

9TH COUNCIL OF ASEAN CHIEF JUSTICES (CACJ) MEETING OPENING REMARKS

7 OCTOBER 2021

1. Good morning, selamat pagi, Honourable Chief Justices, Heads of Delegations, Your Excellency Dato Paduka Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.
2. It is a pleasure to join you again virtually for the 9th Council of ASEAN Chief Justices meeting. I am grateful that we are able to still come together during these most unprecedented times. Indeed, by any measure, this has been the most challenging period the world has faced in recent memory however these challenges also remind us that we can only overcome them by being united.
3. As Chair of ASEAN in 2021, Brunei chose to promote three fundamental areas:
 - i. Caring for our people and each other's well-being;
 - ii. Preparing for future opportunities and challenges; and
 - iii. Prospering together as a unified region.
4. It is therefore apt that I centre my remarks today on Brunei's theme for its Chairmanship, 'We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper', and how these three fundamental areas apply to our sphere of judicial cooperation in the CACJ.
5. Firstly, it is critical that we continue to support the people and communities within which we serve through ensuring access to justice and ensuring the fair

and efficient administration of justice. For instance, through the working group on Cross Border Disputes Involving Children, we have been able to bring our judiciaries together through establishing points of liaison and the adoption of a common procedure for dealing with cases where there is a cross-border dispute involving children within ASEAN. Our current reality has meant that with borders closed and lockdown measures in place, the movement of children and families have been subject to many restrictions. Therefore, it is hoped that our efforts in bringing our judiciaries together in enhancing our systems of family justice within ASEAN will go a long way in caring for our people and each other's well-being.

6. Secondly, in preparing for future opportunities and challenges we must acknowledge that judicial education and training is key in ensuring that our judges, judicial officers and staff remain current in their knowledge and skills. There is no doubt that all judiciaries have had to adapt its modes of judicial training as a result of the pandemic and we have benefited greatly from the efforts of the Working Group on Judicial Training and Education in identifying new ways of conducting training and education programs for our judiciaries. Most recently in September 2021, the working group and the CACJ Secretariat organized a webinar on 'Judicial Training during the Time of the Pandemic' which gave us a platform for us to gather and learn from international experts and exchange our experiences. It is clear that CACJ plays a significant role in helping us to prepare ourselves for future challenges and the working group's future plans in engaging with potential international partners in obtaining support for training and education initiatives also bodes well for our future opportunities to raise the calibre and standing of our ASEAN judges and judicial officers.

7. Thirdly, in supporting the needs of ASEAN's commerce and trade, we have taken important steps together through the Working Group on Facilitating the Service of Civil Processes within ASEAN where a Model Rule on obtaining evidence for foreign proceedings has been developed for the CACJ's consideration. It is hoped that the Model Rule will be able to provide a standard set of procedures that may be applicable to all ASEAN member states which can help reduce obstacles to cross border dispute resolution. This will, in turn, reinforce legal certainty and security across borders especially in civil and commercial matters. In these uncertain times, the CACJ can do its part to nurture a conducive environment for commerce and trade within and beyond ASEAN, which will hopefully sow the seeds for a prosperous and unified region.

8. To this end, we can be proud that the CACJ has remained active and operational throughout this difficult time. And even though many aspects of our work have gone virtual, I am confident that we will continue to make strides within the CACJ. Indeed, it is our shared hope that through our efforts we can continue to facilitate productive dialogue and mutually beneficial judicial cooperation within the framework of the rule of law. Thank you and I look forward to our fruitful deliberations today.

Chief Justice Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong

Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam