

Remarks
by
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At the
ASEAN Special Summit on COVID-19
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- *His Majesty the Sultan, Esteemed Leaders of the ASEAN Countries,*
- *Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

First of all, I am delighted to participate in this ASEAN Special Summit on COVID-19, and I would like to highly appreciate the initiative made by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, at the time when all ten ASEAN Member States as well as the rest of the world are facing dire consequences of COVID-19. Taking this opportunity, I would like to warmly welcome the attendance of His Excellency MUHYIDDIN YASSIN, Prime Minister of Malaysia, at this Special Summit.

COVID-19 has in fact impacted rapidly and substantially, and increasingly spread from one sector to another. Actually, the spread of COVID-19 has deterred the development of ASEAN, not only in the health sector but also in other sectors such as tourism, trade, finance, industry, and particularly, and the livelihood of our people. Upon this occasion, on behalf of the Royal Government and the people of Cambodia, I would like to extend our deepest condolences and sympathies to the Governments and people of ASEAN Member States for the losses of lives caused by COVID-19.

As far as Cambodia is concerned, we have assessed that the COVID-19 is at the small cluster stage, in which the majority is imported cases. In an effort to fight against COVID-19, as applied in other ASEAN Member States, Cambodia has imposed strict, firm and rigorous measures in three different fronts: (a) preventing imported cases into Cambodia, (b) preventing local transmission within Cambodia, and (c)

treating COVID-19 infected patients. To achieve the highest efficiency, Cambodia has established a **National Committee to Combat COVID-19**, a joint command in leading, introducing and implementing measures to fight against COVID-19. Furthermore, Cambodia has decided to postpone the celebration of the Khmer New Year, and imposed ban on inter-provincial movements of people.

Recently, the majority of measures introduced by countries have mostly targeted the fight against COVID-19 domestically. Within the frameworks of globalization and regional integration, I am confident that the containment of this disease cannot be done within one country; and the success in fighting against COVID-19 requires an in-depth and comprehensive cooperation across sectors. In short, ASEAN has to unite together in fighting against COVID-19 as a common cause. In this spirit, I would like to share some of my views as follows:

First. As COVID-19 is a new disease and many related aspects are unknown, ASEAN indeed needs to: (one) enhance the timely exchange and sharing of best practices, information, data, techniques, experiences and medical knowledge on the disease in the field of preventing, controlling, diagnosing, treating and monitoring; (two) further strengthen existing ASEAN cooperation mechanism, as well as cooperation with international organizations and dialogue partners in public health sector in order to tackle challenges resulted from COVID-19 in an effective and comprehensive manner; and (three) provide supports among ASEAN Member States, including the sharing of resources, techniques, medical equipment and supplies, etc. In this spirit, the Royal Government of Cambodia would like to express our highest appreciation for the establishment of a “**COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund**” in addressing necessary needs of medical equipment and supplies for instance.

Second. ASEAN, as a community of common destiny, should enhance closer coordination and dialogue among Member States ahead of an introduction of any measures, avoiding heavy socio-economic damages within the region though unilateral measures such as a closure of cross-border checkpoints without prior notice, which can possibly

affect production, supply chains, trade flows between countries in the region and the entire regional economy, particularly travelling, businesses, and the daily lives of the citizens living in the ASEAN region.

Third. Since the fighting against COVID-19 requires significant funding, supplies, and human resources, what Cambodia could share as an experience is through fostering and cultivating a culture of sharing, for instance, from public institutions toward the people; from development partners and NGOs toward the people; from high-income groups toward the society and the low-income groups, and between people at community levels. This culture has not only helped relieve pressures on the national budget, but also established a united movement, a spirit of one nation and a catalyst to fighting against COVID-19.

Fourth. We have to avoid racial discrimination and the attitude of blame game, which can lead to a breakup of unity, while the rest of the world is trying to remain united in fighting against COVID-19. In the spirit of humanitarian and international solidarity, Cambodia has allowed the **Westerdam cruise ship**, loaded with more than 2,200 passengers, to dock in the morning of February 13, 2020. So far, Cambodia has not only provided treatment to Cambodian but also foreign citizens free of charge: 2 Indonesians, 13 Malaysians, 1 Chinese, 5 British, 40 French, 1 Canadian, 1 Belgian and 2 Americans.

Fifth. We have to continue strengthening the spirit of mutual assistance within ASEAN, especially for those stranded or suffered from COVID-19. In this sense, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to ASEAN Member States for coordinating and facilitating stranded Cambodian in a number of airports. Cambodia in return has provided the same treatment. On March 25, 2020, Cambodia indeed allowed Malaysia to send a special airplane to pick up 111 Malaysian citizens who have stranded in Cambodia.

Sixth. ASEAN has to consider strategies toward recovering and boosting economic growth once COVID-19 ceases. Cambodia is of the view that ASEAN needs to further accelerate the implementation of existing plans and mechanisms, such as promoting the regional economic integration, abolishing non-tariff measures, and enhancing

trade facilitation. In addition, we have to enhance the implementation of ASEAN's integration initiatives by focusing on: (a) promoting micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as well as technological and innovative start-ups, (b) enhancing public-private partnership in digital economy, and (c) developing digital human resources and skills.

Thank You!