

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE HON. CHIEF JUSTICE NGUYEN HOA BINH
AT THE 8TH COUNCIL OF ASEAN CHIEF JUSTICES MEETING
(Hanoi, 5 November 2020)**

Chief Justices, Heads of Delegations of ASEAN Supreme Courts,
Ambassadors,
Representatives from diplomatic missions of ASEAN Member States,
Ladies and gentlemen,

From the thousand-year capital of Viet Nam, and on behalf of the People's Supreme Court of Viet Nam, please allow me to extend a very warm welcome to the esteemed Chief Justices, the Heads of Delegations of ASEAN Supreme Courts, members of the diplomatic corps, and distinguished guests who are taking part in the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices Meeting.

I wish to sincerely thank all Chief Justices, Heads of Delegations, delegates from ASEAN Supreme Courts, for your presence and your time at the 8th Council for ASEAN Chief Justices, or CACJ, meeting today *via* video conference.

I am also grateful for the presence of H.E. Nguyen Quoc Dung, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassadors, and representatives from diplomatic missions of fellow ASEAN Member States at the opening session of CACJ.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last year, at the 7th CACJ Meeting, upon our acceptance to host the 8th CACJ Meeting, we wished to welcome you to Viet Nam with all due ceremony and the best hospitality from our country and people. We also considered the occasion as an opportunity to enhance cohesion and cooperation amongst ASEAN judiciaries. Unfortunately, due to the impact of COVID-19, the 8th CACJ Meeting did not take place as planned. Our meeting was supposed to take place earlier, but we decided to delay the date of the meeting with the hope of controlling the pandemic and welcoming all of you to Hanoi. Given the current circumstances, the convening of our delegations *via* video conference today already speaks volumes of the admirable efforts from all of our judiciaries.

Since its accreditation as an entity associated with ASEAN, the CACJ has worked tirelessly to improve its organizational structure, bolster and expand the scope of its activities with other institutions and organizations within and beyond the region, in order to promote democracy, enhance efficiency, uphold the rule-of-law, and maintain peace, stability and prosperity in ASEAN.

Given the trend of greater regional integration, the peak of which was the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015, there has been robust growth in investment, trade, and migration within the region. In this context, the integration and harmonization of ASEAN legal and judicial systems based on widely-accepted common principles will help reduce the cost of legal enforcement, and promote an environment favourable to businesses and citizens in their activities, be it trade or migration. At the same time, this trend of integration and harmonization will also enhance transparency and predictability of our judicial systems, which would boost confidence amongst investors, drive investment into and enhance fair competition between ASEAN Member States.

Given this context, the CACJ has become an important channel which facilitated the exchange of information amongst ASEAN Judiciaries. This allowed for a greater understanding of the different judiciaries' work and to build greater rapport between the judiciaries. The CACJ has also contributed to the development of an ASEAN Community which is united in diversity. From its humble beginnings as a sideline meeting of the ASEAN Law Association (ALA) Governing Council, the CACJ, formerly known as the ASEAN Chief Justices Meeting (ACJM), has gradually become an official cooperation platform with an independent mandate, clearly defined organizational structure and regular activities. The CACJ has made formal and tangible achievements, such as the formation of the ASEAN Judiciaries Portal and the ASEAN Family Judges Forum, the adoption of a model rule on service of civil processes within ASEAN, and the organization of joint training courses for ASEAN judges. Beyond these tangible achievements, CACJ has also contributed to the development of more "intangible" values which, in my view, we all can appreciate upon joining the CACJ. These intangible values include a deeper mutual understanding of ASEAN judicial systems, a spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance, as well as goodwill in promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation among judiciaries. Thus, we can be fully confident in the development and success of the CACJ, which would substantively contribute to the development of an ASEAN Community of peace, stability and prosperity.

For today's meeting, we shall continue our discussion on implementing ideas and initiatives proposed at previous meetings. In addition, we shall also discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the region as a whole and on the CACJ specifically. Within the past year, ASEAN (much like other regions) has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The CACJ's activities were delayed, as priority was naturally given to the management and control of the pandemic in our ASEAN Member States. The pandemic may still continue for the foreseeable future, and there's no telling when our countries can fully contain it. Despite these unfavorable conditions for conducting our activities, we can still use this time to review and make plans that are flexible and adaptive to future circumstances.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the first time that the CACJ is conducted *via* video conference. Given the complexity and uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the region, our organizing this CACJ meeting online is, in my view, a clear indication of our judiciaries' determination and effort in overcoming challenges and strengthening cooperation in this "new normal". While difficulties in convening *via* video conference may be very likely, if not inevitable, I trust that all Chief Justices, Heads of Delegations and members of Judiciaries in attendance will engage in open and candid discussions to ensure the success of our meeting.

On behalf of the host judiciary of the 8th CACJ, I declare our meeting open.

Thank you.