

Remarks
By the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan
At the Best of ASEAN Performing Arts V featuring Malaysia

Usmar Ismail Hall, Jakarta, 11 March 2010

Your Excellency, Dato' Seri Rais Yatim, Minister of Information, Communications and Culture of Malaysia;

Your Excellency, Tifatul Sembiring, Minister of Information and Communication Technology of Indonesia;

Pak Wardiyatmo, Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Indonesia; Permanent Representative of all ASEAN Member States to ASEAN;

Ambassadors of ASEAN to the Republic of Indonesia;

Ambassadors of the ASEAN Dialogue Partners;

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Allow me to express my deep appreciation to your excellencies and all the distinguished guests for taking your time out to be with us this evening. I would like to thank, in particular, His Excellency Dato Seri Rais Yatim from Malaysia and His Excellency Tifatul Sembiring from Indonesia. Just outside this room we have witnessed how culture and arts can bring people together. The media is interested in knowing which performance belongs to which country. Arts belong to all of us; performing arts bring us together, and as the ASEAN Secretary-General, I will say all performing arts in all Member States of ASEAN belong to ASEAN.

Tonight, we celebrate our cultural diversity and community harmony with the Fifth Best of ASEAN Performing Arts by Malaysia. For those of you who have been following the series, you will know that we are at the halfway point. We have enjoyed the performances of Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Myanmar. Vietnam is coming at the end of this year and we hope, Cambodia will come before that and Lao PDR, the Philippines and Brunei Darussalam will finish this series before my term is up.

For tonight, Malaysia will be at the center stage and perform its best, with theme 1Malaysia: Harmony in Cultural Diversity. Culture is our legacy and our future. We draw upon it to shape our identities - as individuals, as a nation and as a region, most like our ASEAN Anthem, which says: ASEAN we are bonded as one, look in out to the word. For ASEAN, the South East Asia cultures are a source of strength; they inspire creativity and help build a sense of community among the people of the region, 600 millions of them all. Through this series, we demonstrate our respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation. In building mutual trust and understanding, we foster and enhance peace and security for the region and beyond.

*Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

We could not have stage this performance without the support of the Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture of Malaysia, the Office of the Permanent Mission of Malaysia to ASEAN and the Embassy of Malaysia in Indonesia. I would like to pay tribute to Minister Rais Yatim in particular for having accepted this proposal during my first ever ministerial meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in January 2008. The idea is to bring the ASEAN best performances here to show to the community of people in Jakarta, diplomatic corps and others that ASEAN is diverse, but ASEAN is one at the same time. We have been here hosted by the people of Jakarta for the last three decades. We want to pay back in a very small way through artistic performances through cultural diversity and along the way, we would like to make Jakarta the capital of arts and cultures of ASEAN as all of us inspired to be - one diversified, unified but prosperous and very welcoming region for everyone from everywhere around the world.

Again, welcome to the tonight's performance. Enjoy the show and thanks for coming.
