

## CLOSING STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ASEAN WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL LEGAL COOPERATION IN TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS CASES

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Like all good things, we must now come to the end of our Workshop. I wish to take this opportunity to set out, very clearly, what we have done and where we intend to go. It is very clear to me, as your Chair, that this workshop has been an important step forward for ASEAN and for each of our countries. We must therefore make sure that the important achievements of the past three days will not be wasted.

Two years ago, SOMTC adopted the *ASEAN Practitioner Guidelines on Trafficking in Persons*. The Guidelines are an important source of guidance and authority for the work we have been doing. They affirm some of the basic rules that should continue to guide our work.

These include:

- The importance of the principle of 'extradite or prosecute';
- The central place of the ASEAN Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in our regional response to trafficking in persons;
- The need to ensure that national laws, procedures and practices are harmonized so that we have the best chance of working effectively together;
- The need to promote knowledge and skills development among criminal justice officials in the area of international legal cooperation;
- The importance of tracing and seizing the proceeds of trafficking; and
- The significance of strong extradition procedures to eliminating 'safe havens' for traffickers.

I believe that our work over the past several days has affirmed the value of these standards. It has reminded us that international legal cooperation is too complex, too difficult to just happen. Things will only change if we decide it is important enough and if we make a concerted effort to surmount the many obstacles that are in our way.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With your permission I will summarize, very briefly, what we have agreed will happen once we leave this meeting.

You have all received copies of the rapporteurs' reports from each of the three working groups sessions. Those reports set out, in summary form, your responses to the various questions and issues raised by the case study. They give us good and recent information on how international legal cooperation operates in each ASEAN country. It is our intention to check that information against what is in the draft Handbook. This will make sure that the handbook is as complete and accurate as possible.

We ask that you take the reports back to your capitals and make sure that the information contained in them, at least as far as your own country is concerned, is correct. Any comments or amendments should be sent to the ARTIP Secretariat within the next two weeks. In the usual ASEAN way, we will assume that if we do not hear from you, you are happy with the text.

A similar procedure is being adopted for the draft Handbook as a whole. We have your comments on the Handbook and your very helpful suggestions for improvement. All of this input will be taken into account during the revision and finalization of the draft. If you have any further comments, corrections or suggestions for improvement, you will need to get those to us within the next two weeks.

I apologize for the tight deadlines as I realize you are all very busy. However, I'm sure you will all agree that this is best done while the discussions are still fresh in our minds. I am very sure that you will all be happy with the final result.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is incumbent upon me to extend my thanks to the many persons who have worked so hard to make this workshop a success.

In my opening address I mentioned to you that ARTIP has been a strong and long-standing friend of ASEAN. We have been fortunate to once gain benefit from the expertise and efficiency of our ARTIP friends. On behalf of SOMTC and all delegates I extend my sincere thanks to the ARTIP team and to the Australian Government, which funds this valuable project.

Thanks are also due to UNODC for providing such important technical expertise in the persons of Ms Candice, Dr Jay, Mr Lee and Mr Michel and, very importantly, for working so hard to secure funding for this important event. We also thank, of course, the European Union, which provided that funding to UNODC.

Finally, I turn to the delegates. Your expertise, hard work and willingness to share experiences is what has made this workshop such a success. As Chairperson of the Workshop I thank you for your support and cooperation and congratulate you on what you have achieved. You can be proud and I believe that ASEAN can be proud of its criminal justice practitioners.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We should not underestimate the difficulty of the task ahead. Trafficking in persons is a very difficult crime to investigate and prosecute successfully. Stronger and more efficient international legal cooperation is critical to improved criminal justice responses. However such cooperation requires increased knowledge, greater skills and higher levels of political commitment. I urge you to return to your homes with renewed vigor. I urge you to work, from within, to ensure that ASEAN can continue to be a leader in this area. Our region and our people deserve nothing less.

I thank you once more for the honor and pleasure of chairing this 2009 workshop and wish you safe travels as we all proceed back to our homes.