

**Welcome remarks by**  
**H.E. Mr. Thani Thongphakdi**  
**Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United States**  
**On Occasion of the Reception to Celebrate the 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN**  
**10 September 2019, Royal Thai Embassy**

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**The Honorable Matthew Pottinger, Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Asian Affairs, National Security Council,**

**The Honorable Ted Yoho, Ranking Member, Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation, U.S. House of Representatives,**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good evening and a very warm welcome to you all.

On behalf of all ASEAN Ambassadors, I would like to thank everyone for joining us today to celebrate the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of ASEAN.

In August 1967 in Thailand, Foreign Ministers from five countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, embarked on an ambitious journey to create an association that would become the premier platform for consultation, consensus and cooperation in Southeast Asia and beyond.

This ambitious but visionary project changed the course of history and transformed Southeast Asia -- from a zone of conflict to a zone of peace, and from a region of poverty to a region of prosperity.

With the subsequent joining of Brunei Darussalam, Viet Nam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, ASEAN has grown from an association of five countries to now a community of ten.

Today, ASEAN, with a combined population of 650 million people, is the third largest market in the world after China and India.

According to the latest ASEAN Matters for America report by the USABC and the East-West Center, ASEAN is currently the third largest economy in the Indo-Pacific and the fifth largest in the world.

It is also projected to become the fourth largest economy in the world by 2050, behind only the United States, China and the European Union.

Through various ASEAN-led mechanisms, ASEAN has played an instrumental role in promoting dialogue and cooperation among parties in the region. This unique ASEAN role will definitely become even more important in the new strategic landscape of Asia.

I am confident that ASEAN will again be able to rise to the occasion and be a strong force for peace, stability and development in the region in the coming years.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The theme of Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship this year is "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability". Under this theme, we have been working closely with all fellow ASEAN member states to achieve sustainable and inclusive security and development.

We are pushing ahead with ASEAN Community building, through closer economic integration and better infrastructure connectivities, among other things.

We are working to strengthen ASEAN's capacity to harness opportunities brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the development of new technologies, while enhancing our resilience to cope with potential disruptions.

We are working to promote clean, green, smart and sustainable development in each and every ASEAN member state.

But ASEAN cannot achieve all these alone. We need to work closely with our partners and combine our respective strengths.

That is why we attach importance to building stronger partnerships with all our dialogue partners, including the United States, so that we can create synergies benefiting our peoples.

The strategic partnership between ASEAN and the United States covers a broad spectrum of cooperation that has grown from strength to strength, from counter-terrorism to cyber security, and from trade and investment to education and youth development.

And just last week, ASEAN and the United States conducted the first ever ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise.

Looking ahead, we welcome the intention of the United States to step up its economic engagement with ASEAN. We hope that this will translate into even more investment from the United States into ASEAN, and vice-versa as well.

ASEAN also appreciates the firm support of the United States for ASEAN centrality. This point was made clear by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during his visit to Thailand last month to attend the ASEAN ministerial meetings. A strong ASEAN playing a central role in the regional architecture is in the best interest of the United States and the broader Indo-Pacific.

There is therefore much more that ASEAN and the United States can do together. We appreciate the strong support of the United States for the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which was adopted by ASEAN Leaders earlier this year.

This Outlook represents a vista of how ASEAN, as a group that sits at the strategic crossroads between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, sees the evolving strategic landscape, and our intention to continue playing a central role in contributing to closer cooperation among parties in the Indo-Pacific.

As the ASEAN-US Summit and the East Asia Summit in Thailand in November are fast approaching, ASEAN looks forward to working with the United States to explore how we can advance cooperation in areas outlined in the ASEAN Outlook document, for example, maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development, and economic development. Doing so will further deepen and strengthen our Strategic Partnership.

Let me conclude by expressing my deep appreciation to all the ASEAN embassies for co-hosting this evening's ASEAN Day reception. I also wish to thank all of you for joining us in celebrating the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of ASEAN, and for your continued support for ASEAN-US relations.

Thank you very much.

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