

**Statement by H.E. U Thein Sein**  
**at the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit Opening Ceremony**

(12 November 2014, Nay Pyi Taw)

*Your Majesty, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Good morning and Mingala Ba!

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and on my own behalf, I have the great pleasure to welcome you to Nay Pyi Taw for the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit and Related Summits.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations and welcome to President Joko Widodo of Indonesia and to Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan O-cha of Thailand who are attending the ASEAN Summits for the first time.

I am fully confident that your leadership will not only bring greater peace, stability and prosperity to your peoples but also contribute to further enhance ASEAN integration. Therefore, I would warmly welcome you to the ASEAN leaders' circle.

Your presence at a series of meetings scheduled today and tomorrow reflects our collective commitment and unwavering efforts towards the realization of politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible ASEAN Community, and to further strengthen our engagement with external partners with the aim to achieve mutual benefits.

*Your Majesty and Excellencies,*

Our meetings take place at an important juncture for ASEAN as the ASEAN Community will emerge at the end of next year. As, ASEAN Community will be realized in line with the Roadmap, it is incumbent upon us to collectively think about our main task for our future to lead our community in a sustainable way.

In this respect, two main tasks were undertaken during this year, that is, consideration for strengthening the ASEAN Institutions in line with ASEAN Charter, and our endeavors to work for the ASEAN Community's Post 2015 Vision. These measures will immensely contribute for the sustainability and progress of the ASEAN Community.

We are very satisfied that ASEAN is making progress in various areas in line with this year's theme of: "Moving Forward in Unity, to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community." We all are making progress in implementing of ASEAN

Community Roadmap. We are able to maintain and promote peace and stability in our region.

As envisioned in the Bali Concord (III), we are striving for the emergence of ASEAN Common Platform on global issues by taking more coordinated, cohesive and coherent positions. To underscore ASEAN unity in support of this year's theme, we took swift actions on matters of common concern and issued ASEAN Statements on Combating Terrorism, condemning the downing of Malaysia Airline Flight MH 317 and violence acts of the extremists. We also welcomed the successful outcome of Philippines Government's Bangsamoro peace agreements.

Our unity and centrality have been further expounded our voice in regional and global issues of common interests and projected ASEAN as a united and credible regional organization in the international community. It is very encouraging that ASEAN's norms and principles we have set for interstate relations are contributing toward peace, security and stability in the region. This is why countries are showing interests in our regions to promote engagement with ASEAN.

We are pleased to see that most of the action lines of the ASEAN Political and Security Community Blueprint have been implemented.

Likewise, in the economic sphere, progress are also seen in the tariffs elimination, facilitating trade, integrating capital markets, promoting private sectors' participation, development of Small and Medium Enterprises(SMEs), enhancing food security, narrowing development gaps and promoting cooperation with external partners for mutual benefits.

Despite the uncertainties in the global economy, ASEAN's domestic demand is growing and economic growth remains strong at 5% with the positive projections in coming years. As ASEAN Economic Community is a driving force for the ASEAN Community, realisation of targets sets in four pillars of ASEAN Economic Community is important in creating better opportunities for our peoples to enjoy the benefits of ASEAN Community.

Activities undertaken during the year are also contributing greatly in the evolvement of a "caring and sharing society", by promoting education, youth affairs, cultural exchanges, and improving communication of ASEAN with its peoples, enhancing coordination and capacity in disaster management, humanitarian assistance and creating climate resilient ASEAN.

Our work to strengthen and deepen ASEAN's external relations is progressing well, and contributing our

Community building and enhancing intra and inter-regional connectivity. I wish to commend the work of our Ministers' for their endeavours related to our relations with the external partners. While looking back to the past, we will see that our economic progress was made through our outward looking strategies.

Therefore, ASEAN will continue to broaden external relations that will bring benefit to the ASEAN Community. It is time for us to consider strategically in expanding our external relations with potential trading and investment partners. We should also look into ways to engage more with G-20 and emerging global economies, namely BRICS and markets in other regions.

Trade and Investment promotion will contribute for sustainability of ASEAN Community. Therefore, we should aim to increase Trade to GDP ratio and Foreign Direct Investment to GDP ratio along with our efforts to double ASEAN's GDP and reducing Poverty.

I am happy to note the progress of ASEAN's external economic integration through on-going ASEAN-Plus One Free Trade Agreements (ASEAN+1 FTAs) with Dialogue Partners, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

***Your Majesty and Excellencies,***

Despite the achievements that we have made in various fields and accomplishing nearly 80% of the overall measures due under the three ASEAN Community Blueprints, challenges remains in implementing the remaining 20% of the targets and addressing the issues that will emerge in the Post 2015 ASEAN Community.

In addition to the natural disasters and some external factors such as global economic uncertainty, spread of Ebola virus and extremism are also challenging ASEAN. Therefore, I would like to emphasise the importance of our continued efforts to strengthen unity, capacity and resilience to overcome the challenges.

Therefore, there is no room to be complacent with our achievements and we should not rest on our laurels made so far. Our Community building is a work in progress. The evolvement of ASEAN Community in 2015 will be a new beginning for a new ASEAN calling for greater unity and integration, enhanced operational efficiency, better coordination, stronger resilience and greater competitiveness of the Community.

In this respect, I would like to commend the work of our officials for their concrete recommendations in strengthening

ASEAN Institutions and for submitting their annual reports for ASEAN Community's Post 2015 Vision.

Our meetings today and tomorrow will provide us opportunity to accelerate our remaining tasks to establish the ASEAN Community. We also have to consider ways and means to further strengthen institutional capacity of ASEAN which will resonate with the growing scope and scale of activities in the coming years.

We all need to anticipate the challenges which lies ahead of us, to take clear vision and plan concrete actions for the future of ASEAN.

***Your Majesty and Excellencies,***

I wish to emphasise some important aspects which ASEAN should focus while entering into the next level of integration as a Community.

**First,** we need to sustain efforts in promoting the culture of compliance to the established rules and norms of ASEAN and to promote them to a broader extent. Rules-based and Norm-based ASEAN will elevate our stature and transparency which are key to build confidence and trust among ourselves and with our partners. This, in turn, will foster peace, stability and security in the region and beyond, and bring economic development and social harmony.

**Second,** we need to have strategy to promote ASEAN's central role in existing regional mechanisms and in evolving regional architecture. We need to ensure open, inclusive and rules-based regional architecture where we engage with our partners in more substantive and effective manner. ASEAN also needs to play a greater role in international arena by taking more united stand in addressing issues of common concern and interest.

**Third,** ASEAN needs to sustain economic dynamism by intensifying integration and pursuing sustainable development path which would guarantee inclusive development, reduce poverty and narrow the development gaps. In this respect, we need to create policy environment where benefits are enjoyed by all by promoting and protecting social justice and the rights of women, children and elderly in our societies.

**Fourth,** ASEAN has to continue enhancing its resilience and competitiveness in the face of greater integration regionally and with the countries beyond the region. In this respect, we need to keep building up and strengthening our capacity to tackle transnational issues such as climate change, disaster management, food, energy and water security, infectious diseases, preventing violence and extremism, cyber security, drug and human trafficking etc.



Last but not the least, ASEAN need to enhance institutional efficiency, procedural coherence, effective decision making and systematic monitoring, evaluating, reporting and follow up capacity.

We all will discuss further on above mentioned measures which are essential for keeping ASEAN Community relevant to the needs of ASEAN peoples and responsive to the changing dynamics of the regional and international community into the future.

With this note, I officially declare the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit and related Summits open!

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