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An Invitation

ASEAN ROUNDTABLE 2011 ENHANCING ASEAN'S CONNECTIVITY

**Thursday, 5 May 2011
Katong Ballroom
Shangri-La Hotel
Orange Grove Road, Singapore 258350**

ASEAN intends to create an economic community by 2015. The tariff cutting component of that community is on track on paper. All ASEAN's Free Trade Agreements with its dialogue partners have become effective at different points in time in the last few years. But there exist many non-tariff barriers which would lower the potential benefits under the ASEAN economic integration.

One such barrier is the lack of physical and personal connectivity across the ASEAN region. The physical infrastructure, such as highway and rail networks, power grids, and gas pipelines, particularly in the less developed ASEAN countries, is characterized by structural weaknesses - low responsiveness to users, organizational inefficiencies, insufficient funding, heavy dependence on official development assistance, low foreign direct investments, and lack of environmental awareness. Most ASEAN countries are also short of the 'soft' infrastructure (ICT), which are important prerequisites for the next stage of development.

Hence, it is a crucial time for ASEAN to enhance regional connectivity. Greater connectivity is one of the important solutions to the problems obstructing the process of economic community building. Greater connectivity results in better cooperation not only among the member countries, but also between the ASEAN region and the rest of the world.

During the Hanoi Summit in October 2010, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders. The Master Plan aims to provide a framework for regional cooperation on connectivity and a foundation for further connectivity with other regions, such as East and South Asia.

Keeping these developments in mind, the ASEAN Studies Centre (ASC) at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), along with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), will convene the ASEAN Roundtable 2011 on “Enhancing ASEAN’s Connectivity” on 5 May 2011 at Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore.

The roundtable will focus on four areas: transportation for the movement of goods and people, telecommunications for business and people, ICT for businesses, education and other developments in the region, and energy infrastructure for better use and distribution of resources.

Thus, the objectives of the roundtable are to examine the current state of infrastructure development across ASEAN and to discuss how greater connectivity can contribute to the process of ASEAN economic integration. The roundtable will also seek to address the national- and regional-level challenges to build a robust infrastructure and approaches to resource mobilization for this purpose.

ISEAS cordially invites you to participate at our Roundtable as a valued guest.

Please send in your response to Ms Lily Koh by 25 April 2011. For further enquiries, please contact Lily via email: ascevents@iseas.edu.sg, tel: 6870-4509 or fax: 6775-6264.

Attached are the programme and the reply form for your completion.

Rodolfo Severino
Head, ASEAN Studies Centre
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

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4 April 2011