

## **President U Thein Sein Addresses the Opening of the 47<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting**

Nay Pyi Taw, 8 Aug — The Opening of the 47<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the ceremony to mark the 47th ASEAN Day were held in Myanmar International Convention Centre I in Nay Pyi Taw on Friday with an address by President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein.

In his address the President said: The coincidence of the 47th Anniversary of ASEAN this year and the Opening of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting is a rare and significant occasion in the history of ASEAN. Therefore, it is a privilege and great honour for me to speak on the occasion of both the opening ceremony of the 47th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Celebration of the 47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN here in Nay Pyi Taw.

47 years ago, on this very day, ASEAN was established by its founding members Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. From the original five members of ASEAN, today ten members have grown to Southeast Asian Nations.

I would like to congratulate our fellow member, Indonesia, for the success and peaceful holding of presidential elections. In the past forty seven years, ASEAN has weathered, endured and overcome incidences of object poverty, internal conflicts, natural disasters and the major powers rivalries, and yet it has shown its extraordinary resilience.

Through the individual and collective efforts, ASEAN has become more united in striving for the establishment of an economically dynamic, politically peaceful, prosperous and stable, and socially caring community.

The absence of wars and conflicts has become a symbol of ASEAN and through this peaceful environment, ASEAN member states have been able to bring economic development and welfare for the majority of the people.

From an organization that promoted cooperation in the beginning, ASEAN today is striving for integration and is gaining success. These integration efforts will become more apparent in the coming years, ASEAN is now a market of 609 million people with a combined GDP of US 2.5 trillion dollars.

Even in past world economic recessions and crises, ASEAN's annual GDP growth rate exceeded more than five percent of annual average growth. ASEAN will soon become an ASEAN Community in line with its motto "One Vision, One Identity and One Community".

In support of our objectives, Myanmar has chosen the theme for its chairmanship "Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community" to vigorously and relentlessly move the community building process forward.

The current developments in the world are causing serious concern to us. ASEAN should strengthen the ASEAN-led regional architecture. ASEAN should move forward its policy of non-alignment, proactiveness, resort to peaceful settlement of disputes and differences.

ASEAN must show its leadership and maintain its centrality. In the restructuring of new regional political and security frameworks in our region, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in the Southeast Asia should remain as basic document for our future endeavours.

In order to maintain the world's peace and prosperity, we should promote within ourselves a common spirit of peaceful co-existence, harmony and tolerance. We should refrain from extremism and let good-will, forbearance, peace and good nature prevail. At the same time, we should study the root causes behind the rise of extremism.

We should cure the disease from spreading and at the same time should prevent the disease from taking root.

At the age of globalization and interdependency, making use of improved communication and information technology, some small groups of people are exploiting the technology in order to spread hatred and to incite people. Peace-loving majority should also radiate the world of good-will and message of peace in response to promote peace.

In moving forward to a peaceful and prosperous community, our first priority at present is the successful establishment of ASEAN Community. ASEAN is now at the critical juncture for the establishment of ASEAN Community as inspired by its Vision 2020.

We are encouraged by the fact that we have completed implementation of 80 percent of the targets of the ASEAN Community Blueprint. We are confident that in the coming 17 months, we will be able to achieve the remaining goals.

In order to redouble our community building efforts, we have adopted the Nay Pyi Taw Declaration on the realization of ASEAN Community at the 24th ASEAN Summit. In the declaration, the ASEAN leaders have show their political will and determination to carry out the implementation task more actively and diligently.

The successful establishment of ASEAN Community will show the world that ASEAN is credible, united and integrated. The Second priority for ASEAN is to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, and to be more streamlined and better coordinated. After the ASEAN Charter came into force in 2008, ASEAN has transformed itself into a rules-based organization.

ASEAN needs to be more strengthened and better coordinated. The time has come to review ASEAN mechanisms and organs as well as to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat, in order for ASEAN to perform better in the future. We adopted the Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration at the 23rd ASEAN Summit in Brunei Darussalam and formed a High Level Task Force for this purpose. I share the view that we should provide adequate resources to match the increasing workload of ASEAN as well as we need to improve better coordination among ASEAN organs and mechanisms.

I am confident that the report and recommendations of the High Level Task Force will be valuable in transforming more streamlined, more capable and efficient organization.

The third priority of our organization is that ASEAN should be able to respond to the realities and changing circumstances of regional and international dynamics. Seventeen years ago, ASEAN adopted its vision 2020.

