

Welcome Remarks

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International Conference on the Implications of the ASEAN Charter for
East Asian Integration

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Distinguished guests from the diplomatic and international community, the academe, government and the business sector, and members of the press, good morning to all of you.

As country representative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the Philippines, which is a partner of the Asian Institute of Management Policy Center in organizing this event, I would like to welcome you all to the International Conference on the Implications of the ASEAN Charter for East Asian Integration.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation bears the responsibility of carrying the values, political principles, and beliefs of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. Konrad Adenauer believed that European integration would be the best course of action for lasting peace and economic reconstruction in Europe and was incremental in West Germany's integration into the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which is now known as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

This event is of particular interest not only to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation but to the European community as well, given the success of political and economic integration in our region, which is evident in the depth and in the expansion of ties between Western and Eastern Europe. The European example only goes to show that while each state has its own interest to pursue, it is still possible to achieve complete integration through constant cooperation that is bound by common economic and political goals. This is particularly true in the current relations between Germany and France, two countries with great historical differences that now benefit from increased cooperation and stable diplomatic relations.

Unlike Europe, however, the ASEAN region possesses diverse cultures and history. It is therefore prudent to take into account the unique circumstances in Southeast Asia even as we strive to learn from the experiences of Europe.

As we are all gathered here today, I believe that our question is how integration within the ASEAN region can be deepened to become a precursor of East Asian integration. In this event, we explore the implications of a recent milestone in ASEAN history, the birth of the ASEAN Charter, for greater regional integration.

Our distinguished speakers, who are experts in their respective fields, will shed light on the issues surrounding this latest development. We are fortunate to have with us today no less than former President Fidel V. Ramos, who is a certified world-class leader and a forerunner of regional cooperation. We also have regional luminaries to help us dissect the ASEAN Charter and the state of regional integration in this part of the world.

We look forward to the insights of the various sectors represented here. It is our hope that by the end of the conference, most of us, if not all, will have a clearer understanding and better appreciation of the ASEAN Charter and how it relates to the region's goal of one East Asia.

Thank you very much and a good day to all of you!