

(OFFICIAL TRANSLATION)

Speech by

H.E. Mr. Justice Panya Thanomrod,
President of the Supreme Court
at the Opening Ceremony of 9th General Assembly
of the ASEAN Law Association
The Grand Hall, the Plaza Athenee Hotel,
Thursday, 23 November 2006

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Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the ASEAN Law Association, I am most pleased and honoured that His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn has graciously entrusted Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha to represent His Royal Highness in presiding over the opening ceremony of the Ninth General Assembly of the ASEAN Law Association.

This year marks the 27th year since the ASEAN Law Association was inaugurated as a result of the conference on ASEAN Law Development in Jakarta, Indonesia in February, 1979. In the past 27 years, the ASEAN Law Association has progressed well with its membership expanded from 5 countries at its establishment to 8 countries at present. In 2003, the ASEAN Law Association at its General Assembly in Singapore, accepted Lao PDR and Vietnam as new members.

Regarding the progress of the Association, not only has it continuously organised various meetings, hosted in rotation by its member countries, the Association has also undertaken a variety of activities to implement its intents and objectives. These include, *inter alia*, the publication of 8 books of the ASEAN Comparative Law Series, the academic exchange programmes on topics of mutual interests between ASEAN countries, the establishment of the ASEAN Law Fund to promote the Association's academic, cultural, social, and charitable objectives, the publication of the ASEAN law journals and books on ASEAN countries' legal systems, the Lawyers Exchange Programme under the Asian fund, the ASEAN Business Law Project, and the ASEAN Law Association website.

In 2006, the ASEAN Law Association has initiated projects and proposals aimed at forging closer cooperation among its members with a view to strengthening the Association such as the ASEAN Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, the inclusion of the topic of "Judicial Cooperation" into the Association's website as a forum for the exchange of information on the success of the court administration, starting with the enforcement of civil and commercial judgments. In this regard, the ASEAN Law Association has organised a study visit to the Supreme Court of Singapore to learn from it the case management and the submission of claims via electronic means. In addition, The Association has compiled in its website, a directory of lawyers of different legal fields within the ASEAN countries.

The ASEAN Law Association has encouraged the member countries to promote adherence to the "rule of law on the suppression of transnational crimes and the United Nations conventions against corruption and international terrorism, to enhance the cooperation on capacity-building in the area of international economic law, to exchange information on human rights issues, to promote studies on adjudication policy on juvenile delinquents and offenders with mental incapacity and on the rights of ASEAN lawyers in the courts of member countries, as well as to establish an exchange programme for law teachers and students to conduct comparative studies on member countries' laws.

At this ninth General Assembly of the ASEAN Law Association, there will be an academic conference under the title "Challenge of Globalisation to Legal Services". The participants will be given the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences on the issues of current mutual interests of our member countries, ranging from class and public interest litigation, legal education in ASEAN in the 21st Century, WTO and regional trade liberalisation: implications for ASEAN, to alternative dispute resolution in ASEAN, and protection of victims, particularly women and children, against violence, sexual offences and human trafficking. It is expected that the meeting come up with proposals or guidelines that will be of benefit to member countries in enhancing their cooperation and in their application of those guidelines to suit their needs and their legal systems.

ASEAN will reach its 40th anniversary next year and will be celebrating such event. This Conference can be regarded as the beginning of the celebration, to be followed by any other activities ALA may consider organise next year.

It is now the auspicious time. May I humbly invite Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha to deliver an opening remark.
