

Statement by Mr. Ho Quang Trung

At the session on “Initiatives to Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

The High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Ha Noi, Viet Nam, March 2017

H.E Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam,

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under Secretary General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary General of ASEAN, I would like to thank the Vietnamese Government and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) for inviting us to the High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Meeting is a valuable opportunity for LLDCs, transit countries, development partners and international organisations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to look into comprehensive and coherent policy solutions to develop cooperation in transit and trade facilitation, especially after the recent entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

ASEAN is prominently characterised by its dynamics, great diversity and different magnitudes of economic development within the region. ASEAN membership consists of least developed countries, landlocked and transit developing countries. ASEAN, therefore, recognises the importance of equitable and sustainable economic development as an integral part of the region's growth strategy. In this connection, ASEAN is committed to strengthening our cooperation with other regional and international organisations and development partners to support the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for Decade 2014 – 2024 (VPoA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The ASEAN regional economic integration consistently contributes to the realisation of the goals as set out in the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The development of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is envisioned to create a deeply integrated and highly cohesive ASEAN economy with a more equitable, inclusive economic growth and enhanced connectivity and sectoral cooperation. These objectives are being translated into concrete strategic plans of actions for the period 2016 – 2025 in various sectors in line with and in support of the vision and goals of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 that aims to connect the ASEAN Member States in the areas of sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility.

For ASEAN, the movement of goods in transit plays a crucial role to promote trade and ensures sustainable development throughout the region. ASEAN Member States concluded the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit (AFAFGIT) in 1998 and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Inter-State Transport (AFAFIST) in 2009 to simplify and harmonise transport and customs procedures for goods in transit and inter-state transport

of goods. The ASEAN Framework Agreement on Multimodal Transport (AFAMT) was concluded in 2005 to facilitate the development and operationalisation of efficient multimodal transport services adequate to the requirements of international trade. These agreements, once fully implemented by all ASEAN Members, will provide a harmonised and concrete legal and institutional framework governing transport, customs, immigration and other trade-related procedures in the region.

On trade facilitation, significant progress has been made with a view to reducing time and cost of doing business within the region. This is the outcome of on-going process of simplification, modernization of customs and trade related procedures, transparency enhancement of non-tariff measures, harmonization of standards, technical regulations and negotiations for mutual recognition arrangements. These have been pursued through regional trade facilitation initiatives such as the Rules of Origins Self-Certification Pilot Projects, the ASEAN Trade Repository, the ASEAN Single Window, ASEAN Customs Transit System and the ASEAN Solutions to Services, Investment, and Trade.

However, there remains much work to be done to fully realise the AEC 2025 objectives, including the enhancement of the movement of goods in transit and trade facilitation measures in the region. ASEAN envisages many challenges due to constraints on resources, technical expertise and capacity to be able to tackle different issues ranging from the institutional framework to physical infrastructure development. For that reason, ASEAN strongly encourages international organisations and development partners to foster cooperation with ASEAN at the regional level or with individual ASEAN Member States to implement successfully the AEC Blueprint 2025, the VPoA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on the basis of mutual and long-term benefits.

I wish the Meeting every success.

Thank you.