

Opening Remarks

By: Dr. Filemon A. Uriarte, Jr.

**WORKSHOP ON PROSPECTS OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN
SOUTHEAST ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA: SOME POLICY OPTIONS
INCLUDING SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
12 OCTOBER 2009, ASEAN SECRETARIAT,
JAKARTA, INDONESIA**

H.E. Mr. Pedro Suckel, Ambassador of the the Republic of Chile to Indonesia,

H.E. Mr. Cesar de Paula Cidade, Minister Counsellor, Deputy Head of Commision of Brazil to Indonesia,

H.E. Mr. Jaime Rivera Guzman, Commercial Attachè of the Embassy of Chile in Viet Nam,

H.E. Mr. Jose Barojas, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Republic of Mexico,

Mr. Amnal Rachman, Head of Sub Directorate FEALAC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia,

Mr. Irmawan Emir Wisnandar, Director of ASEAN Functional Cooperation, Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,

H.E. Ms. Maria Virginia Mezones, Charge d’Affairs of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Indonesia,

Mr. Kaname Okada, Chief of Japan Program, Inter-American Development Bank,

Representatives from the Diplomatic Community,

Representatives from the Business Sectors,

Ladies and Gentleman,

Today we take a small step towards restoring the once flourishing trade between Southeast Asia and Latin America which started 444 years ago.

The Manila-Acapulco galleon trade began when Andres de Urdaneta, sailing in convoy under Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, discovered a return route from Cebu in the Philippines to Mexico in 1565. Galleons were big-masted ships that were made of hardwood. Until 1593, three or more ships would set sail annually from each port. But the merchants of Seville complained of their losses and petitioned King Philip of Spain to limit the trade to only two ships to sail each year from either port. With such limitations, the largest possible galleons were built, some averaging 1,700 tons to 2,000 tons. The Concepcion was 48 meters long while the Santisima Trinidad was almost 52 meters long.

The galleons carried spices, porcelain, ivory, lacquerware, processed silk cloth and other goods from the Spice Islands, Asia and the Pacific to be sold in European markets. The goods were transported by land across Mexico to the port of Veracruz in the Gulf of Mexico where they were loaded onto the Spanish treasure fleet bound for Spain. On the return trip to Manila, the galleons carried silver ingots from the mines of Mexico as payment for the goods and which were prized by the Chinese. Manila was the largest trading center at that time. A total of 110 Manila galleons set sail in the 250 years of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade from 1565 to 1815. Most of the ships were built in the Philippines and only 8 in Mexico.

The galleon trade came to an end in 1815. The last ship to make the voyage was the Magallanes, which arrived in the midst of turmoil in Mexico which was waging a war of independence from Spain. While docked at the town of Chipalcingo near Acapulco, the Magallanes was held by Mexican rebels led by

General Jose Maria Morelos, who commandeered the ship's load but allowed the vessel to sail back to Manila, the last ship to sail the galleon trade.

Today, 194 years after the end of the galleon trade, we are endeavoring to restore – indeed exceed – its previous glory. Today we hold the first of three workshops of the project “Sharing of Knowledge between Southeast Asia and Latin American Countries on Trade and Investment” for the purpose of enhancing trade and investment between the two regions – a modern day “galleon trade” and much more. We wish to express our thanks to the Inter-American Development Bank for providing the financial support to make this workshop possible.

The ASEAN Foundation and the Inter-American Development Bank held its first meeting on 10 November 2008. This was followed by extensive exchange of emails and a second meeting on 1 December 2008, followed again by many exchanges of emails. Then on 16 March 2009, just 4 months after our first meeting, we signed the project contract. And today, less than a year since our first meeting, and only seven months from the time we signed the contract, we open the first of the three planned workshops. Hopefully, after these three workshops, many more joint activities will follow.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I welcome you all to this workshop. I hope that this workshop will help us understand each other better, enable us to enhance our friendship, and allow us to find ways of promoting trade and investment opportunities for the sustainable economic and social development of both regions.