

**REMARKS BY H.E. PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN XUAN PHUC OF VIET NAM
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE AMM- 53**

(08h00-08h15, 9/9/2020)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning!

It is my great pleasure to be invited to address the Opening Ceremony of the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM-53) and Related Meetings. The meeting is another testament that ASEAN is adapting itself to the new circumstances and standing steadily united to overcome all adversities.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2020 is a year full of significant events. This year, ASEAN has entered its 6th decade, and celebrates the 5th year of the ASEAN Community. Our ASEAN has grown strong to become the world's 5th largest economy, a key actor that holds centrality in advancing dialogue and cooperation for peace, security and prosperity of the region. These valuable fruits of our cooperation are being tested in an environment full of volatilities and unprecedented challenges, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cohesive and responsive is not merely the theme of ASEAN 2020. Cohesive and responsive, along with proactive and responsible, have become a brand of ASEAN, which enabled us to stand hand-in-hand in the face of immense challenges and keep forging ahead.

Such brand has emerged prominent in the past 8 months, and is evident through the highest-level commitments by the ASEAN Leaders at the Special ASEAN and ASEAN+3 Summits in April and the 36th ASEAN Summit in June, respectively. The spirit also guides the efforts of the Community pillars to expand cooperation and linkages while realising the dual tasks of advancing growth and containing the pandemic.

I take this opportunity to commend the ASEAN sectoral bodies for their whole-hearted devotion to help our businesses and people restore production and return their life to normal. The initiatives, including the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, the Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies, the Standard Operating Procedures for Public Health Emergencie, and an ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework have not only assisted in the pandemic joint response but also strengthened the bonds between and among ASEAN member states

ASEAN has well displayed its courage and resilience amid complex dynamics. In that connection, I commend the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the 53rd anniversary of ASEAN, in which Ministers underlined commitment to maintaining Southeast Asia as a region of peace, security,

neutrality and stability while strengthening ASEAN centrality, unity and resilience, and promoting confidence building, mutual respect and the rule of law.

ASEAN has managed to raise its international profile. In my capacity as the ASEAN Chair 2020, I was invited to the G-20 virtual summit, NAM meeting, World Health Assembly on COVID-19 response, where I delivered the strong message of ASEAN, wishing to stand side by side the international community in responding to this global challenge. May I also applaud ASEAN Secretary General Lim Jock Hoi as he made his first speech at the UNSC highlighting ASEAN's commitments to cooperating with the UN and contributing to the UN's efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

2020 will end in just 4 months while the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold in complex manner, and our people and businesses continue to be outstretched by its repercussions. The regional geo-political and geo-economic landscape, including the South China Sea, are witnessing growing volatilities that are detrimental to peace and stability. Against that backdrop, to build upon what we have achieved together, I would like to draw the attention of ASEAN Foreign Ministers to the following matters:

First, we need to continue upholding ASEAN solidarity and unity in order to successfully implement the Blueprints for the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. We also need to raise the effectiveness of the ASEAN Charter implementation and that of the ASEAN sectoral bodies. This will enable us to work out the post-2025 ASEAN Community Vision .

*Second, efforts should be invested to control **COVID-19** and promote sustained recovery.* I propose that the COVID-19 Response Fund *should be well utilised* and the Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies should be operationalised so as to raise ASEAN's response capacity. We need to promptly help our people and businesses restore production and return their life to normal in order to speed up economic recovery. Efforts should also be made to facilitate trade and investment, fix the disrupted supply chain, enhance connectivity and provide mutual support to bridge the development gaps between the sub-regions in ASEAN, including the Mekong.

Third, we need to capitalise on ASEAN centrality in advancing dialogue, cooperation and confidence building in the region. On that basis, we shall formulate and share values and norms, uphold the rule of law, mutual trust, mutual respect and equality in the relations between and among countries in the region, resolve all disputes and differences by peaceful means in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS and ASEAN's key instruments, including TAC, DOC, AOIP...

In such a complex landscape today, ASEAN needs to continue upholding its solidarity and adhering to its more-than-five-decade path and ASEAN way,

in line with the spirit of the Foreign Ministers Statement on the Importance of Maintaining Peace and Stability in Southeast Asia on 8 August. Let us capitalize on the ASEAN values and identity, which bind our peoples together in a caring and sharing community, just like the sheaf of yellow paddy stalks on our ASEAN flag or the ASEAN song, which we should promote to become popular icons and pride of the 650 million ASEAN people.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Viet Nam's ASEAN Chairmanship 2020 also coincides with the 25th anniversary of our ASEAN membership. I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's commitment to doing our utmost alongside fellow member states in realising the ASEAN Community. I look forward to your continued support and collaboration to fulfill the Chairmanship 2020 for a cohesive and responsive ASEAN. Finally, I wish the Meeting every success and wish you all the best of health. Thank you for your attention!