

ALA 25TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE SESSION

OPENING CEREMONY SPEECH

BY

PRESIDENT ALA JUSTICE CHAO HICK TIN

The Honourable Chief Justice of the Philippines, Justice Hilario G. Davide Jr, Honourable Chief Justices and Chairmen of ALA national committees, Your Excellencies, friends and colleagues,

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the ASEAN Law Association is like celebrating our 25th birthday with a gathering of old friends. Through a quarter of a century, ALA has forged life-long friendships and understanding transcending cultures and national boundaries. The ALA had its humble beginnings in a conference entitled “Legal Development in ASEAN Countries” held in Jakarta in February 1979. The memories of the Jakarta meeting are still fresh in my memory. Former President T P B Menon and I were relatively young then compared to the heavy weights such as the late Malaysian Lord President Tun Mohd Suffian, and Chief Justice Enrique M. Fernando and Justice Felix Antonio of the Philippines Supreme Court.

ALA has weathered the storms that have hit South East Asia over the years. Despite the buffeting of the Asian economic crisis and the outbreak of viruses such as SARS, Avian Flu and most recently the tragic Tsunami, ALA has endured and come through stronger than before. I am heartened that through it all, ALA members have given, and continue to give, their unstinting commitment to the ideals of ALA, in particular, to the promotion of close relations, cooperation and mutual understanding amongst lawyers in the ASEAN countries.

The last 25 years have witnessed tremendous changes and events in ASEAN. Some of these events would have been unbelievable 25 years ago. But one of the

keys to the survival of ASEAN has been the resilience and adaptability of her peoples in the face of adversity. As we reflect on the last 25 years, we must not forget to remain adaptable and in keeping with the rapid changes that have characterised this century. I am therefore pleased to see that the first-ever ALA website and electronic repository of Legal Systems in ASEAN will be launched at this special event. The website will be a valuable resource available to students, lawyers and businessmen free of charge. Both initiatives play an important role in contributing to the design of sound legal policies within ASEAN.

Credit for the continued growth of ALA must be accorded to all the constituent National Chapters, and my predecessors. It is befitting that, at this Commemorative Session, awards and medallions will be presented to recognise and honour our founding pioneers and other individuals who have provided significant and sustained service. Some of them have passed on and they are represented by their family or friends. I would like to honour in particular the late Lord President of Malaysia, Tun Mohammed Suffian and the late Chief Justice of the Philippines, Marcelo Fernan, who were both presidents of ALA and the late Dr Teuku Radhie and the late Dr Komar Kantaatmadja of Indonesia who were the first and second secretaries-general of ALA.

This grand event would not have been possible without the hard work and creativity of the Philippines National Chapter, ably led by Atty Avelino Cruz who also served as Secretary-General of ALA. Atty Cruz and his team have spared no effort in making this a memorable occasion. I must thank our hosts for their hard work and dedication in publishing the commemorative ALA Yearbook, composing an ALA Hymn, and organising this very special event. When ALA celebrates its 50th Anniversary in the future, it will look back with pride at this milestone celebration. I have no doubt that the camaraderie and kinship built through ALA over the years will continue to be a beacon of the ASEAN spirit.