



## Remarks at ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Shangri-la Hotel  
Singapore  
July 23, 2008

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much. Thank you, Minister, and thank you very much for the excellent arrangements for all of us here in Singapore. It's always a pleasure to visit Singapore. And I want to thank my ASEAN colleagues for this opportunity to join you to discuss the many very important, some crucial issues, that we all face.

The United States is deeply committed to engagement with ASEAN. And indeed, I have also had an opportunity and will continue to meet with a number of my ASEAN colleagues on a bilateral basis. We look forward to the Asia Regional Forum as well.

Since we last met, your leaders have signed the ASEAN charter. We welcome the charter's adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, and respect for and protection for human rights and fundamental freedom. We hope that in implementing this new charter, ASEAN, individually and collectively, will keep these important values in the forefront. We think that the ASEAN charter is a very important step forward.

A strong ASEAN benefits not just Southeast Asia, but greater Asia and indeed, beyond. And so you can count on U.S. support for your efforts to integrate the ASEAN community. We want to continue to be a good partner and support ASEAN, because we share so many common interests. As you've said, our economic relationship is extremely important. Our two-way trade topped \$171 billion last year.

The ten ASEAN countries represent our sixth largest export market. And as a group, ASEAN is one of the most rapidly growing and dynamic economies in the world. And so the American private sector, which has recognized this, very much also supports U.S. engagement with ASEAN.

Today, we will review progress on the enhanced partnership that President Bush and ASEAN leaders announced in November of 2005. The plan of action that we signed when we met in Kuala Lumpur two years ago forms a roadmap for implementing the enhanced partnership. The work we have completed under a plan of action is clear evidence of the value of our engagement. And I hope that you're as pleased as I am with the accomplishments that we have had.

One of the ways that ASEAN can become stronger and implement the ideals expressed in the charter is by encouraging peace and prosperity and democracy across the region. We are especially concerned, as you know, about the situation in Burma. And the United States did indeed extend humanitarian assistance. We will always extend humanitarian assistance no matter the political circumstances, we frankly would like to have been able to do more. But we believe that ASEAN has an important role to play in addressing the root cause of Burma's grave problem: the repression of the Burmese democracy movement.

It is in the interests of the people of Burma, and of ASEAN as an organization, to persuade the leaders there to release all political prisoners and to begin a genuine, time-bound dialogue with democratic and ethnic minority leaders on a credible transition to democracy.

Finally, I hope you've had an opportunity to review transnational issues that affect all of us. As you mentioned, we have a common interest in dealing with the effects of climate change. We have a common interest in dealing with the food security issues that are now so prevalent throughout the world, and of course, the energy security issues that we all face.

I would like to discuss how we might improve our coordination in response to natural disasters in the region. All in all, we have a very strong foundation. We have many issues that we can work on together. And President Bush has been proud over the time of his Administration to deepen and intensify our engagement and our dialogue with ASEAN.

And this is, of course, the last time that I will meet with you as Secretary of State. But I know that the United States of America will remain committed to ASEAN and to the future deepening of relationships between these very important countries and this very important maturing and further integrating organization. Thank you very much.

**2008/T21-3**

Released on July 23, 2008

