

**Opening Speech by The Hon. Chief Justice Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong for
the 12th CACJ Meeting**

CACJ Chair, The Hon. Chief Justice Gesmundo,
My fellow Chief Justices,
Justices, Judges,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

1. At the outset, please allow me express to our Thai colleagues our condolences on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, The Queen Mother of Thailand. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Thailand at this time of national mourning.
2. On behalf of the delegation from Brunei Darussalam, I wish to extend our deepest gratitude for the warm welcome we have received in Singapore. I wish to thank our gracious host, Chief Justice Menon and the Singapore Judiciary for their generous hospitality and for the excellent organization of this meeting and related events.
3. It is also my pleasure to welcome the President of the Court of Appeal of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, His Excellency Afonso Carmona to his first meeting of the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ). As ASEAN's newest member, Timor Leste's presence today marks a historic milestone in the CACJ's journey and we look forward to their admission as members of the Council.
4. Brunei Darussalam reaffirms our shared commitment to supporting the work of the CACJ to maintain and strengthen international partnerships and regional solidarity among ASEAN judiciaries. We have all benefited from the judicial cooperation and collaboration that the CACJ has fostered over the years.

5. It is my belief that the CACJ continues to play a crucial role in strengthening the foundations that support our region's shared aspirations. Indeed, a secure, stable and prosperous ASEAN depends on our ability to adapt our justice systems to new and evolving challenges.
6. The well-being of the communities we serve, turns not only on traditional notions of justice but also on how effectively we can address emerging threats such as cybercrime, online scams, human trafficking, while also safeguarding our region from the far-reaching impacts of climate change.
7. In confronting these new and complex challenges together, we must remain grounded in the rule of law, a foundation that is essential for our economic progress and social development. In this regard, our judiciaries must continue to evolve and respond with resilience and foresight and I am confident that many opportunities lie ahead for us to deepen our ties and to strengthen cooperation in ways that serve the common interests of all ASEAN Member States.
8. I am confident that we will have productive deliberations today focusing on CACJ's priorities for the years ahead and plans of action to further strengthen judicial cooperation within ASEAN and beyond. Thank you.