

**Sixth ASEAN Chief Justices' Roundtable on Environment
"Forging the Sustainable Future of the ASEAN Region"**

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**Introduction to the Jakarta Common Vision, the Hanoi Action Plan, and the Angkor
Statement of**

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The Honorable Maria Lourdes Sereno, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, respected chief justices and senior judges, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Time certainly moves fast. It seems only yesterday that judges from all over the world discussed the need for judicial specialization in environmental law at the Asian Judges Symposium on Environmental Decision Making, the Rule of Law, and Environmental Justice held in Manila on 28–29 July 2010. Thereat, Honorable Chief Justice Harifin Tumpa of the Supreme Court of Indonesia invited ASEAN chief justices and their nominees to the Inaugural ASEAN Chief Justices' Roundtable on Environment in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2011. With ADB's support, five other judiciaries hosted the roundtable—the Federal Court of Malaysia, the Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand, the Supreme People's Court of Viet Nam, the Supreme Court of Cambodia, and now, the Supreme Court of the Philippines.

For six years since that momentous occasion, three documents steer the course for succeeding judicial initiatives and innovations for upholding the environmental rule of law and advancing environmental protection in Southeast Asia. First, *A Common Vision on Environment for ASEAN Judiciaries* (or the Jakarta Common Vision), agreed at the Inaugural Roundtable, underlines the three roles of the roundtable to many ASEAN judiciaries: *first* by providing a forum for exchanging information on the region's common environmental challenges and global best practices on environmental adjudication; *second* by emphasizing the crucial role of ASEAN chief justices and senior judges in leading the legal profession and promoting the rule of law—the cornerstone of good governance—and environmental justice; and *third* by facilitating further judicial cooperation on environmental issues. Stressing their aim of strengthening environmental law compliance, enforcement and education, the vision also contemplates that the ASEAN judiciaries set up specialized environmental courts and specialization programs, draft and implement special rules of procedure for environmental cases, and environmental alternative dispute resolution, and share environmental jurisprudence with the public and the other members of the Asian Judges Network on Environment (or AJNE).

Second, the *Hanoi Action Plan to Implement the Jakarta Common Vision* (or the Hanoi Action Plan), agreed at the Fourth Roundtable, seeks to accelerate the realization of the Jakarta Common Vision through concrete steps by asking the ASEAN judiciaries to (i) form the ASEAN Judicial Working Group on Environment, the national judicial working groups on environment and even provincial committees, where beneficial to judicial networking; (ii) submit progress reports on the judiciaries' implementation of the Jakarta Common Vision on a regular basis; (iii) conduct environmental twinning programs among various judiciaries; (iv) share sample content for rules of procedure for

environmental cases; (v) prepare translated record of proceedings, and (vi) create and maintain the AJNE website.

Lastly, the *Angkor Statement of Commitment to ASEAN Judicial Cooperation on the Environment* (or the Angkor Statement), agreed at the Fifth Roundtable, emphasizes the transboundary nature of many environmental challenges confronting Southeast Asia, the renewed commitment of ASEAN judiciaries to cooperate in implementing the Hanoi Action Plan, and the importance of continuing environmental law education and information sharing on environmental laws, jurisprudence and sentencing.

Your Honor, although these three documents may be considered as aspirational and nonbinding documents, you have constantly showed admirable enthusiasm and dedication in taking the time out of your extremely busy schedule to attend this annual roundtable since 2011—a feat in itself as you have promised to hold this roundtable annually—and in performing your other undertakings. Moreover, on greening benches, the Supreme Court of the Philippines has 117 environmental courts. The Supreme Court of Indonesia has a judicial certification program on environment. The Federal Court of Malaysia already has environmental benches and continuous environmental law training. The Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand has a specialized environmental division.

Second, on stronger judicial networking, the ASEAN Judicial Working Group on Environment had already convened twice. The supreme judiciaries of Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam already have national judicial working groups on environment; and the Federal Court of Malaysia has even formed state judicial working groups to cascade judicial collaboration on environmental matters to lower court levels.

ADB has likewise delivered on its promises such as by creating and maintaining the AJNE website and publishing translated proceedings of prior roundtable conferences. In addition, ADB has also been conducting training for environmental law professors and practitioners through its *Developing Environmental Law Champions* project.

These are only a few of your achievements in furthering environmental protection in Southeast Asia by achieving the Jakarta Common Vision and implementing the Hanoi Action Plan and the Angkor Statement. I eagerly look forward to hearing your next course of action for the region.

Thank you and mabuhay!