

# **Viet Nam's Vision for ASEAN and Regional Affairs: Foreign Policy and International Integration in the Era of National Advancement**

*Your Excellency Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, ASEAN Secretary-General,  
Distinguished guests, dear friends,*

1. I am honored, during my State visit to Indonesia, to have this opportunity to visit and speak at the ASEAN Secretariat. As the permanent seat of ASEAN, this institution hosts a diverse range of meetings and consultations among ASEAN members and partners. It is also where ASEAN leaders adopt pivotal decisions that shape the development and future not only of Southeast Asia but of the wider global landscape.

I extend my sincere gratitude to you, Mr. Secretary-General, as well as to the leaders and staff of the ASEAN Secretariat, esteemed Ambassadors, and members of the diplomatic corps for the warm welcome accorded to the Vietnamese delegation and me. I am also delighted to be in the presence of distinguished scholars and researchers, whose invaluable contributions continue to shape ASEAN's development and strengthen Viet Nam–Indonesia relations. Allow me to convey my highest regards to all of you.

*Distinguished guests, dear friends,*

2. From the moment we set foot on this magnificent land of ten thousand islands, we have been met with the warm smiles and bright eyes of the Indonesian people. It feels as though we are visiting a cherished brother, one with whom we share deep historical ties and cultural affinities. Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, a land where great civilizations and religions have converged across the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is a country of breathtaking natural beauty, where ancient spiritual architecture stands harmoniously alongside modern, dynamic urban landscapes—making it a premier global destination, including for visitors from Viet Nam.

Indonesia is also widely recognized for ideas that extend beyond its region. Among these, independence, self-reliance, resilience, and non-alignment have crystallized into its diplomatic philosophy. Inspired by this spirit and immersed in the warmth, camaraderie, and solidarity at the ASEAN Secretariat, I would like to share my thoughts on ASEAN's vital role in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, on Viet Nam's diplomatic and integration policy lines in the country's new era of national advancement, and on our shared responsibility in fostering peace, stability, and development for ASEAN, the region, and the world.

*Distinguished guests,*

3. Over the past few decades, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, our world and region have undergone profound shifts and transformative changes. Today, three megatrends stand out as key drivers shaping our collective future:

First, the reshaping of the global landscape towards a multipolar, multi-centered world. In this emerging order, strategic competition and decoupling among major powers are intensifying,

presenting both unprecedented opportunities and formidable challenges to the post-World War II international order and the ASEAN community.

Second, the surge in scientific and technological advancements, particularly in AI, quantum technologies, blockchain, and biotechnology. These innovations are fundamentally altering cultural, economic, political, and social dimensions at the global, national, and individual levels.

Third, the increasingly significant impact of non-traditional security threats, such as climate change, resource depletion, epidemics, cybersecurity, and an aging population. This requires each nation to adapt its development strategies and join forces in global governance.

These trends profoundly affect political, security, economic, and social aspects worldwide, presenting both opportunities and challenges for states and international organizations, including ASEAN and Viet Nam. We are more aware than ever of the obstacles and risks threatening peace, security, and stability. Tensions and conflicts among nations are at their highest in seventy-five years. Global security is becoming more precarious, with 15% of the world's population living in conflict zones. International cooperation and multilateral mechanisms face unprecedented tests as trust recedes, replaced by discord and suspicion. Multilateralism, previously buoyed by robust globalization, is waning. Meanwhile, the intricate interplay between traditional and non-traditional security threats is making the Asia-Pacific—encompassing Southeast Asia and ASEAN members—more unpredictable than at any time in recent memory. As you, Mr. Secretary-General, noted at the second ASEAN Future Forum in Hanoi last month, the world today is marked by “competition, confrontation, contestation, and fragmentation.”

Nevertheless, I see that these very challenges and adversities are catalysts for potential. Crises draw nations closer in the quest for shared solutions, and such circumstances present ASEAN with a unique window of opportunity to progress and reposition itself on the foundation of shared principles, values, and six decades of achievements. Above all, hardship inspires innovation. Viet Nam's own journey attests that without the trials of the 1980s, we could not be certain that our Doi Moi policy—and subsequent achievements—would exist today. Our revered President Ho Chi Minh once imparted: “Nothing is difficult, fear only a wavering heart. Move mountains, fill the seas—determination conquers all.” Truly, this is a moment to advance innovation more boldly than ever. What we need is resolute determination and unity in confronting our adversities, strengthening cooperation, nurturing innovation, and creating fresh impetus for growth across ASEAN, each of its member states, and its partners.

*Distinguished guests,*

4.As we reflect on ASEAN's sixty-year history, numerous vital lessons emerge, particularly in self-reliance, self-dependence, and strategic self-determination. Allow me to recount three distinct stories—three pivotal decisions made by ASEAN that altered the trajectory of regional growth.

The first is drawn from the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. That crisis posed existential questions about the effectiveness of regional economic integration, with some fearing that ASEAN would turn inward under the pressures of protectionism. However, ASEAN chose the opposite path. Amid the crisis, ASEAN recognized the deep interconnections of our economies and opted to accelerate integration under the ASEAN Free Trade Area, boosting the free flow of goods, services,

and investments. These farsighted efforts enabled ASEAN to recover, eventually developing a network of free trade agreements covering 30% of the world's population and accounting for 32% of global GDP.

