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**SPEECH BY MR LIM CHEE ONN, MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO  
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ASEAN NEWS PHOTO EXHIBITION  
AT CITY PLAZA ON FRIDAY, 10 JULY '81 AT 11.00 AM**

As "One good picture speaks more than a thousand words", I will not even try to match the different messages which the 50 photographs on exhibit here are trying to convey. It suffices for me to say that this effort of the Confederation of ASEAN Journalists (CAJ) and the Singapore National Union of Journalists (SNUJ) to bring the concept of ASEAN down to the masses is a laudable one and deserves support by those within and outside the union movement.

Indeed they have a formidable task in spreading the message of cooperation to the over 260 million peoples of the five ASEAN countries. But it has to be done for it will only be through the strengthening of the links among the five member nations that will enable us to continue to withstand the tensions and pressures resulting from the constant turbulent state of regional geo-politics. Southeast Asia's strategic location has been and will continue to be the scene of interplay of the major powers. There is therefore every reason for us to foster even closer relations and cooperation between and among ASEAN states to preserve a non-communist, stable and peaceful region.

One of ASEAN's roles in the preservation of peace and stability in the Southeast Asian region can be seen in its common stand on the solution of the Kampuchean issue. We have demonstrated our resoluteness in trying to convince the world community that Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea should be withdrawn and that the Kampucheans should be given the right of self-determination concerning their political future. Our solidarity has earned us credibility as a regional grouping.

This is reflected ..... /2.

This is reflected in the growing interest shown in ASEAN by other regional and international communities and also by the desire of other states to join us.

While ASEAN governments have provided the lead in regional cooperation, their efforts should be supplemented by the active participation of other bodies. The ASEAN spirit of consultation and cooperation should also permeate down to all levels in the private sector if we are to increase our understanding of each others' special characteristics, styles, aspirations and shortcomings. Employers, a few industrial and commercial organisations and trade unions have already made a start.

Recently ASEAN trade unions have taken the initiative to form the ASEAN Council of Trade Unions (ACT). The aim of the ACT is to provide a means of co-ordinating the responses of ASEAN trade unions to socio-economic and political problems in the region. Moreover, under the ACT umbrella, ASEAN trade unions will be able to come together to explore areas of common interest, exchange experiences and share their expertise and know-how for advancing the development of the trade union movement in each of the five states.

The importance of the ACT does not lie only in promoting intra-ASEAN cooperation among trade unions. Equally important is that it helps ASEAN unions to establish better relations with other unions on a regional basis, particularly with those in West Europe and the US. This is crucial in view of the growing protectionist sentiments shown by West European and American unions and the wide range of measures they are advocating to prevent investments from being relocated in developing countries.

Dialogues between ASEAN and West European and American unions on economic and trade issues will be of tremendous value to us. These contacts would provide unions in the developed economies a more accurate perspective of the plight of workers in developing countries. Hopefully, a better understanding of our problems will help them to make the correct decisions on issues relating to global trade, overseas investments and the international division of labour.

Since photographs, by virtue of their visual impact, carry with them the potential of shaping public and even world opinion towards the things they portray, the value of this ASEAN News Photo Exhibition should not be under-estimated. For example, photographs capturing the plight, fear, agony of the Kampuchean refugees fleeing from their war-torn country and Vietnamese refugees on boats packed to capacity and living in the most pathetic state of human conditions, have played a large part in shocking the free world out of their complacency and apathy. Hence the aim of all photo journalists should be to produce news photos which will raise the consciousness of the people towards world and regional events.

If through this exhibition today the CAJ and SNUJ have in some way contributed towards a better understanding among ASEAN peoples and of ASEAN by others, then the purpose for organising this ASEAN News Photo Exhibition will have been met. Let me close by expressing a hope that ASEAN photo journalists and the CAJ will continue to contribute towards the better understanding of ASEAN, particularly by helping to project a correct image of the ASEAN region through a high standard of professionalism among photo journalists.

I now take great pleasure in declaring this exhibition open.

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