



**Message from the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan, on the First World Humanitarian Day
Jakarta, 19 August 2009**

Today, ASEAN is honoured to join the world to commemorate the first World Humanitarian Day*.

As we give special recognition and pay solemn tribute to humanitarian actors across the world who have lost their lives in their honourable cause of duty, there is no better opportunity to reflect on our humanitarian efforts and to remind ourselves of our fellow citizens throughout the world and the region whose survival are at stake and in need of our support. Tropical cyclones, earthquakes, floods, and landslides continue to strike countries in the ASEAN region, causing untold human losses and destruction. Like in other parts of the world, disasters caused by natural hazards and conflicts disrupt the lives of thousands of people.

We will never forget the day when Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar, adversely affecting 2.4 millions of people living in the Irrawaddy Delta. Looking back, we have relieved the pain and sufferings of the affected population. People's livelihoods have been improved; healthcare is available to more of them; children are back to safer schools; and communities have become more resilient to disasters. ASEAN is honoured to have been part of this historic effort and proud to have taken a leading role in the process of building back for the victims of Cyclone Nargis. Yet, our duty of 'building back better' for them is far from over. Fifteen months after the disaster, despite some progress made in the relief and early recovery efforts, the people in the delta are still struggling to survive and not ready to cope if another cyclone hits.

I call on everyone today, the first World Humanitarian Day, to reflect on the exemplary efforts of all the humanitarian workers in aiding the victims of Cyclone Nargis and other disasters in the world and on the necessity to continue this important work.

I have been tasked to serve as ASEAN's humanitarian assistance coordinator. I intend to fulfil this new responsibility with honour and full dedication.

Let us also dedicate this day to those affected by conflicts and natural disasters who are awaiting our action to improve their lives. ASEAN will extend our efforts to ensure that no victim is forgotten, bringing ASEAN closer to the people in the principle of building a caring and sharing society.

** Established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2008, 19 August 2009 is the first World Humanitarian Day. The Day aims to increase public understanding of humanitarian assistance activities worldwide and the importance of international cooperation in this regard. It also aims to honour humanitarian workers who have lost their lives or been injured in the course of their work.*