

FOREWORD

ASEAN came into existence 30 years ago. The last examination of Australia's relations with ASEAN was conducted by the Committee in 1984: *Australia and ASEAN - Challenges and Opportunities*. Since then, the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee has conducted inquiries into Australia's bilateral relations with several regional countries - the Philippines (1986), the South Pacific (1989), Papua New Guinea (1991, and update in 1997), Indonesia (1993), and Thailand (1995).

It is timely that the Sub-Committee should examine Australia's relationship with a developing and expanding ASEAN whose members form the fourth largest trading region in the world after the US, Japan and the EU. The increasing confidence of the ASEAN group flows from factors such as the cessation of most internal threats to security, the end of the Cold War, engagement with the socialist states of South East Asia and the relative absence of major differences between the member countries.

In his letter to the Chairman, Rt Hon Ian Sinclair, MP, dated 8 October 1996, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Alexander Downer, MP, welcomed the Committee's inquiry into the growing importance of ASEAN as an economic and political institution, and its significance to Australia in the broader context of our engagement with the region. Mr Downer highlighted the need for the inquiry to focus as well on the distinction between ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), to give recognition to the fact that our relationship with ASEAN is broader than just our status as a Dialogue Partner, to widen the examination of economic relations beyond the impact of the development of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and AFTA-CER links, and to separate cultural cooperation from development cooperation.

Much of the focus of the inquiry changed in September/October 1997 when the currency crisis in South East Asia began to affect almost every assessment that had been made about the region in the first half of the year. Such dramatic changes and rapidly evolving circumstances have made the task of the Committee very difficult. The early evidence had to be assessed in the light of severe reversals in almost all indicators and gathering evidence on the changes as they occurred has been an uncertain process.

Many of the conclusions of the Committee must be qualified by the fact that circumstances may well change between the drafting of the report and its tabling. Despite these problems, the Committee believes that the inquiry has heightened the need for consideration of our relations with the region.

The Conduct of the Inquiry

The reference for the inquiry was received from the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 12 November 1996. The inquiry was advertised nationally on Saturday 14 December 1996. The Committee received 41 submissions and nine supplementary submissions. Eleven public hearings were held in Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, including two round table discussions, in Darwin and Perth, with representatives of businesses trading with ASEAN. The hearing program was conducted in two phases, from May to June 1997

and from August to December 1997. Inspections were held in Darwin of the new harbour development and the Cox Peninsula transmitters.

In May 1997, the Members of the Joint Committee held private discussions with the Canberra Committee, the forum for ASEAN ambassadors in Canberra. The Members were grateful for the participation of the ASEAN ambassadors and for the insights they were able to give of ASEAN's views on its development.

The fact that the inquiry was taking place during the 30th anniversary year of ASEAN meant that a number of additional activities relating to ASEAN were held throughout the year. In August 1997, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of ASEAN, conferences assessing past achievements and considering future challenges were held in Melbourne and Canberra. The then Chairman, Rt Hon Ian Sinclair, MP, addressed the conference in Sydney and secretariat staff were able to attend the conference in Melbourne. In December 1997, the APEC Study Centre held a conference on trade and the economic crisis which was attended by staff. The secretary to the inquiry also participated in the Asia-Australia Institute's Gwinganna Forum in Manila on 19-21 November 1997. In addition to the formal processes, these meetings were invaluable sources of information and enhanced understanding of what, by October 1997, had become a complex and changing story.

Bill Taylor, MP
Chairman
Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee

CONCLUSIONS

1. Two ASEANS emerged in the course of this inquiry: one, at the beginning, prosperous, confident, exhibiting uninterrupted growth; the other, after October 1997, uncertain, demoralised, suffering sharp decline in economic indicators and intently seeking an understanding of the cause of the crisis and the nature of the solution. The Asian crisis that emerged at that time changed completely many of the assessments that the Committee had received from the submissions and evidence to that date. The extent of the damage and the length of the time it will take to recover are as yet uncertain. The Committee is confident that, given the strength of the achievements of the 'first' ASEAN, member nations will want the recovery phase to be as short as possible. However, a recurrent theme developed as a result of the economic crisis; the need for institutional reform and transparent and accountable financial and political systems.

2. Since the end of the Cold War, until 1997, ASEAN flourished. If the aim in 1967 was to build the independence and the self-confidence of the region, the year of the 30th anniversary, 1997, was marked by an association which was fully and confidently engaged in discussion of the political, economic and strategic issues facing it. The changes in East and South East Asia, and particularly in the ASEAN states, in the last generation have been remarkable. So untrammelled was their growth and development until the current economic problems developed, that their economies were labelled tiger economies. While the scale might now be perceived to be more fallible and human, the achievements are still remarkable: poverty has been reduced; education generally made available to broad populations in the region; health standards have been improved and development infrastructure put in place.

3. ASEAN has established a comprehensive web of meetings and discussions. ASEAN's profile and the weight it carries in international affairs has become significant. Importance is attached to the Leaders' Summits and the Post Ministerial Conferences which bring ASEAN leaders regularly into contact with world leaders, the extra regional interest in the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and in the breadth of issues on the ASEAN agenda.

4. Unlike the European Union, political cohesion in ASEAN is not structural but is demonstrated in the consensus, both public and private, which ASEAN has achieved on a range of matters. Given the private nature of much of the ASEAN process, this cohesion may, and no doubt does, mask considerable differences among members; however the public face of ASEAN and the record of solidarity is remarkable. In short, ASEAN has projected a strong sense of South East Asian identity and purpose based on shared interests and shared experiences. ASEAN coherence has been a valuable source of strength in dealing with the conflict in Cambodia, the refugee problems of South East Asia, conflict over the Spratly Islands, multilateral negotiations over trade matters, particularly falling commodity prices, and the export earnings of developing countries.

5. For ASEAN, two major issues have emerged during 1997: the challenges posed by the enlargement of the Association to nine members (and the prospect of ten) and the impact of the economic crisis that hit the region in October. The effect of both is likely to be a restraint on the growth of the region and the possible undermining of the internal political stability of individual ASEAN states and the organisation as a whole. In addition and related

to the challenge of expansion, the political problems of Cambodia and Burma continue to destabilise the region. In the medium term, ASEAN also faces a generational change in leadership which has created uncertainty, particularly where the succession is uncertain.

6. In the years since independence, some South East Asian states have been served by strong, decisive and often charismatic leaders who have contributed significantly to the development of their nations and, through the ASEAN process, the stability of the region. Whereas independence struggles created demands for strong leaders who could draw nations together, these leaders also produced strongly authoritarian governments. Now, a process of generational change occurring in South East Asia has created uncertainties in some countries. As the economies of the region have matured, authoritarian governments, relying on personal favours and without open and accountable regulatory systems, have been inadequate or unsuited to the task.

7. The problems of transparency and the recognition of human rights in regional states were two matters brought to the attention of the Committee during the inquiry. A number of human rights concerns in the region were raised. They included: the poor adherence to UN human rights conventions in the region; frequent use of the death penalty; imprisonment of political activists, dissenters and conscientious objectors; exploitative labour practices, including the abuse of child labour and migrant workers; trafficking of women and children; suppression of opposition political parties and restrictions on free speech and a free press.

8. By October 1997, the rationale for much of the inquiry had shifted radically. At the outset of the inquiry, prospects for continued strong economic growth across the ASEAN region appeared solid. While the ASEAN economies had experienced some slowdown in growth through 1996, resulting both from a softening in major export markets, such as electronics and primary commodities, and reduced export competitiveness linked to real exchange rate appreciations, most analysts confidently forecast GDP real growth rates for the region in the range of 6-8 per cent for 1998.

9. Twelve months later, such confidence has largely evaporated. The so-called 'Asian financial crisis', which began with dramatic currency devaluations in South East Asia in July 1997, and rapidly spread to financial and capital markets, has resulted in a steadily worsening liquidity crunch, undermining growth and economic stability throughout the region. According to some reports, overall real economic growth across the region may fall as low as 1 per cent for 1997 - a far cry from the 7 per cent average recorded through the first part of the 1990's. The region's ten countries had economies valued at about US\$730 billion in 1996, but that figure may have fallen to less than US\$650 billion last year and are now valued at well under US\$500 billion.

10. Such a *volte face* has led to an intense reexamination of the presumptions about the region and heretofore unnoticed or under-emphasised structural weaknesses have loomed larger with hindsight. No doubt, as time passes, a balanced perspective will emerge on both the causes of the crisis and outcomes for the region.

11. The 'Asian financial crisis' which started in currency markets in South East Asia, then spread to other markets, undermined first confidence, then faith in the certainty of continued high growth in the region - the so-called East Asian Miracle. The ensuing economic downturn has raised questions about the foundations of that growth, the soundness of the region's financial sectors, the role of government in directing investment and lending,

even the appropriateness of 'Asian values' in the context to free market orthodoxy. It has also presented the region's economies with a number of inter-related challenges, including: the implementation of financial sector reforms needed to attract foreign capital back into the region, and the establishment of governance practices which will improve transparency and accountability.

