

**Translation**

**Opening Statement by Herr Hans-Dietrich Genscher,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany,**

**at the EC/ASEAN Foreign Ministers Conference,**

**Brussels, 20/21 November 1978**

Mr President,  
Ministers, dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I declare the meeting of Ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations and of the European Communities open.

As President in office of the Council of the European Communities and at the same time as President in European Political Co-operation, I cordially welcome to Brussels the Ministers representing the Republic of Indonesia, the Federation of Malaysia, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, and the Kingdom of Thailand, as well as the Secretary General of ASEAN and all members of their delegations.

I also welcome all my Council colleagues and the representatives of the Commission of the European Communities. I am particularly pleased that this first ministerial meeting between ASEAN and the Community is taking place at a time when the Federal Republic of Germany holds the presidency of the Community.

II

In my address to the United Nations in September, I said on behalf of the Community that

"Europe wants to be a centre of co-operation in the world. And it sees itself on the side of those who seek to create an order for that co-operation founded on equality and partnership.

We want the one world in which the nations will meet the challenge of global interdependence through global co-operation. But we do not want a uniform world."

And I also said:

"We are glad to see that the idea of regional association among States with equal rights is gaining ground in all parts of the world, and we support this trend."

Today the Ministers of the European Communities and of the Association of South East Asian Nations are gathering for their first joint meeting. We see in this an event of great political significance. Both of them, the Community and ASEAN, are voluntary groupings that have formed themselves on the basis of equality. Both have set themselves the aim of furthering the economic and social well-being of their member States. Both are, in their respective regions, major and recognized factors of stability and peace.

With this conference we are adding to the regional an interregional dimension. The first meeting at ministerial level is a testimony to the firm will of both organizations to join each other as partners in the work of building the one world whose main characteristics are interdependence and co-operation.

ASEAN and the Community have many basic convictions and many interests in common. Both see in regional integration an effective instrument for ensuring independence, peace, and progress, a barrier to the hegemonic aspirations of big powers. In the economic sphere there are many areas for co-operation to our mutual advantage. This, as we see it, is a strong motive for forward-looking co-operation. The traditional relations existing between individual nations of the two regions will be very helpful in this respect.

### III

Last year the European Community celebrated its 20th anniversary. Since its inception it has proved itself to be a close-knit organization linking the destinies of the European democracies, especially in the recent difficult years of world economic crisis. We are now in the process of consolidating what has already been achieved, and carrying on from there. A common monetary system is in preparation. Its purpose is to create the necessary

monetary basis for further economic integration. The Community is also to be enlarged from nine to 12 members. This will increase democratic Europe's weight in international affairs and strengthen its ability to assert its own values in the world. With the first direct elections for the European Parliament which are to be held next year we aim to advance the internal development of our Community. Our increasing co-operation on foreign policy matters has made the Nine an important partner for debate on international issues.

The European Community has never concentrated on itself. From the very beginning it has regarded itself as part of an independent community of States. Its policy is outward-looking. In Asia we have in your Association of States both a suitable and an interested partner. In the Lomé Convention we are co-operating with 53 African, Caribbean and Pacific States. Other examples of co-operation based on partnership with other groups of States are the Euro-Arab Dialogue and our Mediterranean policy.

ASEAN is ten years younger than the European Community. And yet this regional association has already become a factor of stability which is acquiring increasing importance within the political constellation of South East Asia. The closer co-operation it is developing with its Pacific neighbours, Australia and New Zealand, as well as with Japan and the United States, is a demonstration of this, as are the Association's contacts with the People's Republic of China and the growing readiness of the Soviet Union and the nations of Indochina to recognize ASEAN as a political reality.

The members of ASEAN are pursuing a threefold objective:

They are making every effort to advance economic and social development in their own countries and in their region. They wish, through regional co-operation, to help maintain the balance of power in South East Asia. They are determined to promote a policy aimed at the independence and self-determination of all States in the region.

In this way ASEAN is helping to increase the stability of the entire region and to improve the conditions for lasting peace. We Europeans, too, have a vital interest in both. We know that tension and armed conflicts in other regions of the world can impair our own security interests.

The European Community is therefore willing to support the political aims of the ASEAN nations. It wants closer economic co-operation between the two organizations and continuing political dialogue between their member States.

Dear colleagues,

With this meeting we are demonstrating not only to our own peoples but to the whole world that our Governments are serious about co-operation. In the course of our work we shall be examining our political and economic relations and endeavouring to reach positive results. Our purpose is to develop the basic lines of future co-operation. That co-operation will build bridges between two geographically distant regions. Thus our conference can produce a signal effect in the political field which will have an impact far beyond our two regions.

Let us therefore set about our work with the high sense of responsibility that is commensurate with the political significance of this conference. Let us make it a landmark on the road to a new world order of partnership based on equality and partnership on which the solution of the major and complex tasks of safeguarding peace and securing economic and social progress - and hence the future of mankind - depend.