

AMIC Consultation on Communication and the  
Preservation of National Identity : Perspectives  
from Indochina, November 28-30, 1996, Ho Chi  
Minh City, Vietnam : [welcome address]

Menon, Vijay

1996

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/92677>

Paper No. 4

**Consultation on "Communication and Preservation of National Identity: Perspectives from Indochina", Ho Chi Minh City, November 28 - 30, 1996**

**Welcome Address by Mr. Vijay Menon, Secretary-General, AMIC, Singapore.**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this Consultation on "Communication and Preservation of National Identity: Perspectives from Indochina". We have been planning this Consultation for a long time and it is a matter of much relief and happiness to us that we are meeting today in Ho Chi Minh City, with the Center of Consultancy-Information-Training on Economic and Business Management as our partner organization.

To those participants who had responded positively to our first invitation almost two years ago, we would like to express our warm appreciation of your understanding and patience. To our funding agencies, WACC and the ASEAN-Canada Fund, we owe a particularly large debt ~~and~~ <sup>of</sup> gratitude for their unwavering support.

The theme of our Consultation is both timely and significant. We live today in an era of transnational and borderless communication. National laws no longer serve as barriers. Much concern has been voiced in many parts of Asia at the erosion and eradication of local culture and national identities. In the countries of Indochina, which are recovering from a harrowing phase of conflict and annihilation, the concern would understandably be all the greater.

A year ago at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur, participants identified the primary functions of Asian media as supporting nation-building, political stability, national development and social justice; promoting regional cohesion; moulding national identity; promoting social harmony; explaining public issues; and exercising self-restraint in sensitive matters. Vietnam is now a member of ASEAN and the other countries of Indochina are poised to join this regional grouping of nations. It is time to review and reflect on the role of communication in this part of Southeast Asia.

One fact which cannot be denied is that the countries of Indochina are proud heirs to an ancient civilization. A civilization which has survived over the centuries and has therefore acquired a certain hardiness and resilience to stand up to adverse circumstances.

Among the functions of communication is the transmission of cultural heritage. It is appropriate therefore that at this Consultation, we are looking at communication in the context of preservation of national identity, development, cultural identity and the like. It is our hope that the discussions will shed light on these and a number of allied topics, such as minority perspectives, the role of women and the need for a code of ethics.

It would be useful to bear in mind the words of Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister at the Asia Press Forum in Hong Kong two years ago: "If we in Asia want to speak credibly of Asian values, we too must be prepared to champion those ideals which are universal and which belong to humanity as a whole...The quest for growth must always be balanced by a profound concern for social justice and equity".

For the benefit of those unfamiliar with AMIC, I would like to mention that we are a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the development of mass communication in the region. AMIC was founded in 1971 with the support of the Government of Singapore and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, an independent foundation in Germany. We are therefore celebrating our Silver Jubilee this year. It is an interesting coincidence that our concluding function for the year is our first activity in Indochina. Our primary mission is to promote the understanding, development and use of communication as a field of study and its application within the broad framework of economic, social and cultural progress. This Consultation eminently fits our objectives.

What is most gratifying to us is the support that we are privileged to receive from within the region and outside. \* Today's meeting, for instance, has been made possible by the funding support provided by the WACC and the ASEAN-Canada Fund, the organizational support extended by CIT and no less important, the support of the participants who have given us the benefit of their time and thoughts, so that this meeting might be fruitful.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, let me once again say how very happy we are to be here in Ho Chi Minh City. It is our hope that this will be the first of many more AMIC activities in this part of Southeast Asia.

\* \* \*