



Lao People's Democratic Republic

Remarks

by H. E. Salermxay KOMMASITH,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR

at the Special Discussion on “The Future of ASEAN”

New York, 23 September 2016

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- **Excellencies, Distinguished Speakers,**
- **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure and honour to have an opportunity to participate in this important Special Discussion on the Future of ASEAN today hosted by Asia Society and Asia Strategy and Leadership Institute in conjunction with the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Southeast Asia is a region of diversity. This region has differences not only in political systems and levels of economic development, but also in cultures, languages and religions. However, this diversity does not constitute an obstacle for the countries in this part of the world to come together as ASEAN, an inter-governmental regional organization comprising 10 different Member States and bound by geography, common objectives and destiny.

ASEAN has come a long way since its inception in 1967. It has gone through various stages and gradual evolution, from original 5 founding countries to 10 Member States.

Over the past 5 decades, ASEAN has contested against various challenges and yet it continued to progress thanks to its strengthened internal cooperation and enhanced relations with external partners. The ASEAN initiated frameworks, namely ASEAN+1, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS) provide key platforms for not only ASEAN to engage with its Dialogue Partners and external partners, but also for the dialogue partners, especially the major powers to engage one another, thereby contributing to enhancing mutual understanding, strategic trust, and creating an environment conducive to the maintenance and promotion of peace, stability and development cooperation in the region and the world. External partners have recognised and supported ASEAN's centrality in the evolving regional architecture that is built upon the ASEAN-led mechanisms. Most significantly, ASEAN has become a region of peace and stability which provides favorable condition for sustainable regional economic growth and as a result, ASEAN has become the 6th largest economy in the world in 2015. Another historic event for ASEAN was the establishment of the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015.

In my view, ASEAN achievements over the past 5 decades were possible thanks to collective efforts and cooperation within ASEAN and between ASEAN and its external partners through ASEAN-initiated mechanisms based on the ASEAN Way of cooperation and in accordance with the particularity and reality of the region.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

ASEAN Community building is an on-going process. Therefore, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 charting out future direction for continued efforts to further strengthen and advance the ASEAN Community for the next ten years.

The Lao PDR has the great honor to be entrusted to chair ASEAN in 2016 under the theme: ***“Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community”*** which is in line with the continued efforts of ASEAN in realizing the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

At the recently concluded 28th and 29th ASEAN Summits and related Summits early this month in Vientiane, the ASEAN Leaders adopted many important documents such as the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan iii, Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, ASEAN Trade

Facilitation Framework, ASEAN Institutional Framework on Access to Finance for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, which will serve as frameworks for ASEAN cooperation in strengthening ASEAN's efforts to further consolidate ASEAN Community in the years to come.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year, 2017, ASEAN will celebrate its 50th anniversary (the golden Jubilee). In going forward, ASEAN should build upon the ASEAN achievements over the past 5 decades and continue to be an inter-governmental regional organization that adheres to ASEAN's principles and the ASEAN Way, pursues its outward-looking policy through strengthening its relations with external partners, while enhancing ASEAN centrality in shaping the evolving regional architecture and moves forward at a pace comfortable to all.

All in all, I am confident that the ASEAN Community will be stronger through the effective implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 as well as the three community Blueprints, Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan III, thereby contributing to the common cause of maintaining and promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the region and the world.

I have full trust and confidence in our incoming Chair of ASEAN, the Philippines, who will lead the ASEAN Community towards greater achievements in 2017 under the theme: "Partnering for Change, Engaging the World".

I thank you.