

**SPEECH BY**  
**H.E. DR. SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA**

**AT THE OPENING OF**  
**THE ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF**  
**ASEAN LAW ASSOCIATION**

**BALI, 16 FEBRUARY 2012**

*Bismillaahirrahmaanirrahiim,*  
*Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullaahi wabarakatuh*  
Peace be upon us all,  
*Om Swastiastu,*

Your Excellency, Mr. Pham Quoc Anh [*:fam kwok an*] President of the ASEAN Law Association,

Your Excellency, Mr. Harifin Tumpa, Chairman of ASEAN Law Association Indonesian National Committee, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Indonesia,

Excellencies and Honorable Chiefs Justice of Supreme Courts of ASEAN Member States,

Excellencies, Chairman and Members of the ASEAN Law Association,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by welcoming you all to Bali. For those of you who are visiting Bali again, I hope you have another pleasant and rewarding stay. I believe you will always find a memorable new experience in Bali.

For those first time visitors to this island of the god, I suggest that you spend time exploring its natural beauty and the wealth of its culture. Trust me, you will want to come back for more.

Let me also congratulate Mr. Harifin Tumpa and the ASEAN Law Association National Committee of Indonesia, on the excellent preparations for this eleventh General Assembly of the Association, which Indonesia is honored to host.

I am not a lawyer by training, but I trained myself to work with many good lawyers for their expert opinions. But then I realized it is not always easy to harmonize opinions among them. This leaves me pondering, what magic ALA has to bring harmony among their members.

Leaving that little challenge aside, the convening of this Assembly could not have been more timely. You hold it at a time when ASEAN is in the midst of transformation—from a loose association into a rule-based institution, though still people-centered and people-driven ASEAN Community.

ASEAN's three pillars—the Political and Security Community, the Economic Community, and the Socio-Cultural Community—are making rapid progress. We are witnessing an ASEAN that is becoming more politically stable, economically integrated, and socially cohesive. It is also becoming more responsive and responsible to its peoples.

Also of great importance is its transformation into a rules-based regional organization. Having adopted the ASEAN Charter in 2007, ASEAN now has a legal personality. It has a firm institutional framework, that provides its members with guidance as they work closely in concert.

Last year, during Indonesia's chairmanship, ASEAN was able to achieve important milestones. ASEAN acquired new vigor as a force for stability and progress.

In reflection on the current and future global trends, Indonesia adopted the theme "*ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations.*" The theme focused ASEAN to enhance its international responsibility, to help address the global challenges of our time.

Last year, we also made significant progress towards the attainment of the ASEAN Community by 2015. We saw to it that the regional architecture and the regional environment remain conducive to development.

Having committed itself to play a more robust role in the global arena, ASEAN today is focusing on a three-pronged agenda. First, to foster its vision of a just, peaceful and prosperous world. Second to help resolve common challenges. And third, to firmly establish itself as a reliable and responsible partner with other regions in the global community of nations.

Underpinning that agenda, we also strive to achieve an ASEAN Community that adheres to the rule of law, and contributes to a just and a more predictable international order.

Establishing such a Community poses a formidable challenge. But we have gladly taken up that challenge.

Thus, besides advocating and adhering to international law, we are also called upon to develop and set legal norms that will govern our relations. Relations not only among ourselves, but also with non-regional powers, and all for the benefit of our peoples.

Looking back, I am happy to mention that ASEAN has been continuously laying legal foundations, to govern inter-state relations.

In the politico-security field, we have developed an array of legally binding instruments. Many of the instruments has gained international recognition, including the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ) and its Plan of Action.

We have also instituted instruments for conflict resolution, and mechanisms for dispute settlement. These instruments are to ensure compliance and maintain peaceful relations among ASEAN Member States.

These achievements attest to the strength of our commitment to maintaining respect for one another's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and unity.

In the economic field, ASEAN has free trade agreements within the Association and with our strategic partners, including China, Japan, Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

We have also put in place an ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement to harmonize our investment policies, aimed at attracting and protecting ASEAN investors. This region-wide agreement will make intra-ASEAN investment more attractive and simple. Within these agreements, we have instituted dispute-settlement mechanisms to ensure compliance and greater predictability.

