

WELCOME ADDRESS BY
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE OF MALAYSIA,
TUN TENGKU MAIMUN BINTI TUAN MAT
CHAIR, ASEAN LAW ASSOCIATION MALAYSIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 44TH ALA GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING
SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR
21 OCTOBER 2023

SALUTATIONS

- (1) The Honourable The Chief Justice of Singapore cum President of the ASEAN Law Association (ALA), Sundaresh Menon;
- (2) Chief Justices of ASEAN nations;
- (3) Chairpersons and Heads of Delegation of ALA National Committees;
- (4) Members of the ALA Governing Council;
- (5) Mr. Paul Quan,
Secretary-General of the ASEAN Law Association (ALA);
- (6) Honourable Judges from the ASEAN Judiciaries;

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and good morning.

INTRODUCTION

[1] On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I would like to extend a heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you. It is a privilege to host the 44th ALA Governing Council Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, especially as it marks nearly a decade since we last had the honour in 2014.

[2] As we congregate here today, it is a perfect occasion to reflect on our journey thus far and celebrate our shared accomplishments. These achievements are a testament to our unity and shared vision, and they have been made possible by the dynamic leadership of our President, the Chief Justice of Singapore, Sundaresh Menon. Alongside him, we have the invaluable assistance of the Secretary-General of ALA, Mr. Paul Quan – who has been pivotal in ensuring the smooth execution of our initiatives.

[3] I would like to also express my heartfelt appreciation to the ALA National Committees from the ten ASEAN nations for your unwavering support and steadfast commitment to the initiatives, programmes, and undertakings of ALA. Today's meeting carries profound importance as it not only marks another milestone in our journey but also sets forth the strategic direction for ALA and our crucial multilateral partnership.

OBJECTIVES OF ALA AND THE MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIP

[4] Undoubtedly, the vision of a united and dynamic ASEAN has found strength in embracing its differences, where each Member State leverages on its own unique histories, cultures, legal traditions, and legal

systems. The essence of this legal cooperation and collaboration lies in our collective effort to harmonise the laws and formulate an integrated and coordinated cross-border legal framework within ASEAN. These efforts are only possible with the generous and gracious exchange of ideas and expertise among one another, forming the bedrock of our collective strength.

[5] Harmonising does not entail assimilating or discarding our roots. What it entails is streamlining rules and laws that respect our individual legal systems while strengthening our common goal: upholding the Rule of Law. With cooperation and understanding as strong as ours, we can confidently navigate through the rise of novel challenges, particularly in this digital age.

HARMONISATION – A COMMON ASEAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK

[6] The harmonization of laws within the ASEAN region and the establishment of an ASEAN legal framework have yielded positive outcomes such as facilitating cross-border transactions, trade and commerce, the flow of capital and resources, as well as the exchange of knowledge. Above all, it creates a stable, transparent, and predictable environment for trade, businesses, and commerce to thrive within ASEAN.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF ALA

[7] Apart from legal harmonization, ALA being a melting pot of legal professionals consisting of Judges, lawyers, and legal scholars within ASEAN continues to play a vital role in reinforcing diplomatic relations among ASEAN Member States. It is noteworthy to emphasise that ALA

was given a special mandate under the ASEAN Charter as the sole accredited civil society organisation for law by ASEAN, to strengthen ASEAN legal cooperation and the development of legal frameworks and infrastructure within ASEAN.

[8] Our multilateral cooperation does not stop with ASEAN. It extends to beyond this region to develop strategic partnerships globally. In my view, these efforts for cooperation beyond ASEAN strengthen the much-needed global ties, especially in upholding the Rule of Law, promoting judicial education and training, and the developing solutions for uncommon issues of the present and future alike.

INITIATIVES AND COLLABORATIONS OF ALA

[9] As we gather on this occasion of the 44th ALA Governing Council Meeting, we look forward to the many significant initiatives undertaken, overseen, or supervised by ALA, including the various Working Groups and Standing Committees under ALA, and most notably the ASEAN Law Institute (“AsnLI”).

[10] The establishment of the AsnLI, in my view is a significant affirmation to ALA’s devotion for the realisation of the ASEAN Motto of “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.¹ The AsnLI is instrumental in the advancement of ALA’s objectives, mission, and vision as it supports ALA’s core functions. The AsnLI works hand in hand to support the various policies advocated by ALA, ALA’s National Committees, Standing Committees, Ad Hoc Committees, and sub-committees.

¹ ASEAN Law Institute, About Us, accessible at <https://aseanlaw.institute/about-us/>.

[11] The role of the AsnLI is indispensable; it is an important intellectual hub and knowledge centre for ALA and the ASEAN legal community, especially with respect to efforts to study, research, investigate, produce expert reports, and present papers to the various ALA Standing and Ad Hoc Committees.²

[12] ALA has made and will continue to make significant strides in legal education and training, particularly with the recent launch of the Virtual Training Marketplace. This platform provides an avenue for cross-border legal training opportunities and aids in facilitating the supply and demand of legal talent among ASEAN Member States. It not only expedites the exchange of legal knowledge, skills, and experience but also enhances these aspects. The Virtual Marketplace, the product of hard work and dedication of ALA Singapore, chaired by the Honourable Justice Lee Seiu Kin, is a monumental step in fostering cooperation and convergence in the ASEAN region.

CONCLUSION

[13] In closing, I would like to reiterate that an inclusive exchange of ideas has been the hallmark of the ALA Governing Council Meeting. May we seize this opportunity to work collaboratively and strive to make a meaningful difference in the ASEAN legal landscape.

Thank you.

² *Ibid.*