regions can contribute to greater growth and create jobs in the wider Asia-Pacific. In particular, it can be a strong force for peace and a partner of progress for the U.S. Together, we can benefit from this new era of the Asia-Pacific.

For this reason, partners like China and Japan, the Republic of Korea and India, have worked with the Mekong region and ASEAN for many years on connectivity. In addition, we also welcome the growing U.S. interest, as indicated in President Obama's connectivity ideas at last year's EAS (East Asia Summit) and the LMI or Lower Mekong Initiative connectivity projects initiated by Secretary Clinton. Indeed, U.S. support for connectivity is part of the strategic re-balancing of the U.S. in the region. We can, therefore, look forward to enhanced economic relations between the U.S. and Southeast Asia. This is also where the U.S. private sector will play an important role. That is why we are all here today.

At the same time, we must recognize that no matter how good the roads or train tracks are, products and people cannot travel across the region safely if there is conflict and instability. So it is important that we in ASEAN continue to work together

to promote regional peace and stability. This is the key to achieving enhanced connectivity and ASEAN community-building.

Therefore, the priority for ASEAN is to promote enhanced regional connectivity, from the hardware infrastructure to the software to people-to-people links. Through connectivity, we are creating the infrastructure backbone of ASEAN that will support regional and global supply chains. This will not only generate greater opportunities but will also provide a level playing field for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me underscore Thailand's full commitment to enhancing connectivity as well as community-building in ASEAN and beyond.

At the regional level, we are implementing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity and the GMS Strategic Framework 2012-2022. Thailand is providing millions of US dollars for road repairs, building of bridges and other projects throughout the East-West, North-South and Southern Economic Corridors.

On the software side, we are actively supporting the establishment of the ASEAN Single Window which we hope will be completed by this year. We have an ASEAN Infrastructure Fund, which if supported by the private sector and other sources, would help address infrastructure needs of around 18 billion US dollars. And we are improving our border management to safeguard the region from those who wish to misuse connectivity. This is in line with other important projects such as the Container Security Initiative.

In cooperation with our neighbor Myanmar, we are developing the Dawei deep seaport. Dawei will be linked to Bangkok and Laem Chabang deep seaport, serving as a "Land Bridge" from the Andaman Sea to the Gulf of Thailand. In this connection, I am pleased to have discussed this important matter with President Thein Sein and hope to take it forward during his visit to Thailand later this month.

At the national level, Thailand is investing around 73 billion US dollars in infrastructure projects, including a high speed train link to other major cities of Thailand including Chiang Mai. More importantly, this will also be linked with Laos and southern China. Other projects include expansion of Suvarnabhumi International Airport to accommodate 65 million travelers a year. We are also building mass transit lines in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Apart from connectivity there are also other reasons for you to invest in ASEAN. Our region is resource-rich, has productive labour, and enjoys increased integration in many sectors that is important for sustained growth.

For example, in ICT, eighty percent of ASEAN citizens already have access to information technology. This will increase with the development of the ASEAN Broadband Corridor. In the area of energy, the trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline

leading to a regional gas grid will be created. A totally integrated ASEAN Power Grid is to be established by 2020, with potential savings of hundreds of millions of US dollars in new investments and operating costs. On food security, ASEAN has arrangements to ensure food security and the potential to be a key food provider to the world.

Most importantly, there is ASEAN unity which leads to market stability, and cooperation over competition. Our diversity is our strength. ASEAN draws the comparative advantages of its Member States together and creates synergies that will help build a dynamic and productive ASEAN Community.

In conclusion, the emerging ASEAN Community is committed to enhancing regional connectivity to ensure sustained growth. But we will need the support of our friends from the U.S. I believe some of you have a lot of experience here in ASEAN so please come. Indeed, U.S. companies have expertise in a wide range of fields such as alternative energy, logistics, ICT and financing.

I believe that this partnership can help ensure sustainable growth and employment, not only in Southeast Asia but also beyond, including in the U.S. This will also contribute to peace and prosperity in our region which remains our key common interest.

I look forward to seeing all of our U.S. business partners continuing to invest in ASEAN's future. After all, it is also your future.

Thank you for your attention.
