



Welcome Remarks by SG Dr. Kao Kim Hourn

## OPENING CEREMONY

**IAI Attachment Programme from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam (CLMV) and Timor-Leste at the ASEAN Secretariat (2024-2025)**

*Hibiscus Room, Heritage Building, ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat,  
17 March 2025*

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*Your Excellency, Kiya Masahiko, Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN*

*Your Excellency, Dr. Ton Thi Ngoc Huong, Ambassador of Viet Nam to ASEAN and Chair of IAI Task Force,*

*Excellencies, Permanent Representatives of the ASEAN Member States to ASEAN and Members of the IAI Task Force,*

*Colleagues at the ASEAN Secretariat and IAI Attachment Officers,*

*Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Good Morning.

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Opening Ceremony of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Attachment Programme for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam (CLMV) and Timor-Leste at the ASEAN Secretariat. Hosting officers from CLMV for this important initiative has always been an honour, and today, we are especially delighted to welcome Timor-Leste's historic first participation in the programme. I wish to also welcome Your Excellency Natércia Cipriana Coelho da Silva, Ambassador of Timor-Leste to ASEAN.
2. The IAI Attachment Programme stands as the longest-running initiative under the IAI framework, meticulously designed to enhance human capital and strengthen institutional capacity in CLMV countries and now Timor-Leste. Since its inception in 2002, the programme has provided invaluable training and hands-on experience to 120 officers, who have gone on to play key roles in driving ASEAN integration and ASEAN Community-building within their respective ministries and countries.
3. I am particularly proud to note that their remarkable success can, in part, be attributed to the strong foundation and practical experience gained through the IAI

Attachment Programme, clearly demonstrating the enduring impact of this initiative in nurturing future leaders and advancing ASEAN's comprehensive integration efforts.

4. This year, the programme takes on special significance as we welcome Timor-Leste for the very first time. This landmark occasion underscores ASEAN's unwavering commitment to capacity-building for Timor-Leste, supporting its careful preparation for full ASEAN membership. Through participation in this programme, Timor-Leste officials will gain essential first-hand exposure to ASEAN cooperation mechanisms, substantially strengthening their readiness to contribute meaningfully to the ASEAN Community.

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

5. I wish to underline that the sustained success of the IAI Attachment Programme over the past two decades would not have been possible without the generous and steadfast support of the Government of Japan. On behalf of ASEAN, I extend my sincere appreciation to Japan and ofcourse the JAIF Management Team for your continued contributions to this programme and the broader Initiative for ASEAN Integration. This exemplary collaboration significantly underscores the strong, enduring partnership between ASEAN and Japan in advancing regional development and narrowing the development gap.
6. To the Attachment Officers, I offer you my heartfelt congratulations on being selected for this prestigious programme. In the coming months, you will be actively involved in the daily operations of the ASEAN Secretariat, including preparing for, and participating in various ASEAN meetings, as well as collaborating with officials from ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat, and diverse range of stakeholders. You also have the opportunity to interact and learn from the leadership of the ASEAN Secretariat. In fact, last week, you had the opportunity to engage with me already.
7. Furthermore, you will have access to transformative learning experiences, including a study visit to Japan, comprehensive training on project development, and a specialised training course on diplomacy and regional cooperation—all designed to enhance your professional capabilities and broaden your regional perspectives.
8. I strongly encourage each and every one of you to fully embrace and seize this exceptional opportunity by actively engaging in all aspects of the programme and cultivating a strong professional network. Your time here will not only catalyze your personal career growth but also contribute meaningfully to ASEAN's broader strategic vision of regional integration and community building.
9. Through this programme, I am confident that you will acquire the understanding, the knowledge, skills, and experiences that will serve as a powerful foundation for your future contributions to both your respective countries and certainly ASEAN as a whole.

10. Before I conclude my remarks, I wish to share 9 C's: clarity of purpose, confidence, capability, courage, continuous learning, contributions, commitments, and cooperation.

11. Once again, welcome to the IAI Attachment Programme and to the ASEAN Secretariat. I wish you a truly productive and enriching year ahead.

Thank you.

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