

Keynote Speech by H.E. General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister, at the event "Thailand Together for the ASEAN Chairmanship 2019"

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21 December 2018, Government House

Dear Thai Citizens,

The Secretary-General of ASEAN,

Ministers,

Excellencies,

Executives of government agencies, the private sector, and civil society organisations,

Distinguished Guests,

I am very pleased to preside over today's launching of the ASEAN Chairmanship in Thailand at the "Thailand Together for the ASEAN Chairmanship 2019" event. On 1 January 2019, or only 10 days from now, Thailand will officially take over the ASEAN Chairmanship from Singapore, and begin our duty as ASEAN Chair.

Over 50 years ago, ASEAN was born in Thailand. Today, ASEAN consists of 10 countries and a population of six hundred million people, and is the sixth largest economy in the world. It has played a creative role and is recognized by the international community. Hence, the opportunity to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship is an important duty, an honour for Thailand and the Thai people, which we should all take pride in.

The theme of the Thai ASEAN Chairmanship is “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability”.

“Partnership” - Countries throughout the world are intricately interconnected through economic, social, and security issues. Thailand needs friends. Our ASEAN Community needs friends. We must depend on each other to resolve problems together or take advantage of various opportunities which may arise.

At today’s event, we have representatives from all over the country, including students from schools and universities, who are the new generation with the power of creativity. Also present are the government, private sector, and civil society organization, actors and actresses, and well-known personalities, as well as the media, all of whom will drive forward our ASEAN Chairmanship. We have youths here from the Wild Boar team, who symbolise the strength of cooperation between Thailand and our friends in overcoming obstacles and achieving miracles. In addition, we have here the world renowned Thai national volleyball team, who are an example of unity and solidarity – a team which brings hope, inspiration and pride to all Thais. And we have all of you, who have come together at this event.

ASEAN must also be a team to be strong. The members of the team are all ASEAN Member States and every person in ASEAN. All 67 million Thailand people are part of the ASEAN Community, and are a positive force in resolving our own problems, both regional and global. Thus, ASEAN must unite, cooperate, and connect with one another. At the same time, ASEAN must promote good relations and create

seamless connectivity with our friends outside the region, based on the Principle of the 3Ms, namely mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual benefit, for sustainable peace and prosperity in every dimension.

“Advancing” is to move towards the future in sync with a world of competition and challenges. Standing still is no different from moving backwards. Hence, we must prepare Thai and ASEAN peoples’ readiness to enter the 4.0 era efficiently. We will take advantage of technological progress, and move towards a Digital ASEAN to improve our livelihoods and increase income for the people of ASEAN, while leaving no one behind. In addition, we will benefit from ASEAN Centres which will be established in Thailand, such as the ASEAN Centre for Active Ageing and Innovation, the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre, and the development of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network.

“Sustainability” - Development in all areas for the people’s prosperity and security, must take into account long-term sustainability. This is why I sincerely hope that ASEAN will work together to promote sustainable development, which is a global agenda. Thailand upholds the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of His Majesty the Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. His Majesty the King of Thailand has continued to carry forward the Royal Wish of His Majesty the Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej by using the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy as a way to promote development towards a green economy, to have smart farmers who use technology in agriculture, and to build smart cities which use technology for management. To help mitigate the effects of climate change, next year, we will launch an ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue in Thailand and host an ASEAN meeting to reduce marine debris and plastic, for example. You may use the souvenir cloth bag from today’s event instead of plastic bags, which supports our policy to organise environmentally-friendly and green meetings throughout next year.

Dear Thai Citizens,

Distinguished Guests,

All Thais will have a role in hosting ASEAN next year, such as the 321 youths who have submitted entries for the ASEAN Chairmanship logo contest. Each entry, including that of an eight year old child, is on display in the front area of this event. I wish to congratulate Mr. Khemphong Rungsawang (นายเขมพงษ์ รุ่งสว่าง) and Miss Chayuta Homhnug (ชยุตา หอมหนัก), the designers of the logo we will use during our ASEAN Chairmanship next year. The logo is inspired by flower garlands which is a Thai symbol of welcome. In addition, the beautiful flower arrangement represents the ASEAN Community's unity, cooperation and support for each other.

Finally, I wish to note that 2019 is another very important year for Thailand. In addition to the Royal Coronation Ceremony and the elections, which will lead to sustainable democracy, Thailand will have an important role in driving forward the ASEAN Community and opening up our home to welcome Leaders and foreign dignitaries, including ASEAN friends and ASEAN's dialogue partners. Thailand will host over 180 meetings, both in major and secondary towns. In this room, there are representatives of provinces from all regions which will host ASEAN meetings next year. A large number of delegates will attend meetings in Thailand, which will stimulate the economy. If they have a good impression of Thailand, they will return as tourists. I invite all Thais throughout the country to join hands as good hosts for smooth and successful meetings for the pride of Thailand and the Thai people, and to fulfill the expectations of the international community. I also wish to stress that each of you are not doing this only for Thailand, but also for ASEAN, since ASEAN's success depends on the partnership of all sectors to drive forward and advance the ASEAN Community in a sustainable manner.

I wish to thank members of all sectors who have played a role in supporting the success of today's event and will play a part in driving forward our ASEAN Chairmanship next year. Thank you to all distinguished guests for the large and warm gathering today, thank you all Thais, and thank you Secretary-General.

Thank you.