

Welcome Remarks by
H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi
Secretary-General of ASEAN
Celebration of 52nd ASEAN Day (09:30am– 09:35am), 8 August 2019
Nusantara Hall

H.E. Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning again. While it is a privilege to be the first Secretary-General of ASEAN to be housed in this new building, I would also like to acknowledge the presence of our former Secretary-Generals of ASEAN H.E. Tan Sri Ajit Singh and H. E. Le Luong Minh who are able to join us today on this historic occasion.

Indeed, as we commemorate the 52nd Anniversary of ASEAN, it is timely to reflect on just how far we have come to where we are today, as the region transitions to become One Community that is dynamic, inclusive, rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centered.

What began as a loose grouping of five countries in Southeast Asia has grown into a full-fledged association comprising of 10 ASEAN Member States with a combined population of 647 million people and a combined GDP of just under US \$3 trillion, making us the third-largest economy in Asia and the fifth-largest in the world.

ASEAN today is a stable and economically viable community. While it is still a work-in-progress, ASEAN, with all its diversities, bound by ties of friendship and legitimate shared interests, have so far delivered to its peoples the dream of a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian Nations, through regional integration and meaningful cooperation. Such regional integration has also contributed significantly to the efforts to secure a better future for the international community at-large. Our dialogue partners have placed trust and confidence in us to lead the way in furthering regionalism.

ASEAN is also a young region with full of potential, given that more than 30% of our combined population are aged 35 years or younger. As such, it is crucial for us to continue to work together to secure the future of ASEAN for the next generation. As future leaders, our youth are the ones to sustain and build upon the progress in the evolvement of the ASEAN Community. With this in mind, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers will place the time capsule this morning for the next generation of our secretariat to unveil in 25 years to appreciate the expectations and aspirations that have been placed upon them.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

The future of ASEAN is in the hands of its people, as they will be the one driving the integration and cooperation. The role of ASEAN Member States – with support from the ASEAN Secretariat – is to render enabling environments and platforms for peoples and their ideas to grow.

For the Celebration today, the ASEAN Secretariat has performances lined-up to highlight and showcase such inclusiveness and youthfulness of the ASEAN

Community. There are musical performances by C-ASEAN Consonant – a social enterprise based in Bangkok – that consists of orchestra members from all ASEAN Member States each playing their national musical instruments, and the London School Beyond Academy (LSBA), whose band members are special-needs children.

We are also opening the new ASEAN Gallery with an exhibition of Southeast Asian contemporary art called *‘Shifting Tides’*, including inaugural presentation of the ASEAN Artists Residency Programme (AARP), supported by Thailand Beverage, one of ASEAN’s biggest conglomerates. To cap it all, the ASEAN Secretariat Heritage Building is staging an exhibition to showcase opportunities pertaining to scholarship, education, social enterprises, youth and sports. The purpose of these programs is to develop the next generation of talents across boundaries, as we strengthen the ASEAN Community.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me end my remarks by citing a quote from Philippines’ Secretary of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Narciso Ramos, one of ASEAN’s Founding Fathers. After signing the Bangkok Declaration exactly 52 years ago, he was asked by his staff in the Department of Foreign Affairs about how he felt. Ramos responded without hesitation, that ***“ASEAN will survive because it is ours!”***

I would like to echo Ramos’ optimism and record my appreciation for everyone’s support and dedication towards the organization and celebration of ASEAN Day that is truly ours. Thank you.