

Speech by Ms. Yanti Triwadiantini, Chair, ASEAN CSR Network

at the Conference on Corporate Governance & Responsibility: Theory Meets Practice
20 July 2016, Singapore

Guest of Honour Minister Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Singapore

*Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished guests and friends,*

1. It gives me great pleasure to extend to you all a very warm welcome on behalf of the ASEAN CSR Network. Thank you very much for taking time to join us today for the Conference on Corporate Governance & Responsibility: Theory Meets Practice.
2. Corporate social responsibility or CSR has never been more prominent on the regional agenda than it is today. 2015 was a momentous year for ASEAN as it declared the formation of an integrated ASEAN Community and the launch of ASEAN's new 10-year strategic blueprint – ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together. And for the first time CSR was incorporated in all three pillars of the ASEAN Community as one of the strategic measures for sustainable, equitable and inclusive development, and realising a truly rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN Community.
3. In line with the global sustainable development goals, instilling a culture of integrity, ensuring the respect and promotion of human rights, especially rights of vulnerable groups, promoting labour standards, food security, sustainable and inclusive agriculture, sustainable consumption and production amongst others are identified as key action points for ASEAN under the new workplan.
4. Related to this, we are very happy and we wish to congratulate ASEAN on the adoption of the ASEAN Guidelines for CSR on Labour in May this year. This is a new and great achievement for all CSR advocates and ASEAN citizens. The ASEAN CSR Network was proud to have been an active contributor to the development and promotion of the Guidelines.

5. ASEAN is now one Community, but in order for ASEAN to be a truly integrated, inclusive, equitable and sustainable Community, there is much to be done. The success of ASEAN relies on the concerted efforts by all people, stakeholders and sectors to tackle numerous challenges head-on. 200 participants are here today representing academia, businesses, governments, civil society, trade-unions, media and ordinary citizens. This diversity reflects one of the central tenets of this Conference, that tackling challenges threatening our sustainable development requires commitments and contributions from everyone.
6. Businesses are universally recognised as the primary engine of the economic growth and development needed to alleviate poverty. And as ASEAN continues on the path of regional economic integration, businesses are increasingly expected to contribute not only to wealth generation, but also to solving some of the region's pressing challenges.
7. CSR is not new in ASEAN, but despite increased attention to CSR, the gap between expectation, theory and practice of CSR remains unresolved. One such example is sustainability reporting, as Prof. Lawrence Loh shared with us earlier. While the overall level of disclosure of companies has increased significantly in recent years, there is still an imbalance of disclosure quality across sustainability topics and the depth of reporting remains relatively low.
8. How do we bridge this gap? Through this 3-day Conference, by bringing both academics and practitioners together with other key stakeholders, we aim to decode the truth behind the CSR myths, and equip businesses with the know-how and means to do CSR. We also hope that academics will find this conference a good opportunity to strengthen their research and teaching practices. Only then can we nurture a new generation of business and public leaders that will take CSR and sustainability to the next level.

Dear distinguished guests and friends,

9. ACN is committed to helping mainstream responsible business conduct in ASEAN based on internationally accepted norms and standards under our 'ASEAN CSR Vision 2020' strategy.

10. Related to this, I would like to share that the 3rd Call for Proposals of the ASEAN CSR Vision 2020 Small Grants Fund is currently open until 15 August 2016. Supported by the Government of Sweden, the fund provides supplementary support to local and regional organisations who are engaged in work to promote CSR and with an interest to link their work to regional objectives.
11. I'm also taking this opportunity to announce the launch of the ASEAN CSR Fellowship programme. Through this program, we seek to build up the next generation of ambassadors for responsible business in ASEAN, harnessing the potential of the private sector to address key regional issues in anti-corruption, environmental degradation, poverty and human rights. You can find more information about our Small Grants Fund and CSR Fellowship programmes from the flyers in your conference folder or through the ACN website.
12. In addition, we are planning to launch a network of individuals and organisations interested in the research, teaching and practice of CSR/sustainability. This Conference serves as an opportunity to engage the relevant stakeholders in conversations on how to make this happen. If you are interested, please approach us.
13. Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of our donors and partners, so please allow me to thank the Government of Sweden for their generous support to ACN's work and this Conference. I would also like to extend special thanks to our co-organiser Centre for Governance, Institutions & Organisations (CGIO), NUS Business School, without whose cooperation this Conference would not have been possible.

Dear distinguished guests and friends,

14. I would like to end my remarks by encouraging you to take an active part in the discussions. Once again, let's bridge the gap between theory and practice and find actionable breakthroughs in CSR for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth in ASEAN. I wish you all a productive Conference and a pleasant stay in Singapore. Thank you.