CHAPTER - IV

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF ASEAN

The problem of setting up viable regional institutions and an efficient machinery with a clearly demarcated line of authority is both vital and delicate for the health of any regional organisation. It is vital because efficient central institutions, capable of taking wise and down to the earth decisions quickly, clearly and effectively, make a difference to regional economic efficiency and progress. The problem is a delicate one because regional institutions, in order to be effective, are supposed to reflect the general outlook and political perceptions of the member nations for which they exist.

As far as the formal institutional structure of ASEAN is concerned, one important fact may be noted at the outset i.e., ASEAN is not a supra-national organisation as the EC is. Whereas the EC started out with a grand design, ASEAN began as a loosely structured grouping, and had a highly decentralized organisational structure. Therefore, the ASEAN does not have any supra-national governmental apparatus comparable to the EC such as the European Parliament, the Court of Justice, the European Commission etc. Also, ASEAN is neither a highly centralized

1 Stuart Harris and Brian Bridges, European Interests in ASEAN (London, 1983), p.10.
organisation as the COMECON was nor is it equipped with any centralized mechanism of economic planning as the COMECON had. It seems that at the time of the inception of ASEAN in 1967, the Foreign Ministers did not have any clear cut idea of how it would function. Consequently, they designated their own annual meeting as ASEAN's highest policy making forum and did not establish an effective ASEAN institutional structure that could make ASEAN a more viable organisation. It was, probably, due to the conspicuous absence of well organised institutional structure that ASEAN, during its earlier years of existence, was generally perceived as a private preserve - a veritable 'diplomatic club' of Foreign Ministers. However, the institutional structure of ASEAN has grown slowly but steadily and the Association has, over the years, spawned a bewildering array of institutions such as permanent committees, adhoc-committees, sub-committees etc. Indeed, 'making haste slowly' (a phrase coined by Adam Malik at the time of inception of ASEAN in 1967 and fondly used by ASEAN leaders) appears to be an apt description of ASEAN'S leisurely pace of institutional development.

In this chapter, a modest attempt is to sketch out in broad strokes the evolution of ASEAN institutions, the configuration and inter-relationship between governmental and non-governmental institutions, to briefly study their functions, to identify the linkages (where they exist) between the two, and also, to make some concrete suggestions.
for making ASEAN institutions more viable and effective. This presentation of evolution and working of ASEAN institutions takes account of and examines the institutional muscles of ASEAN before and after the major institutional restructuring in the wake of the Bali Summit in 1976.

I) PRE-1976 INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

To carry out the aims and purposes of ASEAN and facilitate cooperation, the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 established a relatively uncomplicated institutional structure. It provided for four main institutions viz., :

(a) Annual Meeting of the Foreign Ministers, to be held by rotation in each member country and referred to as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. Special Meeting of the Foreign Ministers may be convened as required.

(b) A Standing Committee, under the chairmanship of the Foreign Minister of the host country or his representative and having its members the accredited Ambassadors of the other member countries, to carry on the work of the Association in between Meetings of Foreign Ministers.

(c) Ad-hoc Committees and Permanent Committees of specialists and officials on specific subjects.

(d) A National Secretariat in each member country to carry out the work of the Association on behalf of that country and to service the Annual or Special Meetings of Foreign
INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF ASEAN BEFORE THE BALI SUMMIT, 1976

Source: Adapted from ASEAN Secretariat, Ten Years ASEAN, Jakarta, 1978.
Ministers, the Standing Committee and such other committees as may hereafter be established.

Apparently, the apex and the highest decision and policy making body was the Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers (see Table-I). The Foreign Ministers met once a year, rotating the site of the meeting among member states in an alphabetical order. The Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers discussed the world situation, particularly affecting the region and its economic interests, and took into consideration and passed resolutions on future plans of economic cooperation among member nations. Decisions were taken by consensus. Further, Foreign Ministers were also entrusted with the responsibility of policy formulation, coordination of activities, and reviewing of decisions and proposals of the lower-level committees. The Special Meetings of the Foreign Ministers might be held as required or when necessary to meet an emergency situation.

The day to day routine or urgent work of the Association in between Foreign Ministers Meetings was conducted by the Standing Committee. In other words, it handled the routine or urgent matters to ensure continuity and make decisions which could not wait for the Foreign Ministers Meetings. Also, it formally vetted the reports

and recommendations of the various ASEAN Committees in the ASEAN institutional hierarchy and submitted them for the approval of the Foreign Ministers. This Committee comprised the Foreign Minister of the host country as its chairman and had its members, the accredited Ambassadors of the other ASEAN members in that host country.

In order to carry out and facilitate its cooperative ventures, ASEAN from time to time established a network of Permanent Committees, Special Coordinating Committees and Ad-hoc Committees. An important step in the direction of ASEAN'S institutional growth was the setting up of various Permanent Committees. These Committees were composed of senior government officials and experts from each member nation. The venues of the meetings of these Committees were rotated once every two or three years. Responsible through the Standing Committee to the Annual Ministers Meetings, the primary duty of these Committees was to recommend and implement ASEAN's programmes. Thus, in view of the key role which these Committees played in the implementation of regional functional cooperation, they may be called the sinews and muscles of ASEAN. In the pre-Bali Summit era, there were eleven Permanent Committees viz. :

3 These were established between 1968 and 1977. However, most of these committees viz; food production and supply, including fisheries; civil air transportation; communication; air transportation/meteorology and shipping were established at the Second ASEAN Ministerial Council's is Meeting in August 1968. Asian Recorder, November 4-10, 1968, p. 8607.
1. Permanent Committee on Food and Agriculture;
2. Permanent Committee on Shipping;
3. Permanent Committee on Civil Air Transportation;
4. Permanent Committee on Communication/Air Traffic Service/Meteorology;
5. Permanent Committee on Finance;
6. Permanent Committee on Commerce and Industry;
7. Permanent Committee on Transportation and Telecommunication;
8. Permanent Committee on Tourism;
9. Permanent Committee on Science and Technology;
10. Permanent Committee on Socio-Cultural Activities; and

Apart from these eleven permanent committees, the pre-Bali Summit era also witnessed the setting up of certain Special Committees. These were:

i) The Special Coordination Committee of ASEAN Nations (SCCAN). Established in 1972, it was entrusted with the main responsibility of negotiating for better trade relations with the EC as well as conducting dialogue between the two regional organisations;

ii) the other two Committees responsible for smooth conduct of extra-regional relations were the ASEAN Brussels Committee (ABC) and the ASEAN Geneva Committee (AGC). These

---

4 ASEAN Secretariat, 10 Years ASEAN (Jakarta, 1978), p. 19.
Committees comprised the ASEAN Ambassadors accredited in Brussels and Geneva respectively; and

iii) the Special Coordinating Committee of the ASEAN Central Banks and Monetary authorities; which were assigned the task of promoting cooperation between these two financial institutions.

