



Opening Statement

By

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

At the

Opening Ceremony of the 21st ASEAN Summit

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(09:00-09:45 am)



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

On behalf of the Royal Government and People of Cambodia, I would like to warmly welcome Your Majesty the Sultan, Excellencies ASEAN Leaders and delegates to the 21st ASEAN Summit and related Summits in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

First of all, I would like to express my high appreciation for the full support and cooperation extended by all ASEAN member countries throughout the year of Cambodia's Chairmanship. The success and outcomes of the 20th ASEAN Summit and other related meetings in April were proof of the wholehearted support extended to the Chair by Your Majesty the Sultan and esteemed ASEAN Leaders. Moreover, your valuable presence at this

time indicates once again your strong commitment to continue working closely together as one entity in the ASEAN spirit of unity and solidarity, friendship and cooperation under the Theme “**ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny**”.

I would like to start off the meeting with the notice that the **21st ASEAN Summit** is taking place at a time when ASEAN is justly proud of its great achievements in cooperation from on-going efforts over the past 45 years, particularly the recent accomplishments in ASEAN Community building in the three pillars namely, **political-security community, economic community and socio-cultural community**. Yet, we can also see clearly the challenges and the tasks that remain, which require us to work closer in a concerted effort to overcome and address them in a rapidly changing political, security, economic and social situation at both regional and global levels.

Globally, we continue to face difficult problems including the fragile economic recovery in developed countries, the prolonged debt crisis in Europe, possible emergence of fiscal cliff crisis in the United States of America, the slowdown of growth in Asia, the ongoing political and social turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa, high oil prices, food and energy security, climate change, natural disasters, terrorism as well as transnational crime. Regionally, although the development gap among ASEAN members has noticeably narrowed over the years, it remains significant. This requires us to redouble our efforts to promote faster growth and improve equitable distribution of the fruits of growth among the member countries. Moreover, we have only slightly more than 3 years ahead to realize the ASEAN Community by 2015, while daunting tasks remain to be addressed.

-Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the above mentioned context, this meeting provides us with opportunity not only to take stock of implementation during the past years, but also to find appropriate solutions to further accelerate the pace ASEAN

Community building, strengthen ASEAN's external relations and enhance ASEAN centrality and international status, especially in ensuring peace, security and development in the region for effectively responding to regional and global challenges. There is no doubt that the above challenges can hardly be addressed effectively and efficiently at national level. This requires us to adopt a more comprehensive and cooperative approach, particularly through our ASEAN cooperation. In this spirit, I am of the view that the **Phnom Penh Agenda** which we laid out in April clearly shows the most practical and realistic course of action toward the realization of ASEAN Community by 2015 through implementing policy measures, strengthening cooperation in external relations and ensuring the ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture. At the **21st ASEAN Summit**, for reinforcing the positive, fruitful and concrete outcomes of the **20th ASEAN Summit**, I would like to highlight several priorities as follows:

First, realizing the ASEAN Community by 2015 should remain our top priority. Timely implementation of programmes and Plans of Actions for building the ASEAN Community through the accomplishment of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community Roadmap, a mid-term review of the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan II (2009-2015) and a timely implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity are urgent matters that need our clear and sincere guidance.

For achieving this objective, I believe we need to encourage all ASEAN Ministers concerned to formulate necessary policy measures to be implemented before 2015 in key areas including (i) tariff and non-tariff barriers, (ii) investment liberalization, (iii) connectivity and transportation, (iv) SME development, (v) Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), (vi) mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) on professional services and labor mobility, (vii) institutional building and regulatory reforms and (viii) institutional issues for AEC building.

I believe that the Report of the Mid-Term Review of the AEC Blueprint and the enhancement of AEC Scorecard as well as policy actions at the country

level to address ATIGA obligations constitute the foundation for ASEAN to review and put forward concrete policy measures to be implemented before 2015. Alongside, ASEAN should find appropriate ways and means to overcome protectionism in trade in goods and services in the region. In addition, the forthcoming official launch of negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) during these Summit meetings would help open up our markets and transform our region into an integrated market of over 3 billion people.

