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ASEAN AND SAARC: THE IMPERATIVES OF COOPERATION

It is indeed a privilege and honour for me to be able to address this Seminar of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) on regional and global issues, a forum that has over the years heard and weighed the views of eminent authorities on international affairs. I shall endeavour to share with you today an Indonesian view of the crucial role that regional organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can and do play to promote and maintain peace and stability within their own regions.

I am sure that within these two regional organizations, Bangladesh and Indonesia have assumed similarly active and positive roles, for there is a great deal in common between our two countries. Since Indonesia recognized the sovereignty and independence of Bangladesh in 1971, one of the very first countries to do so, we have worked closely together within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In various other international forums, our two countries have consistently supported each other's position on international issues of common concern. In the economic sphere,

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our trade and investment relations have been steadily growing. Our cooperation has also been flourishing in the social, cultural and information fields. Particularly important is our working together within the framework of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC).

Our two countries also share a fervent hope that our respective regional organizations, SAARC and ASEAN, succeed in their endeavours dedicated to engendering an environment conducive to peace and stability in their respective regions that will redound to the accelerated social and economic development of our two countries. In the case of ASEAN, this is a hope that has been substantiated by its contributions towards the building of a network of treaties, arrangements and forums for political and economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. The work of ASEAN has indeed exerted a profound and benign effect on the stability and the economic well-being of the Asia-Pacific region.

Since more than two decades ago, a time that coincides with the developing years of ASEAN as an organization, and until recent months, Southeast Asian economies have enjoyed unprecedented rates of economic growth that were well above the world average. Each of them has adhered to a distinct development programme that addressed problems specific to itself. Yet they have one thing in common: they have all benefited from a situation of relative peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

In a very real sense, the dynamism that our region demonstrated in more than two decades was the fruit of peace. Today, our Southeast and East Asian economies are in the midst of a monetary turmoil whose severity and contagion effect have caught the whole world by surprise and now threaten to impact upon the global economy itself. And yet the peace has held and we continue to enjoy relative stability as we struggle to sort out our problems, come to one another's aid and strike out a *modus vivendi* with international

financial institutions as well as with our partners in the developed world. Without this situation of relative peace in which cooperation can and has indeed flourished, we could not have enjoyed this sustained period of prosperity and growth, and today we would not be so confident of eventually overcoming our monetary and financial difficulties.

On the other hand, our habit of economic cooperation that we built over the years has also contributed to peace in the region. This once again confirms the axiom that peace and economic development are inextricably linked.

Indonesia and the other members of the ASEAN family have worked hard to bring about such a situation. In the case of Indonesia, this was not originally a matter of economic strategy but rather a matter of faithful adherence to the basic principles and tenets adopted at the onset of our independence--those enshrined in the *Panca Sila*, the 1945 Constitution, and the independent and active or Non-Aligned foreign policy spelled out in 1948 by our then Prime Minister Mohammad Hatta. Since the advent of the New Order Government under the leadership of President Soeharto, Indonesian foreign policy has been guided by a consistency of vision and realism of approach that are at all times closely attuned to the needs and interests of our people. This is *inter alia* reflected in Indonesia's relations with states within the Asia-Pacific region and in the priority given to regional peace, stability and cooperation. It is also reflected in the emphasis that Indonesia has placed on economic development.

Hence, Indonesian diplomacy has been geared toward the achievement of two simultaneous tasks: first to maximize support, material as well as political, for our national development goals-- but always steadfastly abiding by our country's Non-Aligned policy. Indonesia is willing to accept foreign assistance and cooperation, provided no political strings are attached and no extraneous conditionalities are imposed. Foreign assistance, while vitally

important to the development process, can only supplement, never supplant the national development effort. The choice as to the forms and modalities of development remain the responsibility of the Indonesian people who must also bear responsibility for its success or failure.

It is clear that to attain this objective, peace and stability are absolutely essential, not only domestically but also in the international context. Thus, Indonesian diplomacy also has the task to secure an international environment of relative peace and stability, of cooperation and mutual goodwill without which meaningful development may be impossible. We have therefore focused our attention on the countries in our immediate surroundings--Asia and the Pacific. At the same time, in the global context, Indonesia's foreign policy actively strives towards the establishment of a new international order in which lasting peace and equitable prosperity can prevail.

