

Steady Strides for the ASEAN Community by 2015

By

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Excellencies, Colleagues in AMRI, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon

I bring the warm and cordial greetings of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as well as the Philippine delegation and their best hopes for the success of this Tenth Conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information in this beautiful Lao capital of Vientiane.

We meet at a most significant moment. It was over 42 years ago since this alliance was founded in Thailand by our seniors. Their vision continues to inspire us and give us the passion to commit ourselves to the creation of the ASEAN Community by 2015.

Our meeting today is the first such opportunity at the AMRI level since the promulgation of the ASEAN Charter on December 15, 2008 .

I note that the Tenth Conference is being held at a time when ASEAN is starting to implement the 2009-2015 ASEAN Community Roadmap.

And this is where the challenge is, to rise above individual concerns and build the ASEAN Community.

I am happy that our friends and partners from China, Republic of Korea and Japan have joined us here.

Their presence makes this Conference even more meaningful as we explore new areas of cooperation.

We must acknowledge the efforts of our leaders in fast tracking the realization of the ASEAN Community by 2015.

They decided to hasten the transformation of ASEAN into a more prosperous region through political security, economic integration and socio-cultural bonding.

This is the ASEAN Community that distinguishes us from the rest of the world.

It is our hope that we, the 10 nations that form this formidable bloc of 580 million people, almost nine per cent of the world's population, can realize the aspirations of our peoples as we consolidate the ASEAN Community.

In the Philippines, we have launched several initiatives which are among the

action programs of government.

There have been round table discussions, special television and radio programs, workshops, campus tours, ASEAN Film Festivals , exhibitions, as well as a television and radio news exchange.

In view of our new directions, there is need to do the following:

1. Review and recast our respective national communication plans to ensure alignment with our objectives and the strategies of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Communication Plan;
2. Encourage more active involvement of ASEAN journalists. We propose that workshops on the national and regional levels be conducted to provide the ASEAN journalists with the ASEAN perspective, and enlist their support.
3. Promote ASEAN segments in our newspapers, television and radio stations.

Our government television network, NBN, already has an ASEAN segment in all its newscasts. It may also interest you to know that our morning show "One morning Cafe" which is aired on all 3 government TV networks and on government radio features ASEAN cuisine.

When I return, I will ask our government radio to also have their ASEAN segments in all their news programs.

I will speak with the owners of our major broadsheets to explore having ASEAN sections. And,

4. We must use the internet to share.

We can no longer ignore this important medium. We must understand and use it as our young people do. I propose we allocate additional resources to this. Before we can tell our peoples about each other we must first tell each other our stories. The internet has become the fastest cost-effective way to communicate.

I now ask that we strengthen the ASEAN media portal to put online all the material that we wish to share. Our media portal address is www.aseanmedia.net.

I will commit to do two things, all government information agencies in the Philippines will contribute information to the media portal **daily**, and all these agencies will use material from our portal **daily**.

If we do this, we would have taken a great stride towards building the ASEAN Community. Let us log in to move on.

In Vientiane, the Philippines joins the nine other countries in pursuing the ASEAN dream.

Our presence here today affirms our unqualified commitment to the ASEAN vision.

We thank the organizers for making this conference a success.

Thank you and Mabuhay.