

**Third Round Table of  
ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks (AINTT)  
25-26 August 2014, Hanoi**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam H.E.  
Mr. Pham Binh Minh;

Minister for External affairs of India H.E. Shrimati Sushma Swaraj;

His Excellency Mr. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East);

Professor Dr. Nguyen Xuan Thang, President of Vietnam Academy of  
Social Sciences;

Heads of Indian diplomatic missions to various countries in this region;

Distinguished Panellists and Speakers and members of the Think-Tank  
Fraternity of this region;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) including its Chairman, Ambassador Shyam Saran, I would like to extend a warm and cordial welcome to all of you to this Third Round Table of ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks. I would like to in particular, convey our gratefulness to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh for kindly agreeing to deliver the Keynote Address and to the Minister for External Affairs H.E. Shrimati Sushma Swaraj for consenting to inaugurate the proceedings. The august presence of your excellencies has enabled our gathering to acquire great importance. Your views and suggestions will provide valuable guidance and direction to our discussions today and tomorrow. It is very important that the think-tanks on Track 1½ or 2 have such regular interactions with political leaders and decision makers in Track 1. It is also a welcome coincidence of our meeting and the meeting of the Heads of India diplomatic missions in the

region that has enabled us to have the presence at this inaugural session of all these senior Indian Ambassadors and High Commissioners, actively promoting ties with countries in this region.

May I also take this opportunity to convey our sincere thanks to our co-host, the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, and to Professor Dr. Nguyen Xuan Thang in particular, for all the excellent arrangements and host facilities? RIS had the opportunity and privilege of hosting of Professor Dr. Nguyen Xuan Thang only recently in New Delhi and Kolkata, as part of our Eminent Persons Lecture Series. His lectures were very well received and extensively covered by our local press.

RIS has been involved in interacting with think-tanks in the region for more than a decade now. An India-ASEAN Centre has also been established last year in RIS that is now witnessing a steady stream of activities. RIS is also the focal point in India for this more systematic Annual Round Table of AINTT which began two years ago in 2012. A primary objective of this Round Table is to provide policy inputs to the governments of India and the ASEAN countries on future areas of cooperation. It is regarded as a high quality research platform for the policymakers, academia, professionals and the research community. While the first Round Table was held in New Delhi in 2012, last year the second Round Table took place in Vientiane, Laos and this year we are holding it in Hanoi, Vietnam. Holding this important network meeting on a rotational basis in different venues, we believe will also bring in a welcome local flavour and perspectives into our discussions.

ASEAN today is a market of over 600 million people with a combined GDP of US\$2.5 trillion dollars. The bustling economy of Vietnam is an illustration of the dynamism of this region. As steady progress is being made towards the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community, discussions are already underway, among various think-tanks about moving ASEAN forward beyond AEC over a medium term till 2020 and beyond and to see how it can achieve further sustained high and equitable growth.

India is a market of over 1.23 billion people with a GDP of 1.842 trillion. While our growth slowed in the last couple of years, registering growth

less than 5%, the current year is expected to see some revival with expectations of 5.4 to 5.9% growth. The assumption of office by the new government and the announcement of several reform measures and initiatives have already led to high expectations with the stock market registering record level. If the growth projections are realised, it can form the basis for our reversal to a 7 to 8% annual growth in the not so distant future. It could be expected then that even our bilateral trade and investment with ASEAN could also lead to more accelerated expansion. I think this optimistic outlook provides an interesting setting for the Round Table discussion.

With the Commemorative Summit in 2012, ASEAN-India relations have been elevated to the Strategic Partnership level. This is set for further strengthening of relations once the FTA on services and investment becomes effective. ASEAN and India are now along with other partners also negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement. With both sides showing keenness to deepen and widen their economic partnership, there is need to dwell on a range of issues, including trade in services, investment and connectivity, and development cooperation.

Keeping all these in view the third Round Table has been designed to discuss the theme "ASEAN - India: Integration and Development". There will be three main sessions. The first session will focus on economic cooperation and integration seeking to examine aspects like regional trading architecture, production networks, financial cooperation and other regional integration issues. The second session will be devoted discussing the challenges and prospects of ASEAN-India physical connectivity and soft infrastructure. In RIS, we had recently undertaken a study on how the various connectivity corridors under development between India and Myanmar can be transformed into development corridors. A copy of this report is being circulated to all participants which we hope will facilitate discussions during this session. The third session will focus on investment cooperation possibilities. The potential for building supply chains and further strengthen infrastructure are some of the priority areas for exploration. There will also be a session on 'Way Forward' and we are very pleased that we have amongst us several

experts and senior representatives from ASEAN countries, apart from RIS, who will be contributing to the discussion.

I would also like to thank here both the coordinators, Prof. Dr. Ngo Xuan Binh, Director General, Institute of India and Southwest Asian Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and Dr. Prabir De, Professor, RIS for all the preparatory work that has gone into making the holding of this event possible.

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