

(Unofficial Translation)

**Statement by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the Opening Ceremony of
the 52nd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings
Wednesday, 31 July 2019, at 09.10-09.40 hrs.
World Ballroom A-B, Centara Grand and Bangkok Convention Centre at
Central World, Bangkok.**

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(7 minutes)

**Excellencies the Foreign Ministers and the Secretary-General of ASEAN,
Honoured Guests,**

1. It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome all of you to the Opening Ceremony of the 52nd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings today.
2. It was in 1967 that the ASEAN journey began -- when the Foreign Ministers of five ASEAN Member States came together at Laem Thaen and, guided by the "Spirit of Bang Saen", signed the Bangkok Declaration, underscoring their commitment to building a region of peace, security and prosperity. From then to now, and from a small Association to a Community of ten nations, this commitment has been passed from one generation to the next.
3. Today, we have returned once again to the birthplace of ASEAN to build on our commitment to creating a people-centred ASEAN Community that leaves no one behind and looks to the future, under the theme of "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability". We have also come here to jointly address some key questions: how can we create a stable, prosperous and sustainable Community given the many regional and global challenges that we currently face; how can we advance partnership with our friends from outside the region to drive forward sustainability in all dimensions; and most importantly, how can we ensure that our people truly benefit from our efforts?

Foreign Ministers,

Honoured Guests,

4. In the past six months, our close cooperation has produced a number of concrete outcomes – importantly, moving forward our endeavour to achieve sustainability in all dimensions. At **the 34th ASEAN Summit** last month, the Leaders adopted **the ASEAN Leaders’ Vision Statement on Partnership for Sustainability**, and pushed forward cooperation directly benefitting the people, such as the launching of the **Satellite Warehouse** in Chainat Province under the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN; the upgrading of **the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine** as an official ASEAN entity; and the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region.

5. But ASEAN cannot accomplish all of its goals alone. We are all part of the community of nations. We must therefore strengthen cooperation with our Dialogue Partners and with other countries outside the region while also welcoming new cooperation with new partners. Last month, I attended the G20 Summit in Japan, as ASEAN Chair, where I took the opportunity to build on the outcomes of the 34th ASEAN Summit by reaching out to the members of the G20 to consider exploring cooperation with ASEAN in four key areas, namely, (1) making use of financial technology, or **Fintech**, to support financial inclusion for women, youth, start-ups and MSMEs as well as remote communities; (2) narrowing the development gap between urban and rural areas by using technology and innovation to drive forward the **ASEAN Smart Cities Network**; (3) conserving and rehabilitating the environment and natural resources, in particular by **combating marine debris** and adapting and mitigating the effects of **climate change**; and (4) promoting **human capital development**, whether in the area of education, skills or public health.

6. Therefore, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting this year will be a good opportunity for us to ensure continuity in the implementation of the outcomes of these various meetings so as to produce concrete deliverables. In doing so, I propose that we consider taking the following three approaches:

7. One, is strengthening **ASEAN-led mechanisms**, including the ASEAN Plus Three, EAS, ARF and ASEAN cooperation with Dialogue Partners to ensure sustainability in all dimensions for the benefit of the ASEAN peoples. For example, Thailand, as ASEAN Chair, has invited countries from outside the region to attend the ASEAN Smart Cities Network Conference and Exhibition scheduled for August in Bangkok so as to enhance ASEAN centrality.

8. Two, is enhancing **connectivity** through the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the “connecting the connectivities” approach in various areas, whether physical, people-to-people, financial, digital and trade, in particular by supporting the conclusion of **RCEP** negotiations this year, which is the joint aspiration of RCEP Leaders.

9. Three, is promoting **regional security** by inviting countries, both big and small, to engage in cooperation based on the principle of the 3Ms to promote an atmosphere of mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual understanding. This is especially with regard to difference and diversity, and mutual benefit as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes to fulfill the aspirations of ASEAN’s Founding Fathers from 52 years ago to create and maintain a region of peace and security.

Foreign Ministers,

Honoured Guests,

10. I hope that the Meeting this year will provide you with the opportunity to review these aspirations and the road that we have travelled these past six months; and to seek a common way forward to translate these aspirations into action, creating concrete deliverables based on good partnership with our friends around the world, international and regional organisations, and all sectors of society for the 35th ASEAN Summit and Related Meetings this November. No country can go it alone. We all share this one planet. Therefore, we must go forward together, protecting our natural resources and the environment, our land, our soil or the air that we breathe. These resources belong to all the people of this world, and to all of us in ASEAN. So we must cooperate to move the ASEAN Community towards a future of stability, sustainability and peace.

11. Lastly, I wish to welcome all of you to Thailand once again. I wish the meeting every success. I hope that you will enjoy your stay here and I wish you a safe return home. Thank you and sawasdee krub.

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