Ad-hoc Committees viz.,

1. The ASEAN Coordinating Committee for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Indo-China States (ACCRRIS). Formed at Kuala Lumpur in February 1973, its primary responsibility was to assess the economic requirements of the Indo-Chinese states in the background of the Paris Agreement and provide ASEAN assistance for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Indo-China region;

2. The Senior Officials on Synthetic Rubber to consider the problem of competition in synthetic rubber and negotiate with Japan to reduce synthetic rubber production;

3. The ASEAN Senior Trade Officials on the Multilateral Trade Negotiations under the Geneva Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It comprised the ASEAN Ambassadors to the UN in Geneva and was assisted by the ASEAN Geneva Committee (AGC);

4. The Senior Officials on Sugar, assigned with the function of encouraging cooperation in sugar industries; and
5. The Special Committee on ASEAN Secretariat, entrusted with the responsibility to look into the establishment of ASEAN Central Secretariat.

These Committees may be called 'functional' Committees which performed definite functions and had clearly demarcated jurisdiction. These Committees reported directly to the Standing Committee.

Finally, an important characteristic feature of the pre-Bali institutional structure of ASEAN was the National ASEAN Secretariat in each country. Established by the Bangkok Declaration in 1967, the main function of the National Secretariats was to carry out the work of the Association on behalf of the parent country and to render services to the Annual or Special Meetings of Foreign Ministers, the Standing Committee, and other Committees. The Secretaries-General, heading the National Secretariats met formally to prepare agenda for the meetings of the Standing Committee.

II) POST BALI STRUCTURAL GROWTH: EXISTING CONSTELLATION OF ASEAN INSTITUTIONS

The above discussion seems to reveal that in the pre-Bali era, ASEAN, in essence, had a highly decentralized organisational structure. Although ASEAN members, from time to time, realized the necessity for a reappraisal of the

5 ASEAN Secretariat, n.2, p. 25.
organisational structure of ASEAN, but restructuring could not take place till Bali Summit, primarily because of the divergent perceptions of ASEAN nations on the required pace of structural evolution. For example, as early as 1968, at the Second Ministerial Meeting, the Philippines favoured an immediate establishment of the Central Secretariat. But Singapore opposed such a move by arguing that the prerequisite for the success of ASEAN was not the hasty decisions for establishing new regional institutions but the growth of national economies along progressive lines and that otherwise ASEAN would be built on sand. Thailand and Malaysia held similar views and were supported by Indonesia. Again, at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting in Singapore on April 13-14, 1972 the member nations called for an immediate structural revision and setting up viable and effective ASEAN institutions but they could not reach any agreement on the type and nature of new institutions to be established, and deferred the issue to a future date.

In this context, it seems interesting to note that ASEAN's hesitant and cautious approach towards an immediate institutional restructuring in the form of the establishment of permanent ASEAN institutions was shared by the UN Report on "Organisational and Institutional Arrangements for the Administration of Cooperation". While it recommended that a few "functions, particularly those involving protracted

negotiations and detailed preparations, will call for the establishment of new institutions in those areas in which negotiations must be expected to be complicated and to recur at frequent levels". It cautioned that "not all the decisions to create new working committees or permanent institutions need to be taken up immediately". In this context, it suggested:

...decisions to create new institutions should be made only where there has been a decision in principle to implement the related recommendations of the Team...So long as the extent of the future ASEAN Cooperation remains somewhat uncertain, it may be wise to entrust some of the new functions initially to temporary ad-hoc working groups and to learn by experience what is involved before going to create permanent regional institutions.

However, notwithstanding ASEAN's cautious attitude towards institutional growth and the UN Report recommending the deference of the establishment of permanent regional institutions, the pre-Bali decentralized institutional structure of ASEAN consisting of committees, sub-committees, ad-hoc committees had some serious organisational limitations. In this context, it seems relevant to refer to the study of H.H. Indorf who has analysed the working of

8 Ibid., Emphasis added.
ASEAN committees in the pre-Bali period. He argues that the main defect in the pre-Bali ASEAN's structure was that not only the recommendations of various committees were uncoordinated, their functions also often overlapped with each other. To substantiate his contention, Indorf gives some statistics which reveal that in 1973, the committees made two hundred and eighty five recommendations for the considerations of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, of which only about 30 per cent were really implemented. Although this percentage rate of implementation shot up to about 40 percent in 1974, good deal of overlapping of functions continued, and there appeared to be little discrimination between matters of substance and matters of organisation and procedure. He further notes that another problem with the pre-Bali ASEAN organisational structure was that a very few people within the ASEAN had an effective grasp of both the overall and specific activities of ASEAN. For example, the Foreign Ministers normally met only once a year. The Ambassadors comprising the Standing Committee, too, served for a year at a time. Moreover, they were more pre-occupied with their bi-lateral representative functions than with the ASEAN activities, and had neither specialized knowledge nor sufficient time which might have enabled them to exercise effective managerial insight. As a result, the task of an effective coordination of executive policy of ASEAN practically devolved on the heads of the National ASEAN

Secretariats. These heads of the National ASEAN Secretariats were very senior officials, who, in fact, were instrumental in the day to day functioning of ASEAN, and hence, they appeared to be the only true 'Aseancrats' in the higher echelons of the individual governments. However, their ability to effectively coordinate ASEAN's policies was also severely plagued by their under-staffed Secretariats.

Thus, during the pre-Bali era, it appears that ASEAN had some serious institutional drawbacks. There was not only an overlapping (and resultant confusion) of functions of various committees but also, the people entrusted with the responsibility of implementing decisions and promoting regional cooperation lacked specialized knowledge, and those who were equipped with such a knowledge lacked institutional manpower required for an effective coordination and implementation of ASEAN's policies. Obviously, in view of these serious limitations in ASEAN's organisational structure and also because of quantum jump in ASEAN's activities, institutional restructuring of ASEAN was both necessary and inevitable.

However, notwithstanding an imperative for organisational restructuring of ASEAN, momentous change in ASEAN's institutional structure did not occur until the events in Indo-China provided a much needed stimulus. The defeat of the US forces, its inglorious withdrawal from

10 Ibid.
Indo-China and the unification of Vietnam, by and large, led to the convening of the first ever ASEAN Summit. The Summit opened the way to basic changes in ASEAN's institutions, which are reflected in the present institutional structure of ASEAN. Also, it appears that the Summit revealed the great concern of ASEAN nations towards their individual security and that of Southeast Asia in view of the unification of Vietnam in 1975. The reason for this anxiety on the part of ASEAN nations was that North Vietnam had consistently been critical of ASEAN, and the unified Vietnam rejected unofficial feelers regarding Vietnam's interest in joining ASEAN. Further, it seems that the need for an effective mutual cooperation assumed an added importance as a result of the US withdrawal from Vietnam, leaving a strong reminder to the ASEAN nations that they had to rely on themselves for internal security as well as for their survival as nation-states. Thus, the events in Indo-China clearly seemed to suggest that the "domino-theory" should not be taken too lightly.

It was against this backdrop that ASEAN's hitherto approach of 'making haste slowly' was replaced by hyper-activity, and after an incessant flurry of preparatory work for months together, the first Summit Meeting was convened.


at Bali in February 1976. Two major documents that emerged from the Summit Meeting were: Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. The latter document proved to be an historic milestone in the institutional restructuring of ASEAN. The Declaration envisaged not only accelerated cooperation in political, economic, social, cultural, and even security (on a non-ASEAN basis) matters, it also significantly provided for a much needed restructuring of ASEAN machinery, particularly, through establishing an ASEAN Secretariat. Undoubtedly, the declaration proved to be a key document for the structural reorganisation of ASEAN. Section F of the Concord laid down:

1) signing of the "Agreement on the Establishment of ASEAN Secretariat";
2) Regular review of the ASEAN organisational structure with a view to improve its effectiveness; and
3) Study of the desirability of a new institutional framework for ASEAN.

The Declaration of ASEAN Concord, it seems, paved the way for three dimensional changes in the institutional structure of ASEAN, and since then only marginal changes in ASEAN's institutions have been made (See Table-II).

First, following the Bali Summit, in addition to the Foreign Ministers Meeting, two other blocs of Ministerial Meetings have been established. These are the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the other ASEAN Ministers (OAM) viz., the ASEAN Ministers on Education, Energy, Health, Labour, Social Development, Science and Technology, Environment, and Justice/Law.

Second, to direct economic cooperation more effectively and to service the newly established two blocs of ASEAN Ministers Meetings, the Permanent and Ad-hoc Committees of the pre-Bali era have been regrouped into five economic and six non-economic Committees.

Third, with a view to provide for greater efficiency in the coordination and implementation of policies, projects and activities of the various institutions of ASEAN, the ASEAN Secretariat headed by a Secretary General has been formally established. Located in Jakarta, Indonesia, it came into existence in June 1976.

The existing institutional structure of ASEAN may briefly be discussed as follows:

**The Heads of Government**: The Heads of Government of member countries constitute the highest authority and decision-making body in ASEAN. However, it may be noted that since the meetings of the Heads of Government have not been

---

13a ASEAN Secretariat, n. 2, p. 10.
institutionalised so far nor is there any indication of any plan to institutionalize these meetings, they should not be considered a part of the formal institutional structure of ASEAN.

The ASEAN Heads of Government meet as and when necessary to give directions to ASEAN, and only four such meetings have been convened so far. The first ever Summit Meeting was held in Bali from February 23 to 25, 1976, where the aims and purposes embodied in the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 were reaffirmed and steps were initiated to accelerate regional cooperation. The Second Summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from August 4 to 5, 1977, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of ASEAN and to assess the progress made in the implementation of decisions taken at the Bali Summit. The Third Summit of the ASEAN Heads of Government was held in Manila, the Philippines, on December 14-15, 1987. It adopted the "Manila Declaration of 1987", also known as the "Manila Declaration of ASEAN Resolve". The Declaration specified ASEAN's stance and position regarding political and economic cooperation as well as the ASEAN's relations with its dialogue partners. Besides, with a view to impart greater efficiency, it called for continued improvement in ASEAN's organisational structure. The ASEAN

14 Ibid., p. 9.
15 For details see, Malaysia, n. 13, pp. 6-26.
Heads of Government also agreed to meet every three or five years, if necessary. The Fourth Summit of Heads of Government was held in Singapore on January 27-28, 1992, and culminated in the adoption of the 'Singapore Declaration of 1992'. An important outcome of the Summit was an agreement to establish ASEAN Free Trade Area within a timeframe of fifteen years beginning from January 1, 1993. Also, the Heads of Government reviewed the ASEAN economic cooperation in the last twenty five years, and agreed to meet formally every three years.

However, a notable feature of ASEAN's Summitry seems to be that despite the absence of institutionalized Summits and occasional convening of uninstitutionalized Summit Meetings of ASEAN Heads of Government, The ASEAN Heads of Governments have met quite frequently on a bilateral basis outside the formal structure of ASEAN. Indeed, the bilateral Summitry consisting of numerous exchange of visits and meetings between the Presidents and Prime Ministers of ASEAN states has been quite phenomenal. By one account, ninety six of these meetings were held between 1967 and 1981. The largest number of such meetings (around nineteen) took place between Malaysia and Thailand and the least (only

17 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Newsletter (Jakarta), n. 24, (November-December 1987), pp. 8-9.

two) between Malaysia and the Philippines. While some of these meetings were held formally, most of these were rather informal i.e., without following a rigid protocol which normally accompanies visits by Heads of Government. The Heads of Government met not only in the capitals but quite often in remote islands and small towns. Thus, given the informal nature of these meetings in which there is a free and frank exchange of views among the Heads of Government, one may conjecture that these meetings play an important role in eliminating misgivings, and creating a better understanding among the leaders of ASEAN. However, Estrella, who has made a comprehensive and critical analysis of ASEAN bilateral Summitry considers the usefulness of bilateral Summitry conditional. In this context, she holds that bilateral Summitry enhances the effectiveness of ASEAN if the outcome: (i) gives direction to ASEAN's policies such as by contributing to the preservation of its fundamental principles and enabling it to accept new responsibilities for mutual benefits; (ii) smoothens its processes, such as by facilitating transactions and cutting down time for decision-making and action; (iii) provides a congenial environment for the members by increasing their vitality to work, their mutual responsiveness, and their will to play down conflicts; (iv) increases the members' desire to search for new areas of cooperation and for new

collective efforts; and (v) improves the quality and quantity of ASEAN's resources to include the credible assets such as symbols and values which create ASEAN's appeal.

Hans, H. Indorf, on the contrary, is quite skeptical about the usefulness of inter-country Summitry and argues that such visits and ASEAN bilateral Summitry can hardly substitute for ASEAN Summit Meetings. Such an assumption (i.e., usefulness of bilateral Summitry as a substitute for ASEAN Summits), he points out, could be valid, if over a reasonable period of time, all the ASEAN Heads of Government regularly exchange visits and hold bilateral meetings with each other. But such an ideal situation does not exist. Furthermore, the challenges the hypothesis that every important and vital issue affecting the working of ASEAN could be discussed and settled on a bilateral basis (and therefore, does not call for ASEAN Summit) as theoretically unsound. This is so because of different perceptions of ASEAN members on the degree of importance accorded to an issue, and these differences in perceptions, perhaps, cannot be resolved at a bilateral basis.

However, despite the fact that bilateral Summitry cannot substitute for ASEAN Summits because of certain constraints inherent in the former, nevertheless they seem

20 Ibid., p. 11.

21 Hans H. Indorf, Impediments to Regionalism in Southeast Asia: Bilateral Constraints Among ASEAN Member States (Singapore, 1984), p. 74.
to have played an important role in bringing the ASEAN Heads of Government closer (especially, when ASEAN Summit could not be convened for years together due to one reason or the other), tearing down 'psychological barriers' to cooperation by encouraging informal discussions, and thus, paving the way for inculcating a knack of 'thinking regional' among member nations.

**The Annual Ministerial Meeting (AMM)**

The Annual Meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers, more commonly referred to as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), constitutes a policy-making body responsible for the formulation of policy guidelines and the coordination of all ASEAN activities. The Meeting also reviews all decisions and hands down for implementation the approved policies and programmes to the Standing Committee or other bodies concerned. It meets annually in each country on a rotational basis, in an alphabetical order.  

Special or additional meetings of the Foreign Ministers may be held whenever necessary. For example, such a special meeting was held in Bangkok in February 1985 during which the problem of the Vietnamese incursions into Thailand and related matters were discussed. Another such meeting was

---


23 Ibid.
hired in Bangkok in August 1987 to discuss the progress in
ASEAN’s diplomatic efforts to resolve the Kampuchean
problem.

Thus, in view of the important powers and functions
assigned to the AMM, and keeping in mind the fact that
ASEAN Heads of Government Meetings have not been
institutionalized as yet, the AMM may be regarded as
representing the formal supreme decisions making body in the
hierarchy of ASEAN’s organisational structure.

The Asean Economic Ministers’ Meeting (AEMM)

The AEMM is institutionalized, and hence, is considered
a part of the formal institutional structure of ASEAN. It
has primarily been entrusted with the responsibility of
directing and supervising ASEAN economic cooperation through
five economic committees viz., Committee on Finance and
Banking (COFAB), Committee on Food, Agriculture and Forestry
(COPAF), Committee on Industry, Minerals and Energy (COIME),
Committee on Transportation and Communication (COTAC), and
Committee on Trade and Tourism (COTT). The pre-Bali
Permanent Committees whose functions had been absorbed by
the above committees were deemed abolished.

However, a Joint Ministerial Meeting (JMM) of Foreign
and Economic Ministers may be convened as and when

24 ASEAN Secretariat, n. 2, p. 9.
25 ASEAN Secretariat, n. 4, p. 21.

196
necessary. The first ever JMM was held in Kuching, Malaysia on February 15, 1990. The convening of JMM, it may be noted, seems to be an important step in providing an appropriate forum for strengthening of ASEAN's coordination on matters that are of interest to both the ASEAN Foreign and Economic Ministers. Further, the ASEAN Economic Ministers' participation in JMM, as the first JMM acknowledged, 'renders the discussions more dynamic and meaningful, particularly when economic items are raised'.

The Other ASEAN Ministerial Meetings (OAM)

In other fields of ASEAN cooperation, ministerial meetings are held as and when considered necessary. The ASEAN Ministers on Education, Energy, Health, Labour, Social Development, Justice/Law have held meetings and drawn up their respective programmes of cooperation. The recommendations made by the OAMM are taken up by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers or the ASEAN Economic Ministers or may be referred to the Heads of Government. It may, however, be noted that since the OAM have not been institutionalized as yet, they are not considered a part of the formal structure.
Of ASEAN.

To service these Ministerial Meetings, the pre-Bali non-economic Permanent Committee have been regrouped into six non-economic Permanent Committees, viz., Committee on Science and Technology (COST), Committee on Culture and Information (COCI), Committee on Social Development (COSD), ASEAN Senior Officials on Drugs (ASOD), ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN), and ASEAN Conference on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM). Like the five Permanent Committees of the ASEAN Economic Ministers, these Committees are responsible for the operation and implementation of ASEAN projects in their respective fields.

The ASEAN Standing Committee

The ASEAN Standing Committee appears to have carried over its features as well as traditional role from the pre-Bali to post-Bali era. It comprises a Chairman, who is the Foreign Minister of the country hosting the Ministerial Meeting in that particular year, the Ambassadors of the ASEAN Secretariat, Annual Report of the ASEAN Standing Committee, 1989-90 (Jakarta, n. d.), pp. 93-133.