Today, in accordance with this vision, we are striving to establish an ASEAN Community that will soon be realized in 2015. Based upon this success, we should look forward to the next 15 or 20 years to set a new vision so that ASEAN will be more credible, relevant and responsive to changing circumstances and overcome the threats. Therefore, it is vital that all ASEAN member states participate actively in this important mission.

On this very auspicious ASEAN Day, I would like to stress one important point in our endeavours of community building, setting forward-looking vision and strengthening our organization, i.e. we should not forget the fact that our ultimate aims should be to bring prosperity to our people, raise living standards, and ensure peace and stability for them and finally the promotion of human dignity.

Our efforts should provide tangible benefits to ASEAN people. We should also need to promote ASEAN awareness and create a venue for greater participation of ASEAN people in the Community Building. All inclusive and people-centred ASEAN should enjoy broad-based development and share the benefits to the most marginalized sectors of our societies.

The principles of Equitable Economic Development of ASEAN should be promoted to bring economic growth and create opportunities for all. In order to achieve equitable economic development, ASEAN has implemented the initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI). I am encouraged to note that due to our collective efforts, the contribution of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam to the combined GDP of ASEAN has increased from 6 percent in 2009 to 12 percent in 2013.

As we are approaching closer to target year for ASEAN Community, I would like to urge you to accelerate our efforts on Initiatives for ASEAN Integration.

On this occasion, I would also like to highlight an important matter to promote ASEAN integration, equitable development and highly competitive region. That is the promotion of seamless connectivity within the ASEAN and ASEAN with the rest of the world and to fully implement Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC).

The Master Plan consists of physical connectivity, institutional connectivity as well as people to people connectivity that require substantial resources. These resources should not only come from the member states and international financial institutions but we must also prioritize the provision of resources through Public Private Partnership.

When we move forward, ASEAN should be prepared to overcome the challenges and imminent threats. Among the challenges and threats, we should pay greater attention to climate change and natural disasters caused by extreme weather.

Taking these threats into consideration, we need to take preventative action as well as mitigation measures. In this respect, I would like to recall the actions that I proposed at the 24th Summit. I would like to urge all to take urgent action on these proposals. To facilitate the prosperity of our people, we need to prioritize and undertake the policy and concepts that are focused and support sustainable environmental conservation and sustainable economic development.

On this occasion of the 47th Anniversary of ASEAN, I wish to call on all ASEAN member states to continue to move forward in unity to a peaceful, economically dynamic and people-centred ASEAN; as standing tall as a dignified regional organization in the global community of nations.

Next, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin made a speech. He said: As ASEAN stands at the threshold for a new stage of ASEAN Community, it is of utmost importance for us to make sure that all our targets are fully realized in time. This is a time not only to think of our past glories but also to make candid assessment of our work as well as to plan for our future. This is to further reinforce our collective actions to ensure the emergence of a politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible ASEAN Community by 2015.

I am very pleased to note that ASEAN's ongoing process to review to strengthen our institutions and our external relations are progressing well. I am also encouraged by the progress in formulating our vision for post 2015 to chart our course for future of ASEAN Community. I believe that these endeavours will strengthen ASEAN and enable us to fulfil the aspirations of our peoples.

ASEAN has developed important political instruments such as ASEAN Charter, Treaty of Amenity and Cooperation (TAC) and Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ Treaty) ASEAN's norms and principles enshrined in these documents; that include principles of consultation, decision making by consensus and respect for level of comforts to all, have stood the test of time and become the hall marks of ASEAN, and has not only served the ASEAN's own interest but also contributed to the peace and stability in the region.

Nevertheless, our efforts are not free from challenges. The challenges of ASEAN today are more complex, multifaceted and transnational in nature requiring more coordinated and comprehensive solutions.

Our united voice is important for ASEAN to remain relevant in the changing regional security and economic landscapes.

In Moving collective efforts forward; We must continue ASEAN to build up on capacity to promote regional peace, stability, prosperity and social harmony. We must continue to be outward looking by exerting greater efforts for more consolidated external relations and improved efficiency of ASEAN led processes. We must continue to be proactive in the global processes through active involvement in addressing the issues of global concern and regional relevance.

After the ceremony the president had documentary photo taken together with ASEAN Foreign Ministers and ASEAN Secretary General. Also present on the occasion were Vice Presidents Dr Sai Mauk Kham and U Nyan Tun, Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the Lower House Thura U Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Upper House U Khin Aung Myint, Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Tun Oo, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Service Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal U Mya Thein, Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Tin Aye, union ministers, ASEAN Foreign Ministers and their wives, Foreign Ministers of Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Mongolia, deputy ministers of Norway and Turkey and others.

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