



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

Appreciation Remarks

**At the *Unveiling of the Sculpture “Vitality 2026”* on the occasion of the
Visit of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines to
the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat**

22 April 2026, ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat

*Your Excellency Maria Theresa P. Lazaro, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of the Philippines,*

Excellencies, Permanent Representatives of ASEAN,

Colleagues, DSGs, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good afternoon. What a pleasure it is to gather here today for the unveiling of *Vitality 2026* — a gift from the heart of the Philippines to the ASEAN Secretariat. On behalf of the ASEAN Secretariat, I offer my deepest gratitude to the Government and people of the Philippines for this wonderful gesture. The work of Ms. Impy Pilapil is alive with heritage, identity, and pride — a vivid expression of the Philippines' rich tradition of artistic excellence.

And what a work it is. With its dynamic form and sense of joyful movement, *Vitality 2026* does exactly what great art does — it lifts the spirit. It speaks to a region that is dynamic, forward-looking, and full of life. It reminds us of what we are building together: an ASEAN that is resilient, united, and always moving forward. The sculpture captures beautifully the spirit of the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship theme — *“Navigating Our Future, Together.”* In its energy and momentum, we see our own — a community that does not stand still, but presses forward, together dynamically with confidence and purpose.

Excellency,

We are especially moved that you are with us today. We know that the Philippines is navigating a national energy emergency at home like some other ASEAN Member States, and the demands on your time and attention could not be greater.

That you are here — personally, and with such warmth — speaks volumes. It speaks to the Philippines' unwavering dedication to ASEAN. And it speaks to your own remarkable energy, your personal commitment, and your belief in what this community can and must achieve together.

Your presence is itself a kind of gift already. As *Vitality 2026* takes its place here at the ASEAN Secretariat, it will greet all who enter with a reminder of what ASEAN truly stands for — resilience, creativity, and the enduring strength of our shared purpose. Every day, it will carry a little of the Philippines' spirit into the Secretariat.

For that, and for your leadership this year Your Excellency Secretary of Foreign Affairs, we are truly grateful.

Thank you.