12. For ASEAN as a grouping and as an organisation, the crisis also presents a number of challenges: the need to maintain the momentum of intra-regional trade liberalisation and economic cooperation under AFTA in the face of severe domestic constraints; the need to devise regional strategies which can practically assist battered economies regain stability and health; and, more specifically, the need for ASEAN to assume a greater role in the process of institution-building in the region. Where formerly, internal problems were sidestepped or ignored, ASEAN now realises that regional stability depends on being involved in each other's affairs.¹ Recognising the need for a concerted, regional response has been an important first step for the association, but it has not yet demonstrated that it can play a role in helping economies of the region overcome their problems.

13. The crisis in the economies of the region demonstrates that corruption is a serious political and economic problem. Its cause rests in the political systems where there is little transparency, accountability and scrutiny; the lack of a free press, a viable opposition and an independent judiciary. These fundamental civil and political rights are the means by which corruption, while not eliminated, is kept at bay. There is commonly expressed, in Australia and in the region, the view that the political and economic systems can be compartmentalised, that human rights and trade are not connected,² and that a country can adopt western economics and reject broader democratic accountability: this appears, in the light of current events, to be a fallacy. The experiences of the past months in Asia have had antecedents in capitalist economies on a number of occasions. Both this experience and the clamour for reform in Thailand, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea illustrate that, while the problems of greed and the abuse of power are not uniquely Asian problems, they are universal; the solutions of fairness and equity are not Western, they are universally understood to be valuable.

14. The danger that the economic crisis could become a political crisis and in turn affect strategic balance in the region was also raised in the latter stages of the inquiry. Even before the crisis, the region was already contemplating strategic uncertainty created by the rapid changes that had affected the region since the mid 1980s.

15. The end of the war in Indochina, the settlement of the conflict in Cambodia, the conclusion of the Cold War and the rise in economic power of the countries of South East Asia, North and East Asia, especially China, have combined over the last ten years to alter the strategic relationships of the region. Vietnam has become a member of ASEAN, an organisation which set itself against the rise of Communism in the region in the late 60s and 70s. ASEAN has sought to expand into the full complement of 10 regional countries, adding strategic weight to its views and interests. This process courts difficulties.

1 Exhibit No. 47, *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 February 1998, p. 26.

2 This Committee has argued for the integrated nature of human rights and the economic systems of nations for some years; it has debated at length how that clear interconnection should then inform policy in ways that are constructive rather than punitive.

16. Since the breakup of the former Soviet Union, Russian influence has declined in the region. ASEAN has been ambivalent about the roles of both the United States and China in the region. There is concern that the United States, which is still seen as pivotal to regional security, might seek to withdraw from the region at the same time as there is a fear of American hegemony and an unwillingness to accommodate United States' bases within ASEAN countries.³ There is concern about the growing power, assertiveness and possible ambitions of China towards South East Asia - Burma and the Spratly Islands in particular - at the same time as there is a desire to include China within the strategic dialogue. Thus ASEAN continues to navigate a fine course between regional independence and neutrality and great power engagement that is more paradoxical than contradictory. The ambivalence stems to some extent from the differing views or emphases placed on security by different ASEAN states. The interests of the Philippines or Vietnam over the Spratly Islands or Thailand over the influence of China in Burma are different from those of Malaysia, Laos or Indonesia.

17. It is in ASEAN's broad strategic interest that the potential conflicts of North and East Asia on the Korean Peninsula and between Taiwan and China be well managed and that the China/United States/Japan relationships remain stable. The bilateral security arrangements between the United States and significant powers in the region continue to underpin stability for the present.

18. What is the response of ASEAN to this changing security environment?

19. Formal, multilateral security architecture in ASEAN is limited. The Association did not develop the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a broad security related dialogue, until 1994. The mandatory treaties for membership of ASEAN are not military alliances and there are no dispute settling procedures. The style is one of confidence building through dialogue and statements of principles. The ARF is a new and untested organisation.

20. However, despite misgivings, there were a number of positive assessments of the achievements of the ARF so far. Witnesses recognised that there was a need for a multilateral strategic vehicle in the region and that something was better than nothing. It was thought that the ARF had progressed further than expected in its short life. It had proved to be useful both on the issues of the South China Sea and the confrontation over the Taiwan Straits, although whether a resolution is any closer is doubtful. Most comments in support are in terms of the ARF's 'promise'.

21. The ARF offered a forum for the informal discussion of regional issues through the second track security dialogue on such matters as transborder crime, drug trafficking, migration, maritime security and resource questions. These are important transborder regional issues that need a multilateral focus as a matter of some urgency.

22. The Australian aid program focuses strongly on the region, although funds overall have declined. However, the stated shift in the program to give emphasis to institutional capacity is timely. The Committee believes this shift should be pursued more vigorously.

3 JSCFADT, *ANZUS: After 45 Years*, Seminar Proceedings, 11-12 August 1997, p. 165. However, it should be noted that the United States has negotiated a right for its naval vessels and aircraft to use Singapore's military facilities and to locate a logistics facility and that Malaysia and Indonesia have agreed to limited US naval access to their ports. Exhibit No. 57, Michael Leifer, *The ASEAN Regional Forum*, Adelphi Paper 302, p. 7.

Furthermore, given the weaknesses within institutions that the current crisis has highlighted and the transborder and strategic nature of a number of the problems in the region, the Committee supports both the inclusion of these issues on the agenda of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and encourages region-wide aid initiatives to address them.

23. Australia's relations with ASEAN as an association are limited. They have been characterised by a strong and productive economic focus, significant regional initiatives in the ARF and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and bilateral relations which are strong and wide ranging. However, political sensitivities continue over political style and the interpretation and implementation of human rights. These sensitivities have affected our engagement adversely. Australia's policy, consistent with both a sympathetic understanding of the region and adherence to our democratic traditions, needs to be articulated more consistently and less ambiguously. As the Vice Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong observed, 'Paradoxically, it is the things that Australians value about their culture: the law, the respect for human rights, the parliamentary system - the things that are not features of Asian societies - these are the elements that tend to attract Asians'.⁴

24. Furthermore, the need to broaden the ASEAN agenda to encompass cross regional political and social issues is even more urgent in 1998 in the light of the region's severe economic problems. The solutions to these problems must place strains on the political fabric of all regional countries. Regional countries, as they review their economic and financial systems and the institutional frameworks that underpin their societies, have an opportunity to broaden that review to include political structures. The sectors are interconnected and transparency and accountability cannot be confined to only the financial sector of society. The Committee believes that it is in Australia's interests, where appropriate, to assist such processes.

25. If differences in our political culture have long created some tensions, our image has also been affected by the debate about the focus on Asia and subsequently about the 'Asianisation' of Australia. It was a debate that often appeared to generate exaggerated positions. What might have been understood as a sensible policy that took account of the growing power, significance and complementarity of regional countries and which pressed Australia to develop greater Asian literacy and cultural sensitivity became instead a debate about the Asianisation of Australia, expressing, rather, an old anxiety about Australian identity and Australian isolation and vulnerability. This debate that consumed so much energy in the last five years about our place in the region will no doubt also be modified by changing economic circumstances.

26. Unfortunately, our cultural relations, an area where we might explain ourselves comprehensively, has been neglected. As a priority, cultural relations remain low on the agenda. Their very ephemeral nature has undermined their significance in an age of relentless quantification of worth, creating circumstances where we know the 'price of everything and the value of nothing'.⁵ Nevertheless, as in 1984, the rhetoric remains strong. 'Culture plays a key role in increasing cultural understanding between peoples, which in turn

4 Exhibit No. 12, James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs*, Oxford University Press Australia and the Australian Institute of International Affairs, May 1997 p. 45.

5 Oscar Wilde.

strengthens political, economic and other strands of international relations'.⁶ However, in significant areas, there have been cuts to services and to support for this aspect of our relationship with the region. This is particularly evident in the dismantling of Radio Australia, in the continuing problems in broadening the base of Asian studies in Australia, in the abolition of two student exchange schemes,⁷ in the curtailment of the Public Affairs Division and the Australia-Indonesia Institute and the virtual demise of cultural attaches in Australian embassies.

27. The Committee believes that much more energy should be devoted to our engagement with the region on the non-official, individual level of personnel exchanges whether through migration, educational and academic exchanges, cultural visits or professional assistance and cooperation.

