

PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS COMMUNIQUE

First session at Ambassador level  
of the dialogue between the  
European Communities and the  
ASEAN countries

The first meeting at Ambassador level, in the context of the dialogue procedure between the European Communities and the ASEAN countries, was held in Brussels on 29 November 1977 at the seat of the Council of the European Communities.

This meeting was chaired jointly by H.E. Mr Carlos FAUSTINO, Philippines' Ambassador and Chairman of the ASEAN Boards Committee, for the ASEAN countries and by H.E. Mr Joseph VAN DER MEULEN, Belgian Permanent Representative and Chairman of the Permanent Representatives' Committee, for the Community.

The ASEAN countries were represented by their Heads of Missions to the European Communities. The Communities were represented by the Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives of the Member States and by representatives of the Commission <sup>(1)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> A list of participants is attached hereto.

In recent years the Community and the ASEAN countries have, by means of specific acts, demonstrated on numerous occasions their common will to strengthen and intensify further the links between the two regions. This will originates, on the one hand, in the ASEAN countries' desire to introduce in their international relations a larger element of balance. On the other hand, the Community supports these countries' efforts to establish ASEAN as a regional entity whose political and economic importance is increasing.

An initial practical demonstration of this mutual will was the exchange of letters in 1975 between the Commission and the ASEAN countries which led to the establishment of a Commission/ASEAN joint study group in the context of which fruitful co-operation has developed since then.

In response to an initiative by the ASEAN countries the Council, in June 1977, sought to add a new dimension to the links already existing between both regions. It was thus agreed to commence a dialogue at Ambassador level in order to permit the ASEAN countries to have direct contacts through the Council with the Member States of the Communities and to hold exchanges of views on problems of common interest.

Today's meeting was the first time that this new procedure had been implemented and at the end of it both sides were satisfied with the friendly atmosphere which had reigned and noted with satisfaction that their discussions had been held in a practical and pragmatic fashion.

The following aspects of the discussions held on the different specific problems on the agenda for the meeting should be mentioned.

1. The meeting firstly allowed both sides to take stock of the developments which have occurred recently in relations between the two regions. In this context, particular mention was made of the relatively modest presence of the Community in the ASEAN region if this presence was compared with that of other economic entities.
2. The ASEAN countries formulated detailed arguments in favour of the introduction, on a bilateral level between the two regions, of a "Stabex scheme" for their exports of commodities; the Community pointed out that it adopted a multilateral approach on this matter and that an international study was at present under way which stemmed from the initiative taken in particular by it in the context of the North-South dialogue.
3. The ASEAN countries indicated their concern that the Community - faced with economic difficulties the gravity of which could not be denied - had adopted or might be considering the adoption of measures which would have the effect of limiting exports of products of particular importance to the ASEAN. ASEAN stressed the need for consultation to allow for a closer examination, prior to such measures being made, of all implications which might arise for the exporting countries concerned. The Community assured ASEAN of its desire to comply fully with its international obligations, in particular those entered into under GATT.

4. ASEAN gave a detailed account of several measures which would allow a better use to be made of the system of generalised preferences. The Community pointed out that these comments were made at a particularly opportune moment since the problems concerned are covered by a current Commission proposal, encompassing these needs, which is at present pending in the Council.
  
5. It was noted that ASEAN expressed its appreciation of the assistance given by the Community to two of its Member countries under the Community's programme on financial and technical aid to the non-associated countries (aid to rural development). ASEAN also attributes great importance to the recognition of its regional identity in the implementation of the Community's said programme and the programme on aid to trade promotion. The Community stated its willingness to examine in an open and positive frame of mind the possibilities of fulfilling this wish, while satisfying the criteria governing the implementation of the Community programmes in question.
  
6. As for development co-operation projects not covered at this stage by the programmes mentioned above, ASEAN noted that the dialogue could provide an opportunity to examine to what extent such ASEAN projects could be carried out with the assistance of certain Member States. The Community said that these suggestions should be examined more closely, taking into account the Resolution approved by the Council on the day before this meeting.

The purpose of this Resolution - over and above existing co-ordination arrangements for Community and Member States' aid - is, to better co-ordinate the bilateral activities of two or more Member States in a country or for a group of particular developing countries or when the implementation of joint projects is involved.

7. Both sides pointed out the importance for each of them to intensify European investments in ASEAN, bearing in mind in particular the potential of that region; the Community was particularly satisfied with the large number of bilateral agreements already concluded between Member States belonging to both regions, these agreements giving reasonable guarantees to European investors. It was pleased that ASEAN had expressed a desire to complete the arrangements already existing in this field. Finally, both sides noted the success of the first conference on industrial co-operation held in April 1977 in Brussels which will be followed by a second conference on the same subject planned for the third quarter of 1978 in Jakarta.
  
8. ASEAN stressed the importance of measures to encourage transfers of technology, which have immediate and direct benefits to ASEAN industrialisation plans. In this connection, the Community took note of a series of specific activities which ASEAN considered particularly appropriate and of the suggestion to set up a "Centre for promotion of transfer of technology". Finally they observed that the first seminar on the transfer of technology held in September 1977 in Singapore had produced very satisfactory results and that it would be followed by a second seminar in 1978.

9. The Community informed ASEAN of the fact that the possibility of subsequently holding an ASEAN-EEC meeting at Ministerial level had been discussed in a positive spirit at a recent meeting of the Council of the European Communities. It was stressed that the new dialogue could make a definite contribution to the preparation of such a meeting and that this item could usefully appear on the agenda for the next session.
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LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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