
Joint Statement

of the
Special Meeting of the ASEAN Economic Ministers,
16 October 1985

The ASEAN Economic Ministers held a special meeting in Bangkok on 16 October 1985 and considered the issue of rising protectionism in international trade especially in the US, with particular reference to the Jenkins-Thurmond Bill.

The Ministers noted that ASEAN member countries, collectively and individually, have been making their utmost efforts in urging the US Administration, Congress and interested parties concerned to appreciate the extent of the repercussions of the Bill, if passed, on the economic and social development of ASEAN countries and on the overall close and friendly relations between ASEAN and the US.

The Ministers reiterated ASEAN's strong opposition to the Bill which is discriminatory and contrary to existing international law and US bilateral agreements. At the same time, the Ministers welcomed with great appreciation the explicit and firm stand of the US Administration in opposing the Bill. The Ministers were also encouraged by the rising recognition within and the understanding of members of the Congress of the negative consequences of the Bill. The Ministers, however, recognize that the danger is far from over. They, therefore, further urge the US Administration and members of the Congress to continue efforts toward the eventual rejection of the Bill which poses a grave danger not only to ASEAN but also to the free international trading framework from which all countries jointly benefit.

The Ministers further pointed out that the Bill, in adversely affecting the ASEAN economies' ability to export, will provide them with no alternative but to curtail trade in order to maintain external balance. Moreover, ASEAN's export-led economies will be considerably damaged and destabilized. Accordingly, each ASEAN country will have to consider adopting measures to counter the damaging effect of the Bill.

The ASEAN Economic Ministers finally pointed out that beyond the economic impact which is real and immediate, the Jenkins-Thurmond and other protectionist bills have already and inevitably created within ASEAN a sense of uncertainty and disappointment with the United States. The constructive efforts and progress made to nurture and consolidate US-ASEAN relations will undoubtedly suffer a setback with the passage of the Jenkins-Thurmond Bill.

BANGKOK, 17 October 1985