



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

Remarks at the

***Launching Ceremony of the Disaster Management Cooperation Project
between ASEAN and China***

30 April 2026, ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat

Your Excellency Dr. Raditya Jati, Deputy Minister for System and Strategy of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of the Republic of Indonesia and Alternate Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM),

Your Excellency Wang Qing, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to ASEAN,

Your Excellency Evangeline T. Ong Jimenez Ducrocq, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to ASEAN and Chair of the CPR,

Excellencies, Permanent Representatives of ASEAN Member States, ACDM Focal Points, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I also want to extend my warm greetings to distinguished guests attending online as well. I am grateful to all of you for being here this afternoon. Your presence reflects a genuine commitment to the work ahead — the practical, demanding work of building a more disaster-resilient region. Before we proceed further, I wish to express our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Indonesia, and in particular to the families of those who lost their lives in the recent train crash in Jakarta. We stand in solidarity with all those affected, and with the agencies working tirelessly on the response and recovery efforts.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Disasters of all kinds and form remind us, repeatedly and without mercy, that preparedness is not optional but imperative. Floodwaters do not wait for protocols; earthquakes and fires do not observe borders. It is in this spirit of urgency and shared

responsibility that we gather here together today — not simply to mark an occasion, but to set something consequential in motion.

This ceremony opens a new chapter in the ASEAN-China partnership, one grounded in concrete cooperation on disaster management. Over the years, our two sides have built a strong and dynamic relationship. Today, we direct that trust toward one of the most pressing responsibilities we share: protecting our peoples from the growing force of natural hazards and all kinds of disaster.

That force is considerable and real. Our region remains among the most disaster-prone on the planet. Typhoons, floods, earthquakes, droughts — these are not abstract risks but recurring realities for millions of people across Asia. Climate change is compounding these threats, making them more frequent, less predictable, and more destructive and deadly. Rapid urbanisation and environmental degradation are adding further layers of vulnerability. No single government, however capable, can navigate this landscape alone. Regional cooperation is a practical necessity.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This project between ASEAN and China was built with that necessity in mind. It rests on three concrete pillars.

The first is people. The project invests directly in human resources development — training disaster management professionals to handle increasingly complex, fast-moving emergencies. Knowledge, trainings and skills developed before a disaster strikes are among the most effective tools we have.

The second is coordination. When a crisis unfolds, the ability to communicate clearly, make decisions swiftly, and act in concert across agencies and response teams can make a real difference between a coherent response and a fragmented one. This project will strengthen our consultation mechanisms and sharpen command systems so that, when the moment comes, we are ready to act with speed and clarity.

The third is technology. Real-time data, early warning systems, digital decision-support tools and public communications — these are operational necessities in modern disaster management. By upgrading our information and communication technology, we expand our ability to anticipate disasters, prepare communities in advance, and coordinate responses with greater precision.

Taken together, these three pillars serve something larger. This project is closely aligned with the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and supports the AADMER Work Programme 2026–2030 — the region's guiding framework for disaster risk cooperation. It is not a standalone initiative; it is a deliberate contribution to a longer-term architecture of regional resilience.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to acknowledge the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) for the sustained work that brought this project into reality, particularly in deepening cooperation with external partners, in this instance, it is with China. Their efforts have translated shared intent into a concrete and workable plan.

I also want to express sincere appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China. China has been a consistent and dependable partner of ASEAN including in this particular domain — contributing technical expertise, resources, and solidarity when it has mattered most. This project adds to that record, and it strengthens what is already a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of real substance of real substance.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To those who will carry this project forward: the launch is only the beginning. What matters now is implementation — close coordination among all stakeholders, clear communication as challenges arise, and a genuine sense of shared ownership over the outcomes. The knowledge and capacities built through this project must be embedded into our institutions and systems, so that their value endures well beyond the project's duration.

Disasters will continue to test us from time to time. This project is part of how we intend to meet that test. I wish it every success — and more importantly, I wish it real and lasting impact, especially from this project.

Thank you, and with that, a good afternoon to all.
