

**ASEAN Awareness Forum
Rome, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22nd-23rd March 2012**

Opening addresses	<p>The ASEAN Awareness Forum has been opened by the welcome speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giulio Terzi, the ASEAN Secretary General, Surin Pitsuwan, the Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia and ASEAN Chairman, Sok Siphana and the Vice President of the European Commission, Commissioner for the Enterprise and Industry, Antonio Tajani.</p> <p>The Minister of Foreign Affairs has firmly stated the Italian intention to play an active role within the EU to reach a deeper and more effective cooperation with Asean partners. He has welcome the new regional infrastructure born after the impressive development in the South East of Asia and has cited the crucial importance of trade and investment flows to ensure growth and prosperity. The pro-business environment built in the ASEAN countries is always more attractive for our firms and Italy is ready to support their expansion plans, promoting a greater economic cooperation. He have also reminded that trade flows have steadily grown during the last decade but our economic relations could be dramatically enhanced if the complementarities of our productive systems were more deeply explored. The distinguished guests have warmly welcome the Italian initiative to launch a process made of different steps, the ASEAN Awareness Forum being only the first, and have highlighted that this was the first initiative where all the ASEAN countries had been involved. Each speaker has expressed the will of the institution he represented to tie stronger cultural and economic relations, recognizing the mutual benefit stemming from a deeper collaboration on a number of issues.</p>
Debate with interventions of the Heads of Delegations	<p>During the debate with the Heads of Delegations, the latter acknowledged the Italian organization of the event and have reminded the ancient relation the joins Italy with South East Asia since Marco Polo's exploration of the silk road. The Italian excellence in a number of productions has been often cited together with the desire of the emerging middle class of the ASEAN countries to access the consumption of those goods/services. The Heads of Delegations have also informed of the sectors where collaborations with Italian counterparts are already in place and those where opportunities could be seized. As far as sectors are concerned, much of the interest has been focused on renewable energies, energy saving technologies, waste management, agro-food and traceability. The ASEAN countries share common concerns with EU countries: the need to address climate change and move to "greener" economic growth models, the desire to rebalance growth toward domestic demand and the necessity to boost education, skills development and employment.</p>



	<p>Tourism has also been discussed as one of the channels to improve relations and generate stronger economic ties together with better reciprocal knowledge. Nevertheless, the unanimously recognized key sector was infrastructures, a sector which is also strictly connected to the last mentioned tourism. Not only because our enterprises show a high level of specialization and quality, as also stated by the Representative of the World Bank, but also because ASEAN countries need infrastructures and a better connectivity in order to step further in their development plans. Most of the actors referred to PPP as the instrument to cooperate in this sector.</p>
<p>Infrastructures</p>	<p>Infrastructures have been discussed during the first of the business sessions. The significance of the sector has been stressed, reminding the audience of its horizontal relevance. Enlarging ASEAN production bases, in fact, would be worthless if goods/services couldn't be transported and distributed. Furthermore, the goal of integration for people, institutions and markets could never be reached if the infrastructural system is left behind. A number of Italian firms, such as Saipem, ENEL, Finmeccanica, Italian Railways and others have expressed their interest in the area, also presenting the countries they already serve and the specific service they are able to provide at the highest level.</p>
<p>Mechanics</p>	<p>In the Mechanics related business session, Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan gave a brief but detailed description of this industry in the area, presenting Thailand as the Detroit of Asia and Indonesia as the next "lucrative" market. He stated that Italy could be very competitive for its well-known cluster based production and its famous quality in high fashion and automotive which is also accompanied by the strong brand recognition of the Made in Italy. This statement was then discussed, asserting that some kind of products must be produced in Italy, such as Ferrari, but some machinery, like food or leather processing, can be produced in the ASEAN countries with Italian technology. The development of the sector, as well as for other sectors, requires trade barriers in the area to disappear, although they are already low.</p>



Science and Technology	<p>In the Science and Technology session, references have been made to the point stated the day before by Commissioner Tajani: time has come to go beyond outsourcing and delocalization. Firms have to start building cooperation projects and scientific & technological partnerships, in line with the European promotion policy. Also Mr Secretary General referred to joint ventures/technological partnerships as a means to “skip the learning curve”.</p> <p>A stronger dialogue should be launched with the Italian industrial district, especially those with a technological vocation. Mr Secretary General also underlined that ASEAN is rich in raw materials, such as rubber that could be used in the automotive industry. But this could be done only with strong investments in R&D. As highlighted by the Representative of Philippines, this kind of cooperation should not invest only the R&D sector strictly defined but should also be extended to the larger sector of education.</p>
Consumer Goods and Distribution	<p>In the Consumer Goods and Distribution session, three main aspects have been stressed: made in Italy, property rights, standards and nontariff barriers. Given the larger share of the ASEAN population which is moving the middle class, there will be an increasing demand for Italian products and, by consequence, higher flows of Italian exports towards the area. This trade needs to be safeguarded by a full respect of property rights. Many of Italian trade marks - in textiles, agro-food and other sectors – are very often faked and our authorities are firmly committed in protecting our productions.</p> <p>Cooperation on this issue should also be extended to nontariff barriers which ought to be removed in order to let the potential of economic relations with ASEAN be fully exploited. It is also evident that this kind of cooperation should be done at regional level, including the entire EU in the dialogue with our friends from ASEAN.</p>
Concluding remarks	<p>The Forum has been closed by the intervention of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Marta Dassù, who has underlined the efforts made by the current Government to sustain growth recovery and to promote the internationalisation of the Italian production base, especially in emerging markets such as South East Asia at which our enterprises look with great expectations. She has stated that the strengthening of our relations should be realized in the EU framework and that this first event should be considered as the kick-off of a number of actions to be launched</p>



shortly. Nevertheless, Italy will continue to support its firms interested in developing their business in ASEAN and has wished next meeting to be very operative and specifically focused on well defined sectors and interested partners, from both sides of the participants at the ASEAN Awareness Forum.