

SUMMARY OF THE SIXTH EAST ASIA FORUM 16 October 2008, Luang Prabang

Introduction

1. The Sixth East Asia Forum was held in Luang Prabang, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) on 16 October 2008 and organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR.

2. The 6th EAF was chaired by H.E. Mr. Bounkeut Sangsomsak, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR. The Forum was attended by government officials, business leaders and scholars from ASEAN Member States, People's Republic of China (PR China), Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat also attended the Forum. The list of delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

3. The theme of the 6th EAF was "Towards East Asia community: Turning Challenges through Greater Cooperation and Collaboration into Opportunities".

4. The Forum was held in Plenary. The Forum was composed of an Opening Ceremony, two Plenary Sessions on energy and food security, and narrowing development gap, and Closing Remarks. Each Plenary Session was opened by the EAF Chairperson and followed by presentations by lead speakers and lead discussants from public sector, academia and business circle. At the end of each Session time was allocated for discussion by the participants. The Programme of Activities appears as **ANNEX 2**.

Opening Ceremony

5. H.E. Soulivong Dalavong, Minister of Planning and Investment of the Lao PDR, delivered the Opening Remarks. The Minister underscored the progress and achievements of the EAF. He emphasised the importance of the EAF in providing diverse perspectives on regional cooperation and constructive ideas, views and suggestions on ways and means to move forward cooperation in East Asia as well as debating a wide range of policy issues to address the current and emerging challenges faced by the region. The Minister touched upon issues related to topics for discussion at the 6th EAF, which include food, energy and narrowing development gap. The Opening Remarks appears as **ANNEX 3**.

6. Additional opening statements were delivered by H.E. Mr. Yang Wenchang, President of Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Masaharu Kohno, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, H.E. Mr. Sang-Ki Chung, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Mr. Vitavas

Srivihok, Director-General, Department of ASEAN Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, H.E. Dr. SOEUNG Rathchavy, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN. The opening statements appear together as **ANNEX 4**.

Session 1: Greater Cooperation and Collaboration to Address Energy and Food Security

7. At Plenary Session 1, following the Chairperson's remarks, three keynote speakers and four lead discussants presented their views and ideas on "Greater Cooperation and Collaboration to Address Energy and Food Security".

8. The Chairperson, who attended all six EAFs during the past years, since the first Forum was held in 2003 in Seoul, highlighted the accomplishment and progress of the EAF. The Chairperson introduced topics of food and energy security, which have been major challenges to the regional economies.

9. The Forum shared the view that food and energy price hike posed challenges to and affected socio-economic development of the region and the world. The Meeting voiced for concerted effort of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) countries to address these challenges for the well-being of peoples in East Asia.

10. The participants reiterated that food security should include accessibility, availability, quality and safety of food. The Forum saw a need for a comprehensive approach in tackling an issue of food security. This includes enhancing agricultural production, promoting harmonisation of food safety standard, encouraging investment in agriculture, balance of government policies in industrialisation and agriculture, market-oriented policies in agriculture trade, etc.

11. The Forum talked about ongoing scheme under the APT framework, such as the East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve (EAERR) initiated as a pilot project to promote rice security in times of need in the region. The Forum stressed the importance of strengthening the mechanism of the EAERR to enable the scheme to effectively and timely respond to the emergency caused by natural disasters such as flood, drought, cyclone, earthquake and tsunami.

12. As food security and bio-energy are closely linked, the participants saw a need to develop a sustainable and integrated regional food and bio-fuels production strategy that will promote a better allocation of resources to meet long-term demand for food and bio-fuels.

13. The participants discussed the issue of energy security. The Forum expressed concern over the recent volatility and rise of oil

prices, which had adversely affected economic development of the region. They called for individual countries and regional and international efforts to address this challenge to ensure uninterrupted and sustainable energy supply, enhance efficient functioning of market and strengthen greater collaboration to improve energy efficiency and conservation. The APT countries were encouraged to share their experience, expertise and information on energy efficiency and conservation.

14. The participants emphasized a need for regional energy strategy and roadmap on the development of alternative and renewable energy sources, including bio-fuel and hydro power.

