



## Opening Statement

*By*

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Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

*At the*

**Opening Ceremony of the ASEAN Summit**

**and the Celebration of the Anniversary of ASEAN**

*Phnom Penh, Peace Building, 3 April 2012*

*(09:30-10:30 am)*

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- *Your Majesty the Sultan, Esteemed ASEAN Leaders,*
- *Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,*
- *Distinguished National and International Guests!*

On behalf of the Royal Government and People of Cambodia, I would like to warmly welcome Your Majesty the Sultan, Excellencies Heads of State/Government and distinguished delegates of the ASEAN countries to the **ASEAN Summit** being held in Phnom Penh, the capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The Royal Government and people of Cambodia have the great honor to once again host this important Summit and we would like to extend our hospitality to Your Majesty, Excellencies, the Leaders of ASEAN as neighbors, friends, brothers and sisters, who have

come to the land of Angkor, Kingdom of Cambodia, **Kingdom of Wonder**, which is full of cultural heritages and valuable ancient temples left by our ancestors thousands of years ago.

After achieving peace and unification of territory which resulted from the Royal Government's "**Win-Win**" policy, Cambodia became a full member of ASEAN in 1999. This has allowed Cambodia to integrate with the regional and world economy and play an active and dynamic role as an equal member with equal rights in both regional and international forums. Indeed, in 2002, with the support of the ASEAN countries, Cambodia hosted and successfully chaired the ASEAN Summit. At this time, Cambodia is greatly honored and proud to assume the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2012 with ownership and high responsibility in order to make contribution towards realizing our common goal which is the establishment of the **ASEAN Community in 2015** as stated in the ASEAN Charter.

The 20th ASEAN Summit coincides with the celebration of the **Anniversary of ASEAN**. Indeed, ASEAN has undergone a major transformation since its founding, from a region wracked by conflict, misery, and poverty to a region of peace, stability and development. After more than four decades of development, ASEAN today has become a closely-integrated political and economic entity, an influential player in Asia and an indispensable strategic partner of major countries and organizations in the world. Cambodia is certainly proud of having made positive contribution to ASEAN according to its capacity and ability in bringing about such progress.

Nevertheless, along with the success and achievements made so far, ASEAN is facing some challenges that need to be addressed in order to realize the objective of "**ASEAN: One Community-One Destiny**".

Indeed, uncertain global financial and economic situations, especially the fragility of the economic recovery of developed countries, coupled with severe debt crisis in Europe still pose a great threat to the sustainability of socio-economic development of ASEAN achieved over the last four decades and the success of our effort towards realizing a full ASEAN Community. At the same time, the ongoing social and political turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa remains a threat to global security and is exerting an

upward pressure on the already high oil prices. In addition to these new uncertainties, the world continues to be faced with several intransigent issues and challenges, such as food security, energy, climate change, natural disasters, terrorism, trans-national crime, and maritime safety, among others.

Within the region, although the development gap among ASEAN members has been noticeably narrowed, it is still huge. This requires us to double our efforts to promote further growth and improve equitable distribution of the fruits of growth at both national and regional among member countries. Indeed, narrowing such development gaps is not only a precondition for ensuring ASEAN competitiveness and reducing poverty of our people but also for helping ASEAN achieve real regional integration and promoting its centrality in broader regional and world affairs.

Indeed, these challenges can hardly be addressed effectively at national level. This requires a more cooperative and comprehensive approach, particularly through regional cooperation. I believe ASEAN will be able to forge a regional consensus on the resolution of outstanding issues. This belief is based on the experience of more than four decades which proved that ASEAN has adequate ability to strengthen stability and security in the region towards achieving inclusive economic growth and becoming an increasingly **"people-centered"** community. This is consistent with the selection of our theme **"ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny"**, for ASEAN in 2012 which highlights the joint determination and cooperation of the ASEAN people to work in chorus to build the ASEAN Community as a cohesive family, living in political, security, economic and socio-cultural harmony, and is rules-based, peaceful and economically strong.

In the spirit of making more positive contribution to the effort of ASEAN Community building, and overcoming all the above mentioned challenges, as the Chair of ASEAN, I would like to put forward, for the consideration of all ASEAN Leaders, the **"Phnom Penh Agenda"** which spells out our priorities for 2012 as follows:

*First*, in the context of the continued global financial and economic uncertainty, ASEAN must pay special attention to strengthening the mechanism for ensuring financial stability in the region as well as for

preventing and resolving future crises that may occur in the world or the region. In this mechanism the **Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization** (CMIM) is the most important instrument. Therefore, we should encourage our Finance Ministers to work together, and with the partners concerned to achieve an agreement or concrete commitment of all member countries to strengthening and doubling the size of the current mechanism from USD 120 billion to USD 240 billion as soon as possible.

*Second*, we have to ensure the timely implementation of the Roadmap for ASEAN Community building (2009-2015), particularly the implementation of all action plans of the three pillars by accelerating the adoption and the ratification of the remaining agreements and protocols as soon as possible. Moreover, we have to pay special attention to narrowing development gaps among members of ASEAN through reviewing the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan II (2009-2015), so that we can identify challenges and lay out additional measures to accelerate implementation. In this regard, we should select some projects related to the new members of ASEAN from the Work Plan and implement them as ASEAN flagship projects immediately in order to achieve concrete results as soon as possible.

