Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen.
Good morning.

First of all, on behalf of the AMRI Chair, may I extend my sincere appreciation to you all for participating in the 15th Conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information, or the 15th AMRI, which is actually the first AMRI meeting hosted via videoconference.

Media and information have always been an important sectoral body of ASEAN. We have implemented initiatives and projects to develop ASEAN citizens’ quality of life, such as enhancing the skills of our media professionals, creating media literacy among ASEAN’s young cyber content creators and consumers, and promoting awareness and opportunities for our people from all walks of life, to ensure that no one is left behind.

When Thailand assumed the AMRI-SOMRI chairmanship on 1 June 2020, it was at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We realised that our urgent task was to cope with unprecedented situations and we had to maintain ASEAN’s effective roles in media and information.

The AMRI Joint Statement to Minimize Negative Effects of COVID-19 was adopted by AMRI on 25 August 2020. The Joint Statement voices AMRI’s determination to create effective public communication, to reduce fake news and disinformation, and to exchange timely and accurate information among ASEAN Member States. For example,
the weekly COVID news exchange between Member States is carried out via existing platforms that once were used for the ASEAN Television News project's regular news exchange. This allows us to create flows of factual information exchange.

Throughout the past nine months, we have come together to support one another, shoulder to shoulder, to pass through this difficult time. But, looking at the bright side, we always find new opportunities, stronger cooperation, and unexpected lessons-learned, which led us to explore new normal ways to work together.

When ASEAN called for collective cooperation by sectoral bodies, SOMRI was there to share recommendations to handle fake news during the pandemic. The recommendations were compiled into the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, or ACRF, which was noted by our leaders during the 37th ASEAN Summit Meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must not forget that during the pandemic, our dialogue partners have also been helpful to us. Medical assistance, recommendations, exchange of professionals, and other forms of support were proof that ASEAN’s relations with the dialogue partners are not merely about a regional strategic partnership but also about a long-standing friendship.

Our next step on the way forward for AMRI is the way towards a digital community with accessibility for all. As today, we will still continue reinforcing the digital skills of our citizens and we will leave no one behind. Creating inclusive and accessible media, which would serve as a valuable legacy for the better future of our region, will be an important task for us. I cannot do it alone but together we certainly can.

Thank you very much.