



Statement at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference

John Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State

Manila, Philippines

August 1, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your introduction. I would also like to thank our hosts, the Government of the Philippines, for organizing these meetings here this week. I am very happy to be back in Manila, where I proudly served as U.S. Ambassador from 1993 to 1996. I had an opportunity to meet with President Arroyo yesterday and have had a number of productive meetings with our Philippine colleagues.

I am pleased to be here today at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference. Secretary Rice regrets that she is traveling in the Middle East with our Secretary of Defense at the request of President Bush.

This is a milestone year: 2007 marks the 30th anniversary of dialogue relations between the United States and ASEAN, and the 40th anniversary of ASEAN itself. When ASEAN was founded in 1967, I was serving as a political officer in our Embassy in Vietnam. I recall discussing the significance of that development with colleagues at the time.

Slightly more than a decade later, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asia, I had the privilege of working closely with many of your predecessors around this table on issues of the day and accompanied our then-Secretaries of State to post-ministerial dialogues in 1980 and 1981, in Kuala Lumpur and Manila, respectively. So I can personally attest to the enduring commitment of the United States to ASEAN. My message today is that our engagement in this part of the world is strong, and we are committed to deepening our ties even further in the time ahead.

Today, we will review progress on the Enhanced Partnership announced by President Bush and ASEAN leaders in November 2005. The Plan of Action that Secretary Rice and many of you signed in Kuala Lumpur last year forms the roadmap for implementing the Enhanced Partnership. The work we have completed under that plan is clear evidence of the value of our engagement. I hope you are as pleased as I am at what we have accomplished.

We continue to be strong economic partners. Our two-way trade reached \$168 billion last year. ASEAN's combined GDP topped \$1 trillion for the first time in 2006. The 10 ASEAN countries represent our 4th largest export market, and as a group are one of the most rapidly growing and dynamic economies in the world. The American private sector has recognized this, and foreign direct investment from the United States into ASEAN is nearing \$90 billion.

Our common interests are not just economic. One area where ASEAN is playing a stronger role is in support of democracy. We note the significance of the statement of ASEAN leaders on their shared vision to achieve peace, stability, democracy, and prosperity in the region. We also applaud the ASEAN Eminent Persons Group recommendation to your leaders to strengthen democratic values, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights and freedoms as fundamental principles and objectives in the ASEAN Charter. We commend these objectives and encourage your efforts in these areas.

Beyond the work of business and government, ASEAN and the United States have a vast number of links spanning the Pacific among our schools and universities, nongovernment organizations, families and individuals. These people-to-people ties play an important role in reinforcing our common interests.

The world has changed in many ways since our first dialogue meeting, here in Manila in 1977. Today, we face challenges unforeseen in those years. But we also look to a future of even greater opportunities. The United States considers its relations with ASEAN as a critical component of its dealings with East Asia as a whole. We want to deepen our partnership with you both individually and collectively to help build the better future our peoples expect and desire.

Thank you.

Released on August 1, 2007

