

Twenty-Ninth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting

Jakarta, 20–21 July 1996

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The Twenty-Ninth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held in Jakarta from 20–21 July 1996.

Fifth ASEAN Summit

2. The Foreign Ministers underlined the significant achievements of the Fifth ASEAN Summit held in Bangkok from 14–15 December 1995. As part of the Summit's agenda, the ASEAN Leaders held a meeting with the Leaders of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, pursuant to the Summit's theme "ASEAN towards One Southeast Asia". All ten Leaders signed the Treaty on Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and agreed to launch a new pattern of regional development cooperation involving the development of the Mekong Basin, the establishment of a rail link running from Singapore through Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and on to Kunming and a network of gas pipelines linking the ASEAN countries. The Summit elevated functional cooperation to a higher plane and called for the further strengthening of the ASEAN identity, spirit and sense of community. Focusing on the theme "Greater Economic Integration", the Summit resulted in the acceleration and deepening of the commitments under AFTA, expansion of ASEAN economic cooperation in new sectors, as well as increased linkages with other countries in Southeast Asia. The Foreign Ministers looked forward to the convening of the Informal Meeting of the ASEAN Heads of Government to be held in Indonesia in December 1996 as agreed upon in the Fifth Summit.

3. The Foreign Ministers accepted the formal applications of Cambodia and Laos to become members of ASEAN in 1997. They also granted Observer status of ASEAN to Myanmar thereby, [and] the vision of ASEAN's founders of all ten Southeast Asian countries living in harmony under a single roof came closer to realization. In this connection, the Ministers reiterated their continued determination to enhance cooperation with Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to assist them in preparing for their eventual membership in ASEAN.

...

Economic Cooperation

Progress on AFTA and Other Related Issues

21. The Foreign Ministers were pleased to note the rapid increase of 21% in intra-ASEAN exports of CEPT products in 1995, that is from US\$49.1 billion in 1994 to US\$59.3 billion in 1995. The Ministers also noted with satisfaction the progress made on the decision of the Fifth ASEAN Summit in Bangkok to accelerate the CEPT-AFTA whereby tariffs of items in the CEPT Inclusion List will be reduced to the 0–5% range by the year 2000, thus enabling ASEAN to achieve the AFTA even before the target date of 2003. The Foreign Ministers noted that for new members, the schedule for the implementation of CEPT for AFTA will be carried out in accordance with the agreement and commitment between ASEAN and new members.

22. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the substantial progress made in the negotiations to liberalise trade in unprocessed agricultural products and welcomed the decision to phase in these products into the CEPT Scheme by the year 2010. The Ministers encouraged Member Countries to intensify their efforts to realise this decision.

23. The Foreign Ministers called for continued efforts to reduce the impediments to trade and investment in ASEAN. The Ministers were pleased to note that customs surcharges affecting identified CEPT products will be removed by 1996 and called upon Member Countries to intensify their efforts to eliminate Non-Tariff Barriers. The Ministers also noted with satisfaction the rapid developments made in customs cooperation to support AFTA, especially the establishment of the Green Lane system for CEPT products which will expedite the customs clearance for these products. The Ministers welcomed the decision for ASEAN to come up with an Agreement on Customs which will enhance regional cooperation in customs. They expressed optimism that trade facilitation measures under AFTA as provided in the Agreement particularly the harmonization of tariff nomenclature, customs procedures and customs valuation would be fully implemented.

24. The Foreign Ministers called for the active participation of the private sector in ASEAN economic cooperation programmes and activities and to take advantage of the business opportunities arising therefrom. They encouraged the private sector to come up with specific proposals especially those pertaining to trade facilitation measures, SME development programmes, industry-specific projects and promotion-oriented activities.

25. The Foreign Ministers noted the progress made in the areas of Food, Agriculture, Forestry, Energy, Transport and Tourism. They supported the recommendations of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers that further measures be taken to facilitate travel in ASEAN countries. In this respect, the Ministers noted that some member countries have established the special lanes for ASEAN nationals. The Ministers welcomed the decision of the 15th AMAF to continue to focus on cooperative endeavours in the seven priority areas identified in the Ministerial Understanding on ASEAN Cooperation In Food, Agriculture and Forestry. The Ministers also noted that the private sector is now more involved in cooperative efforts and activities with the signing of the MOU on ASEAN Cooperation and Joint Approaches in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme by the AMAF in 1994. They expressed their support of the decision of the AEM to accelerate the negotiations in services to enable ASEAN Member Countries to come up with initial commitments by September 1996.

26. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the signing of the Basic Agreement on ASEAN Industrial Cooperation (AICO) which broadens the scope of industrial cooperation in ASEAN. They expressed confidence that this new Scheme will encourage more industrial cooperation projects and further enhance the attractiveness of ASEAN as an investment site.

Facilitation of Goods in Transit

27. The Foreign Ministers shared the view that the implementation of AFTA has made much progress. They believed however that other related efforts should be undertaken by member countries to promote trade and the free movement of goods in the region. They therefore agreed to recommend to the ASEAN Heads of Government that appropriate ASEAN bodies consider additional measures for facilitation of goods in transit.

AFTA-CER Linkages

28. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress made in the establishment of trade and investment linkages between AFTA and countries of the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZCERTA) and encouraged the establishment of such linkages with other regional groupings and trading arrangements.

WTO Ministerial Conference

29. The Foreign Ministers were pleased to note that the inaugural World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference (MC) would be held in Singapore in December this year. The Foreign Ministers recognized the importance of the Singapore MC and reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring a substantial outcome at the MC.

30. The Foreign Ministers endorsed the position taken by the AEM regarding the framework of ASEAN's approach towards the agenda of the inaugural WTO MC in Singapore. The Foreign Ministers agreed that the Singapore MC should critically review the implementation of UR Agreements and seek a Ministerial mandate to start the preparatory work on the built-in agenda, including agriculture. The Foreign Ministers resolved that ASEAN Members should actively work towards a successful conclusion of the negotiations on basic telecommunications and maritime transport services and that other WTO countries should be urged to also exert themselves with a view to achieving that end. The Foreign Ministers reiterated that ASEAN should oppose any attempt to include issues which were not trade-related, such as corruption and social clause, at the Singapore MC. The Ministers noted that other issues, such as competition policy, may not be mature enough for inclusion at the MC. The Foreign Ministers also endorsed the AEM's position to oppose the inclusion of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, as it stands, into the agenda of the Singapore MC.

East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC)

31. The Ministers reiterated their commitment toward the early realisation of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) which will intensify economic cooperation that is mutually beneficial to its members. In this regard they were happy to note the increasing acceptance of the concept and the rationale for the establishment of such a caucus among the countries of the region.

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

32. The Foreign Ministers noted that in implementing Part One of the Osaka Action Agenda, the SOM chair will furnish a report on the overall progress of collective actions and IAP preparations to the APEC Ministers in charge of trade at the Christchurch meeting which was held in July 1996. These Action Plans will be formulated in accordance with the general principles and framework of the Action Agenda so as to realize APEC's long term goal of free and open trade and investment in the region.

33. The Foreign Ministers noted that all 18 member economies of APEC have submitted their indicative Individual Action Plans (IAPS) during the APEC Senior Official Meeting (SOM II) in Cebu City last May. The IAPs will be further refined in the coming months for submission to Ministers. These IAPs together with the report on Collective Actions will be integrated into the Manila Action Plans for APEC (MAPA 196), the document to be adopted by the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November. The Foreign Ministers noted that APEC devoted attention to Part Two of the Osaka Action Agenda pertaining to the economic and technology cooperation (EcoTech), with the view to providing greater coherence and sharper focus to the activities of the Working Groups. They also noted the successful inaugural meeting of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in Manila, which further enhanced private sector participation in the APEC process. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the convening of the APEC Business Forum (ABF) on the occasion of the APEC meetings in November 1996 as a way of highlighting and making more effective the role of the private sector in the APEC process.

34. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers expressed full support for Vietnam's request for admission into APEC when the moratorium on new membership in APEC is lifted.

