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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

ASEAN and EU: Family matters

Jakarta, 1 March 2011 -- ASEAN and the European Union marked the start of a new phase in the ASEAN-EU economic cooperation with a seminar today in Jakarta. The seminar also marked the conclusion of the ASEAN-EU Programme for Regional Integration Support, Phase II (APRIS II).

APRIS directly supports ASEAN in the implementation of its ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint, in particular helping with practical steps for establishing the ASEAN single market and production base.

APRIS Phase I and Phase II have been operating for the last eight years with EU grant support of €10 million (approximately IDR 120 billion). A new phase of ASEAN-EU economic cooperation through the ASEAN Economic Integration Support Programme (AEISP) was unveiled at the seminar. This next phase of economic cooperation starts now with expanded targets and hence a larger budget of €15 million (approximately IDR 180 billion). The new funds will directly help ASEAN realise its targets for a single market by 2015.

Over the four-year period (2006-2010), APRIS II focused its support to ASEAN on developing key agreements and implementation mechanisms leading to trade facilitation and removal of non-tariff barriers between the ASEAN members. This had led to tangible successes including the simplification of customs procedures across borders, harmonisation of administrative documents, standardisation of technical requirements and the transition from governmental pre-approval system to a post-market surveillance system for cosmetic products.

“Over the last eight years, the APRIS support from the EU has been successful and helpful to ASEAN. The new phase of support opens a new and exciting chapter for economic cooperation with the EU. I look forward to working in closer partnership with the EU in advancing economic integration,” said the **Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan**, as he thanked the EU for their steadfast support to economic integration in ASEAN. *“Regional economic integration will bring multi-fold gains for the citizens of ASEAN – peoples in ASEAN will benefit from cheaper goods, better job prospects and improved living standards, and businesses from lower taxes and a more competitive environment. The EU’s experiences in integrating their economies are certainly good pointers for ASEAN and will help us realise these gains faster,”* he added.

During the event, **EU Ambassador Julian Wilson** said: *"The EU and ASEAN are the two most ambitious regional integration projects in the world. That makes ASEAN and EU not just natural allies but actually members of the same family who can learn and mutually benefit from each other. As ASEAN's largest source of foreign investment and major trading partner, the EU and ASEAN have and always will invest first and foremost in our economic and people-to-people alliance. This is what makes a real positive difference to our citizens' lives through job creation, education, tourism and other areas. Our ASEAN and EU family matters... and, as the EU Ambassador, I am proud of that."* The Ambassador added that: *"The EU is honoured that ASEAN views the last 8 years' of APRIS cooperation as a success and has invited the EU to continue helping in realising its single market, a cornerstone of the ASEAN vision. I look forward to this next chapter in our cooperation with ASEAN with great excitement. "*

The APRIS Programme also strengthened ASEAN Secretariat's institutional capacity - in particular by helping ASEAN with the Enhanced Dispute Settlement Mechanism. Through financing policy dialogues and study visits to Europe, the Programme also contributed to the creation of ASEAN-EU networks of policy-makers and practitioners.

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More information on the programme is available on APRIS II website:

<http://www.asean.org/apris2/index.htm>