



SPEECH BY
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BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



OPENING CEREMONY FOR
THE VECONAC 29TH EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
AND 16TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7th October 2016
Goldstone Ballroom, Centrepont Hotel
Brunei Darussalam

Bismillah hirrahman nirrahim.

Your Excellency Lieutenant General Hsan Oo, President of the Veterans Confederation of ASEAN Countries (VECONAC).

Yang DiMuliakan Pehin Datu Pekerma Jaya Major General Dato Paduka Seri Mohd Tawih bin Abdullah, Commander of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces

Yang DiMuliakan Pehin Dato Padukaraja Major General (Retd) Dato Paduka Seri Haji Shari bin Ahmad, President of Ex-Soldiers Association of Brunei Darussalam.

Distinguished Heads of Delegations, Delegates and Observers of VECONAC Member Countries, distinguished Advicers of of Ex-Soldiers Association of Brunei Darussalam, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and a very good morning.

At the outset, I am deeply honoured and privileged to be here in this esteemed gathering of Heads and Members of VECONAC.

Allow me to first warmly welcome all of our guests to Brunei Darussalam. I am delighted to note that you will have the chance to enjoy the sight, culture and tradition of our country in these next few days. Perhaps for some, this may not be their first visit to Brunei but I hope you will still bring back good memories of your time spent here.

Looking around the room, it is truly heart-warming to see the solidarity, bonds of brotherhood and enduring camaraderie has continued in strength and numbers. We in Brunei last hosted the VECONAC in 2000 and it is pleasure to see VECANOC's profile expanding with new veteran organisations¹ joining in the family. This fine tradition of VECONAC reflects the spirit of ASEAN's sense of belonging and in

¹ Laos National Veteran Federation and Myanmar War Veterans Organisation in 2012

building closer relations through interactions at all levels and in many layers of our society.

On the same note, I must also commend veteran organisations for its ongoing commitment in ensuring the general welfare of all veterans in their respective country. It is certainly impressive on learning the progress made by VECONAC since its establishment in 1980. In particular, the pursuit of welfare for women veterans and dependents... as well as... its focus in the promotion of Small Medium Enterprises. These are significant contributions in social welfare and justice as well as the nation's economy. More importantly, it lends towards building our Leader's vision of ASEAN Community.

With over 5 million members, and a stint of great works spanning for over 3 decades, VECONAC has indeed become one of the prominent organisations in the region. The strong sense of camaraderie, that is undeniably apparent, just by scanning the hall, is the priceless fruit of the extraordinary passion and commitment that have been selfishly dedicated, not just in promoting the critical relevance of veteran's welfare, but also in continuously elevating the Confederation's outreach and profile in the region. This very well reflects the the very aspiration of ASEAN unity and cohesiveness, and the demonstrative effect of the strength of unity in diversity.

The Government of His Majesty The Sultan And Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, in advocating towards the achievement its Vision 2035 developmental target of a High Quality of Life for its people, will remain committed in the welfare of military veterans. His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, the Minister of Defence and the Supreme Commander of the RBAF, is very passionate about military veterans affairs, and has, in August 2016, consented to grace the get together event with RBAF Retired Officers, organised by former officers of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces.

Led by distinguished military veterans, (who have brought so many impacts to the country's defence development), the Ex-Soldiers Association of Brunei Darussalam or in Malay, Persatuan Bekas Perajurit Negara Brunei Darussalam, established in 1992, continues to be an active player and a significant contributor to nation-building

and social cohesion. Their experience, knowledge and skill set make them an important asset to the country even beyond retirement. Their sense of responsibility in protecting the nation is enduring even after active service, and this is harnessed towards advocating the importance of discipline, patriotism and loyalty to the younger generations. Their membership in VECONAC, is very significant as an access to a large and rich pool of wisdom, a platform to establish links, share experience and best practices, and an outlet to expand their contribution in championing their cause and purpose.

Through the years, the footprints of VECONAC's work and initiatives have touched the lives and crossed the paths of so many people. The Ministry of Defence and the Royal Brunei Armed Forces join me in congratulating and wishing the Confederation continued success in moving forward and may all the achievements inspired you to continue to innovate and grow, in further solidifying unity and solidarity for common development among ASEAN countries, thus further contribute to maintaining regional peace and stability.

On a final note, I must congratulate the award conferred to recipients of VECONAC Honorary Presidency and VECONAC Medal of Honour. Your commitment in contributing to fulfilling VECONAC's aspiration to protect and promote the welfare of all veterans... to foster goodwill, understanding and harmony amongst the veterans are exemplary leadership and a well-deserved recognition.

Once again allow me to express sincere appreciation to VECONAC and each veteran organisation's work and activities in support of the broader peace, stability and security of our respective nations and region as a whole. I wish all of you the best in another successful assembly.

And with the kalimah "Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim", it is my pleasure to officially open ... **the VECONAC 29th Executive Board Meeting and 16th General Assembly 2016.**

Wabillahit Taufiq Walhidayah Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Ta'ala
Wabarakatuh.