



**REMARKS BY MR GEORGE YEO, MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SINGAPORE AND CHAIRMAN OF
THE 41ST ASEAN STANDING COMMITTEE**

Directors-General

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Let me begin by welcoming all of you to Singapore for this final Meeting of the 41st ASEAN Standing Committee. Much has happened since last August when I met you at your First Meeting.
2. ASEAN's progress could not have been possible without the effort and dedication of officials like yourselves. Your persistence and perseverance have kept the ball rolling, keeping ASEAN in the game. The ASC performs a critical function in the entire ASEAN machinery. ASEAN is like an elaborate timepiece with the ASC at its heart ensuring that all the parts are in sync. Your work often goes unnoticed because it is behind the clock face. Sometimes, it is only when things go wrong that we appreciate how indispensable the function of the ASC is.
3. The past year has been a challenging one for ASEAN. We have worked hard to draft the Charter. We are working equally hard now to get it ratified by the Bangkok Summit later this year. The ASC has been busy with the various blueprints and workplans. We have stepped up our cooperation with dialogue partners. ASEAN also had to deal with the situation in Myanmar, both the political situation and disaster relief and recovery following Cyclone Nargis. ASEAN helped build a bridge of trust between the Myanmar Government and the international community.

4. With the signing of the Charter by our Leaders last November, ASEAN has opened a new chapter in our history. ASEAN will establish the Committee of Permanent Representatives or CPR, on 1 January next year. The CPR will take over much of the regional-level coordination that is under the ASC's purview. The Directors-General, who remain heads of their National Secretariats, will focus on co-ordination at the national level. However, the division of duties should not be a stark one. We need the CPR and the ASEAN DGs to work closely together and keep the ASEAN machinery humming along.

5. In closing, let me express my deepest appreciation to all of you for your wonderful contribution to ASEAN in the past year, to Secretary-General Surin, Jacky and all of you, the ASEAN DGs, able men and women, for all the wonderful work you have done. We look forward to the next ASC under Thailand's chairmanship. I hereby bring the 4th Meeting of the 41st ASEAN Standing Committee to a close.

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SINGAPORE
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