

Special Address
by H.E. Le Luong Minh,
Secretary-General of ASEAN
at the Delhi Dialogue VI: Realising ASEAN-India Vision for Partnership and
Prosperity

Session I: “*Translating the Vision Statement*”

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Five years of implementation of the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community since it was adopted, to date, less than two years before the deadline of December 2015, overall about 80% of the measures due under the three ASEAN Community Blueprints have been implemented. The result of the implementation of the Blueprints over the past 5 years has changed fundamentally the landscape of ASEAN in each of the 3 pillars of the Community. With enhanced political cohesion, economic integration, social responsibility, the narrowed gap of development within and amongst Member States and the fact that ASEAN has become more connected not only physically but also institutionally and people-to-people, the standing of ASEAN in the region and in the world has been elevated to a highest level ever. Politically, with peace, security and stability in our region basically ensured, ASEAN has been increasingly speaking with one voice on regional and global issues of common interest and concern. Economically, substantial gains have been achieved in eliminating tariffs, facilitating trade and investment, integrating capital and aviation markets, enhancing food security, narrowing development gaps and promoting cooperation with external partners, all this contributing to ASEAN's ability to sustain

growth in the region despite the volatile external environment resulting from the recent global and EUROZONE crisis. Socially, with the promotion of education and youth and cultural exchanges, progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, greater attention to disadvantaged groups such as disabled people, elements of a caring and sharing society are emerging. With approximately 20% of the measures left for implementation in the next 2 years, ASEAN is basically on track in Community building.

Such progress has strengthened ASEAN itself as a platform for dialogue and cooperation to preserve and enhance peace and security, a locomotive for open trade, investment and economic growth in the region while maintaining its unity in diversity and its central role in regional mechanisms.

Positive impacts of such progress in the process of Community building on external relations are reflected in the number of non-ASEAN countries having acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia or the TAC, which is 22 of late, 2 applications pending approval, and in the number of countries having appointed their envoys to ASEAN, which is 78. Those positive impacts also find their expression in the fact that ASEAN's relations with all major partners have moved far beyond trade, investment economic cooperation to more comprehensive partnership encompassing joint projects and programs in all major spheres of activity.

In that context, with confidence in the prospect of a three-pillared Community established by 2015, ASEAN has already started work on a Post-2015 Vision with a view to setting a firm foundation for a stronger ASEAN Community. While concrete elements of such a vision are still to be developed, there has been broad agreement on its thrust among Member States which share the view that since Community-building is a process, a work in progress, the Post-2015 Vision should be one to enhance and consolidate the ASEAN Community through a continued but deeper and more comprehensive process of integration. The ultimate objective is to build an ASEAN

that is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible, an ASEAN people-oriented, people-centred and rules-based, an ASEAN Community well integrated into the global community of nations. It should be a vision addressing the needs of ASEAN in the new phase of development. While integration and peace and stability will remain, the preconditions for the region's economic growth, the Post-2015 Vision would lay a greater focus on improving the living conditions of the 600 million people of ASEAN and, thus, it should set concrete goals in expanding trade, investment and economic growth, poverty reduction and narrowing development gaps with a view to ensuring equitable and sustainable development for all Member States. And, both as part of and as a contributor to the realization of that vision, ASEAN would continue to promote and strengthen its external relations, first and foremost with its immediate East Asian partners. A strong, united and prosperous ASEAN Community will be an important factor for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in East Asia and Asia-Pacific. As one of the only two partners, happening to be two biggest partners populationwise, physically connected to ASEAN with many historical and cultural similarities and a great many shared interests, India has always been and in the context of ASEAN's enhanced Community building process, one of ASEAN's most important partners.

In fact, since India became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992 and subsequently a full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1995, ASEAN-India relations have grown rapidly. The relations were further elevated with the convening of the inaugural ASEAN-India Summit in 2002. Another important milestone is the elevation of the relations to Strategic Partnership in 2012 at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark the 20th anniversary of the Dialogue Relations which adopted the ASEAN-India Vision Statement which serves as a roadmap for ASEAN and India to work towards an enduring partnership for peace and shared prosperity. As we continue to implement the initiatives contained in the Vision Statement, the tasks at hand for us is to ensure that the implementation is effective with high impact and mutually beneficial

cooperation projects and activities. Let me highlight salient areas in which efforts need to be doubled:

First, in the Vision Statement, the Leaders of ASEAN and India expressed their strong commitment to realise the trade and economic potentials of the strategic partnership. With a combined market of over 1.8 billion people and a GDP of US\$ 3.8 trillion as well as relative geographical proximity, there are huge potentials waiting to be tapped in ASEAN-India trade, investment and economic cooperation. While the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods (TIG) Agreement was already signed in August 2009, the agreements on trade in services and investment having been concluded and legally scrubbed are yet to be signed. The agreements should be ratified by all parties as soon as possible. We also need to promote and devise measures to ensure the FTA benefits the business community on both sides. Deeper private sector engagement is vital to enhance our economic ties. I believe with concerted efforts we will be able to achieve the target of USD100 billion for ASEAN-India trade by 2015, as well as increase tariff-free lines beyond the existing levels. Given the importance of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership to both ASEAN and India, the two sides, in a phased approach focusing on delivering on the core issues identified in the Guiding Principles, should work closely together to achieve the target of concluding the negotiations by 2015.

