

DOCUMENTATION

Speech by HRH Prince Mohamed Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam at the Opening of the Sixteenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, on 24 June 1983

Mr Chairman,

I should like to begin by congratulating you on your unanimous election as Chairman of this 16th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and also by associating myself with the fine tribute paid by Their Excellencies the other Foreign Ministers of ASEAN on your distinguished service as Chairman of the Standing Committee during the past twelve months; and most importantly, to thank you and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for the generous hospitality and courtesy accorded to my delegation for our attendance at this meeting in your beautiful city of Bangkok, the birthplace of ASEAN.

It gives me great pleasure also to express on behalf of my delegation my warmest gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency the Prime Minister of Thailand General Prem Tinsulanonda for his inspiring inaugural address.

This is the third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting which Brunei attends as an observer, at the kind invitation of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers. On behalf of His Highness the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, His Highness's Government and the people of Brunei Darussalam, it is my pleasant duty to convey to the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN our deep and sincere appreciation once again for this most valuable and unique opportunity for us to participate at this meeting as an observer; also for the warmth and sincerity with which they have welcomed us and the co-operation and understanding which they extend to us in our keen efforts to forge close links with ASEAN.

On the 1st of January 1984, God willing, Brunei Darussalam will resume its status as a fully independent and sovereign state, ready and willing to assume its responsibility as an equal member of the community of nations. Although Brunei will be a new state amongst the international community, the problems facing it are no different in kind to those facing older members. The task for our Government, therefore, will be difficult but challenging, the more so because the people in a newly independent country tend to identify

themselves with the current expectations of the developed world.

In facing the challenges ahead of us, we are much fortified and strengthened in our resolve towards securing for our people their expectations by our faith in the noble principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Foremost in our minds as principal purposes and objectives are the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations among nations based on sovereign equality, respect for territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

These noble and worthy purposes are reflected in the Bangkok Declaration establishing ASEAN, and are to be found in the statement of its aims and purposes: namely, the promotion of regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and the adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter. These purposes are further elaborated in the ASEAN proposals for a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality for the region.

Since our first participation as an observer at the 14th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila in 1981, we have been privileged to follow closely developments in the pursuit by ASEAN of its aims and objectives on issues involving the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. We have been much impressed by the success achieved by ASEAN co-operation and unity in the United Nations General Assembly at its 37th Session on the question of the seating of Kampuchea.

In a world which sees an increasing disregard by members of their obligations under the United Nations Charter, ASEAN's unremitting and concerted effort towards finding a peaceful settlement of the question of Kampuchea, on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter, represents a positive and meaningful contribution to peace and stability in this region which has earned it the respect and support of the international community; and the occasion also provides an opportunity for a recommitment not only by ASEAN but also by members of the United Nations of their obligations under the Charter.

Without peace and political stability there can be no economic progress; and without economic progress our independence and freedom will be in jeopardy. In an increasingly interdependent world aggravated by a depressed world economy, the need for co-operative endeavours has never been more urgent. We note with admiration the way in which ASEAN has since its beginning in 1967 developed in the field of regional economic co-operation transcending national interests and barriers. This is more than amply demonstrated by the ASEAN industrial projects. It is largely due to these co-operative efforts in widening areas of economic endeavours that member countries of ASEAN have been able to sustain their economic growth.

We, therefore, see ASEAN as an organization dedicated to the attainment of peace, progress, and prosperity for the region. These are also Brunei's principal objectives. Brunei shares with ASEAN a geographical proximity, historical ties and economic similarities.

This geographical proximity means that we cannot divorce ourselves from developments in the region. Indeed, our proximity is such that any threat to ASEAN security is also a threat to Brunei. Similarly, progress achieved by the ASEAN countries in the economic and social spheres will create expectations for our people. Especially since modern communications, particularly television, can now bring to the homes of the individuals in vivid colours pictures of the events and developments which occur around the region. The everyday life of our people are therefore already inextricably tied to a regional environment.

As part of the region, Brunei is indeed fortunate to have the countries of ASEAN as its neighbours, particularly in view of the friendship and co-operation which they have extended to us. We are, therefore, confident that in the secure and orderly environment within the close limits of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam can build up its prosperity and give our people a better life in independent Brunei.

Having regard to the close and friendly ties which already exist with ASEAN, and bearing in mind the unanimous support which each and every member of ASEAN has expressed for Brunei's membership of ASEAN, I have the honour and greatest pleasure to inform this august gathering of the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN that it is the earnest intention of the Government of His Highness the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to apply for membership of ASEAN after the resumption of its full independence and sovereignty on the 1st of January 1984, God willing.

We hope that as a member of ASEAN we will be able to work closely together towards the achievement of peace, progress and prosperity for the region.

In conclusion, I would like on behalf of His Highness the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to convey His Highness's good wishes for the success of this 16th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting.