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Statement by the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the ASEAN States on the acquittal of Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim

The chairman of the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the ASEAN States, Dr Thomas Gambke, who supports the Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim under the "Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians" programme, has issued the following statement on behalf of the executive committee of the parliamentary friendship group:

"We welcome today's acquittal of the Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim. We hope that this will be an important signal to further democratization of Malaysia. Anwar Ibrahim was accused of sodomy. In case of conviction he would have faced up to 20 years of detention. The trial was suspected to be politically motivated to remove an inconvenient opponent.

We call on the Malaysian Government to respect the movement for democratic reform of the electoral system of which Anwar Ibrahim is the leading representative. Measures against electoral fraud have to be established and more opportunities for the opposition parties to seek support for their aims via the public media. A pluralistic society accounts for a strengthening of Malaysia and will therefore advance the country's economic development."

The executive committee of the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the ASEAN States (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam) is composed of the group's chairman, Dr Thomas Gambke (Alliance 90/The Greens), and its deputy chairpersons, Dr Michael Fuchs (CDU/CSU), Holger Ortel (SPD), Jürgen Koppelin (FDP) and Caren Lay (The Left Party).