28. In particular, migration represents one of the most important and enduring means of developing our integration with the region as well as enriching and diversifying Australian culture. Although people from ASEAN represent a relatively small percentage of the total population of Australia, they have brought to Australia cultural diversity, education, enterprise and industry. The debate which erupted in Australia in 1996 in which contrary claims were made is not supported by the statistics or by the overall sentiment of the nation.⁸

29. The sense of gloom and anxiety that has enveloped the region in the last few months may well be exaggerated, a reaction to the immediate crisis which underestimates the oft quoted sound fundamentals upon which regional countries have based their post war prosperity. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to ignore the signs of structural weakness or the possibility of adverse developments in the social, political or strategic conditions of the region. The Committee concluded that the capacity of individual ASEAN states to weather the storm has been related to the sophistication and comprehensiveness of their regulatory frameworks. More than anything else, redressing these institutional weaknesses should be the focus of reform in the region if there is to be a lasting return to prosperity. Australia's closeness to the region and our natural interest in and dependence on its prosperity gives us a particular responsibility to use whatever influence or resources we can towards the return of that prosperity. For this reason, the majority of the recommendations of this report are directed at assisting the region towards that end wherever possible or appropriate.

30. For ASEAN as an organisation, the crisis illustrates the interconnectedness of the region; the extent to which the prosperity of the one affects the prosperity of all, and, given this, it has emphasised the weaknesses inherent in the regional association - the slow consensus style and the unwillingness to consider grave political problems within states. It would seem to be important that ASEAN too uses the crisis as an opportunity to take stock of its role and its capacity to respond to the needs of its members.

31. A number of commentators have noted that the problems facing South East Asia at present are of new dimensions. Previous financial crises have not moved so quickly or developed on such a scale as this crisis. This inquiry and report have been produced in the middle of rapidly changing circumstances and it is not yet clear how events will finally

6 DFAT Submission, p. S426.

7 See paragraph 6.59.

8 That debate is canvassed in this report in Chapter 6.

unfold. For this reason, the Committee's conclusions are both somewhat tentative and subject to reassessment at a later stage.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

Chapter 5

1. the Federal Government strongly encourage those ASEAN countries not party to the WTO Information and Technology Agreement (ITA) to accede to the agreement as soon as possible.
2. a unit be established within the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (DIST) to liaise with industry, Austrade and DFAT in identifying and regularly updating information on major non-tariff barriers to Australian exports in key markets, including those in ASEAN.
3. the Federal Government, in close consultation with Australian industry and business groups, review the impact of AFTA on Australia's trade and commercial interests.
4. the Federal Government further develop the existing program of CER-AFTA cooperation, and explore the possibility of expanding the initiative to include liberalisation on a sectoral basis, for example in the area of services.
5. the Federal Government explore ways in which the provision of state-funded, state-dedicated Austrade resources for trade and investment promotion (Bangkok model) can be extended to other states and territories.
6. the Federal Government review the possibility of introducing a mixed credit scheme for Australian firms undertaking infrastructure projects in the Asia Pacific region, to be administered by the Trade portfolio with due regard to Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program objectives.

Chapter 6

7. the Australian Government assist the Australian tourist industry, particularly through the Australian Tourism Commission, to increase promotional efforts in other key tourist markets, for example North America and Western Europe.

Chapter 7

8. the Government establish a formal, annual process of scrutiny both within the Parliament and the Australian National Audit Office of the streamlined entry system.

9. the Australian Government urge the Government of Thailand to:
 - (a) ratify the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol*; and
 - (b) permit the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide greater assistance to the refugees on the Thai-Burma border.
10. the Australian Government continue to press the ASEAN countries to maintain the constructive aspects to their engagement policy by pressing the Government of Burma towards further reform - the end to forced labour, the release of political detainees, dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and the liberalisation of the procedures of the Burmese National Convention, established to draw up a new constitution.
11. the Australian Government:
 - (a) send a senior delegation to the Thai-Burma border to assess the situation and report to the Government and the Parliament with recommendations for possible action on a bilateral or region wide basis; and
 - (b) give generous consideration to the requests for entry visas from bona fide students from Burma itself or the Thai-Burma border and those seeking resettlement within the humanitarian category.
12. the Australian Government urge ASEAN to:
 - (a) include on its agenda discussion on bilateral agreements for the implementation of internationally agreed minimum standards for the treatment of migrant workers; and
 - (b) place labour issues on the agenda of both ASEAN and APEC.
13. the Australian Government encourage transnational businesses to adopt codes of conduct for their operations in regional countries such that health and safety standards for workers in multinational companies are consistent between the developing countries and the country of origin of the enterprise.⁹

Chapter 8

14. the Australian Government support the development of an East Asian political community in the form of a regional forum developed through consultation with all regional governments.

