

Press Release

Red Carpet Welcome for US Secretary of State ASEAN Secretariat, 18 February 2009



The Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan, warmly welcomed the US Secretary of State, the Honourable Hillary Rodham Clinton, to the ASEAN Secretariat this evening. She is the first US Secretary of State and the highest ranking US official to visit the ASEAN Secretariat.

Dr Surin and Secretary Clinton had a good discussion on ASEAN-US relations and ASEAN's community building efforts. "We welcome the US's renewed interest and re-engagement in the region as symbolized by her visit here," Dr Surin said. "We are also pleased with the Obama administration's announcement to launch its interagency process to pursue accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. It is a reaffirmation of the US's political and security commitment to the region." He added, "ASEAN, with its multi-cultural diversity, has been an anchor of stability, peace and harmony for this region and Secretary Clinton's visit emphasizes the importance of ASEAN in the regional architecture."

"We very much appreciate the Secretary's reiteration of her intention to attend the ASEAN Post Ministerial Meeting and the 16th ASEAN Regional Forum in Thailand in July this year."

Economically, as a region, ASEAN and East Asia are exerting all efforts to help manage the impact of the global financial crisis. Dr Surin said, "We are ready, able and willing to work with the US in the search for solutions to the many global impasses and problems, from global financial system reforms to economic stability to food security to climate change to bridging the cultural divide."

The Secretary-General hopes that the US market will remain open for world trade, noting that "that will be good for all of us". He wishes the US every success in the measures they have embarked upon to solve their economic woes. The success of the US will mean so much to the world facing similar financial and economic challenges, said the ASEAN chief.

Dr Surin also registered his concern about the deteriorating situation in the Palestinian territories and the Gaza Strip in particular. He encouraged the US Secretary of State to search for a just

and lasting solution in cooperation with other relevant players in the international community and in that region. "Peace in Palestine is key to calming many anxieties in the Muslim world," the Secretary-General of ASEAN reminded the visiting US Secretary of State.



Notes:

The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) was signed on 24 February 1976 in Bali during the First ASEAN Summit. It aims to "promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and cooperation among their peoples which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship".

Fifteen states that are not ASEAN Member States have acceded to the TAC:

1. Papua New Guinea (5 July 1989)
2. China (8 October 2003)
3. India (8 October 2003)
4. Japan (2 July 2004)
5. Pakistan (2 July 2004)
6. Republic of Korea (27 November 2004)
7. Russian Federation (29 November 2004)
8. Mongolia (28 July 2005)
9. New Zealand (28 July 2005)
10. Australia (10 December 2005)
11. France (13 January 2007)
12. Timor-Leste (13 January 2007)
13. Sri Lanka (30 July 2007)
14. Bangladesh (30 July 2007)
15. Democratic People's Republic of Korea (24 July 2008)