

**OPENING SPEECH AND DISCUSSION BY**  
**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF MALAYSIA,**  
**AND CACJ CHAIR, TUN TENGKU MAIMUN BINTI TUAN MAT**  
**CACJ RETREAT**  
**SHANGRILA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR**  
**20 OCTOBER 2023**

**SALUTATIONS**

Honourable Chief Justices and Heads of Delegation of the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ);

Honourable Judges, Judicial Officers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and good morning.

[1] It gives me great privilege to welcome you back to Malaysia for the historic CACJ Retreat. This occasion brings with it a mix of emotions as we observed some notable changes in the judicial composition of our Council over the past year. It is with heavy heart that we have to bid farewell to Chief Justice Chotiwat Leangprasert, who was a member of the Council during his tenure as the President of the Supreme Court of the Kingdom of Thailand. I had the distinct honour of knowing Chief Justice Leangprasert during the 10<sup>th</sup> CACJ Meeting held last year.

[2] The learned Chief Justice has overseen the Working Group on ASEAN+3 Meeting helmed by CACJ Thailand which had successfully

led the Inaugural ASEAN+ meeting with the Judiciaries of Korea, Japan and China. We owe him our incessant gratitude.

[3] Additionally, I would like to acknowledge and bid farewell to two of our CACJ stalwarts who have retired - the Honourable Htun Htun Oo, the Chief Justice of Myanmar and The Honorable Dith Munt, the Chief Justice of Cambodia. Both Justice Htun Htun Oo and Justice Dith Munt have left a profound imprint on our institutional well-being and resilience. Their unwavering support and sheer commitment to the growth and development of the CACJ's cause since its inception have been precious. We record our appreciation to them and extend our best wishes for a fulfilling and joyful retirement to them both.

[4] Concurrently, it is my pleasure to extend heartfelt congratulations and a cordial welcome to the newly appointed Chief Justice of Thailand, The Honourable Mrs. Anocha Chevitsophon and The Honourable Tha Htay the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of The Union of Myanmar.

[5] We look forward to your invaluable insights and contributions that will undoubtedly enhance and elevate the stature of the CACJ, and to your impactful leadership and commitment, and trust that your tenure will usher in further progress and development for the betterment of the CACJ in the upcoming years. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Honourable Chib Keng, the newly appointed Chief Justice of Cambodia, who I understand had just taken the oath of office yesterday.

## **THE CACJ RETREAT**

[6] The CACJ Retreat this year holds a particular significance as it marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inception of CACJ. This is not just an occasion of a retreat, but a momentous juncture in our CACJ journey.

[7] CACJ was formed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013 and we have come a long way since then having created an initiative designed to foster cooperation and shared understanding among the Judiciaries of the ASEAN Member States.

[8] Our organisation has grown both in recognition and influence. In its first 10 years, the CACJ has accomplished notable feats, such as gaining accreditation as an ASEAN affiliate,<sup>1</sup> forming eight Working and Study Groups<sup>2</sup> to fortify strategic alliances, and launching of the ASEAN Judiciaries Portal in 2018. Other significant milestones include the adoption of the CACJ Charter and Rules, the publication of the CACJ Model Principles of Judicial Conduct, and the creation of a platform for dialogues with Judiciaries and organisations beyond ASEAN through ASEAN+ Meetings.

[9] As we enter the next decade, we ask ourselves: how will we shape the path of this esteemed Council? What is the way forward? These fundamental questions require our collective views and long-term considerations. Last year, we convened in Kuala Lumpur for the 10<sup>th</sup> CACJ meeting. This year, we meet again as a close gathering. This

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<sup>1</sup> 19th of January, 2017-CACJ was officially accredited as an entity associated with ASEAN under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter.

<sup>2</sup> We now have 8 working groups covering such diverse areas as:

- a) Working Group on Judicial Education and Training
- b) Working Group on Facilitating Service of Civil Processes within ASEAN
- c) Working Group on Case Management and Court Technology
- d) Working Group on Cross-border Disputes Involving Children
- e) Working Group on ASEAN Judiciaries Portal
- f) Working Group on Future Work of CACJ
- g) Working Group on ASEAN+ Meetings
- h) Working Group on the Conduct of Videoconferencing Hearings

CACJ retreat, agreed upon last year and set to be held every decade, offers a unique platform for strategic planning and unrestricted dialogue. The retreat's primary goal is to encourage a more unified approach to enhancing Judicial co-operation within ASEAN.

[10] We began this Retreat yesterday at the Palace of Justice in Putrajaya, with a Commemoration Ceremony to celebrate the CACJ's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the launch of the Model Rules.

[11] Today, we embark on the second half of our Retreat to contemplate and weigh the future direction of our esteemed Council.

[12] The CACJ Retreat presents the ASEAN Chief Justices with a valuable occasion to assess the CACJ's triumphs and tribulations in a comprehensive manner, and to ponder on how the CACJ can stay pertinent and reactive to imminent developments and issues. As we enter the beginning of the next decade, let us renew our commitment to CACJ's mission, and aspire to elevate the CACJ to unprecedented levels of success.

[13] And as the CACJ evolves into a more robust platform for facilitating inter-ASEAN Judicial collaboration, it becomes increasingly vital to strategize for long-term planning and sincere discourse among the ASEAN Chief Justices.

[14] In that regard, we have all received the comprehensive discussion paper meticulously prepared by the CACJ Secretariat. This document serves as a guide to navigate us through the course of our discussion which will be anchored on the following five (5) important key topics, namely:

- a) Capacity Building;
- b) ASEAN Judiciaries Portal;
- c) Judicial and Court Excellence;
- d) Co-operation Frameworks within ASEAN; and
- e) Outreach and External Relations.

## **CONCLUSION**

[15] I am certain that all of us stand to benefit enormously from the discussions that are to unfold.

Thank you.