



**JOINT COMMUNIQUE
THE THIRTY-FIRST ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING
MANILA, PHILIPPINES, 24-25 JULY 1998**

1. The thirty-first ASEAN Ministerial Meeting was held in Manila, Philippines from 24-25 July 1998.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS OF THE 2nd ASEAN INFORMAL SUMMIT

2. Recalling the excellent and successful hosting of the Second ASEAN Informal Summit in Kuala Lumpur on 14 to 16 December 1997, the Foreign Ministers lauded the adoption of the ASEAN Vision 2020 by the ASEAN Heads of State/Government, a document which embodies ASEAN's goals and vision for the twenty-first century. They resolved to cooperate purposefully to realize its vision "as a concert of Southeast Asian Nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development, in a community of caring societies." They looked forward to the adoption of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN Vision 2020 at the Sixth ASEAN Summit in Hanoi, Vietnam in December 1998.

3. The Foreign Ministers recalled that the Second ASEAN Informal Summit was an occasion to commemorate ASEAN's Thirtieth Anniversary where the five signatories to the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 were conferred the ASEAN Citation for their distinguished leadership, outstanding statesmanship, unwavering courage and vision. They welcomed the participation of Laos and Myanmar in the Summit as new members of ASEAN.

4. The Foreign Ministers acknowledged the signing of two documents at the Second ASEAN Informal Summit - the *Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the ASEAN Foundation and the Protocol to Implement the Initial Package of Commitments Under the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services* - as important steps towards furthering ASEAN cooperation and integration.

5. Referring to decisions at the Second ASEAN informal Summit, the Foreign Ministers agreed to Cooperate in ensuring the conservation and sustainability of water resources and welcomed the resolution to take firm and stern measures to combat transnational crimes such as drug trafficking and trafficking in women and children, as well as the Proposal to establish a Regional Cooperation on Nuclear Safety and Nuclear Waste Management. They exhorted ASEAN member countries to take concrete steps to pursue these initiatives.

6. The Foreign Ministers, on the Summit Meetings between the Heads of State/Government of the member states of ASEAN and China, Japan and the Republic of Korea on the occasion of the Second ASEAN Informal Summit, stressed the importance of developing a shared perspective on the prospects of East Asia for the twenty-first century, and highlighted the common objectives of enhanced regional security, heightened economic confidence and cooperation, and deepened cultural

exchanges. The Foreign Ministers noted with appreciation the expression of commitment and resolve by China, Japan and the Republic of Korea to strengthen trade and economic relations with ASEAN against the backdrop of the Asian financial crisis. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the expression of support from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea on the ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMDC) and its various projects. Moreover, the Foreign Ministers welcomed the expressions of confidence made by the leaders of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea in the strength and resilience of ASEAN's economies.

7. The Foreign Ministers noted the preparations for the Sixth ASEAN Summit to be held in Hanoi in December 1998. They endorsed the theme for the Summit - *Unity and Cooperation for an ASEAN of Peace, Stability and Equitable Development* - and looked forward to the launching of the Hanoi Action Plan to Implement the ASEAN Vision 2020 at the Summit.

POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION

8. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the signing of the Second Protocol to the, Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia, which would enable non-Southeast Asian states to accede to the TAC as an instrument of commitment to friendly and constructive relations with countries of Southeast Asia. The Foreign Ministers urged non-Southeast Asian states, especially the major powers, to accede to the TAC.

9. The Foreign Ministers noted the report of the ASEAN Senior Officials on the progress made so far by the ASEAN Working Group on ZOPFAN and SEANWFZ regarding its consultations with Nuclear Weapon States in the context of enabling the latter to sign the Protocol to the SEANWFZ Treaty. The Foreign Ministers reiterated that the signing of the Protocol by the Nuclear Weapon States will constitute a manifestation of their support for nuclear disarmament and nuclear weapon-free zones. The Foreign Ministers expressed the view that the recent nuclear tests in South Asia were not conducive to the full realization of SEANWFZ.

10. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the good progress made by the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). They renewed ASEAN's commitment to be the primary driving force of the ARF and to ensure the continued development of the ARF as an effective forum in promoting security dialogue and cooperation and building confidence among countries in the region. They endorsed the participation of Mongolia in the ARF and expressed the hope that its participation would contribute to the achievement of the ARF's key goals and objectives.

11. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the positive outcome of the activities undertaken at the Track I and Track II levels at the ARF and agreed that these activities have significantly contributed to the promotion of transparency and cooperation, and the building of confidence among ARF members. They welcomed, in particular, the results of the Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief and the meetings of the Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and looked forward to the further strengthening of these and other ARF activities in the next inter-sessional year. They expressed anew their hope that the ARF would move from stage I (confidence building) to stage II (preventive diplomacy) in accordance with the spirit of the ASEAN Concept Paper on the ARF. Encouraged by the greater interaction among defense and military officials and their increasing participation in the discussions of regional security, the Foreign Ministers underscored the vital role played by the defense and military Agencies and officials in the ARF process.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

12. The Foreign Ministers had an extensive exchange of views on current regional and international developments. They discussed the measures taken by ASEAN and its member countries to address the current financial situation including those taken on bilateral, regional and multilateral basis or with the assistance of regional and international financial institutions. They called on Japan to expedite the implementation of its economic measures in support of the economic recovery of ASEAN countries. They noted that Japan's determination to strengthen its financial system and to put its economy back on the path of self-sustained and domestic demand-led growth is important to the recovery of the Asian economies. They called on the G-7 to lead international efforts and coordinate policy responses in resolving the financial crisis which has become a global concern. They viewed that while the crisis has severely affected the Asian economies, the situation is temporary and the fundamentals in Asia have not changed, as exemplified by a young and flexible work force, high savings and openness to trade and investment.

13. The Foreign Ministers expressed the belief that the international and regional financial institutions as well as friendly donor countries need to consider the over-all impact of structural adjustment measures, which are being implemented by the affected countries, on the underprivileged and vulnerable sectors of their societies. They urged these donor countries and financial institutions to implement the agreed commitments to enable the affected countries to continue their contributions in maintaining the stability of the region.

14. The Foreign Ministers noted the preparations made by the Royal Government of Cambodia for the 26 July 1998 elections and acknowledged the efforts of the ASEAN Troika, the Friends of Cambodia (FOC), the UN and the international community in support of this undertaking. They welcomed the 15 July 1998 statement of the United Nations Secretary-General on the Cambodian elections. The Foreign Ministers reiterated their hope for free, fair and credible elections that would facilitate the restoration of peace and political stability in Cambodia. The Foreign Ministers recalled that the ASEAN Heads of State/Government at the Second ASEAN Informal Summit called for the intensification of consultations with Cambodia to facilitate its admission into ASEAN.

15. The Foreign Ministers reviewed the developments in the South China Sea. They welcomed the Joint Statement issued at the ASEAN-China Summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997 and called on all countries concerned to exercise self-restraint and to continue efforts to find solutions on the basis of international law, in particular the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and to subscribe to the principles embodied in the 1992 Manila Declaration on the South China Sea. They also urged countries concerned to focus on confidence building measures with a view to enhancing peace and stability in the region. They noted the frank and productive discussions in the bilateral consultations among countries concerned, at the ASEAN-China Senior Officials Consultations and at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), particularly in the Inter-sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures. They also noted the positive contributions made by the series of Informal Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea as well as various groups therein.

16. The Foreign Ministers expressed the hope that the continuing efforts of the Four-Party Talks on the Korean Peninsula would result in the institution of a permanent peace mechanism that would replace the 1953 Armistice Agreement and create a

conducive atmosphere for Korean reunification. They underlined the importance of such talks in the promotion and maintenance of peace and stability in the region and likewise recognized the positive contribution of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) towards achieving the objectives of security, non-proliferation and confidence-building.

17. The Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their support for the Middle East peace process with the framework of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 425. They called on all parties concerned to ensure the continuation of negotiations in all its tracks. Mindful of the concern of the international community on the peaceful resolution of the tensions, the Foreign Ministers urged the implementation of all pledges, commitments and obligations made by parties under the Oslo accord and the Madrid Conference, which significantly stressed the principle of land for peace. They reiterated their demand that Israel take immediate steps to stop the building of a new settlement at Jabel Abu Ghaneim and similar activities in the West Bank.

18. In recalling other relevant UN Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions on Jerusalem, including those of the Tenth Emergency Special Session, the Foreign Ministers condemned the decision of 21 June 1998 by Israel to expand the border of Jerusalem and extend municipal authority over a number of Israeli settlements and called for the revocation of the decision.