The second centers on ASEAN's 2007 decision to expedite the formation of the ASEAN Community by 2015, five years sooner than initially planned. Driven by urgent imperatives to enhance ASEAN connectivity in step with intensifying globalization and regional integration, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Charter in 2008—a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for integration. The official establishment of the ASEAN Community on 31 December 2015 represented a profound change for ASEAN across its Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural pillars. Today, ASEAN unites ten member states within a diverse yet cohesive community, standing as the world's fifth-largest economy with remarkable growth. It serves as a pivotal nexus for regional and global integration, acting as a bridge for dialogue and collaboration that fosters peace and development. Thus, ASEAN plays a constructive role in shaping the emerging international order."

Lastly, we have the extraordinary ASEAN response to COVID-19. Confronted with an unprecedented crisis, ASEAN marshaled its collective resources, turning the need for collaborative response into a unifying interest. Together, we preserved the Association's normal operations and continued advancing the Community-building process. Amid global economic challenges, ASEAN has distinguished itself, with growth projected to reach 4.7% this year. To harness new growth engines, a variety of cooperative frameworks are being implemented to reinforce ASEAN's competitive edge and guide future development trends in the region.

5. These episodes demonstrate the fundamental values sustaining ASEAN's success and identity over six decades. Solidarity, self-reliance, collaboration, and unity in diversity remain instrumental to ASEAN's resilience in a volatile world. As we confront increasingly complex, multidimensional challenges, ASEAN must embrace creativity, flexibility, and innovation, even when shaping its decision-making. Consensus and solidarity do not equate to remaining in a comfortable status quo; rather, they call upon us to think, operate, and act for the collective good. This is the true essence and value of consensus and solidarity.

6. As we usher in a new era of development, ASEAN is poised to grow from strength to strength, on track to become the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030. Boasting a consumer market of 800 million citizens and establishing itself as a center for technological, digital economy, and innovation, the ASEAN digital economy is experiencing rapid growth and is projected to exceed US\$1 trillion by 2030.

Given the complex shifts today, preserving and leveraging our recorded achievements in a sustainable, effective way—and asserting ASEAN's centrality and standing—requires more than mere solidarity, unity, and collective resolve. ASEAN must also embrace innovative thinking, employ agile strategies, develop pragmatic roadmaps, allocate focused resources, and take decisive action. Allow me to share some thoughts on how we might unlock breakthroughs that further strengthen ASEAN's strategic values and elevate its prestige and profile in the years to come.

First, ensure strategic self-reliance and agility to reinforce adaptability and responsiveness to the rapidly evolving challenges amidst strategic competition. ASEAN must act in a more coordinated and responsible manner, with internal cohesion being pivotal to resisting external pressures and

maintaining an independent, balanced voice amid intensifying competition among major powers. This calls for greater consensus, achieved through consultation, dialogue, and alignment of member states' interests. Equally important is fostering a robust sense of community and a proactive approach from each member country to defining shared goals, interest, identity, and values of ASEAN.

Second, strengthen economic resilience, harnessing and capitalizing on the ASEAN's strength of being a vast and highly promising space for economic development to rise along the global supply chain and become a strategic production hub for the world. ASEAN must embrace innovative development solutions and pioneer new growth engines in areas such as innovation, science and technology, digitization, and the advancement of green and circular energy, renewables, as well as cultivating a highly skilled workforce. Equally important is striking a balance between robust economic growth and green, inclusive, and sustainable progress. ASEAN needs to become a center of technological breakthroughs where scientific discoveries are seamlessly converted into practical, impactful applications for socio-economic advancement.

Third, further reinforce ASEAN's identity and values. This involves nurturing cultural connectivity and people-to-people exchanges, preserving ASEAN's signature ethos of consensus, harmony, and respect for diversity. We must preserve and uphold the ASEAN Way as an invaluable cultural heirloom in the Association's decision-making process. The people must especially be placed at the heart as the goal and driver of sustainable development. As food and energy security and climate change has been seriously affecting the people's every day life, it is the ASEAN's mission to prepare in every respect to respond proactively to all circumstances and secure stability and prosperity for the people.

Fourth, enhance the effectiveness of developing norms of conducts to harmonize and navigate relations among regional countries on the principles of balance, inclusiveness and, and mutual benefits. ASEAN must emphasize concrete, results-oriented cooperation. As major powers engage in intensifying rivalries, ASEAN must maintain unity in its conduct and action, assert its centrality and fully embrace its role as a connector and interlocutor—encouraging all concerned parties to engage in ASEAN-led initiatives, which serve as a platform for genuine dialogue and cooperation. This helps foster cooperation and maintain peace and stability in our region and beyond, all while remaining true to ASEAN's core missions and principles. Most importantly, ASEAN must proactively leverage the ASEAN Way to craft long-term, enduring solutions to challenges both within and beyond the region.

Fifth, collaborate in addressing issues within ASEAN—supporting Myanmar's stability and development and assisting Timor Leste's transition to full ASEAN membership.

