

*As of 6 Nov 23.45 hrs.*

**Remarks**  
**by**  
**His Excellency Somchai Wongsawat**  
**Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand**  
**at the Opening session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACMECS Summit**  
**7 November 2008 Hanoi, Vietnam**

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**Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung,**  
**Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen,**  
**Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh,**  
**Prime Minister General Thein Sein,**  
**Excellencies,**  
**Distinguished Participants,**

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to participate in this Third ACMECS Summit in Hanoi. As the GMS Minister attending the GMS Summit in Vientiane in March this year, I feel very much privileged to further our cooperation under ACMECS, which is an integral part of the GMS framework.

Promoting political security, socio-economic and cultural relations with our neighbors have always been top priority in our foreign policy. This has been demonstrated by our close cooperation under both the GMS and ACMECS frameworks.

**Excellencies,**

We are very much encouraged by the progress and successful outcomes of our cooperation under the ACMECS framework. In the development of transport linkages during the past few years, we have seen a sharp increase in trade, investment and tourism among ACMECS countries as a result of the progress in the development of transportation and communications infrastructure and in simplifying cross-border inspection procedures.

The progress of the East-West Economic Corridor projects, the completion and the opening of the Second Mekong Bridge linking Mukdahan and Savannakhet, and the Haiwan Tunnel in Da Nang have substantially

facilitated and increased the movement of goods and peoples between Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam. In addition, the improvement of roads connecting our countries along the border areas has helped increase cross-border trade, investment and tourism in the region.

I wish to confirm our commitment to further cooperate and support the development of transportation network under GMS flagship projects, North-South / East-West and Southern Economic Corridor, which are also major ACMECS projects. Thailand will continue to support the development of transportation network with ACMECS member countries so as to complete the missing links of the GMS projects, such as the road linking Chiang Rai-Houaysay - Louang Nam tha - Boten, the third Mekong bridge linking Nakorn Phanom – Kam Muan, the construction of the road linkage from Mae Sod – Myawaddy – Kawkareik, and the improvement of the Chong Sangam – Anlong Veng – Siem Riep route.

In the tourism sector, we believe the ACMECS Single Visa Agreement between Thailand and Cambodia signed last year to promote the concept of “Five Countries One Destination” will help increase the number of tourists to our ACMECS region.

At the last GMS Summit, Thailand proposed the GMS tourism loop to link historical and nature destinations. The private sector was invited to invest in logistics infrastructure development. I hope that the route will one day become a reality.

### **Excellencies,**

ACMECS countries are not immune to the recent global financial crisis, and have been affected by volatile oil and food prices. As major commodity producers and exporters, we have witnessed both surges and slumps in commodity prices. Mechanisms under ACMECS have been initiated to address the problem, such as agricultural investment under the “Contract Farming” flagship project, which has increased income for farmers and trade volume. But we still need to do more to fully utilize the scheme while the conclusion of MOU on Contract Farming is still pending.

To help guarantee regional food sufficiency, we should encourage increased public and private investment in agricultural infrastructure, research and development, as well as consult with Development Partners to come up with strategies to assure accessibility of food and acceptable prices for exporters.

**Excellencies,**

Human resource development and capacity building are vital for economic and social development. We will continue to support human resource development in neighboring countries. The signing of the MOU on Vocational Training Development in ACMECS countries between Thailand and Vietnam yesterday will also work towards this end. Thailand has a long tradition of providing HRD assistance to the sub-region in fields ranging from public health, agriculture, and education to logistics network development and customs procedures. Today, I am pleased to offer an additional 100 scholarships to ACMECS countries for post-graduate studies in Thailand.

**Excellencies,**

I wish to express appreciation for the assistance provided by Development Partners thus far, and wish to encourage their increased involvement on the bilateral and trilateral basis. To follow up on our commitment at the Ministerial Meeting in Mandalay in May 2007, I would like to reiterate Thailand's readiness to host a meeting between ACMECS and interested Development Partners next year. I also urge further discussion on guidelines for their participation in ACMECS projects.

On the role of governors and local authorities in promoting cooperation under our ACMECS framework, I wish to refer to the Vientiane Declaration which recognizes the important role of governors of border provinces.

Many provinces have established Sister Cities relations and have taken turns organizing annual meetings to promote the use of ACMECS transportation network to enhance trade, investment, tourism, and cultural relations with our neighbouring countries.

**Excellencies,**

Recognising the tremendous resources required for development of these projects and programs, Thailand shares the view of our colleagues that, in order to maximize benefit from the limited financial resources for development, we should streamline, synergise and harmonise all those projects and programs under the various sub-regional cooperation frameworks.

On public-private partnership for development, we fully recognise the role of the private sector in promoting trade, investment and tourism. Thailand wishes to confirm our commitment to facilitate and promote trade and investment by investors within and beyond ACMECS countries, particularly to invest in infrastructure development.

I am pleased that the business sectors of ACMECS countries have developed their close cooperation through the ACMECS Business Councils. Their dialogue with us later this afternoon demonstrates the importance of public-private partnership in promoting economic and social development.

**Excellencies,**

Finally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for hosting this Meeting and for the very warm welcome and excellent hospitality extended to me and my delegation.

Thank you.

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