19. The Foreign Ministers reviewed the prevailing situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and noted the substantial progress that has been made in the implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement of 1995. They recognized the important role of the United Nations in promoting the peace process and ensuring that the parties in dispute maintain the will to restore peace, tolerance and the rule of law. They also noted the significant role played by the international Police Task Force in monitoring the activities of the local police forces, including restructuring and training. They also emphasized the importance of the promotion of freedom of movement and human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Foreign Ministers expressed concern over certain outstanding problems including that relating to the issue of the return of refugees and displaced persons to their rightful homes.

20. The Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their support for the goals and principles of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). They stressed the importance of NAM as a unifying forum not only for discussions but also cooperation among developing countries, so that they may exert a more active influence on the direction and the management of world affairs. They recognized NAM's strength as a significant leverage in negotiations vis-a-vis the developed countries on crucial political and economic issues. The Foreign Ministers also recognized the valuable contributions made by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand as chairmen of various working groups under the NAM. They further emphasized the need to continue the active and collective promotion of the agreed positions of the NAM members in the UN and in the international arena.

21. The Foreign Ministers stressed the importance of the decisions of the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM-COB) which was held in Cartagena in May 1998. They also expressed their support towards efforts to ensure the success of the South-South Cooperation Center in Jakarta.

22. The Foreign Ministers expressed support for the UN Secretary-General's comprehensive efforts to reform the United Nations. They welcomed the specific

reform proposals, which are aimed at improving the implementation and coordination of UN activities and expressed hope for further constructive discussions regarding UN reform at the forthcoming sessions of the General Assembly. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General to assist the Secretary-General in managing the operations of the Secretariat, especially in the economic and social spheres.

23. They also exchanged views on the need to reform the Security Council, particularly on the aspect of representation among the developing countries. The Foreign Ministers agreed that the reform and expansion of the Security Council should be considered as a package, taking into account the principle of sovereign equality of states and equitable geographical distribution, as well as the need for transparency, accountability and democratization in the working methods and procedures of the Security Council, particularly its decision-making process.

24. Reaffirming their commitment towards the goals of general and complete disarmament, the Foreign Ministers reiterated their call to all States especially the nuclear weapon states to fulfill their obligations and commitments, particularly those related to Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Further, the Foreign Ministers reiterated their call for the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The Foreign Ministers underlined the importance they attached to the non-proliferation of other weapons of mass destruction.

25. The Foreign Ministers recognized the importance of the work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD). They fully supported the expansion of the membership of the CD, particularly the application for membership of Malaysia and the Philippines. They recalled UNGA Resolution 51/45 which called upon UN member states to provide for a single international register of conventional arms. They recognized the humanitarian imperatives promoted by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and their Destruction. They also noted the humanitarian necessity to increase international cooperation assistance and training aimed at accelerating the process of demining and removal of unexploded ordnance.

26. The Foreign Ministers deplored the series of nuclear tests conducted recently in South Asia that exacerbated tension in the region and raised the specter of a nuclear arms race. They called on all countries which have not done so to adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in recognition of the overwhelming interest to establish a nuclear free world. In this connection, the Foreign Ministers strongly urged the nuclear-weapon states to take concrete and timely measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons in compliance with the provisions of the NPT.

27. The Foreign Ministers noted the efforts of the Asia Regional Ministerial Workshop on Organized Transnational Crime, held in Manila on 23-25 March 1998, in finding a solution to the growing menace of such crimes as illicit drug trafficking, terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundering, trafficking in persons and piracy. They likewise affirmed the resulting Manila Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Transnational Crime which expresses international resolve to eradicate, through increased cooperation, the menace of such crimes. The Manila Declaration concurs with the 1997 ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crime which called on ASEAN countries to expand the scope of cooperation and explore ways by which the

member countries can work closer with relevant agencies and organizations, including the United Nations.

28. The Foreign Ministers recalled the decision of the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held on 23-24 July 1993 in Singapore to consider the establishment of an appropriate regional mechanism on human rights and noted the establishment of the informal non-governmental Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. The Foreign Ministers noted further the dialogues held between the Working Group and ASEAN officials in Jakarta during the 29th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and in Kuala Lumpur during the 30th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. They recognized the importance of continuing these dialogues and took note of the proposal made by the Working Group during its latest dialogue with ASEAN held in Manila on 22 July 1998.