15. The Forum shared the view that food and energy security should be a priority area of the APT cooperation and that the APT countries should push food and energy security to be high on the UN agenda.

16. The participants emphasized that greater investment by private and public sectors in balanced food and bio-energy production should be further encouraged and promoted.

17. The Forum noted and welcomed that the 12th ASEAN Plus Three Summit in December 2008 in Thailand will adopt the Chiang Mai Statement on ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation on Food Security and Bio-Energy Development.

18. The participants touched upon the issue of global financial crisis and expressed their concern over the situation, which will send impact to economic development of the region. They shared the view that the crisis would affect the efforts of many countries, particularly least developed countries and developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Forum stressed the importance of ensuring sound fiscal and monetary policies, and closer regional and global cooperation to address this global challenge.

Session 2: Narrowing Development Gap: Accelerating Regional Integration and Bringing Strategic Benefits to Our Region

19. At Plenary Session 2, three keynote speakers and four lead discussants gave presentations on “Narrowing Development Gap: Accelerating Regional Integration and Bringing Strategic Benefits to Our Region”.

20. The Forum emphasised that narrowing the development gap was one among the most crucial issue that needs to be urgently addressed in order to move forwards ASEAN integration and community building process. Therefore, efforts to narrow the

development gap should be in line with broader strategy and initiatives of ASEAN integration.

21. The participants highlighted the achievements in the implementation of the Vientiane Action Programme (VAP), the first Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan for the period 2002-2008 and other sub-regional economic growth areas plans such as BIMP-EAGA, IMT-GT, Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and East-West Economic Corridors.

22. The Forum noted that the second IAI Work Plan was being formulated based on the accomplishments lessons learned from the first IAI Plan of Action and key programme areas in the three Blueprints of the ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Political and Security Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The 2nd IAI Work Plan is aimed at contributing significantly to achieving ASEAN Community building by 2015 by further assisting CLMV, the newer ASEAN Member States, to effectively integrate into the region. The 2nd IAI Work Plan will be adopted by the 14th ASEAN Summit in December 2008 in Thailand.

23. Some areas were suggested as crucial areas to help bridge the economic disparities in the region. The participants shared their common understanding that human resources development, education, investment, trade, production chain, infrastructure development provide keys to accelerate economic integration and success in narrowing development gap in the region. The participants reiterated the significance of the IAI and other sub-regional growth areas as critical conditions for ASEAN integration and community building by 2015.

24. The participants shared the view that narrowing development gap in ASEAN should be a part of the wider integration process of East Asia. The APT countries were encouraged to consider doubling their support and contributions to assist in narrowing the development gap of ASEAN, especially the less-developed countries of ASEAN to enable them to integrate their economies in the regional economic development main stream. The Forum shared the view that greater commitments and allocation of financial and human resources were needed to implement and concretize initiatives and decisions already taken to this end. This, in turn, will bring benefit to not only ASEAN but also the region.

25. The Forum noted a suggestion by the ASEAN Secretariat to explore a modality to help narrow the development gap by establishing tripartite cooperation among CLMV countries, ASEAN-6, and other Dialogue Partners, countries and regional and international organizations.

26. The Forum exchanged views on the future of the EAF. The Forum noted the proposal of the ROK to explore a possibility of setting up the EAF secretariat in the future. The ROK will come up with a concept paper on the establishment of the EAF secretariat for discussion at the next EAF. The Forum also noted another proposal by the ROK to explore a possible of holding future EAF back-to-back with ASEAN Plus Three related meetings.

27. The 7th EAF will be hosted by the ROK in 2009 in Seoul.

Closing Remarks

28. In his Closing Remarks, H.E. Bounkeut Sangsomsak sincerely thanked the participants for their active participation in the discussion at the Forum, which had contributed to the successful conclusion of the 6th EAF. He also expressed appreciation for the support and contributions of the Republic of Korea to cost of organizing the 6th EAF through the ASEAN-ROK Future-Oriented Project Fund.

Acknowledgements

29. The Participants of the 6th EAF expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of Lao PDR, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the peoples of Luang Prabang for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to them during their stay in Luang Prabang.

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