



**Special Address by
H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN
ASEAN AI Malaysia Summit 2025**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 12 August 2025

H.E. Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia,

H.E. Gobind Singh Deo, Minister of Digital of Malaysia,

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon.

1. I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Malaysian Government for inviting me to deliver this Special Address at the ASEAN AI Malaysia Summit 2025. Despite ongoing volatility and uncertainty in global trade, we are witnessing the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence in reshaping every aspect of our economies, societies, and daily lives.
2. In this context, I commend Malaysia's leadership in hosting the first-ever ASEAN AI Summit. This landmark gathering provides a timely opportunity to deepen regional cooperation and build strategic trust around a shared vision—where innovation and inclusive development guide our collective journey into a new era of digital transformation. The theme of Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2025 — *“Inclusivity and Sustainability”* — reflects ASEAN's commitment to a future where all member states and citizens can play a leading role.
3. Digital technologies are central to this ambition, driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth. With internet penetration exceeding 80% of the population in 2023¹, ASEAN's digital economy is projected to reach USD 1 trillion by 2030. This year, ASEAN is prioritising the conclusion of the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) to build our regional digital ecosystem, which could potentially double this projection to USD 2 trillion within the same timeframe².

¹ ASEANstats database

² Study on DEFA

4. Within ASEAN, AI offers enormous potential and is actively shaping our future economy. AI is expected to contribute a GDP uplift of 10-18%, equivalent to nearly USD 1 trillion by 2030³. To fully leverage this opportunity, ASEAN has identified cooperation on emerging technologies, including AI, as a key priority in the DEFA negotiations, setting the stage for regulatory frameworks that keep pace with technological innovation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. In 2024, the UN Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence released its final report titled "Governing AI for Humanity"⁴, which outlines the necessity of developing a global strategic framework to address AI risks while maximizing its global benefits. The report emphasizes AI's transformative potential across diverse areas—from scientific advancement and energy optimization to public health and agriculture—while encouraging all nations to participate in establishing ethical standards and policies for AI that reflect diverse needs and values.
6. However, the report also highlights critical governance gaps, noting that only seven of 193 UN Member States are currently engaged in major AI governance initiatives, leaving 118 countries—many in the Global South—on the sidelines. This concentration of AI development risks deepening global inequities, underscoring the urgent need for international cooperation to create an inclusive framework that ensures all nations can participate in setting ethical standards and policies for AI, reflecting diverse global needs and values.
7. The rapid advancement of AI also brings profound risks and challenges. From content generators to autonomous problem-solvers, AI agents have delivered remarkable efficiencies, but when operating without human oversight, they raise serious ethical and safety concerns. Lacking inherent moral reasoning, AI systems remain vulnerable to bias, manipulation, and unintended harm. These developments demand urgent and coordinated global action to ensure that AI technologies advance human welfare and serve the public good.
8. In this regard, governments worldwide are stepping forward to develop trustworthy and responsible AI frameworks. The United States recently launched its AI Action Plan⁵, balancing innovation with safety and societal responsibility, while China introduced its Global AI Governance Initiative⁶ in 2023, aiming to shape global norms through a sovereignty-focused approach. The European Union adopted the AI Act⁷ in 2024—the world's first cross-sector legislation to regulate AI based on risk assessment. These efforts underscore the growing international momentum toward responsible and inclusive AI governance.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

³ [Kearney: Racing toward the future: artificial intelligence in Southeast Asia](#)

⁴ [Governing AI for Humanity](#)

⁵ [The US AI Action Plan](#)

⁶ [China's Global AI Governance Initiative](#)

⁷ [EU AI Act](#)

9. ASEAN too has responded with purpose. In February 2024, we adopted the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics⁸. This Guide serves as a baseline standard to guide proper AI governance in the region while striking a balance between the economic advantages of rapidly advancing AI technology and its associated risks. ASEAN's commitment deepened in January 2025 when ASEAN Digital Ministers approved the Expanded ASEAN AI Guide⁹ and the ASEAN Responsible AI Roadmap¹⁰, providing member states with practical tools to implement responsible AI practices.
10. Recognizing the rising urgency for humanity to shape AI's trajectory, ASEAN is currently developing—under Malaysia's leadership—a Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN AI Safety Network (AI Safe), targeted for adoption by Leaders at the 47th ASEAN Summit. This represents a crucial step toward institutionalising AI safety, ethics, and governance principles as endorsed by ASEAN Digital Ministers, while supporting implementation of the ASEAN Responsible AI Roadmap.
11. The establishment of ASEAN AI Safe aligns with global calls for an international network to tackle AI safety risks through collaboration among governments, academia, and industry. Despite differing national interests, a shared consensus remains that AI must not surpass or replace humans. As the world's first regionally endorsed AI Safety Network, ASEAN AI Safe underscores our commitment to responsible AI development. I commend Malaysia for its leadership and look forward to the network's formal establishment by early 2026.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. We stand at a defining moment—not just for ASEAN, but for the world—where AI's transformative promise is matched by the weight of our shared responsibility to shape its impact wisely. This is our opportunity to co-create a future where AI serves humanity with purpose, guided by ethical principles, inclusive practices, and environmental consciousness.
13. The inaugural ASEAN AI Summit demonstrates that ASEAN can forge bold pathways that make AI a driver of peace, prosperity, and progress in our evolving world. I look forward to the continued hosting of this important Summit in the years ahead.
14. Let us seize this opportunity to build an AI-powered ASEAN economy aligned with our Community Vision 2045 — a future where technology empowers all. I wish you a productive and insightful Summit.

Thank you.

⁸ [ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics](#)

⁹ [Expanded ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics – Generative AI](#)

¹⁰ [ASEAN Responsible AI Roadmap](#)