



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

General Department of ASEAN

PRESS RELEASE

**Outcomes of the Plenary Session of the 56th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting,
Meeting of the Commission of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and
ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Interface Meeting with ASEAN Intergovernmental
Commission on Human Rights Representatives**

Phnom Penh, 11 July 2023 - At the invitation of **Her Excellency Retno L.P. Marsudi**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, **His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister PRAK Sokhonn**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, attended the Plenary Session of the 56th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Meeting of the Commission of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and ASEAN Foreign Ministers Interface Meeting with ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Representatives in Jakarta on 11 July 2023.

The 56th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting

The Ministers deliberated on ASEAN Community Building efforts vis-a-vis the evolving regional architecture under the theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth" and Indonesia's priorities centred around the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

The Ministers welcomed the progress made in achieving ASEAN's deliverables for 2023, including the development of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, the strengthening of ASEAN's capacity and institutional effectiveness, and to support Timor-Leste to become a full member of ASEAN.

The Ministers underlined the significance of upholding ASEAN Centrality and unity in ASEAN's engagement with external partners. The Ministers looked forward to the signing of the Instrument of Accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 12 July 2023, and welcomed the Chair's effort to have Mexico, Panama, Serbia and Spain accede to the TAC in September 2023 on the sidelines of the 43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits. The Ministers granted the status of ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partnership to South Africa.

The Ministers exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern and interest as well as other pressing issues that warrant joint attention and response. The Ministers stressed on the strategic importance of safeguarding peace, security, stability, and prosperity in cooperation with all external partners. ASEAN-led mechanisms remain the fulcrum in facilitating constructive dialogue and cooperation, contributing to the development of the evolving regional architecture in line with the AOIP.

During the Meeting, **His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Prak Sokhonn** emphasized that in engaging with external partners, ASEAN needs to maintain its Centrality, both in words and, in deeds, amid rising geopolitical competition among major powers while stressing on the principles of openness, transparency, and inclusiveness. He further emphasised the need to further deepen regional economic integration through free, fair, open, and inclusive trade among Member States and with external partners. In addition, he underscored the need for ASEAN to explore new sources of growth such as digitalization, green transition, technology, and innovation in order to make ASEAN future-proof and future-ready.

Meeting of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Commission

The Meeting reiterated the commitment to preserving Southeast Asian region as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and free of all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the SEANWFZ Treaty, and stressed on the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Treaty and its Plan of Action (2023-2027).

The Meeting adopted the Concept Note on the Possible Joint Initiative of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) and ASEAN in 2023 which aims to promote cooperation through the sharing of lessons learnt and best practices between the two Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

During the Meeting, **His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister** emphasised on the merit of adopting a “first-come-first-served” approach for the signing of the Protocol to the SEANWFZ Treaty without reservations to encourage other Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to follow suit. He further reaffirmed Cambodia’s support for China to sign the Protocol first and, as proposed by Chair, this could be arranged back-to-back with the 43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits in September this year.

ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting Interface with ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Representatives

The Meeting took note of the 2023 Annual Report (July 2022 to July 2023) of AICHR and approved the AICHR's Priority Programmes/Activities in 2024 with a view to further forge collaboration among ASEAN Member States to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in the region.

His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister shared his views that, due to ASEAN's rich cultural and political diversity, each ASEAN Member State adopts a different approach to human rights to advance their societal agenda based on their respective national context. He also suggested that the AICHR should consider publishing an annual status report, which compiles activities and programmes that each Member State has done to promote human rights in their respective countries.

Bilateral Meetings on the Sidelines of the Meetings

His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister also took the opportunity to engage in bilateral meetings with **His Excellency Bendito dos Santos Freitas**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste, and **His Excellency Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof**, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Brunei Darussalam, to further strengthen bilateral relations and exchanged views on matters of common interest and concern. END