

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY – PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

WELCOME SPEECH OF THE CHAIRMAN, ASEAN LAW ASSOCIATION, SINGAPORE

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Singapore, Mr S R Nathan,

The Honourable President of the Asean Law Association, Tun Mohd Dzaidin,

The Honourable The Chief Justice of Singapore, Justice Yong Pung How,

The Honourable Chief Justice of Indonesia, Prof Bagir Manan,

The Honourable President of the Supreme Court of Thailand, Justice Atthanitti,

The Honourable Minister for Law & Foreign Affairs, Prof S Jayakumar,

The Honourable ASEAN Secretary-General Ong Keng Yong,

Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors of ASEAN countries to Singapore,

Distinguished Heads of Delegation,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

May I extend a warm welcome to you all to this 8th General Assembly. We are most gratified to see so many old friends, and some new faces, at this gathering.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Singapore Chapter, may I specially thank the President of the Republic of Singapore, Mr S R Nathan, for so kindly agreeing to do us the honour of officiating at this opening ceremony. As some of you will recall, this Assembly was to have

been held earlier in May. However, due to the onset of SARS it had to be postponed. In spite of his tight schedule, the President has graciously agreed to the new date. We are most grateful.

Next, I must express our sincere appreciation to Tun Dzaidin, and all heads of national chapters for their wholehearted support for the Assembly. We are also particularly pleased to see among our midst, judges, Justice Ministry officials and lawyers from the three newer member states of ASEAN, namely, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. They are attending the Assembly for the first time. We hope that before long, the lawyers and judges from Myanmar will also be participating in our endeavours.

It was some twenty four years ago that the ALA was formed at a gathering of ASEAN lawyers and judges convened in Jakarta at the initiative of the Indonesian Justice Ministry. It was then felt that members of the legal fraternities had a role to play in the progressive development of ASEAN. The unique feature of this Association is the fact that it brings under one roof all the different branches of the law profession – judges, law teachers, law practitioners and lawyers in the public sector. Since then, not only has ALA provided a useful forum for its members to network and exchange professional experience, it has also helped us understand the laws and legal systems of the other countries.

One of the more significant events over these years was the publication in 1995, of a book entitled “ASEAN Legal Systems”. It

received contributions from all the then ASEAN countries. That publication was the culmination of several years' of work. Now that ASEAN has four newer members, it will be necessary to update that publication and include materials on the legal systems of these member states. This is a project we should undertake when the newer member states are ready. We hope this will not be long.

Now a word on the conference programme. Due to the postponement of this Assembly from May, and in order to accommodate the concerns of all national chapters as to dates, we are afraid some of the arrangements made for this Assembly are not entirely ideal. For example, the Assembly starts today, a Saturday. That is not usual. Of course, there is a positive side to this. As no proceedings are scheduled for tomorrow, participants will no doubt take the time to engage in some leisure activities. Another matter I should mention is that the conference dinner, which ordinarily would be held on the day the Assembly first meets, is now postponed to Monday 1 December 2003. This is because the available banquet facilities at this Hotel for this size gathering have all been taken up.

I hope you will find your stay here both rewarding and enjoyable. To the distinguished guests from Singapore who have taken time off from their normal schedule to attend this morning's opening ceremony, may I say a big thank you for your support.

Chao Hick Tin, Chairman, Asean Law Association (Singapore)

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