29. The Foreign Ministers noted that the world will celebrate in December 1998 the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. Considering that two-thirds of the ASEAN population consist of women and children, they recognized the importance of international conventions and declarations relating to the promotion of human rights, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Foreign Ministers took cognizance of the fact that steps are being taken to bring to fruition the creation of a community of caring societies, as enshrined in the ASEAN Vision 2020, which gives particular emphasis to children, youth, women and the elderly.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

30. The Foreign Ministers noted the efforts being undertaken at the national and regional levels to address the regional economic crisis. They agreed on the importance of these regional efforts to complement the initiatives being taken at the Regional level by all ASEAN members.

31. The Foreign Ministers supported the efforts by the Finance Ministers to strengthen the financial systems of member countries. They strongly endorsed the decision made by the ASEAN Finance Ministers to establish an ASEAN surveillance mechanism to closely monitor regional macroeconomic and financial indicators and to serve as an early warning system. They welcomed the Finance Ministers' decision to support the use of regional currencies for promoting intra-ASEAN trade and the use of bilateral payments arrangements on a voluntary basis between individual ASEAN countries.

32. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the Second ASEAN Informal Summit's decision to accelerate the implementation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area and the ASEAN Investment Area. They noted that the decision reflects the strong commitment of member countries to regional economic cooperation. They also noted that concrete measures to implement the Summit's mandate would help restore confidence in the region.

33. The Foreign Ministers noted that Laos and Myanmar, which acceded to ASEAN in July 1997, had begun the implementation of their CEPT commitments on 1 January 1998. They supported the decision of the 29th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting to prioritize areas for technical assistance to the new members to facilitate their participation in ASEAN economic cooperation.

34. The Foreign Ministers were encouraged by the implementation of the CEPT Scheme and underlined the importance of intra-ASEAN trade as an engine of economic recovery. They were also encouraged by the progress of the negotiations to liberalize the services sector in ASEAN, and the implementation of the AICO scheme.

35. The Foreign Ministers noted that the Framework Agreements on Facilitation of Goods in Transit and Multimodal Transport, and the agreement on Mutual Recognition of Commercial Inspection Certificates of Goods and Public Services Vehicles in ASEAN are being finalized for signing during the Sixth ASEAN Summit in Hanoi, Vietnam in December 1998. They also noted the decision of the Second ASEAN Informal Summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997 for officials to expeditiously study the necessary measures to facilitate the transportation of goods both in transit and interstate, covering land, maritime and air links, which would contribute towards enhancing intra-ASEAN trade and the further integration of ASEAN economies. In this respect, the Foreign Ministers expressed the hope that the study could be finalized to enable agreements on facilitation of goods in transit and interstate transport be prepared for signing by the end of 1999.

36. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the forthcoming ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMDC) Ministerial Meeting in Hanoi in December 1998. They agreed on the need to further intensify efforts to promote the development of the Mekong Basin. In particular, they emphasized the need to expedite the implementation of projects and programs identified. These include the development of the less developed interstate areas along the East-West corridor and the establishment of the Trans-Asian railway network.

37. The Foreign Ministers lauded the initiative taken by the ASEAN Tourism Ministers in January 1998 to formally establish their meeting and to conclude a Ministerial Understanding and Plan of Action on ASEAN Cooperation in Tourism.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

World Trade Organisation (WTO)

38. The Foreign Ministers were encouraged by the successful conclusion of the Second Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They noted that the Second WTO Ministerial Conference coincided with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the multilateral trading system, hence acknowledging the important contribution of the multilateral trading system over the past half-century to growth and employment. The Ministers agreed that keeping markets open is crucial to addressing the difficulties posed by the current regional crisis.

39. The Foreign Ministers noted the significant progress made with respect to those applicants currently negotiating their accessions to the WTO. In this regard, the Ministers reiterated their full support for the admission of Laos and Vietnam and urged the WTO to expedite the accession process.

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

40. The Foreign Ministers were pleased by the strong interest shown by APEC Members in seeing a restoration of financial stability to Asia. The Foreign Ministers were encouraged by APEC's acknowledgement that the financial turmoil has a global

dimension and needs a global response, with regional initiatives to complement and support this effort. They shared the resolve by other APEC members to work together to address these shared challenges. They welcomed the confidence shown by APEC in the fundamentals for long-term growth and prospects for the region. The Ministers shared the conviction by other APEC members that open markets bring significant benefits, while noting that there are adjustment costs, and agreed to continue to pursue trade and investment liberalization that fosters further economic growth.

41. The Foreign Ministers noted the continuous efforts to liberalize trade and investment and hoped that APEC would be able to agree on a concrete package for Early Voluntary Sectoral Liberalisation by the end of the year. The Foreign Ministers welcomed initiatives to review and improve the management of the APEC process, The Foreign Ministers also welcomed the establishment of a Sub-Committee on ECOTECH to enable the development of focused outcomes in this area.

42. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the decision of APEC leaders in Vancouver to admit Vietnam, Peru and Russia by November 1998 in Kuala Lumpur. The Ministers noted the potential of a 21-member APEC which, in 1997, had a combined GDP of 14 trillion dollars representing 58 percent of world income and 47 percent of world trade.

43. The Foreign Ministers pledged their full support to Malaysia during its Chairmanship of APEC and expressed their confidence that important outcomes would be achieved under its leadership. The Ministers agreed on the need to enhance ASEAN consultations, especially in the areas of SME development, capacity-building, HRD and economic and technical cooperation (ECOTECH).

ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM)

44. The Foreign Ministers were pleased by the outcome of the Second Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM II) of 3-4 April 1998. The Ministers were especially encouraged that the ASEM Leaders expressed confidence in the ability of Asian countries to recover and restore financial stability by strengthening their economic fundamentals. They particularly welcomed the determination stated by Prime Minister Tony Blair and other European leaders to stand by Asia in these difficult times. The Ministers were encouraged by the decision of the Leaders to establish an ASEM Trust Fund and expressed the hope that this would be utilized soon to help address the social impact of the crisis. In addition, the Ministers were gratified by the ASEM commitment to resist protectionist pressures in the face of the financial crisis and to maintain an open trading system.

45. Considering the effects of globalization, the Foreign Ministers affirmed the assertion of ASEM II on the need to cooperate on such global issues as human resource development, including management education, the fight against poverty, food supply, improvement of community health, employment, protection of the environment and promotion of sustainable development, and the fight against drugs and international crime and promotion of the welfare of women and children,

46. The Foreign Ministers noted the initiatives to promote greater trade and investment flow between ASEAN and all its major partners such as Europe. The Ministers were encouraged by the efforts of the business/private sector of both regions to strengthen their business linkages. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the adoption of the Investment Promotion Action Plan (IPAP) and the Trade Facilitation

Action Plan (TFAP), including the establishment of an Investment Experts Group (IEG). The Ministers also endorsed initiatives in promoting small and medium enterprises such as the establishment of the ASEM Connect electronic resource network for SMEs.

FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION

47. The Foreign Ministers endorsed the vision of a community of caring societies that is able to respond to the needs and welfare of its peoples. In particular, the Foreign Ministers supported regional and national efforts within ASEAN that mitigate the social impact of the financial crisis prevailing in Southeast Asia.

48. Cognizant of the importance of realizing the vision of a cohesive and technologically competitive ASEAN that is able to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, the Foreign Ministers affirmed efforts to intensify programmes that enhance human development, alleviate poverty, promote sustainable development, eradicate transnational crime, promote cultural cooperation, enhance information technology and information sharing, project ASEAN within and outside the region, and strengthen the institutions and mechanisms of ASEAN that support the realization of this vision.

49. The Foreign Ministers endorsed the idea of promoting ASEAN as a Learning Society, whereby emphasis is given to education and the networking of the region's universities through the ASEAN University Network (AUN) with a view to enhancing solidarity and ASEAN's competitiveness and capabilities in the international fora.

50. The Foreign Ministers were pleased to note the progress of the elevation of functional cooperation to a higher plane, particularly with the incorporation of the theme for ASEAN functional cooperation - Shared prosperity through human development, technological competitiveness and social cohesiveness - into the programmes and activities of the functional committees.

51. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the inauguration of the ASEAN Foundation and the First Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the ASEAN Foundation held in Jakarta on 14 July 1998. Recalling the pledged contributions made by the ASEAN member countries, the Foreign Ministers welcomed Japan's pledged contribution of US\$20 million to the Foundation and appealed to other ASEAN Dialogue Partners, foundations and other relevant institutions and concerned individuals to contribute to the Foundation.

52. The Foreign Ministers agreed that ASEAN member countries shall intensify cooperation to address transboundary environmental issues, with particular emphasis on the haze problem and in this regard welcomed the implementation of the Regional Haze Action Plan, including the establishment of Sub-Regional Fire Fighting Arrangements for Sumatra and Kalimantan. The Foreign Ministers expressed their continued support for the ASEAN Regional Center for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC), given the necessity of developing regional institution network for biodiversity conservation. They welcomed the publication of the First ASEAN State of the Environment Report (SoER).

53. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the formulation of an ASEAN Common Stand for the 3rd Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Kyoto, Japan in December 1997, and the 4th Conference Of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of

Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal held in Kuching, Malaysia in February 1998. The Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their call for developed countries to fully comply with their commitments pledged at these Conferences, including financial resources and transfer of technology.

54. The Foreign Ministers, sharing the strong concern expressed by the ASEAN Labour Ministers at their 12th Meeting in Hanoi in April 1998 that the Asian financial and economic crisis has adversely affected the labour and employment situation in the ASEAN region, strongly supported the initiative of the Labour Ministers to explore with ADB and UNDP the possibility of developing an ASEAN regional programme to alleviate these adverse effects. The Foreign Ministers reaffirmed that ASEAN member countries do not condone child labour and welcomed the ILO initiative to combat its intolerable forms. The Foreign Ministers supported the view of the ASEAN Labour Ministers that the root cause of child labour is poverty, which can be eradicated by generating gainful employment, providing education and training, and enhancing regional and international cooperation.

55. The Foreign Ministers expressed strong support for the implementation of the Ministerial Understanding on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, especially in the context of the current financial and economic crisis faced by ASEAN member countries. They noted with satisfaction the progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action on Social Development with the following achievements: formulation of sectoral work programmes comprising of integrated projects and activities, development of projects to address the needs of the vulnerable and marginalized groups and the consideration of external funding sources and cost-sharing arrangements among member countries.

56. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the results of the 35th Meeting of the Committee on Science and Technology, particularly on its initiative to develop the ASEAN Science and Technology Information Network (ASTNET) and its interest to support flagship projects which demonstrate potentials for commercialization, revenue sharing and sustainable development. With the economic slowdown in the region, the, Foreign Ministers reiterated the need for ASEAN to enhance its competitiveness by strengthening its capacities in science and technology and human resources, enhancing collaboration between the private and public sectors and improvement of research and development.

57. The Foreign Ministers lauded the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) and the Committee on Culture and Information (COCI) for their continuing efforts in building networks to facilitate news and information exchange and make the ASEAN Satellite Channel operational by the year 2000. They commended the expansion of the ASEANWEB with the inclusion of homepages for culture and information; agreed to put up safeguards for the protection of children and youth against the proliferation of pornography and pedophilia in the Internet; and encouraged the development of international content classification schemes to take into account the ASEAN viewpoint. The Foreign Ministers noted with satisfaction the continuing efforts to liven up the cultural scene with the joint production of "Realizing Rama" on the occasion of the Sixth ASEAN Summit, the international exhibition of ASEAN contemporary art and the holding of art and heritage camps for the youth. They agreed that these programs and activities help promote a deepened awareness and appreciation of ASEAN cultures and a consciousness, especially among the youth, of their cultural heritage.

58. The Foreign Ministers also lauded the actions taken by the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Youth Matters in identifying strategies to prepare and empower ASEAN youth to meet the challenges of globalization in the 21st century.

59. The Foreign Ministers reiterated the need for enhancing regional efforts against transnational crimes, such as illicit drug trafficking, terrorism, money laundering, and trafficking in women and children. They noted the ASEAN Declaration on Transnational Crime on 20 December 1997, and agreed to venture further in order to achieve its goals.

60. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the signing of the Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN, which affirms the goal enshrined in the ASEAN Vision 2020 to eradicate the production, processing, traffic and use of illicit drugs in Southeast Asia by the year 2020. They called on Dialogue Partners and international organizations to enter into collaborative undertakings with ASEAN in various areas to help curb illicit drug abuse and trafficking in the region.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

61. The Foreign Ministers affirmed the importance of realizing the vision of an outward-looking ASEAN playing a pivotal role in international fora and advancing common interests in the region. The Foreign Ministers agreed to examine ways to intensify ASEAN's relationship with its Dialogue Partners and other regional organizations based on equal partnership and mutual respect, as envisaged in the ASEAN Vision 2020.

62. The Foreign Ministers pledged to continue cooperation activities with ASEAN Dialogue Partners to assist the integration of new member countries into ASEAN's processes and systems.

63. The Foreign Ministers emphasized that the principle of non-discrimination must be upheld in ASEAN's relations with its Dialogue Partners.

64. The Foreign Ministers welcomed the launching of the Sixth Cycle of the ASEAN-UNDP Sub-Regional Programme (ASP-6) with the signing of the Letter of Intent between the Secretary-General of ASEAN and the Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Manila on 24 July 1998.