

**STATEMENT BY SCOT A. MARCIEL**

**Ambassador-designate**

**U.S. Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs**

**(Association of Southeast Asian Nations)**

**SUBMITTED TO THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

**APRIL 9, 2008**

Madam Chairman, Senator Murkowski, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today to seek confirmation of President Bush's nomination of me as U.S. Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs. I appreciate the confidence that the President and Secretary Rice have shown in me by this nomination.

The creation of the position of U.S. Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs reflects our recognition of the growing importance of ASEAN as an institution. I would like to acknowledge the important role the United States Senate played in the creation of this post. Madam Chairman, just over a year ago, you joined nine other Senators in co-sponsoring Senate Resolution 110, sponsored by Senator Lugar, expressing the sense of the Senate that, among other important actions, the United States should appoint an Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs. That resolution and the Administration's subsequent move to nominate such an Ambassador highlight our shared belief that the United States should increase its engagement and cooperation with ASEAN. In that spirit, and if confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to work with you and other Members to advance U.S. interests in Southeast Asia and within ASEAN in particular.

Southeast Asia is a dynamic region of great importance to our country. ASEAN's ten member nations have a combined population of nearly 600 million, and together constitute our fourth largest export market. ASEAN members include two treaty allies, the world's third-largest democracy, and many long-time partners and friends.

Our fundamental interest in Southeast Asia is that the region's nations remain strong and independent, that they enjoy increasing prosperity and freedom, and that they work with us as partners in addressing a wide range of regional and global challenges.

We are pursuing these interests both by bolstering our already strong bilateral relations with most ASEAN members and, increasingly, by building a fuller relationship with ASEAN itself. Because I have been nominated to be Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs, I would like to focus my comments on our relationship with ASEAN as a whole, rather than on our bilateral relations with individual members.

ASEAN was established in 1967. The United States became a Dialogue Partner, ASEAN's term for those nations with which it has established regular formal discussions, in

1977. Throughout those 31 years, we have developed closer relations between our governments, our businesses, non-governmental organizations, education institutions and individuals.

In recent years, ASEAN members have worked to bolster the organization and to promote economic integration and a greater sense of community. ASEAN governments understand these changes are essential if they are to compete internationally and ASEAN is to maintain its relevance. ASEAN Leaders took a very important step along these lines last November when they signed the ASEAN Charter, which provides a legal basis for the organization and offers the possibility for it to play a much more significant and positive role in the future.

It is in our interests to see a strong and successful ASEAN, which can be a positive force for peace, stability, and prosperity, and which also can set high standards for its members in areas such as rule of law and human rights. That is why we have responded to ASEAN's recent efforts by ramping up our engagement. The ASEAN - U.S. Enhanced Partnership, announced by the President and ASEAN leaders in 2005, set a clear framework for boosting cooperation. The Action Plan signed by Secretary Rice and her ASEAN counterparts in 2006 laid out a series of concrete areas of cooperation. More recently, the Department of State and USAID have developed a program, called ADVANCE, to support these efforts, and to help ASEAN achieve its ambitious goals.

Much of our initial work has focused on supporting ASEAN's economic integration efforts, in large part because ASEAN itself is moving fastest in building its economic pillar. However, we also are advancing our political, security, social and cultural interests with ASEAN. We have been very active on the environment, supporting projects such as the successful ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network, the Coral Triangle Initiative and the Heart of Borneo program. We are rapidly increasing our cooperation on climate change, clean energy, pandemic preparedness, and avian influenza. I am very pleased that we recently launched the first ASEAN Fulbright program.

We want to work with ASEAN to promote democracy and freedom. We are pleased that the fundamental principles embodied in the ASEAN Charter include commitments to "strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law and to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms." We welcome the decision to create a human rights body – and as the structure and functions of that body take shape, we will urge ASEAN to give it the means to promote and protect fundamental human rights throughout the region.

Madame Chairman, nearly half of my 23 years in the Foreign Service has been devoted to working in or on the ASEAN region, including assignments in the Philippines and Vietnam, as director of the two offices responsible for Southeast Asia, and as desk officer for Laos. I have developed a strong network of contacts in the region, as well as a healthy appreciation for its diversity, challenges, and opportunities.

If confirmed, I pledge to use that experience and my firm belief in the value of a strong U.S. role in Southeast Asia to expand U.S. engagement with ASEAN in support of our national interests. I will do all I can to ensure the United States maintains a strong presence in the region, and to eliminate any doubt about the U.S. commitment to Southeast Asia. I intend to urge

ASEAN to set and to meet high standards, whether on economic issues such as intellectual property rights protection or on democracy and human rights, including by making the human rights body a credible and meaningful entity. I also look forward to enhancing U.S.-ASEAN cooperation in other areas, such as health, energy, and the environment.

One of my highest priorities, if confirmed, will be to work with ASEAN and its member nations – as well as with other countries in the region and around the globe -- to convince Burma's rulers to end their brutal repression and begin a genuine dialogue leading to a democratic transition. The problem of Burma represents one of ASEAN's biggest challenges, but also an opportunity. If we and ASEAN, together with others in the international community, can help bring about a reversal of Burma's dangerous downward spiral, it will be of enormous benefit not only to the Burmese people, but to the region, to ASEAN, and to our interests in East Asia.

I would like to conclude with a few comments on how I hope to carry out this new role as Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs, while continuing my work as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia. First, I intend to travel extensively throughout the region, and to use every stop to talk about both bilateral and ASEAN issues. I believe the title of Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs will give me good access, and many opportunities to talk about our concerns – and the positive role the U.S. is playing in the region – both privately and publicly. Second, I intend to engage extensively with the ASEAN Secretary General and his staff in Jakarta to support ambitious ASEAN goals and to find concrete ways in which we can work together. Finally, I need to do a lot of work here to ensure that we have a clear, coherent, and coordinated approach to Southeast Asia that combines the traditional focus on bilateral relations with recognition that our challenges and opportunities in that part of the world increasingly need to be pursued regionally, particularly through close cooperation with ASEAN.

Madam Chairman, I would consider it a great privilege to serve my country as the first U.S. Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I welcome your questions.