A comprehensive Mid-Term Review of the IAI Work Plan II is necessary in order to take stock of the implementation of activities and set out concrete and practical measures to achieve its objectives and chart its future direction, including promoting implementation of the priority projects which are beneficial to Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV), the newer members of ASEAN. Moreover, we should also encourage the early implementation of the **ASEAN Framework for Equitable Economic Development** (AFEED). In this context, we must speed up the preparation of a concrete and rigorous work plan, which spells out concrete activities such as SME development financing, coupled with capacity building initiatives. Although the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund with the budget of approximately USD 500 million has been put into operation, this fund cannot fully respond to the enormous needs of ASEAN connectivity. Therefore, I believe that we should task ASEAN Finance Ministers to take necessary measures to attract more financing partners, especially the ASEAN plus Three partners, East Asia Summit (plus 8) and multilateral institutions with the objective to increase the Fund's size, reduce the costs of financing from the Fund to enable the least developed countries in ASEAN to get access to the Fund.

Second, we should continue to exert our efforts in finalizing a complete legal framework in line with the ASEAN Charter in order to improve the operational efficiency of ASEAN institutions and processes. The early ratification of the protocol on the ASEAN Charter on Dispute Settlement Mechanisms by member countries will help uphold the "**culture**

of compliance” within ASEAN. In addition, we need to further strengthen coordination among executing agencies to promote resource mobilization, and incorporate regional agreements into national development programmes and plans of member states.

Third, maintaining regional peace and security is indispensable for ASEAN’s prosperity and inclusive growth in the entire ASEAN region. In this regard, ASEAN has to further strengthen its capacity and role in the discussions and cooperation mechanisms with ASEAN Dialogue Partners to address issues related to regional peace and security. These tasks should be addressed along with the on-going efforts in implementing these priorities under the ASEAN Political-Security Community blueprint. Moreover, ASEAN must promote the effective functioning of existing mechanisms to ensure regional security and peace, such as the ***Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia, the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty, the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ADMM-Plus and the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism***. In addition, we also expect that the official launch of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR), and the adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration at the **21st ASEAN Summit** will further promote peace, security, reconciliation and protection of human rights in the region.

Fourth, we should continue to work together to maintain ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture and further strengthen cooperation with our partners at all levels, especially through the ASEAN plus One and ASEAN plus Three frameworks based on concrete strategies and action plans on economic cooperation including trade. We should also be more active in providing recommendations and undertaking measures to enhance the operational efficiency of ASEAN-led regional cooperation frameworks to respond to the global challenges, including security, terrorism, transnational crime, natural disasters, climate change, and maritime security and safety.

Fifth, strengthening and expanding good cooperation among ASEAN sectoral ministers is another key factor in addressing regional and global challenges, such as financial and economic crisis, climate change, the

depletion of natural resources, and pandemics.. For this purpose, ASEAN should foster comprehensive cooperation with development partners as well as increasing its participation in the international community, especially with the United Nations system and with advanced industrialized countries. In this regard, at the regional level, we have to promote the **"ASEAN Coordination Center for Humanitarian Aid"** to allow it to fulfill its role in dealing with regional natural disasters.

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

Once again, I am convinced that the above priorities should be the main subjects of our discussions at the **21st ASEAN Summit** and related Summits in Phnom Penh in 2012. Based on this, I strongly expect that the our important Summits today and the next days would reaffirm our commitment and political will toward the realization of the ASEAN Community by 2015 by focusing on the three main pillars namely, ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community, and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, in accordance with the Theme **"ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny"**.

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 I wish the **21st ASEAN Summit** and other related Summits great success.

I have the honor to announce the official opening of the 21st ASEAN Summit!

Thank you for your kind attention!