



Welcoming Remarks

H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN

56th Anniversary of ASEAN

8 August 2023, ASEAN Secretariat

Your Excellency, Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia and ASEAN Chair for 2023,

Excellency Retno Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,

Excellency Heru Budi Hartono, Acting Governor of Jakarta Special Capital Region,

Excellencies, Members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN,

Excellencies Ambassadors, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Today I am incredibly and especially honoured to welcome the President of the Republic of Indonesia and the ASEAN Chair for 2023, Excellency Joko Widodo, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Excellency Retno Marsudi, and other distinguished guests at the ASEAN Secretariat to celebrate the 56th anniversary of ASEAN. The ASEAN Day celebration this year is particularly special for me because it is not only the first time in my capacity as the Secretary-General of ASEAN but it is also graced by the high presence of His Excellency President Joko Widodo, making this event a very meaningful and memorable one.
2. Indeed, 56 years are not short. There have been many notable milestones and achievements as we look back to the history of ASEAN. We have grown into a full-fledged ASEAN Community of ten Member States, with Timor Leste set to join as our 11th member following the ASEAN Leaders' decision at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in November 2022.

3. Collectively, ASEAN's population today stands at over 670 million people with a combined GDP amounts to approximately USD 3.7 trillion, making ASEAN the 3rd largest economy in Asia, and the 5th largest in the world. By 2030, ASEAN is projected to be the 4th largest in the world, demonstrating our immense potential to bring even more prosperity and opportunities to the peoples of ASEAN.
4. ASEAN's success would not have been possible without the strong determination and commitment by the ASEAN Member States to work together in a forward-looking approach to regional integration and the ASEAN Community-building process. Under Indonesia's Chairmanship of ASEAN this year and guided by the theme "**ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth**", ASEAN has further strengthened cooperation to sustain its relevance in responding to regional and global challenges, and in maintaining economic development, and prosperity for the benefits of all that call this region home.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. At the heart of ASEAN's regional integration journey are the peoples of ASEAN. ASEAN's success is ultimately measured by how the ASEAN Community-building efforts can deliver real, concrete and tangible benefits to the lives of its citizens. In return, it is the ASEAN people who will ultimately ensure the perpetuity of the ASEAN Community.
6. Therefore, I wish to invite all ASEAN citizens from all walks of life to join us in this festive celebration of the 56th ASEAN anniversary today and call on each and every one to contribute to our joint endeavour towards the realisation of an ASEAN Community that is peaceful, prosperous, dynamic, resilient, rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centered.
7. Happy 56th ASEAN Day!
8. It is now my now distinctive honour to invite His Excellency President Joko Widodo, to deliver his keynote address.

Thank you.
