

**The Speech to be Delivered by Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, Minister for Information  
at the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Information Ministers Conference in Laos**

*(From 4-11-2009 to 6-11-2009)*

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Mingalabar! I wish Mr. Chairman, ASEAN Information Ministers, delegates and distinguished guests health and happiness.

I, on behalf of my delegation, would like to express special thanks to the government and people of Laos for their warm welcome extended to all of us as family members in this beautiful city of Vientiane. We also thank you for your hospitality, assistance and care to make this meeting a success.

We are pleased to honour Your Excellency, the Information Minister of Laos, for your unanimous election as the Chairman of the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information.

The 9<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Information Ministers Conference was held in Jakarta from 22 to 25 May 2007. The Conference discussed future work programmes. They are: to realize the ASEAN Vision 2020, for the peoples of the ASEAN member states to understand more about the Association and to promote "People to People" relations.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Conference will focus on its main theme "Enhancing Media Cooperation in ASEAN Community Building".

*Mr. Chairman, ASEAN Information Ministers and delegates,*

ASEAN Information Ministers signed the MoU on National Communication Plan to Promote ASEAN Awareness and Understanding in Vietnam in 2000. The aim is to broaden ASEAN peoples' awareness of the Association and promote information cooperation among the ASEAN member states. It is now nine years since the ASEAN member states

have been cementing mutual understanding among themselves in accord with the MoU. It is time to review our accomplishments in this matter. After that we will have to discuss our future work programmes to help implement the theme “Enhancing Media Cooperation in ASEAN Community Building”.

Till now ASEAN member states are realizing the 2000 MoU with their own National Communication Plans. Member states are also exchanging news and TV programmes among themselves. Generally, there are two categories in their initiatives. The first one is “Initiatives to Promote ASEAN undertaken by the Ministry concerned” and the second one “Participation in the regular ASEAN-COCI Projects”. All the member states are implementing the task with uttermost efforts. But, in my view, ASEAN member states, especially their peoples still have less knowledge on the Association and its member states.

There are two causes in this matter. The first one is the peoples’ greater reliance on the Western media. State-owned and private media of the ASEAN member states cannot compete the West in terms of financial and other resources and technology and relying on the Western media for content. So, ASEAN peoples are receiving news and information on the member states based on the West’s point of view and norms. It is an obstacle to the peoples’ understanding of their Association in an objective way. Some of us are relying on Western media for content, the peoples, especially youths are more familiar with Western traditions and culture than with the Oriental ones. It is the main obstacle in building the ASEAN as “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.

The second is the gap in media development within the ASEAN. This gap includes technology and news featuring and broadcasting styles. So, we found that materials we receive from ATN are in poor quality. Sometimes the programmes of a country include scenes that are not suitable to show in another country. These problems are constraints in information exchange programmes.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting of ASEAN in Action (AIA)/ ASEAN Television News Production (ATN) at Vietnam in October this year, I have noted the participants pointing out the gradual decline in the member states' ATN cooperation during the period from January 2008 to September 2009. This conference should discuss means to accelerate AIA and ATN activities.

*Mr. Chairman, ASEAN Information Ministers and delegates,*

Information cooperation plays a pivotal role in improving mutual understanding among the member states. The Communication Strategy is included in the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) that are ASEAN Community Blueprints. So, the main theme of this meeting -- "Enhancing Media Cooperation in ASEAN Community Building" -- is important not only for the success of information sector but also for these Community Blueprints.

In my view, there are three sectors for promoting ASEAN media cooperation. The first is to develop media technology and techniques of the ASEAN member states. There are ASEAN member states enjoying advanced media in terms of IC. These countries can transfer technology, offer staff training and hold workshops for other member states. Technological cooperation is also needed in the Analogue Switch Off (ASO) of the member states.

The second is the joint radio and TV broadcasting. Sending of one country's own programmes to another has become the core of today's ASEAN media cooperation. As I have already mentioned, there are many constraints and difficulties in broadcasting those programmes because of the differences in technology and media development among member states. So, the ASEAN member states should jointly produce and distribute documentaries and TV series. In this way we will know each other's culture, significant customs, natural beauties and history more. Moreover, we will be able to overcome technological and media development gap. These joint projects will also help promote technological and technical cooperation.

The third is the sector to control the media's responsibility toward human society. Nowadays, new media are emerging widely and fast thanks to IT development. This trend is helping people to learn knowledge broadly. On the other hand, we are facing the danger of uncontrolled distribution of extreme ideologies, terrorism and pornography. Traditional media are facing hardships because of the competition of the new media. In this situation, traditional media have turned to irresponsible writings, shocking images, racism and indecent news and photos just for public attraction and profits. The result is that small countries are facing the loss of national identity and the danger of harming racial and religious harmony and political and economic stability.

We, the developing countries, need reforms for greater media transparency and to become more business oriented. At the same time, we should not ignore public services and social responsibilities. In all seriousness, I would like to say that we need cooperation to maintain the harmony between media transparency and social responsibilities. In this way we should build the ASEAN Community.

*Mr. Chairman, ASEAN Information Ministers and delegates,*

Not only the governments concerned but also the peoples should have mutual understanding and amity in building the ASEAN Community. The media play a key role in this endeavour. That is why we are here to find means to develop media cooperation in the ASEAN. Moreover, we will have to make the existing National Communication Plans more active.

We have similar traditions and culture and history as well as different political, economic, social, cultural and historical background. We also have different process of political reforms. We must aware of this point in promoting media cooperation and distributing facts about the ASEAN. We must also try to understand one another's unique situations in our ASEAN media cooperation and exchange. Moreover, we should be able to find unity in the diversity. What's more we need to adhere to the ASEAN principles. At the same time, we

must approach one another with equality and family spirit. Media on their part must feature accurate, objective, impartial and fair news.

Only then, will we be able to distinguish between cooperation and interference. So, there cannot be any misunderstandings between cooperation and interference. If we do not heed these facts, we will face unnecessary obstacles not only in ASEAN media cooperation, but also in realizing our Vision -- One Vision, One Identity, One Community.

*Mr. Chairman, ASEAN Information Ministers and delegates,*

Nowadays, ASEAN has become an economically and politically important regional organization. New challenges appear from our requirement to consolidate the Association more and from globalization, changes in geopolitics, international financial crisis and IC development. We need reforms to face these challenges. We also need to promote cooperation.

There are countries trying to use ASEAN for self interest. There are also pressures and demands for the member states and the Association itself to copy other's models in carrying out reforms instead of realities as the base. Such acts are threats and challenges that may harm the process of building the ASEAN Community.

To overcome the threats and challenges, member states and the peoples should correctly understand the realities of the Association and their own country. They must work with conviction and awareness. The media that is distributing knowledge, news and information is the best means for this purpose.

I hope that we will be able to seek new thoughts, visions, and means based on our experiences and lessons to exchange views. And if we can do so, we will be able to find ways to enhance cooperation within the Association and with the dialogue partners. With this I conclude.

Thank you.