*Third*, we should place priority on the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community by 2015, to transform ASEAN as a single market and production base, with free flow of goods, services, investment, and skilled labor. Therefore, we must lay out priority actions and key concrete measures to address all the challenges and bridge the gaps which are the obstacles for the realization of ASEAN Economic Community as planned. For this purpose, we should encourage ASEAN Economic Ministers to closely cooperate with the **“Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia”** in carrying out a comprehensive study to generate inputs for necessary measures to be taken to close the implementation gaps including the strengthening of institutional capacity and coordination, which could impede the realization of the AEC by 2015.

*Fourth*, the connectivity of ASEAN in both physical and institutional infrastructure is the key for narrowing the development gap and ensuring successful integration of ASEAN. To achieve this objective we have adopted the **“Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity”**. We need to promote the

speedy implementation of the Master Plan. For this purpose, priority should be given to establishing a financing mechanism which involves: (1) attracting major partners of ASEAN and facilitating coordination among them for establishing an official mechanism for realizing this objective, and (2) promoting the expansion of ASEAN Infrastructure Fund which has been newly established with the support of ADB, through mobilizing the participation of major partners of ASEAN, particularly the Plus Three partners. Moreover, we have also to seek effective means to encourage the participation of the private sector in implementing this Master Plan.

*Fifth*, free flow of skilled labor is the primary characteristic of ASEAN Economic Community. Even though this goal has not been fully achieved, indeed the exchange of labor among ASEAN countries has already been robust. This highlights the need for strengthening cooperation among ASEAN members in order to protect the rights of migrant workers. ASEAN has already started working on this issue, but has yet to come to any specific agreement on implementation. Therefore, we should include this issue as a priority in our agenda and agree on some concrete measures in 2012 for implementation.

*Sixth*, disaster management has become an important contemporary issue both in the region and the world. This issue has been highlighted by the episodes of severe flooding in the ASEAN countries at the end of last year. For the objective of strengthening disaster management, ASEAN has adopted some key institutional mechanisms including the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA-Center) last year. However, this mechanism is not fully functional due to some remaining technical issues that need to be addressed including the financing problems. Hence, we should consider this as an urgent priority for promoting the effective functioning of the regional disaster management mechanism.

*Seventh*, climate change and the frequent occurrences of natural disasters have made food security a primary challenge for ASEAN and the world. Based on the performance and potential of agricultural sector in the region, ASEAN has not only been able to ensure food security for the region, but can do so for the world. To realize this potential we need to further promote cooperation in the agriculture sector by focusing on boosting

productivity and agriculture diversification through addressing a range of problems including infrastructure, technology, financing, marketing, and processing of agricultural products for the region and for export to the rest of the world. Specifically, there are some countries in ASEAN that export milled rice while some others import it. This would open an important opportunity for rice trade cooperation to ensure regional food security through establishing a common agreement in our region. I think that ASEAN Leaders should encourage relevant ministers and senior officials especially our economic and agriculture ministers to conduct studies and propose practical cooperation initiatives on this issue.

- *Your Majesty the Sultan, Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen!*

Apart from the above priority agenda, we still have many other challenging issues that need to be jointly addressed in order to bring about progress and prosperity for our people and to promote ASEAN's prestige in the international arena. In relation to this, there are some initiatives that we have already started working on and which need to be completed as soon as possible. Indeed, in order to realize the **ASEAN Community by 2015**, cooperation at government level alone is not sufficient. This requires a broader participation of relevant stakeholders at all levels, particularly the support and participation of ASEAN people as a whole. In this sense, ASEAN Leaders' dialogue with the ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), representatives of civil society organizations and youth representatives is another integral part of our effort to transform ASEAN into a people-centered community and increase its relevance for the ASEAN people.

At the end, I would like to stress that it has been more than 10 years since Cambodia became a full member of ASEAN. We are proud that during this period Cambodia was able to make considerable progress. ASEAN membership has allowed Cambodia to strengthen integration with the region and the international community. At the same time, Cambodia has been strictly fulfilling her role in ASEAN to build a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious regional community, as well as transform ASEAN into a model

of regional cooperation with global importance. As the Chair of ASEAN in 2012, Cambodia will make utmost effort within its capacity to closely cooperate with other member countries for achieving various priorities of ASEAN toward the building of "**ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny**". I strongly believe that the "**Phnom Penh Agenda**" as outlined above will help bring ASEAN even closer toward achieving this goal. I sincerely hope that all esteemed Leaders of ASEAN will extend cooperation for ensuring the success of the implementation of the proposed agenda.

Finally, I would like to wish Your Majesty the Sultan, Excellencies the esteemed Leaders of ASEAN and distinguished delegates of all ASEAN countries good health and success in all your endeavors and the **ASEAN Summit** be crowned with bright success.

*May I now announce the official opening of the ASEAN Summit!*

*Thank you for your attention!*