Distinguished delegates,

Viet Nam is proud of its 30-year journey of international integration, with ASEAN serving as our starting point and gateway to broader regional and global engagement. From a country once isolated under embargo, Viet Nam has now established diplomatic relations with 194 states and actively participates in over 70 international and regional bodies. We have entered into free trade agreements with more than 60 countries and economies, propelling Viet Nam into the ranks of the world's 40 largest economies and among the top 20 trade and investment destinations.

To date, Viet Nam has established comprehensive, strategic and comprehensive strategic partnerships with 35 states, including every ASEAN member and key partner of the Association. I daresay that cooperation with ASEAN members and the network of the Association's partners have been an important contributor to securing an environment of peace and stability to facilitate Viet Nam's development and growing prosperity, open up a development space full of potential for Viet Nam, and support its growing prestige, role and profile in the international arena.

As a trusted, proactive, and constructive regional and international actor, Viet Nam dedicates its resources—material and intellectual—to leading global and regional platforms. Its record of service as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and as a member of the Human Rights Council, active involvement in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and APEC, along with its stints as ASEAN Chair in 1998, 2010, and 2020, has been widely recognized. Viet Nam recognizes that with growing international stature comes greater responsibilities—toward our ASEAN brethren, our partners, and the wider global community.

These grand and historic achievements pave the way for Viet Nam's new developmental chapter, one of national advancement. We aim for 8% economic growth this year, followed by double-digit expansion in succeeding years, aspiring to become a modern industrial nation by 2030 and a developed, high-income country by 2045. We will pair robust and sustainable economic advancement with a transformation in our growth model focused on quality, efficiency, and competitiveness—driven by science, technology, innovation, and digital adoption. At the same time, human beings shall remain the heart and engine of growth as we build a rule -of-law State of the people, by the people and for the people.

In a new era of development, Viet Nam shall continue to pursue its consistent line of foreign relations: independence, self-reliance, friendship, cooperation and development, diversification and multilateralization of relations. Viet Nam is a trusted friend and partner of, and an active and responsible member within the international community, and conducts active, extensive and comprehensive international integration. Viet Nam is ready to make more active and proactive contributions to international politics, the global economy and human civilization.

With the aspiration of a peace-loving nation, we believe that peace is the foundation for growth. Inheriting the heroic, humane tradition of a country that vows to “build enduring friendships between two nations and extinguish war for all time,” and to “use justice to defeat brutality, use benevolence to overcome oppression,” Viet Nam faithfully adheres to its Four No's defense doctrine: (1) no military alliances, (2) no alignment against any other country, (3) no foreign bases or use of Vietnamese territory against a third country, and (4) no threat or use of force in international relations. We staunchly champion respect for the UN Charter and international law, firmly uphold peaceful dispute resolution, and oppose any unilateral actions, power politics, use or threat of force in international relations.

Since embarking on our open-door policy and integration journey, ASEAN has served as the premier multilateral mechanism most directly connected with Viet Nam. Over nearly three decades of membership—since joining in 1995—Viet Nam has consistently prioritized nurturing ties with its neighbors and regional partners, significantly contributing to the construction of a cohesive, resilient, and adaptive ASEAN Community, and positioning itself on the global stage through its ASEAN family.

Looking ahead, Viet Nam's foreign policy focus remains on collaborating with ASEAN to cultivate a dynamic and united Community that advances peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

As we stand at a new historical juncture, Viet Nam and ASEAN will pursue truly ambitious goals together. As we embark on the next phase of our shared development—and in light of the growing expectations for ASEAN—Viet Nam recognizes its responsibility to take a more proactive role and make greater contributions to our collective endeavors. In this spirit, our guiding principle is: “Creative in thought, innovative in approach, flexible in delivery, effective in method, and decisive in action.”

Viet Nam will work closely with its fellow ASEAN members to fulfill our shared potential and address our challenges. This includes building an inclusive, sustainable, and integrated regional architecture encompassing political, security, economic, trade, cultural, social, and people-to-people domains. At the same time, we will champion conducts based on the UN Charter and international law, recognizing it as the most enduring path to securing peace, stability, and prosperity in our region and beyond.

Viet Nam will continue to stand alongside its fellow ASEAN members to fulfill the Association's historic mission and further advance ASEAN's success story. For member states, this is a story of solidarity, cohesion, mutual assistance, self-reliance, self-dependence, and strategic self-determination—one that drives us toward achieving the 2045 ASEAN Community Vision while safeguarding the interests of each member and the broader Community. For the region, it is a story of comprehensive, far-reaching cooperation between ASEAN and its partners, founded on goodwill, responsibility, mutual respect, and shared benefits—all in pursuit of peace, security, stability, prosperity, and sustainable development. For the world, it is a tale of hope and inspiration—an ASEAN that serves as a successful model of integration, strengthening trust, encouraging solidarity, and promoting cooperation, aligning regional interests with global aims, amplifying our collective efforts to tackle common challenges, and realizing our shared dream of peace and progress..

Mr. Secretary General, distinguished guests, dear friends,  
I wish you all good health, happiness, and success.  
Thank you for your kind attention.