

Opening Remarks of Franz Jessen, EU Ambassador Designate in Hanoi, Vietnam

Excellencies,

- H.E. Mr. Le Dinh Tien, Vice Minister of Science and Technology
- H.E. Mr. Tran Viet Thanh, Vice Minister of Science and Technology
- H.E. Mr. Damien Cole, Ambassador of Ireland
- H.E. Mr. Roman Iwaszkiewicz, Ambassador of Poland
- Dr. Le Xuan Dinh, , Deputy Director General of NASATI
- Mr. Dr. Gerold Heinrichs, Head of Department of the International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Science counsellors, Representatives of International Research Organizations and companies

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for inviting me to address the 4th Bi-Regional SEA-EU Net Stakeholder Conference today. This 4th Conference is a noteworthy event because it also serves as the official launch for the “*ASEAN-EU Science, Technology and Innovation year 2012*” proposed by the SEA-EU-NET project last year. The overall objective of the "Year" is to highlight, promote and extend EU-Southeast Asia STI cooperation. The "S&T Year" is the first of its kind, in which EU regional cooperation with ASEAN Member Countries will be enhanced even further.

International cooperation is an important part of the EU research and innovation strategy. As set out in the *Europe 2020 Strategy* and the *"Innovation Union" Flagship Initiative*, we are facing common global challenges, which compels us to increase our international cooperation, based on mutual interest and reciprocity. This cooperation will allow us all to benefit from the increased scale and scope of the actions and the joint approaches that we develop.

Fostering strategic cooperation through bi-regional programmes is a predominant feature of the EU strategy for international STI cooperation. We see ASEAN as a very promising regional partner in this respect. In fact, the status and role of the EU as a scientific partner for ASEAN has been reinforced over the past four years, with initiatives as the bi-regional Science and Technology dialogue, which was established in 2008 with the ASEAN Committee of Science and Technology (ASEAN-COST).

The ASEAN-COST as well as the Steering Committee of the SEA-EU-NET have unanimously supported the initiative of the *"ASEAN-EU Year for STI"*. This represents official political support to the initiative given by organisations from the following countries represented in the Steering Committee, namely: Austria, France, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Turkey. Germany and other EU Member States' have also expressed their support to the initiative.

The European Commission, and in particular the DG Research and Innovation, expressed its official support to the "Year" last September and its commitment to engage into a series of activities that Mr. Laurent

Bochereau will detail during his presentation “*EU Innovation Union and Perspectives on EU-ASEAN S&T Cooperation*” later this morning.

The EU and ASEAN have a rich history of cooperation and dialogue dating from the 1970s, and this year stands as another example of our fruitful relationship.

On the ASEAN side, a series of Plans of Action in Science and Technology have been developed since the ASEAN-COST was established in 1978. The most recent action is the Action Plan of Action on Science and Technology (APAST) 2007-2011, which was endorsed by the ASEAN S&T Ministers in February 2007. The plan included flagship programmes covering 6 themes and we understand that ASEAN is looking for ways to implement them.

On the EU side, since 2007, scientific cooperation with SEA became a high priority on the political agenda on the occasion of the 16th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in Nuremberg, Germany. At that time officials expressed their wish to strengthen further our co-operation and to share experiences on S&T issues of mutual interest such as health, food safety and energy supply.

Over the last four years, we have observed an increasing participation of ASEAN entities in the consecutive Framework Programmes. ASEAN participation in FP7 has been growing continuously. The opportunities for joint research projects under FP7 are seen by ASEAN-COST as a mean to implement ASEAN Flagship programmes under the current ASEAN Action Plan for Science and Technology (APAST).

Despite all the progress and collaboration between the two regions, there are also opportunities for further improvement and the ASEAN-EU Science & Technology Year is one of them. It seeks to encourage a rewarding dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation issues, where joint cooperation will help us to reach our full research potential, while at the same time reinforcing those relationships where meaningful collaboration has already been established.

Therefore, the EU and its Member States are keen to implement effective and coordinated activities in STI cooperation particularly with country blocks such as ASEAN. This "Year" will help catalyse ASEAN and EU Member States' joint strategies and activities, which are numerous but still quite unknown. It will also make Europe more attractive and bring it closer to ASEAN researchers and research organisations as well as push forward the quick progress of ASEAN-EU S&T cooperation and the sound and stable development of our strategic partnership.

Finally the "S&T Year" will be a significant contribution to EU-ASEAN relations in general. The EU is engaged in a series of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) and Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with most ASEAN countries, as well as in the preparation of the 19th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (Brunei, April 2012). In fact, STI is amongst the twelve areas that European External Action Service wants to put forward for concrete results at this Ministerial Meeting.

As I already mentioned, our meeting is very timely as it takes place just before the next EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting scheduled next April in Brunei Darussalam. This conference, together with the ASEAN-EC

Dialogue on Energy, will be a sound contribution to the implementation of the 2007 "ASEAN-EU Plan of Action on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership" (PoA). I am certain that our Ministers will note with satisfaction the results of the knowledge exchange today and tomorrow.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Government of Viet Nam, in particular to the Ministry of Science and Technology for hosting this meeting in the beautiful city of Hanoi. We are confident that the exchange of views over the coming two days will bear fruits and results in identifying concrete proposals for consideration.

I wish you all good fortune and health.

Thank you.

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