

ADDRESS OF DR. JIMMY KOH AS PANELIST

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I have the good fortune to work in almost all ASEAN countries in the last 50 odd years. I have had the privilege to travel the journey in which Singapore developed from 3rd world infrastructure to first world infrastructure in the last half a century. And, with Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, following closely behind. Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar are all picking up speed and gaining pace. Very soon, the continental region of ASEAN nations, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore will be connected by roads and high speed railways. The real physical integration of ASEAN countries is happening.

The mega view is that in the next 10 years, the cross border development in the ASEAN region will accelerate. The technical background of all ASEAN countries are diverse with the exception of Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Myanmar which were based on British standards. Other countries due to historical backgrounds were based on Dutch, French, Russian and American standards. And commercially, due to Japan’s rapid and successful development in the last 50 years, Japanese standards JIS is also commonly used. For all ASEAN countries to have cross border infrastructures, such as roads, railways, airports and seaports. It is imperative that the industrial standards for manufacturing of material and code of practice for design of buildings and infrastructure become harmonized. This will be helpful to the developers and beneficial to the users.

Before the formation of the European Union, Europe had many Industrial Standards for manufacturing of materials such as Steel, Cement, Glass Sheets, etc. A factory had to produce these materials complying with British Standards to sell to England, French Standards to sell to France, DIN Standards to sell to Germany, etc. Now, all factories produce products which comply to only the Euro Norm (EN) and sell to all European Countries. The factories became more efficient and productive because they can concentrate their production to comply to only one industrial standard. This resulted in lesser investment in the factories and more productive in the manufacturing process and the factories become more productive and competitive, the final result of cheaper products which are enjoyed by the consumers. Europe have become more productive and competitive.

All the buildings and infrastructures in Europe are now designed and built under one standard, the Euro Norm. The planners, the Architects and Engineers are now more efficient in their works as they comply to only EN. This hasten the integration of the infrastructure in Europe, and European as a community.

In ASEAN countries, the material manufactured and used in buildings and the infrastructure projects, such as cement and steel etc., should ideally comply to a common standard and specifications and therefore have common qualities and sizes, so that they are available across border and can be used safely and productively. For example, just the basic construction material of steel, the specifications employed now in ASEAN countries are SS, EN, ASTM, JIS, SNI (Indonesian), TIS (Thai), SIRIM (Malaysian) and now Q (Chinese), etc. This is to nobody's advantage and benefit. Even for the stocklist of steel material, the varieties of the same material tie down the storage space and capital, and push up cost of business which have no benefit and therefore is not helpful in the integration of ASEAN as a group.

The standards and code of practice for design of roads, bridges, railways, airports and seaports have to be standardised for safety and convenience of the operator and users. For instance, ASEAN countries have very different geology. Just the item of earthquake, different ASEAN nations have different requirements and allowance for design of buildings and infrastructure. Some countries like Japan, the Code of Practice in this area is well developed. For each member of ASEAN country to carry research to write their own Code of Practice for Seismic consideration would be a waste of resources. We can agreed to adopt a well established code of practice.

Other matters, such as standards and code of practice in Environmental Management and Safety Practice should also be examined and harmonized at the sametime. These matters are of great importance to ASEAN countries, especially those who are in development stage to avoid pollution which will cost billion to get rid of the pollutants and revert the environment to its origin unpolluted conditions.

The ASEAN Secretariat should consider to have a technical unit to look into these areas.

I have single out ASEAN Region as an example for discussion. The same reasoning and argument can also apply to APEC grouping. We must remember APEC is a very much diverse group of 21 nations covering more than half the world. When APEC is discussed under the same subject of industrial standards for Material and Code of Practice for design in building and infrastructure, the new driving force of China must be considered. China is now the factory of the world. The capability of China's factory to produce different variety for a same material is remarkable. The steel factories can produce products to comply with almost any specifications and sizes for different customers in different countries is admirable and beyond imagination,

However, if all these countries can buy steel from China which comply to only one specifications, the investment in plant and saving in the process will make Chinese factories even more efficient and productive and at the same time cut down pollution. This will also increase the competitive edge and resulting in lower prices for the enjoyment of all the customers.

If ASEAN countries can come together to harmonise all industrial standards for production of material and code of practice for design of buildings and infrasture, the benefits will be real and it will immediately cut cost, and make ASEAN as a group to produce real benefits to all its member countries.

Likewise, if APEC can also follow ASEAN's initiative and come together to work on the harmonisation of industrial standards and code of practices for design of buildings and infrastures. This will make the APEC very meaningful. As the capitalisation of factories can be reduced, process can be more productive and wastage in material and energy used can be reduced. This will make globalization bear fruits which everyone will enjoy and there will be no losing party. As we cut wastage in the use of natrual resources and reduce the use of energy in production, the world will also be greener.

Thank you.