

11TH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ASEAN CHIEF JUSTICES

Opening Speech

Wednesday, 20 November 2024

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon
Supreme Court of Singapore

1. Good morning, Chief Justice Gesmundo, and thank you for giving me the floor. Let me first express my deep appreciation to Chief Justice Gesmundo and his team for hosting this 11th Meeting of the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (or “CACJ”), and for the outstanding hospitality that has been extended to all of us. Let me also record our gratitude for the tremendous work that has gone into organising not only this Meeting, but also the second ASEAN+ Meeting and the inaugural ASEAN Insolvency Judges Meeting. Such was the commitment of our hosts to the success of this event that I was told that yesterday evening, while a storm was hitting nearby Cebu City, Justice Singh and her organising committee arranged matters in such a way that we had a lovely evening with cool breezes, great food and superb entertainment. Let me also congratulate Chief Justice Gesmundo on his appointment as the new chair of the CACJ. I know he will lead us with wisdom and with superb leadership. I also take this opportunity to thank Chief Justice Maimun for leading us so well over the course of the last two years. Chief Justices, we have a full agenda today, and I want to make just a few points before we embark on our discussions.

2. But before I do that, please let me state for the record that while we are delighted to participate in today's meeting of our judiciaries, our participation does not in any way imply the Singapore Government's recognition of the State Administration Council as the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

3. Today's Meeting provides us with a timely opportunity both to look back on more than a decade of our work, and to chart our next steps forward, building on the productive discussions we had at our inaugural Retreat in Kuala Lumpur last October. Looking *back*, the CACJ has clearly demonstrated its value in advancing the rule of law and the administration of justice within ASEAN – a fact reflected in the very full agenda that we have ahead of us today. Ours is a region characterised, in some ways, by diversity – in particular, because it is a home to a mixture of common and civil law systems. Against this background, judicial cooperation is especially crucial in overcoming the practical challenges that can arise from the heterogeneity in our laws and procedures. The Model Rules on the Service of Civil Processes and on the Taking of Evidence for Foreign Proceedings in Civil or Commercial Matters are just two examples of areas where our work in developing cross-border frameworks can make a real difference.

4. Looking *ahead*, I suggest that we should continue to be driven by this sense of purpose as we write the CACJ's next chapter together. We already have several important projects in the pipeline, including protocols on verifying the authenticity of foreign court orders; guidance on the recognition and enforcement of foreign money judgments; and a model protocol for court-to-court

communications. And I am told that the Insolvency Judges Meeting yesterday was so successful that there may be a suggestion for more such standing meetings in other areas. By way of example, our Family Judges have gone even further with a working group, but we could have standing meetings modelled on the Insolvency Judges Meeting in other specialised areas – such as intellectual property, for instance. Looking beyond this, we can see the urgent need for all of us to collaborate and share our experiences as technology continues to impact our societies and our justice systems, and in particular our work as judges, to an ever greater degree. Completing and implementing these projects and turning our attention to new challenges, while also coming to grips with both the challenges and limitations as well as the opportunities that technology holds for us, will require significant efforts from each of us. But, with our continued strong support and commitment, I am confident that these and other projects will join the ranks of the CACJ's major achievements.

5. Thank you very much, Chief Justice, and I look forward to a fruitful discussion today.