In the area where Indonesia's vital interests lie--in Southeast Asia--Indonesia has naturally given first priority to fostering harmonious relations as well as close cooperation with its immediate neighbours. For that reason, Indonesia has attached the greatest importance to ASEAN and to cooperation in the context of ASEAN which remains one of the corner-stones of Indonesia's foreign policy.

In our endeavours to promote peace and stability in the region, we in ASEAN have developed two fundamental approaches to peace and security. The first approach is based on a concept of comprehensive security which, beyond the military dimension, also embraces political, economic and social aspects of security. We believe that the best way to achieve security would be to develop, separately as individual nations as well as jointly, the political, economic and socio-cultural strengths which, in addition to a basic military capability, constitutes a nation's real capacity to withstand security threats from within and without. This is the essence of the concept of national and regional resilience, which can best be

achieved not through military alliances nor through arms build-up but through regional cooperation.

This internally directed approach to security is complemented by another basic concept projected for wider applicability over the Asia-Pacific region. This is the concept of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) for Southeast Asia. Being in essence a blueprint for a new regional framework for peace and peaceful cooperation, it consists of a set of principles and policy guidelines that would serve as a code of conduct governing relations among the states within the Zone as well as with those outside it. It prescribes the measures and voluntary restraints to which the zonal states as well as the external powers, especially the major powers, would commit themselves. If accepted and implemented by all sides, such a regime would hopefully obviate the need for direct military intervention by the major powers and, conversely, discourage the regional powers from again inviting or provoking unwarranted major power interference in their bilateral affairs and problems. On the part of the Southeast Asian countries, this will entail commensurate political determination and greater autonomous capacity for peaceful resolution of actual and potential conflicts in the region, such as, for example, in the South China Sea. On the part of the major powers, it will, *inter alia*, require a review of their perceptions of their interests in the region and, as appropriate, adjustments in their security doctrines and strategies.

Some of the elements of the ZOPFAN concept have already been incorporated in the '1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) to which ASEAN and all other Southeast Asian countries as well as Papua New Guinea have subscribed. The Treaty will also be open to non-Southeast Asian powers wishing to associate themselves with its principles and purposes. An essential component of ZOPFAN, the establishment of a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) in Southeast Asia, has been realized with the signing of the NWFZ Treaty by the ASEAN and other Southeast Asian countries in

December 1995. It is hoped that the nuclear powers will endorse it by acceding to the protocol of the Treaty.

In 1994, ASEAN launched the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). It is hoped that through the process of dialogue and consultation within this forum, strategic change in the region could be managed in such a way that a stable relationship among the major powers as well as the regional powers can evolve peacefully over the next decade. Besides the ASEAN countries, ARF participants are ASEAN's Dialogue Partner Countries, Consultative Partner-countries and Observer countries. Together they represent all the major powers as well as the regional countries whose activities and interests impact greatly on the security climate of the region.

Apart from attending to political and security concerns, we in ASEAN countries have equally taken conscious steps to integrate our economies with the world economy. We are now endeavouring to complete the establishment of an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) by 2003 as our contribution to a global regime of open and free trade and investment.

As an outward-looking organization that is very much aware of the growing interdependence and the progressive integration of the world economy, ASEAN decided at the turn of the last decade that the time had come to develop more effective modalities for wider and more intensive cooperation among the economies of the region. Accordingly, when the consultative forum called Asia-Pacific Cooperation (APEC) was established in 1989, the ASEAN countries were among its first participants. Since then, APEC has developed rapidly and grown to include 21 of the most dynamic economies of the region and its proceedings have gone beyond consultation to intensive cooperation and policy coordination. Today APEC is working steadily towards the realization of free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region, to be achieved within a time frame adopted during the second meeting of APEC leaders in Bogor

in 1994: by the year 2020 in the case of the developing economies and the year 2010 in the case of the developed ones.

ASEAN can thus be regarded as engaged in two vital processes that cover the Asia-Pacific region: the ARF in the political and security field, of which it is the driving force, and APEC in the economic field. These, together with other processes in which ASEAN is involved, such as the AFTA and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, complement one another in a synergistic way to form a vital security network in our part of the world. Also an important part of that network are the working relationships that it is assiduously building with neighbouring regional organizations such as the South Pacific Forum, the ANZERTA, the IOR-ARC, the ECO and, of course, the SAARC.

We feel that these relationships, so important in the absence of an overarching organization covering the Asia-Pacific region, must be further strengthened in the face of the economic challenges of our time. The forces of globalization and economic liberalization demand from all countries of the developing world a high degree of competitiveness and capacity for self-reliance. This means a commensurate enlargement and intensification of South-South cooperation as a way of solving many of our problems of national development as well as a strategy of global economic growth. When South-South cooperation takes place between regional economic groupings, it could serve as a way of softening the negative effects of globalization, including the marginalization of developing countries from international economic decision-making. When it takes place between two regional organizations that represent nearly one-third of the human race, the positive impact can only be tremendous—for one of every five human individuals in the world today is a citizen of a SAARC country, and one out of ten a citizen of ASEAN.

A casual comparison of the strategies, activities and programmes of our two organizations shows a remarkable similarity and correspondence which means that we are driving towards the

same goals using approaches that are similar in significant ways. Most notable is the fact that while you are working to develop the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) into a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) we are also striving hard to achieve an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), a few years from now. Clearly, there is much that we can learn from each other and perhaps much that we can do for each other. And I believe the time has come for us to begin moving in earnest towards such a partnership.

That is why we have responded with enthusiasm to the initiatives of the Chairperson of the SAARC Ministerial Council to establish institutional cooperation between our two organizations through our secretariats. We could build on the results of recent constructive interaction between our two secretariats following that initiative so that cooperation between our two organizations could be nurtured toward a larger and more meaningful scale.

What SAARC and ASEAN have so far accomplished and would accomplish at the turn of the millennium clearly demonstrate, that enlightened regionalism and regional organizations have an important role to play in the shaping of a more peaceful, just and prosperous international order. As early as 1945, the role of regional organizations in international peace and prosperity has been recognized and embodied in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Today, most countries are fully awake to the tremendous possibilities of cooperation with their geographical neighbours. Nations of diverse political persuasions and cultural orientations, the developed as well as the developing, are transcending their differences in order to work for common political and economic goals in a spirit of partnership. Indeed regionalism is a force that can and should be tapped to bring about a better life for future generations.

We in ASEAN have developed a clear vision of what constitutes that better life. We have indeed resolved to realize by the year 2020 a concert of Southeast Asian Nations, outward-looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in

dynamic development and in a community of caring societies. By then, ASEAN should be fully a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, where the causes of conflict have been eliminated and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation functions fully as a code of conduct binding us together and to which other states with interests in the region adhere. By that time, we shall have created a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN Economic Region in which there is a free flow of goods, services and investments, a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development, and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities. We shall have an ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by a common regional identity; a socially cohesive and caring ASEAN where poverty and its effects are no longer basic problems, a technologically competitive ASEAN, a "clean and green" ASEAN, an ASEAN where people are governed with their full consent and participation with focus on the welfare and dignity of the human person and the good of the community.

This is the essence of ASEAN Vision 2020 and if it rings a familiar chord to you, it can only be because it is essentially similar to your vision of the full promise of South Asia. Because of this I do believe that SAARC can play an important role in the realization of ASEAN Vision 2020, just as ASEAN can possibly be of help in the fulfillment of SAARC's overall, long term goals. We should therefore, expeditiously develop the modalities of the expanded cooperation between our regional organizations.

In ancient times, before the dark age of colonialism, South Asia and Southeast Asia interacted so closely that a large part of our culture is an undying legacy from your part of the world. In this era of globalization, it is time that we renewed that partnership, a partnership involving one third of the human race, this time to realize a vision that is shared by all who long for lasting peace and the ultimate triumph over poverty.