However, it may be noted that following the Bali Summit, there was an intense debate on the issue of role and powers of the Standing Committee. The ASEAN Economic Ministers and the Indonesian Government even proposed the abolition of the Standing Committee altogether and argued that its functions and powers be transferred to a strengthened Central ASEAN Secretariat. Eventually, a compromise was reached at and the Standing Committee was retained in its role and functions confirmed. See for details, David Irvine, "Making Haste Less Slowly, ASEAN From 1975", in Alison Brionowski, ed., Understanding ASEAN (London, 1982), pp. 56-58.
member countries accredited to the host country, and senior officials. The Standing Committee carries on the work of the Association in between Ministerial Meetings. It handles routine matters to ensure continuity and makes decisions which cannot be postponed till the Ministerial Meeting. It meets about six times a year and submits an Annual Report as well as other reports and recommendations of the various ASEAN Committees for consideration by the Foreign Ministers.

**The Permanent Functional Committees**

In the post-Bali era, ASEAN's Permanent Functional Committees have been regrouped into five economic (COFAB, COFAF, COIME, COTT, and COTAC) and six non-economic Permanent Committees. (COST, COCI, COSD, ASOD, ASOEN).

---

31 ASEAN Secretariat, n. 2, p. 10.

32 For details see, Ibid., p. 11-16.

33 It may be noted that as a result of organisational restructuring in the aftermath of Bali Summit, to begin with only three non-economic committees were established. Drug matters used to come under COSD, but since 1987, a separate body viz., ASOD has been established to handle drug abuse. ASEAN Secretariat, n. 22, p. 15.

34 ASOEN was launched at the Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Malaysia on 18-19 July 1990, and the first ever meeting on ASOEN was convened immediately after its inception. Six Working Groups have been established by ASEAN to plan and implement project activities in their respective fields of environment, and the chairmanship of each Working Group has been assigned to each member country. The coordination of projects under the purview of the various Working Groups is the responsibility of the respective Working Group's Chairman. ASEAN Secretariat, Annual Report of the ASEAN Standing Committee, 1990-1991 (Jakarta, n. d.), p. 7.
ACCSM. While the economic committees report to the ASEAN Economic Ministers, the non-economic committees report directly to the ASEAN Standing Committee.

To service these economic and non-economic Permanent Committees and to facilitate speedy implementation of the programmes and projects of these Committees, subsidiary bodies of ASEAN Permanent Committees have also been formed.

Besides these Permanent Functional Committees, there are two important Committees which are a part of the formal institutional structure of ASEAN. These are: the Committee on Budget; and Audit Committee. While the former manages and disburses the ASEAN Fund and the budget of the Central ASEAN Secretariat, the latter audits accounts of the ASEAN.

ASEAN Dialogue with Third Countries/Group of Countries / International Organisation and ASEAN Committees in the Third Countries

Although ASEAN was established primarily for promoting intra-regional cooperation, it appears that the need to develop closer relations with the third countries, especially the developed countries, in the field of trade

35 ACCSM has been institutionalized as a part of the ASEAN machinery since the Second Meeting of the Twenty First Standing Committee, Bangkok, October 20-22, 1987. The ACCSM has the status equal to that of the ASEAN Committees and reports directly to the ASEAN Standing Committee. ASEAN Secretariat, n. 29, p. 122.
and commodity issues eventually assumed importance. ASEAN's third country dialogue began with the early dealings on trade matters with Japan and the EC, and the benefits accrued from these dialogues demonstrated to the ASEAN countries the importance of collective action in international relations. Therefore, at the Bali Summit Meeting in February 1976, the ASEAN Heads of Government reaffirmed the importance of establishing closer relations with the third countries and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord adopted at the Summit clearly reflected it.

At present, ASEAN conducts dialogue with eight countries/group of countries/international organisations viz., Australia, the EC, New Zealand, UNDP, Canada, the US, and Republic of Korea (ROK).

36 ASEAN Secretariat, n. 2, p. 20.
38 Beginning in November 1989, ASEAN-ROK relations were initially given the status of Sectoral Dialogue relations, however, the Fourth Meeting of the Twenty Fourth ASEAN Standing Committee recommended to the Twenty Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting the elevation of this Sectoral Dialogue to a Full Dialogue status, which was adopted by the latter, thus allowing the ROK to participate in the Post-Ministerial Conferences as a dialogue partner. See, ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Documents Series 1989-91, Supplementary Edition (Jakarta, 1991), p. 81 ; ASEAN Secretariat, n. 34, p. 135 ; and ASEAN Secretariat, "Joint Communique of the Twenty-Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting", The Twenty-Fourth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post Ministerial Conferences with the Dialogue Partners, Kuala Lumpur, 19-24 July 1991 (Jakarta, n. d.), p. 53.
In order to support the smooth conduct of its external relations with third countries and international organisations, ASEAN has established Committees in the capitals of its third country 'dialogue' partners. These Committees are composed of the heads of the diplomatic missions of the ASEAN member countries in the host country. They conduct meetings with their host governments, supplementary to the formal meetings between ASEAN and its third country partners. The guidelines and terms of reference governing the role and activities of these Committees are set by the Standing Committee.

At present, there are ten ASEAN Committees in the third countries. To the Committees in Brussels and Geneva, which had existed in the Pre-Bali era, have been added Committees in Canberra, Willington, Tokyo, Bonn, London, Paris, Washington and Ottawa (See Table - II).

**The ASEAN Secretariat**

"The Secretariat", as Claude rightly observes, "is the major organ which best expresses the continued vitality of the whole, as distinguished from parts". But to begin with, ASEAN lacked strong 'organisational muscles', and because of structural diffusion as well as conspicuous

---

39 ASEAN Secretariat, n. 2, p. 10.

absence of an organized focus and bureaucracy, it continued to be a loose Association during the first eight and half years of its existence. It was for this reason that a United Nations official at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) referred to ASEAN as a 'joke', because it pretended to be a strong regional organisation but it did not even have a Secretariat.

Although need for a Permanent ASEAN Secretariat was realized by ASEAN members almost at every Annual Ministerial Meeting, an agreement for establishing Permanent ASEAN Secretariat was not reached at as late as the Bali Summit in February, 1976. As a result of this agreement, ASEAN Secretariat having its seat in Jakarta, Indonesia, was established. The ASEAN Secretariat is headed by the Secretary General who is assisted in his work by "a Staff and Locally Recruited Staff" (See Table-III). The Secretary-General must be a person of a Senior Ambassador rank. He is


43 It may be noted that as a result of an agreement reached at the Fourth Summit in Singapore, in 1992, the Secretary General of ASEAN Secretariat has been redesignated as the Secretary - General of ASEAN. His new designation seems to imply that he has become the chief spokesman of ASEAN. Also, he has been accorded ministerial status with an enlarged mandate to initiate, advise, coordinate and implement ASEAN activities. Malaysia, n. 18, p. 42.
appointed by ASEAN Foreing Ministers upon nomination by a member nation on rotational basis in an alphabetical order, and holds office for a term of three years. The Secretary-General is responsible to the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting when it is in session and to the Standing Committee at all other times. He looks after all the functions of the Secretariat and discharges the responsibilities entrusted to him by the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and the Standing Committee. He attends personally all ASEAN Ministerial Meetings and meetings of the Standing Committee. Further, it is his duty to keep himself informed of the activities of all ASEAN Committees, and to act as the channel for formal communication between: (i) ASEAN Permanent Committees, Ad-hoc Committees, Expert Groups, and other ASEAN bodies and the Standing Committee; and (ii) the Secretariat and other international organisations and governments. He also prepares an Annual Report for submission to the ASEAN Ministerial Meetings and harmonizes, facilitates and monitors progress in the implementation of all the

44 Though the "Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat" signed at Bali provided for 2 years term for Secretary-General, it was considered too short. Therefore, with all the five founding members of ASEAN having had their rotational term to hold the key position of the Secretary General, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers at the Eighteenth Ministerial Meeting in 1985 signed a 'Protocol to Amend the Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat', and extended the term of Secretary-General from two to three years. See, ASEAN Secretariat, Annual Report of the ASEAN Standing Committee, 1985-1986 (Jakarta, n.d.), p. 7.

45 Malaysia, n. 13, p. 21.
activities which have been approved by ASEAN. Further, Article-3 of the 'Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat' empowers him to address directly to the member governments and ensure that the ASEAN Committees are informed of current developments in ASEAN activities. He is also entrusted with the responsibility to initiate plans and programmes of activities for ASEAN regional cooperation in accordance with approved policy guidelines, and acts as custodian of all ASEAN documents.

Besides Secretary-General, following a decision of the Third ASEAN Summit of 1987, a new post of Deputy Secretary-General has been created. The Deputy Secretary-General is appointed by the Foreign Ministers and holds office for a term of three years.

In addition, ASEAN Secretariat has three Bureau Directors (each heading, in order of seniority, Economic, Science and Technology, and Socio-cultural Bureaus respectively). Further, there are five Deputy-Directors who are entrusted with the responsibility to assist the Economic Bureau Director in serving and monitoring the work of the five Economic Committees. ASEAN Secretariat also has a locally recruited staff. Some important officials of

46 Ibid., p. 22.
locally recruited ASEAN Secretariat staff are: a Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Officer, an Administrative Officer, a Public Relations Officer, an Assistant to the Secretary General, a Narcotics Desk Officer etc. All these appointments are made by the Standing Committee upon nomination by member nations. The Bureau Directors must be persons of at least a counsellor rank and each of other officers must be of at least a first secretary rank. The principal consideration in such nominations and appointments, it may be noted, are the highest standard of professional efficiency and integrity, equitable distribution, and rotation of the posts among member nations.

ASEAN National Coordination Agency/ASEAN National Secretariats

In the post-Bali restructuring of ASEAN institutional structure, ASEAN National Secretariats have been retained as such. In each member country, day to day work is coordinated by its own ASEAN National Secretariat headed by a Director-General.

ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organisation (AIPO)

The AIPO is a group of ASEAN Parliamentarians. It meets annually to discuss and analyse wide range of economic 48. To avoid confusion with the ASEAN Secretary-General, the Secretaries-General of the National ASEAN Secretariats have been redesignated as Directors-General, ASEAN Secretariat, n. 22, p. 9.
and political issues affecting the region. Although AIPO is neither a part of the formal structure of ASEAN nor does it (like European Parliament) have any legislative function, the importance of ASEAN-Inter-Parliamentary Conferences may be seen in the light of the fact that they go long way in stimulating greater public awareness and interest in ASEAN. They also seem to serve as a link between the people on the one hand and the governments on the other, and thereby, facilitate interaction and foster cooperation among ASEAN Parliamentarians. Further, these conferences enable the people to become more conscious of the problems faced by each of the ASEAN countries, which may differ from country to country. Through the forum of Inter-Parliamentary Conferences, there is an exchange of ideas not only on how the people of the region can solve their problems more effectively but also on how they can help each other to overcome the problems that they may face separately. These Inter-Parliamentary Conferences, it may be argued, in a way serve as consultative and advisory bodies to both the people and the governments.

ASEAN Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's)

An interesting but relatively unnoticed feature of the

49

Of course, such NGO's do not strictly fall within the purview of the formal institutional structure of ASEAN, nevertheless they play no insignificant role in the initiation of proposals and implementation of Joint ASEAN Projects, serve as effective coordinating units, and thus, enhance closer cooperation and instill a sense of identity among member nations on governmental as well as non-governmental level.
working of the ASEAN is the emergence and growth of NGO's with prefix of ASEAN. Though ASEAN, to begin with, was essentially conceived as an inter-governmental organisation, it appears that it was eventually realized that if the aims and aspirations of the Association were to be truly realized, it should involve not only governmental bodies but also allow private organisations to articulate their views and hopes. Therefore, with an encouragement from ASEAN, by the early 1970's, NGO's with similar interests in the various ASEAN countries began to develop a regional awareness and joined hands to forge an ASEAN identity. Perhaps one of the most important NGO established in the early formative years of ASEAN was the ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI) which has become the spokesman of the ASEAN business community since 1972 with the blessings of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers. As in 1988, there were thirty one affiliated ASEAN NGO's. They included among others: ASEAN Bankers Association/Banking Council, ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organisation, Medical Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Federation of ASEAN Public Relations Organisation, ASEAN Association for Planning and Housing, ASEAN Law Association, ASEAN

ASEAN defines a NGO's "as a non-profit making association of ASEAN persons, natural or juridical, organized to promote, strengthen and help realize the aims and objectives of ASEAN cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and technical fields". ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Newsletter, n. 25, (January-February, 1998), p. 6.
University Sports Council, Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation etc. Through such organisations, not only the ASEAN message is being carried to a vast level of ASEAN society, their activities also help give expression, meaning and substance to the ASEAN idea.

Affiliation to ASEAN, it may be noted, is useful and beneficial for both the NGO's and the ASEAN. For ASEAN, the objective of affiliation appears to be to draw the NGO's into the mainstream of ASEAN activities so that they are kept informed of major policies, directives and decisions of ASEAN and are given opportunity and privileges of participating in ASEAN activities, and to ensure interaction and fruitful relationship between the existing ASEAN organisations and the NGO's. On the other hand, an affiliated NGO enjoys certain privileges and benefits which include the use of the name 'ASEAN' and to display the official ASEAN emblem in correspondence and communications and in its official meetings so long as the display of such emblem is non-commercial in nature. A NGO may submit written statements or recommendations and views on policy matters or on significant events of regional or international concern to the Standing Committee through the ASEAN Secretariat. It may also submit its own project proposals for third party funding through the ASEAN Secretariat to the Standing Committee for approval.

51 Ibid., pp. 6-7 and 15.
Further, for the purpose of doing research for its projects, it may be allowed access to the ASEAN documents on a selective basis in consultation with the ASEAN Secretariat and/or its link body.

Thus, the mushroom growth of NGO's in the recent past, it may be argued, clearly manifests popular non-governmental response to the ASEAN concept of regional cooperation, and forms a part of the fabric of ASEAN cooperation in economic, social and cultural, technical fields. It is so argued because NGO's active participation appears to enhance and enforce governmental activities of ASEAN.

**Inadequacies in ASEAN's International Structure : A Summary of Proposals**

Despite the attempts for structural revamping of ASEAN institutions following the Bali Summit of 1976, some glaring and serious defects in ASEAN's institutional structure seem to persist. These are:

1. First, there are some ambiguities and overlapping of activities in the ASEAN's institutions. The five Permanent Committees provide an outstanding illustration in this context. Although these Committees work under the coordination and supervision of the ASEAN Economic Ministers, yet strangely enough, they cannot submit their

52 For details see, Ibid., p. 6.
reports directly to them. Rather, these have to be routed through the Standing Committee and Foreign Ministers, who then channel these to the ASEAN Economic Ministers. Still more frustrating is the rule that even the decisions made by the Economic Ministers have to be once again referred to the Annual Ministerial Meeting for ratification by the Foreign Ministers. It goes without saying that such cumbersome and lengthy procedure hampers regional cooperation and has, more often than not, largely been responsible for the slow pace of progress in ASEAN economic cooperation. In this context, it may be suggested that to simplify procedures, the reports of the Economic Committees be directly sent to the ASEAN Economic Ministers and then channelled to the Annual Ministerial Meeting through the Standing Committee for final approval. This measure shall check, not only an overlapping of activities, but also help circumvent avoidable and unnecessary delays resulting from lengthy working procedures.

2. Second, ASEAN's decision-making process by consensus, though not without any merit, seems to have, by and large, outlived its utility and requires some rethinking. In retrospect, it may be noted that since the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 did not lay down any specific procedure to regulate decisions making process, it became a common practice in ASEAN to take decisions by consensus and
thereby, avoid the voting procedure. Such a procedure, described as "ASEAN Way", it may be noted, was, in fact, in tune with the device variously known as 'Musjawarat', 'Meshurat', and 'Mushawarah', which had been in vague in the region. Though it is not easy to state a precise meaning of the word, but broadly it means "taking counsel together" or "consultation towards consensus". Despite the fact that decision-making through consensus seems to be a tedious and cumbersome process, it was accepted as a useful recipe by member nations to keep the ASEAN united. In this process, all the participants have their say, and normally there is no restriction on the number of times one individual may address the meeting. As a result, all participants talk themselves out, and usually arrive at a consensus which is an amalgam of their original views.

Eulogizing the utility of decision-making through consensus, Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, remarked, "ASEAN

---

53 For an extended and enlightening discussion on ASEAN's negotiation style see, Pushpa Thambipillai, "ASEAN Negotiating style : Asset or Hindrance", in Pushpa Thambipillai and J. Saravanamuttu, ASEAN Negotiations : Two Insights (Singapore, 1985), pp. 3-20.

54 Musjawarat, as a style of negotiation, has its roots in traditional village society in Southeast Asia. At the village level it meant "that a leader should not act arbitrarily or impose his will, but rather make a gentle suggestions of the path a community should follow, being careful always to consult all other participants fully and to take their views and feelings into consideration before delivering his synthesis-conclusion". See, Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, 1962), p. 40.

countries have learnt to manage their differences and to contain them. ASEAN has made progress in Asian manner, not through rules and regulations, but through musyawarah and consensus. Most important, ASEAN countries have made a habit of working together and of consulting each other over common problems”.

However, as ASEAN expanded to six members with an entry of Brunei in 1984, some reservation were expressed on decision-making process through consensus, and it was suggested that the principle of consensus should be made more flexible. For example, Singapore argued that innovation was not possible when consensus was based on the lowest common denominator, therefore, the ASEAN leaders needed to consider what was called a “six minus x” principle. Elaborating the principle, S. Dhanbalan, Foreign Minister of Singapore observed:

Broadly stated, this is the principle that where there is agreement among some members on a certain activity, and the interests of other members are not harmed nor is their future participation prevented, then those who agree should be allowed to proceed. Given six members of different development levels and interests, progress will be slow if we insist that we should move in tandem at all times. Instead of viewing this “six minus x” principle as divisive one, we should try to see it as a way of propelling ASEAN ahead into new heights of cooperation. Members should then have

---

Thus, in view of the cumbersome nature and limited utility of the decision-making process through consensus, the claims to uniqueness occasionally made on behalf of musjawarah seem to be largely exaggerated, and a switch-over from consensus to "six minus X" principle, at least in economic sphere, seems to be in order. While it is true that decision by consensus avoids unacceptable coercion, it seems equally true that it produces protracted and unnecessary negotiations, and thereby, hinders regional economic cooperation, and thus, far outweigh its merit. The "six minus X" principle, it may be noted, has been successfully practised in the case of European Monetary System (EMS).