Second, ASEAN is embarking on a bold and long-term strategy to improve the region's physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity. Enhanced ASEAN connectivity would promote ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture, facilitate the building of an ASEAN Community and serve as a foundation for enhanced connectivity beyond the region. This is in line with the commitment of the Leaders in the Vision Statement to further strengthen ASEAN-India connectivity. Expanding and improving road, rail, maritime and air linkages will be crucial to further increase ASEAN-India trade and investment. The development of the Mekong-India Economic Corridor, the early construction of the new India-Myanmar-Lao PDR-Viet Nam-

Cambodia Highway and the extension of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to Lao PDR and Cambodia would promote transport infrastructure linkages, hence contributing to the increase in two-way trade and investment. At the same time, ASEAN-India air connectivity could be strengthened by working towards greater liberalisation of air services, both cargo and passengers. In this connection, the ASEAN-India Air Services Agreement should be concluded as soon as possible. Concrete ways and means should be explored to support the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity in areas where India has strong expertise and interest. Regular exchanges between the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and India's Inter-Ministerial Group on Connectivity would be essential to advance ASEAN Connectivity and ASEAN-India connectivity

Third, another key area of importance to our partnership is information and communications. ASEAN-India cooperation in information and communication technology (ICT), particularly digital connectivity, through sharing of best practices in policy, regulations and technological development and capacity building programmes should be further encouraged.

Fourth, the Leaders of ASEAN and India also stressed the importance of strengthening socio-cultural cooperation and people-to-people interaction in the Vision Statement. ASEAN-India collaboration in this broad area has expanded to include human resource development, science and technology (S&T), people-to-people contacts, health and pharmaceuticals, transport and infrastructure, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), tourism, information and communication technology (ICT), agriculture, and energy. In order to promote dynamism in this area of cooperation, ASEAN and India need to collaborate to implement concrete activities in culture, education, youth, sports, creative industries, science and technology, information and communication technology and software, human resource development as well as scholarly exchanges. There is also need to enhance contacts between parliamentarians, media personnel, academics and Track II institutions.

Fifth, ASEAN and India need to continue the momentum gained in their cooperation to support the narrowing of the development gaps in ASEAN. India has been contributing to narrowing the development gaps in ASEAN through the implementation of a number of high impact projects and programmes. India's efforts and support to the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) by implementing programmes in entrepreneurship training, English language and ICT have contributed significantly to enhance the capacity of CLMV countries. As stressed by the Leaders of ASEAN and India in the Vision Statement, enhancing cooperation in bridging the development gaps needs to be continued and further promoted.

Sixth, ASEAN and India need to work closely to strengthen cooperation in agriculture and food security, as well as promote cooperation in tourism, space science, ICT and climate change and environment. In addition, ASEAN and India need to expand their cooperation in energy security, renewable energy and disaster management.

Seventh, people-to-people exchanges are a key component to further cultivate our partnership. There is need continue to promote people-to-people interactions through, among others, university networking, young business leaders programmes, religious and cultural exchanges, and continue the existing exchange programmes for students, diplomats, farmers and media.

Eighth, ASEAN and India need to strengthen their consultations/cooperation through making full use of existing multilateral fora, including ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN-Europe Meeting, the East Asia Summit where India has been a strong supporter of ASEAN's central role, as well as the United Nations and other bodies within the UN system, where more than with any other partners, ASEAN shares with India most common positions with regards to respect for most fundamental principles of international law and international relations, where India is

well known and highly respected for its promotion of the culture of non-violence, ASEAN for its consistent support for the principle of non-use of force, in order to strengthen a sound multilateral system amidst the continually changing regional and global strategic landscapes with a view to defending and advancing the common interests of ASEAN and India in promoting peace, stability and prosperity.

Finally, as ASEAN and India do, the ASEAN- India partnership keeps evolving. Periodic reviews of cooperation programs are necessary for possible adjustments to enable them to correspond to the needs of both sides in their respective new stages of development.

Outcomes of Track II deliberations such as those at Delhi Dialogues can be meaningful contributions to those reviews. I wish success to your deliberations and thank you!

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