

Delivered

**The ASEAN Tribute and Recognition Ceremony for ASEAN Athletes and Participants of the XXXI Olympic and the XV Paralympic Games**  
30 November 2016, JW Marriott Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia

**Welcome Remarks by H.E. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee**  
Deputy Secretary-General for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

**Greetings and courtesies**

1. Dato' Ahmad Shapawi bin Ismail, Director General of Minister of Youth and Sports of Malaysia and Representative of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Sports (SOMS) Chairperson
2. Other members and representatives of the SOMS from the ASEAN Member States
3. Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps --
  - a. H.E. Mr. Latsamy Keomany, Ambassador of the Mission of Lao PDR to ASEAN
  - b. H.E. Madam Elizabeth P. Buensuceso, Ambassador of the Mission of the Philippines to ASEAN
  - c. H.E. Ms. Busadee Santipitaks, Ambassador of the of the Mission of of the Kingdom of Thailand to ASEAN
  - d. H.E. Mr Nguyen Hoanh Nam, Ambassador of the of the Mission of Vietnam to ASEAN
  - e. H.E. Suh Jeong-in, Ambassador of the Mission of Republic of Korea
  - f. H.E. Madam Elizabeth Jane Duke, Ambassador of the Australian Mission to ASEAN
  - g. H.E. Mr. Rubem Correa Barbosa, Ambassador of Brazil
4. Other members and officials from the permanent missions to ASEAN

## 5. Members of the media

Our distinguished athletes, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

On behalf of the ASEAN Secretariat, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to today's ceremony --

The ASEAN Tribute and Recognition for ASEAN Athletes and Participants of the XXXI Olympic and the XV Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the summer this year.

I am very pleased to address you this morning and commend the great achievements of the ASEAN athletes in these two international sporting events.

### ***Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,***

1. The ASEAN Leaders have recently manifested resolve for greater collaboration and adopted the ASEAN Community 2025 Blueprint which envisions “a politically cohesive, economically integrated, socially responsible, and a truly people-oriented, people-centred and rules-based ASEAN.”
2. In support of this, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community or the “people pillar” envisions a community that engages and benefits the people, and is inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic.
3. The focus of ASEAN for a truly people-oriented and deeper sense of Community has placed sports as an effective instrument in bringing about friendship and greater interaction and understanding among the ASEAN peoples. This leads to further development of sports especially when sports became an element of human development strategy of ASEAN in 2011.
4. In September this year, the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Sports (SOMS) endorsed the ASEAN Work Plan on Sports 2016-2020 as a mechanism to accomplish the sector's vision in promoting sports as a tool to raise public awareness of ASEAN Community, to forge a common regional identity, and build a caring and sharing society. Eventually, this leads to a greater goal of achieving unity and solidarity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN.

5. In the next five years, the ASEAN SOMS will work collaboratively with key stakeholders in ASEAN to put into action the four key elements in the ASEAN Work Plan on Sports which includes priorities and actions, namely:

- a. Promote awareness of ASEAN through sporting activities that bring the ASEAN peoples together and engages and benefits the community;
- b. Foster the sense of an ASEAN Community through mutually beneficial sports exchange programmes;
- c. Strengthen the ASEAN people's sense of resilience with healthy lifestyles; and
- d. Increase sports dynamism, competitiveness and competencies through capacity building and skills programmes.

6. Over the years, aspirations of the ASEAN Leaders have included raising the level of performance of ASEAN athletes in the regional and international competitions and enhancing the achievements of ASEAN in competitive sports.

7. Today, it is my honour to witness the realisation of that aspiration as we honour the great men and women -- the ASEAN athletes --- and their achievements at the XXXI Olympic and the XV Paralympic Games. Today, we commend their efforts, sacrifices and successes in their respective sporting events. We also pay tribute to the collective efforts of the ASEAN Member States and their persistence to participate and achieve greatness in the global sporting arena. And for the Paralympians, what a pride and inspiration for the persons with disabilities of ASEAN!

***Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,***

8. On behalf of the ASEAN Secretariat, I would like to congratulate the ASEAN Member States for these collective achievements -- collective efforts and pride, bound as one, and achievement that is truly ASEAN. Our performance in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil between August and September this year is a notable achievement that will form part of the history of ASEAN's achievement and contribution to the world of sports.

9. Today, please allow me to make special mention of Thailand (my beloved country) for bringing home the most number of medals from the Rio Games, thus contributing significantly to our achievement as a region.

10. To our ASEAN athletes, you are ASEAN's heroes and inspiration. And we are honoured with your presence here today. Thank you for responding positively to our invitation and taking time out of your schedules to come all the way to Jakarta for this ceremony. We sincerely value this very kind gesture.

Indeed, you have set the bar for other budding athletes to follow. Your achievements will live on and continue to inspire other including our youth.

11. Your achievements and the collective achievement of ASEAN deserve recognition. This becomes more special as we tread towards a new era of cooperation in our region this year, and we forge ahead together towards better future and greater ASEAN.

***Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,***

12. Sports defines us as a people. It perpetuates our culture, our history, our modernity, and our unity. Sports leads us to our common goal and our desired destiny. Indeed, it is a key unifying force of ASEAN Community. This underscores the importance of what our ASEAN athletes have achieved.

13. In closing, let me thank the everyone for making this ceremony a success - the SOMES leaders, the members of the diplomatic corps especially our permanent missions to ASEAN, the media, and of course our today's heroes - the ASEAN athletes.

14. Once quoted by a legendary American athlete and professional boxer who was generally considered among the greatest heavyweights in the history of the sport – Muhammad Ali

**Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside – a desire, a dream, a vision.**

15. Moved by our vision for the good of our peoples and the Community, may we all be champions in the cause of sports development in ASEAN and beyond.

Thank you very much.