

REMARKS

**BY H.E. MR. NGUYEN PHU TRONG, GENERAL SECRETARY,
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 37TH ASEAN SUMMIT**

(Hanoi, 12/11/2020)

Excellencies, Leaders of ASEAN and Partners,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address the Opening Ceremony of the 37th ASEAN Summit and related Summits - the most important series of ASEAN meetings in the year.

At every ASEAN event that I attend, I always leave with memories of the warmth, solidarity and close-knit brotherhood of our big family. This year, such familial bonds have only become stronger as ASEAN Member States stand hand-in-hand in cohesiveness and responsiveness to cope with the challenges facing Southeast Asia and the world at large.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken over a million of lives, upended our daily life, and threatened to reverse the socio-economic progress accrued over decades. The year 2020 is coming to a close as complex and far-reaching changes are sweeping the world. More than ever, all countries need peace and stability for cooperation and development while the people require attention, assistance and protection in overcoming this period of hardship. This will only be possible if conflicts and friction over interests and differences in thinking and approaches are settled with trust, constructive purpose and goodwill from all parties concerned.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Against the multi-colored backdrop of the world today, one may note brighter shades – cooperation in response to challenges – in the Asia-Pacific, and ASEAN is at the front and center of this process.

In 2020, ASEAN Member States have manifested resolve and resilience in face of myriad difficulties and challenges. From political commitments at the highest level to the well-coordinated actions of the entire Community and between Member States, we have witnessed the spirit of a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN embodied

in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Such spirit is equally visible in our efforts to deal with the impacts of the pandemic, and facilitate our people and businesses in accelerating economic recovery. Our governments' capable response to COVID-19 has garnered high level of public trust.

While certain multilateral institutions are beset by challenges, ASEAN has managed to maintain its functions, and uphold its role and position this year. Its partners have continued to hold ASEAN in high regard, and pledged to support its centrality. Dialogue, cooperation and integration have continued to prove their relevance in the current regional and international landscape.

However, there remain various obstacles on our road ahead. The losses of lives and property of millions in the region from natural disasters and diseases are catastrophic. The people of ASEAN are expecting their Leaders to adopt more effective and vigorous means of cooperation in curbing new waves of infection. They are also expecting us to find ways to sustain business operation, and join them in revitalizing the economies. In addition, they are expecting us to assist them to return to normal life, and guarantee social security for each and every individual and locality of our nations.

Identifying a relevant position for ASEAN in the post-COVID-19 world is a key issue. The strong will and aspiration to uphold a region of peace, stability, cohesion, unity and the rule of law should be further affirmed as a core value of Southeast Asia and the ASEAN Community.

In the new context, ASEAN Member States need to showcase their resilience and work together in realizing recovery plans and initiatives via new, substantive and effective ways of operation and collaboration. The ASEAN-led frameworks for regional dialogue and cooperation should be fully harnessed. ASEAN can make even greater contributions to promoting multilateralism, upholding international law, and strengthening the global multilateral system with the United Nations at its core.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is Viet Nam's consistent policy to engage in diversification and multilateralization of its external relations, to be a reliable friend and partner, and an active and responsible member of the international community, striving for peace, cooperation and development. Such spirit has guided Viet Nam to go from strength to strength over the past 75 years, and will continue to be the guiding compass for our foreign policy, particularly given complex and unpredictable developments are taking place in the world.

The accession to and companion with ASEAN over the past 25 years has served as the pre-condition for Viet Nam to effectively implement our foreign policy

and international integration. ASEAN has become our common home while the ASEAN Community is critical to upholding the Southeast Asian identity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the ASEAN Chair in 2020, in the spirit of “cohesiveness and responsiveness”, Viet Nam values the solidarity, support and assistance of fellow Member States, partners and friends of ASEAN which have facilitated the ASEAN Community in firmly overcoming all adversities, sustaining the momentum of integration and Community building, and reinforcing ASEAN centrality, for a Southeast Asia of peace, friendship, cooperation, neutrality and stability.

Our President Ho Chi Minh once said: “Unity makes strength”. Only through cooperation, trust, synergy and one-mindedness, can ASEAN and the world overcome hardships to revitalize economic growth, and maintain peace, stability and sustainable development.

I am fully confident in the solidarity and collective strength of the ASEAN Community. May the 37th ASEAN Summit and related Summits be crowned with success and guide ASEAN to greater heights, as aspired by our citizens.

Thank you for your attention./.