

Joint Media Statement of the Inaugural ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council Meeting Cha-am, Thailand, 27 February 2009

1. The Inaugural Meeting of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council was held on 27 February 2009 in Hua Hin, Thailand. H.E. Korbsak Sabhavas, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Economic Affairs of Thailand, chaired the Meeting.

ASEAN Charter

2. The Council discussed the status of implementation of the ASEAN Charter and institutional structure of AEC. The Council deliberated on its role and functions, which include identifying cross cutting issues that require collective consideration to deliver AEC priorities; and ensuring the effective implementation of and compliance with the relevant decisions of the ASEAN Summit. The Council also welcomed developments in the ASEAN Political Security Community Council, the ASEAN Social Cultural Community Council and the ASEAN Coordinating Council.

ASEAN Economic Community Scorecard

3. The Council underscored the significance of the AEC Scorecard as a monitoring tool which would enable ASEAN to capture information and produce an assessment of the current situation of AEC implementation towards meeting AEC goals. The Council discussed and agreed to submit the first AEC Scorecard and its Executive Summary to ASEAN Leaders at the 14th ASEAN Summit and looked forward to subsequent enhancements to the AEC Scorecard. In this regard, the Council called on all sectoral bodies under the AEC to work together in ensuring the compliance to the commitments under the AEC Blueprint and other relevant ASEAN economic agreements through the continuous improvement of the AEC Scorecard. The Council also requested all sectoral bodies to develop their respective detailed sectoral work plan towards achieving the goals of AEC by 2015.

ASEAN Economic Community Communications Plan

4. In conjunction with the AEC Awareness Year 2008 designated by ASEAN Leaders, the Council welcomed the development of an AEC Communications Plan by ASEAN Economic Ministers to enhance awareness of stakeholders on AEC initiatives, elicit their feedback and garner support from them. The Council also took note of the report of ASEAN Economic Ministers on national and regional communications activities for AEC Awareness Year 2008 which will be submitted to ASEAN Leaders at the 14th ASEAN Summit.

5. The Council was of the view that communications activities are essential to keep the ASEAN identity, vision and activities visible on a regular basis and emphasised the need to intensify communications activities at the national and regional level beyond the AEC Awareness Year 2008. The Council also underscored the importance of involving various stakeholders in the communications process, namely, the ASEAN sectoral bodies and institutions; the private sector; the national and local authorities in ASEAN Member States; the academia and civil society.

Global Economic Situation

6. The Council deliberated on the challenges posed by the global economic situation and recognised that slower growth in the world economies could lead to calls for protectionist measures which would only exacerbate the current economic situation. In this regard, the Council noted that despite the crisis, ASEAN remains on track and committed to implementing the AEC Blueprint because free flow of goods, services and investment are key to recovery. Therefore, the Inaugural Meeting of the AEC Council is timely to ensure that ASEAN will maintain the momentum of Community building.