These achievements demonstrate that ASEAN has significantly advanced harmonization of rules, standards, and requirements, for the free flow of goods, services, investments, capital and skilled-labor within the region.

The next step is to ensure implementation at the national level. I am confident that when once implemented, our region's development will surge and bring us closer to an ASEAN Economic Community.

With regard to the socio-cultural pillar, I am pleased to mention that we are developing a region-wide system on labor. In partnership between labor-exporting and labor-importing countries, we aim to better regulate the recruitment of migrant workers, and adopt mechanisms to eliminate recruitment malpractices.

Apart from these, there remains a lot to be done. We must, for instance, create the legal basis for further progress the attainment of the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community.

Moreover, our efforts at creating legal norms should not be limited to our own immediate region. Developments in the South China Sea have made it necessary, that the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties be fully implemented. This means that we must work to reach an agreement on a Code of Conduct, that would serve as legal reference for interactions between ASEAN members and the PRC on the issue of the South China Sea. With this, we can ensure peace and stability in the area.

At the same time, we in ASEAN have decided to build a regional architecture, based on the last year's Declaration of the Sixth East Asia Summit, on the Principles of Mutually Beneficial Relations.

What I have been sharing thus far are some of the important developments at the regional level. In the case of Indonesia, we continue to make advances in our legal reform.

We are fully aware that legal reform is an essential part of our dedication to build a just and stable society. We are committed to ensuring that our judicial system is well respected, trustworthy and ensure legal certainty. A judicial system that is free of bribery and other corrupt practices.

As a result of this commitment, there were cases where corrupt judges and legal practitioners have been brought to justice, and have been imprisoned for the terms that they deserve. This is unprecedented in the history of Indonesia.

Of course, we admit that more needs to be done. We cannot complete our legal reforms overnight. But with God's help and the support of our people, Indonesia will achieve this goal with full confidence.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To realize the ASEAN Community that we have envisioned, ASEAN Member Countries must support and help one another. We must continue to

strengthen the rule of law, and enhance our judiciary systems, as well as the legal infrastructures in our region.

This task cannot be confined only to the Governments of ASEAN. We need to increase the participation and the sense of ownership among our civil society. Our peoples must have confidence that the laws that are passed, interpreted and enforced are for their own good.

The ASEAN Law Association is one important component of the region's civil society, and should be deeply involved in this process.

I have every confidence that in enhancing member states' capacity in the legal field, the ASEAN Law Association can generate fresh ideas and formulate concrete measures. The Association can help ensure that we remain faithful to our vision of a people-centered ASEAN, where all our actions and programs uphold the rule of law.

An effective and just legal system is one of the main foundations for the ASEAN Community, that will come about in 2015. Given that strong base, the laws and legal systems of ASEAN countries will complement one another, and thereby accelerate and facilitate regional integration.

This does not mean that ASEAN should combine or merge the diverse legal systems in ASEAN countries. That is not our goal. But there has to be a process of harmonization among the different legal systems.

As a final note, I would like to suggest for the ASEAN Law Association to consider seriously the following three issues.

First, you could provide a platform for the study and analysis of the laws of ASEAN countries, with a view to harmonizing them. You are already doing this to a certain extent. By expertly identifying legal issues of common concern, you would be rendering a great and valuable service to ASEAN member states and to the region. The peoples of ASEAN will be grateful to you for that.

Second, you should direct your cooperation at enhancing professionalism and integrity among the legal professions of each member country. These include state attorneys, judges, legal academicians, and legal practitioners. The Association can facilitate exchanges of knowledge and experiences among its members. It can also identify and set benchmarks for best practices.

Third, you need to expand engagement and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders in carrying out your activities. You must reach out to government institutions, private sectors, the academic world, civil society organizations, mass media and other relevant parties. Inclusiveness promotes

a better public understanding of the Association's role and task, and generates public support.

I understand that to lawyers time is money, so to cut the cost, I will end my remarks here.

Lastly, I wish you a productive meeting and every success in your deliberations in the days ahead. And it is with pleasure that I declare the Eleventh General Assembly of the ASEAN Law Association open.

Thank you.

*Wassalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh,*

*Om Santhi, Santhi, Santhi Om.*