9 The Joint Committee made recommendations on this matter in its report on Burma in 1995. See JSCFADT, *Human Rights and Progress towards Democracy in Burma*, p. xxiii.

15. the Australian Government encourage the ASEAN states to ratify and implement international human rights instruments as an integral part of their responsibilities in the international order.
16. the Government ensure that human rights issues are an integral part of emerging dialogues with ASEAN countries on regional development cooperation, economic and security issues.

Chapter 9

17. representatives from the Australia Council be included in the Australian delegation to the ASEAN Australia Forum and particularly, where appropriate, to the working party of the ASEAN Committee on Communications and Information.
18. the Australian Government invite the ASEAN Ministers for Culture to visit Australia with a view to establishing a regular dialogue between Australian and ASEAN ministers and officials on cultural matters.
19. the Australian Government endorse the ASEAN initiatives on common practices regarding intellectual property and offer assistance in the form of further training programs or technical assistance for their implementation.
20. the Australian Government provide sufficient financial and human resources to the newly formed Australian International Cultural Council to enable its effective operation in the full range of cultural promotion.
21. the Department of Communications and the Arts and Austrade combine to explore ways in which Australian theatre management and associated technological skills can be more effectively marketed to the region.
22. the Federal Government give consideration to the expansion, over a period of ten years, of the University Mobility in the Asia Pacific Program to reach the target of 5,000 Australian students studying in Asia annually.
23. the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, through the establishment of the International Cultural Council, and in conjunction with the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee develop strategies for the promotion of Australian excellence in educational and cultural fields.
24. the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs liaise with the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee to investigate the establishment of a network of supporting arrangements for foreign students studying in Australia.

25. the Australian Government investigate the feasibility of establishing a broad based Australia ASEAN Council, comprising business, academic and cultural interests, as well as relevant government and non government agencies, to support, coordinate and review Australia's programs which seek to advance Australia's relations with ASEAN.
26. post-privatisation, the Government continue to monitor and enforce the adherence of Australia Television (ATV) to the contractual obligations requiring the use of Australian content, the retention of Australian and ABC news and current affairs and the service's consistency with broader national objectives.
27. the Government restore the Cox Peninsula transmitters to full operation for the use of Radio Australia.

Chapter 10

28. the Australian Government, in both its bilateral dialogue and in the multilateral forums of ASEAN:
 - (a) encourage countries of the region to adhere to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers; and
 - (b) press governments in the region for the repeal of the anti-subversion laws.
29. the Australian Government continue to use its position on the Mekong River Commission and through bilateral relations to ensure that social and environmental concerns are paramount in river system management and development.
30. the Australian Government:
 - (a) examine the possibility of expanding its regional aid programs, such as the South East Asia regional program (SEARP), in order to address cross regional issues such as water, forestry, energy, labour standards and protection and issues relating to the trafficking of women and children in the region; and
 - (b) provide an increase in funding to the regional aid programs commensurate with any expanded scope of the program.
31. the Australian Government seek to strengthen civil society through training and other forms of institutional development in regional countries and thereby strengthen Australia's relationships with the non-government sectors in those countries.

32. **given the emphasis on the need for improved regulatory systems in the financial sector of countries in the region, the Government support projects to encourage international standards of accounting and auditing throughout the region.**
33. **the Australian Government:**
 - (a) **reinstate a well funded legal services assistance program within the Attorney-General's Department; and**
 - (b) **ensure there is greater coordination and cooperation between the Attorney-General's Department and AusAID in the development and delivery of those legal training and education programs currently within regional development assistance programs.**

Chapter 11

34. **the Australian Government in its bilateral discussions and in appropriate multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, continue to encourage the countries of ASEAN and the wider region, in particular China, to ratify the Inhumane Weapons Convention (IWC), Protocol II and the Ottawa Treaty.**
35. **the Government continue its broad based support for and involvement in the ASEAN Regional Forum and the second track dialogue CSCAP process.**
36. **the Australian Government, through contact at ministerial level in the APEC and ASEAN forums and in its normal diplomatic contact, encourage the other ASEAN states to become members of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).**
37. **to improve our regional dialogue and legal cooperation on matters relating to transnational crime, the Government ensure that there is legal representation in at least one major diplomatic post in the region.**
38. **the Australian Government:**
 - (a) **investigate the practice of other countries in their use of resources to ensure the security of national borders; and**
 - (b) **following appropriate negotiation, seek to increase the number of Australian Federal Police (AFP) liaison officers in countries in the region.**