ASEAN Common Time Zone

25. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the initiative of the ASEAN Economic Ministers to establish a working group to discuss the merits of the proposal of having an ASEAN Common Time Zone. The Foreign Ministers noted that while Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam have GMT plus 7 hours, the other countries, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines have GMT plus 8 hours.

Functional Cooperation

36. Pursuant to the decision of the Fifth ASEAN Summit to elevate function[al] cooperation to a higher plane to bring shared prosperity to all members of ASEAN, the Foreign Ministers adopted the Framework for Elevating Functional Cooperation to a Higher Plane. The Framework consists of the theme "shared prosperity through human development, technological competitiveness and social cohesiveness" and six measures to guide regional cooperation in science and technology, environment, culture and information, social development, and drugs and narcotics control. The Ministers reiterated the need to encourage the effective participation of women and youth in all levels of development.

37. The Foreign Ministers reiterated the importance of human resources development and of further strengthening the ASEAN identity and raising ASEAN awareness towards the realisation of a caring, cohesive and technologically advanced ASEAN community. In this regard, they welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN University Network by the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, the initiative of the ASEAN Labour Ministers to study the feasibility of establishing an ASEAN Regional Human Resources Development Planning Centre, and the decision of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information to further develop and expand the ASEANWEB and to explore the possibility of establishing an ASEAN Satellite Channel which would enable ASEAN to present its views and culture more effectively to the world.

38. The Foreign Ministers emphasized the need to strengthen the family as a foundation for a strong caring and cohesive society. They expressed their support for the efforts of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare to establish an ASEAN Regional Mechanism for Family and Child Development.

39. The Foreign Ministers expressed serious concern as underlined by the ASEAN Labour Ministers that attempts to link international labour standards and international trade would undermine the economic growth of developing countries which in turn would affect the economy of developed nations.

They reiterated the view that the issue of international labour standards should be discussed in the ILO and not in other non-labour related fora. The Ministers supported the decision to urge the ILO to review the international labour conventions including the so-called fundamental workers' rights conventions.

40. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the completion of the Medium Term Programme on ASEAN Science and Technology Development (1996–2000), the Medium Term Programme on ASEAN Drug Abuse Control (1996–1998) and the ASEAN Regional Programme on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control (1995–2000) which further elaborated the respective Action Plans. They supported the vigorous implementation of these programmes to help achieve the goals of a technologically competitive ASEAN, and a drug-free and healthy ASEAN.

41. The Foreign Ministers recognized the need to raise the public profile of ASEAN's activities in the scientific, environmental, narcotics control, social and cultural fields through wider publicity and agreed that valuable contributions of individuals and organizations in these areas should be properly recognised with prestigious ASEAN awards and prizes.

42. The Foreign Ministers called for greater coordination among the various sectors involved in functional cooperation and agreed to strengthen the capability and resources of the ASEAN Secretariat in this area. They stressed the need to explore various funding modalities, including cost-sharing schemes, to ensure the effective and timely implementation of priority functional cooperation programmes.

43. The Foreign Ministers noted the progress made in the setting up of ASEAN Resource Centres in the different areas in ASEAN Member Countries in accordance with the decision of the 8th ASEAN Conference on Civil Service Matters.

Transnational Issues

44. The Foreign Ministers recognized the need to focus attention on such issues as narcotics, economic crimes, including money laundering, environment and illegal migration which transcend borders and affect the lives of the people in the region. They shared the view that the management of such transnational issues is urgently called for so that they would not affect the long-term viability of ASEAN and its individual member nations. The Ministers therefore agreed that all the works and projects of the existing ASEAN bodies in these areas should be urgently reviewed and recommendations be submitted to the ASEAN Heads of Government for consideration.

ASEANWEB

45. The Foreign Ministers appreciated the initiative taken by the ASEAN Secretariat to launch the ASEANWEB on the Internet. The Ministers noted that the ASEANWEB had expanded to cover more ASEAN activities and that it had also established links to web sites in Member Countries. The Ministers encouraged all ASEAN countries to develop the ASEANWEB into an effective and useful channel of communication on all aspects of ASEAN and its activities and to make full use of it to project ASEAN more effectively.