59 When the EMS came into force in 1979, a few members of the EC did not take part in it. But the members who had opted out of the EMS, gradually improved their ability to cope with currency fluctuations and eventually joined the EMS. Thus, the EMS would never have taken off the ground, if the EC members had waited for everyone to agree. Even at a recently signed Maastricht Treaty, on the issue of a "Single European Currency", a choice has been given to the reluctant EC members to opt out of the arrangement for the time being and join it at a later date.
(3) Third, the unequal status of ASEAN Economic Ministers in the ASEAN's institutional hierarchy appears to have resulted in the soft-pedaling of economic cooperation. The Bangkok Declaration of 1967, it may be recalled, not only accorded special position to the Foreign Ministers, it also gave them the responsibility for policy making and coordination, regardless of whether the subject was of economic, cultural, or political nature. Therefore, it seems that conferring of such an encompassing jurisdiction and overriding powers to ASEAN Foreign Ministers tends to undermine the importance of ASEAN Economic Ministers. Also, it appears that a lack of clearly demarcated jurisdiction might result in unnecessary collision between Economic and Foreign Ministers. To avoid this likely confrontation, it may be suggested that an ASEAN Council of Ministers that would incorporate all ministerial meetings and would be the formal top policy and decision-making body of ASEAN, should be established. This concept, too, has been successfully practised in the EC.

(4) Last, the ASEAN Secretariat, particularly the office of the Secretary-General, warrants a close scrutiny. Although in the aftermath of the Bali Summit, efforts have been made to provide 'muscles' to the ASEAN machinery, particularly

60 "The ASEAN Task Force Report" in its detailed sixty six page findings submitted to the Sixteenth Annual Ministerial Meeting, 1984, had made this recommendation. But no agreement has been reached at on this innovative proposal so far. See, ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Task Force Report (Jakarta, 1983), p. 57.
through the establishment of the Central ASEAN Secretariat, the latter's functioning has brought forth some limitations which call for immediate remedial measures. Take for example, the office of the Secretary-General. Here, there seems to be a wide gap between written provisions and his actual position. Any dispassionate analysis of the Secretary-General's functions and powers would reveal that he, assisted by the Secretariat staff, enjoys enormous powers, but most of the incumbents of this office have "informally characterized the office as a "mailbox of coordination", 'a service station with limited staff and inadequate funds', and "a job of restricted powers and curtailed responsibilities". However, the reason for this frustration and discontentment seems hardly attributable to the lack of written provisions. There must have been other reasons.


62 It may be noted that the image of the office of the ASEAN Secretary-General has been severely damaged by the recall of Secretary-General by the parent country as in the case of recall of Mr. H.R. Dharsono of Indonesia in February 1978. This precedence of a recall had an inhibiting effect upon the selection and performance of succeeding Secretaries-General. Further, an expression of an inability by a member-nation to spare a senior career diplomat for the office of Secretary-General (as in the case of Singapore) clearly brings forth and reinforces member nations' perception of the office of Secretary-General as basically a "mailbox of coordination". For details see, Indorf, n. 21, pp. 67-69.
It is perhaps against this backdrop of diminutive powers and role of the Secretary-General that Hans Indorf stresses on an immediate need for conferring more powers to the Secretary-General of the ASEAN as well as providing him with the necessary funds and staff. Besides, he prescribes certain measures, which, it appears, if considered and adopted, would greatly strengthen the organisational structure of ASEAN. These include among others:

(i) Make the Secretary-General an-adhoc member of all Ministerial Meetings;
(ii) form the Directors-General into an Advisory Council to the Secretary-General;
(iii) phase out the Standing Committee as duplicative and transfer its responsibilities to the Secretary-General and his Advisory Council,
(iv) coordinate ASEAN's programmes more closely with those of other regional organisations;
(v) issue quarterly or at least semi-annual report on projects which can expedite their implementation;
(vi) contemplate merit recruitment for an ASEANOCRAT career service, together with regional post-graduate training centre;
(vii) circulate research results of ASEAN regional institutions and second ASEANOCRATS to them for in-service training;
(viii) keep Secretariat staff as small as efficiently

63 Indorf, n. 62, p. 150.
possible to provide conference service, background research for projects, and support for Permanent Committees; and (ix) have Permanent Committees meet at the regional Secretariat in Jakarta for ease of serving.

Although some of these proposals seem to be too radical to be easily adopted by ASEAN, nevertheless a few of them have been considered by member nations time and again. But ASEAN's past experience reveals that considerable time and effort is needed to establish inveterate administrative structures with personnel totally committed to regional objectives. However, as discussed in the foregoing, following the Bali Summit, measures are being taken to make ASEAN machinery more viable and effective. But despite these efforts, there appears to be an air of uneasiness within ASEAN about its existing organisational structure. It is being increasingly realized that "a strong and effective Secretariat is a necessity to bring about changes in the methods and increase in the substance of ASEAN cooperation... (and) to determine how best the ASEAN institutional machinery and in particular, Secretariat is to be improved bearing in mind the requirements of the Association in the future".


Thus, it appears clear that while there is a lack of consensus on the required pace of organisational growth of ASEAN, there seems to be no dispute to make the necessary efforts for revamping and strengthening the institutional structure of ASEAN, particularly the ASEAN Secretariat. It may be re-emphasised here that the strengthening of ASEAN's institutional structure is a necessary pre-requisite for the augmentation of intra-ASEAN cooperation as well as for the promotion of ASEAN's relation with the third countries and other regional and international organisations. It is, perhaps, because of the dawning of such a realization that following to the decision of the Twenty Third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, a 'Panel of Five Eminent Persons' headed by Muhammad Ghazali Shafie has been set up. The Panel has recently carried out a study on strengthening the institutional structure of ASEAN, with special reference to the ASEAN Secretariat. Another notable study recently conducted in this context is the 'UNDP-Assisted Study of ASEAN Economic Cooperation for the 1990'. It is likely that some of the recommendations made by these studies shall be adopted and necessary adjustments made in the institutional structure of ASEAN to enable it to function as an efficient instrument of regional cooperation.

66. ASEAN Secretariat, n. 34, pp. 5 and 179.