



PRESS RELEASE

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Background Information: ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meetings between 19-21 July 2009

- ASEAN Foreign Ministers are scheduled to meet between 19-21 July 2009 at the following forums:
 - 1) 42nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, a forum specifically for the ten ASEAN Foreign Ministers
 - 2) 2nd ASEAN Political-Security Community Council (APSC) Meeting
 - 3) ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting with the High Level Panel (HLP) on the ASEAN Human Rights Body
 - 4) ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting with High Level Legal Experts Group (HLEG) on the ASEAN Charter
 - 5) 4th ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting
 - 6) Meeting of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Commission
- On the morning of 20 July 2009, ASEAN Foreign Ministers will pay a courtesy call on the Prime Minister of Thailand who will also give an opening statement during the Opening Ceremony of the 42nd AMM.
- The 42nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM)
The AMM will commence on the evening of 19 July 2009 with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers attending an informal working dinner. On 20 July 2009, the ten Ministers will have discussions the whole day. The main topics of discussion are expected to include:
 - (1) Implementation of articles stipulated in the ASEAN Charter, especially those relating to the administrative structure and the setting up of new organizations under ASEAN which would enable ASEAN to take on new challenges and tackle problems more effectively and efficiently, i.e. the establishment of an ASEAN human rights body, the setting up of an ASEAN dispute settlement mechanism which would deal with any non-adherence to the ASEAN agreements, and the Terms of Reference for the functioning of Permanent Missions to ASEAN.
 - (2) Exchange of views on the challenges facing the region i.e. enhancing ASEAN cooperation in tackling natural disasters and in resolving the issue of illegal migrants entering ASEAN countries
 - (3) Enhancement of cooperation/follow-up to the outcome of meetings between ASEAN and other countries/organizations, i.e. the Commemorative Summit between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea, ministerial meetings between ASEAN and MERCOSUR and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as the issue of the accession of the U.S., the European Union and Turkey to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).
- During this 42nd AMM, it is expected that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers will adopt a number of documents including the Joint Communique of the 42nd Ministerial Meeting, the Terms of Reference (ToR) of an ASEAN Human Rights Body, and the ASEAN Work Plan on Maintaining and Enhancing ASEAN Centrality.



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- ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting with the High Level Panel (HLP) on the ASEAN Human Rights Body (afternoon of 19 July 2009)

The High Level Panel will present their final draft of the ToR for the ASEAN human rights body to the Foreign Ministers. The ToR is in line with Article 14 of the ASEAN Charter which would serve as a mechanism in promoting and protecting human rights in the region. Once the draft is adopted by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, it is expected that the establishment of an ASEAN human rights body will be officially announced at the 15th ASEAN Summit which Thailand will host in October 2009.

- In drafting the ToR, the High Level Panel resolved to uphold three main principles: 1) the credibility of the human rights body through both the promotion and protection of human rights of each country in the region; 2) the organization must be realistic by taking into consideration the political differences and readiness in promoting human rights of each ASEAN member country; and 3) the setting up of a human rights body must be an ongoing evolving process.
- An ASEAN human rights body will create increased public awareness on human rights in ASEAN countries, enhance member states' capabilities in tackling problems on human rights, develop norms on human rights in the region, as well as advise governmental, social and international organizations on human rights issues.

- ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting with High Level Legal Experts Group (HLEG) on the ASEAN Charter (afternoon of 19 July 2009)

The Meeting will allow the HLEG to table their recommendations on the legal issues that ASEAN would need to take up now that the ASEAN Charter has come into effect, e.g., the development of an ASEAN dispute mechanism settlement, the issue of privileges and immunities for ASEAN officials. Once the legal framework is established, it will help pave the way for ASEAN to achieve its goal of establishing an ASEAN Community by 2015 as well as boost the credibility of ASEAN, thus enhancing ASEAN cooperation with countries/groups of countries and organizations outside the region.

- The 2nd ASEAN Political-Security Community Council (APSC) Meeting (morning of 20 July 2009)

The APSC is one of the new bodies set up when the ASEAN Charter came into effect, with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers serving as members of the Council. The APSC is assigned the task of developing ASEAN political and security cooperation towards the goal of an ASEAN Community by 2015 as stipulated in the ASEAN Political and Security Community Blueprint adopted last March at the 14th ASEAN Summit. This meeting will follow up on the previous meeting in such areas as enhancing ASEAN cooperation on peacekeeping and disaster management, developing of ASEAN Convention on Human Trafficking, and enhancing cooperation with civil society organizations (CSOs) on non-traditional security issues. The APSC will also adopt the Rules of Procedure for the APSC, which defines the work methodology of the APSC.

- The 4th ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting (morning of 20 July 2009)

The Council is another new body set up when the ASEAN Charter came into effect, with ASEAN Foreign Ministers comprising the membership. The Council will discuss preparations for the 15th ASEAN Summit to be held in October 2009.

- Meeting of the SEANWFZ Commission (morning of 21 July 2009)

The Commission is tasked with coordinating with SEANWFZ states party in enforcing the SEANWFZ Treaty and enhancing cooperation. It is expected that the Commission will follow up on such matters as revisiting outstanding issues, consultations with Nuclear Weapon States, enhancing the role of SEANWFZ in multilateral fora, including the UNGA.

18 July 2009