Celebrations for ASEAN's Thirtieth Anniversary

46. Recognizing that the Thirtieth Anniversary of ASEAN falls next year, the Foreign Ministers called on each Member Country to plan and organise year-long activities beginning 8 August 1997. The Ministers also called on the ASC to coordinate these activities at the national and regional levels with the participation of all the ASEAN committees and bodies.

External Relations

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

47. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the inaugural Asia-Europe Meeting held in Bangkok on 1–2 March 1996 which successfully launched a New Asia Europe Partnership for Greater Growth. The historic Meeting, attended by the Heads of State and Government from ten Asian countries, consisting of seven ASEAN Member Countries, Japan, Republic of Korea and China, and fifteen European nations and the President of the European Commission, ushered in a new era in relations between Asia and Europe by reinforcing political dialogue at the highest level and strengthening economic links and cooperation in other areas between the two regions. The Ministers agreed to work closely to ensure that ASEAN continues to play a central role in the evolution of ASEM and the implementation of follow-up actions agreed to by ASEM. The Ministers noted that the Second and Third ASEM will be held respectively in the United Kingdom in 1998 and in the Republic of Korea in the year 2000.

Cooperation with Dialogue Partners

48. The Foreign Ministers noted that the Dialogue process has continued to be the most important aspect of ASEAN's external relations. It has provided ASEAN with opportunities to promote its common interests and engage in dialogues on both regional and global issues with some of the most important countries in the world. The Ministers expressed the hope that the achievements in this area could be sustained through increased consultations and mutual understanding.

49. The Foreign Ministers noted, in particular, that regular consultations with Dialogue Partners have facilitated greater cooperation in various areas. The Ministers called upon the Dialogue Partners to remain committed to the promotion of trade, investment, technology transfer and market access for ASEAN products. The Ministers continued to place importance on development cooperation and expressed appreciation for the continued support by the Dialogue Partners in the implementation of various development projects. They expressed ASEAN's readiness to work with Dialogue Partners in a trilateral approach to promote development cooperation with CLM countries.

50. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the initiative of H.E. President Kim Young Sam of the Republic of Korea which led to the establishment of an ASEAN-Republic of Korea Eminent Persons Group and expressed the hope that the Group's report would contribute to a more dynamic ASEAN-Republic of Korea relations for the 21st Century. The Foreign Ministers took note with appreciation the ASEAN-EU EPG Report.

ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation

51. The Ministers noted the Record of the Ministerial Meeting on ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation held in Kuala Lumpur in June 1996 and expressed their satisfaction on the progress achieved towards implementing the Fifth ASEAN Summit decision on ASEAN cooperation in the economic development of the Mekong Basin.

52. The Ministers endorsed the basic framework for the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation as adopted by the Kuala Lumpur meeting. They also reiterated the decision in Kuala Lumpur to open the participation in the cooperation to countries, other than the core group, which are currently engaged in development cooperation on a bilateral or multilateral basis in the Mekong Basin or have expressed interest in the ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation and to international regional institutions which are interested or engaged in assisting development of the area.

53. They recognised the need for ASEAN countries to establish appropriate modalities for funding and cooperation and noted the agreement to establish, under the chairmanship of Thailand, an ASEAN and non-ASEAN Riparian States Experts Group to study the issue further and any other relevant matter connected with the mobilizing of funds and to establish, under the chairmanship of Malaysia, a Special ASEAN and Non-ASEAN Working Group to study all the issues on the proposed railway links between Singapore and Kunming.

54. The Ministers also supported the decision of the Kuala Lumpur meeting to convene an annual meeting of Ministers which would be held back-to-back with the Joint Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Foreign and Economic Ministers prior to the ASEAN Summit Meetings and that Special Meetings of Ministers could be held, as and when necessary, and to establish a Steering Committee for the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation.

Sectoral Dialogue Relations and Links With Regional Organizations

55. On ASEAN-Pakistan relations, the Ministers noted the move by the ASEAN-CCI to initiate the formation of the ASEAN-Pakistan Business Council and called for the further strengthening of the sectoral dialogue relations. The Ministers called for continuing efforts to develop linkages and cooperation with other regional organizations, mindful of the limited resources and means available.

SOURCE: ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.