



**Remarks**

**by H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN,  
at the Opening of the Exhibition on the Fifth Anniversary of the ASEAN-  
Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**

ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat, 26 May 2026

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***Your Excellency M.I. Derry Aman, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN  
and Country Coordinator for ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations,***

***Your Excellency Tiffany McDonald, Ambassador of Australia to ASEAN,***

***Excellencies, Permanent Representatives of ASEAN Member States,***

***Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

A very good morning.

1. It is a pleasure to join you today for the opening of this special exhibition commemorating the Fifth Anniversary of the ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
2. Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Tiffany McDonald and the Australian Mission to ASEAN, as well as Ambassador Derry Aman and the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to ASEAN, for organising this exhibition today. What we see displayed here is more than a collection of photographs and milestones. It is the story of a relationship that has grown steadily, matured consistently, and proven its value over time.

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

3. Australia became ASEAN's first Dialogue Partner in 1974. At that time, ASEAN itself was still young, and the region faced conflicts and deep uncertainty. Yet even then, there was a recognition that regional peace, stability and prosperity could not be built in isolation. They had to be built through partnership and cooperation.
4. Five decades later, that idea remains just as relevant. Perhaps even more so today.
5. Over the years, ASEAN and Australia have built a relationship grounded in mutual respect, practical cooperation, and a shared commitment to an open, peaceful, stable, and prosperous region. What began as a dialogue partnership has evolved into broad cooperation across political-security, economic, and socio-cultural fields. The establishment of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2021 reflected not only

the maturity of our ties, but also a shared understanding that the challenges ahead require deeper cooperation, greater engagement, and more ambition.

6. Australia's longstanding support for ASEAN Community-building, ASEAN integration, and ASEAN Centrality has been deeply valued. Through our cooperation across all three ASEAN Community pillars, ASEAN and Australia have contributed to strengthening regional resilience, supporting economic growth, and fostering closer people-to-people connectivity. Initiatives, such as the Australia for ASEAN Futures Initiative, demonstrate a partnership focused not only on dialogue, but also on delivering practical outcomes for our peoples.

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

7. In the political and security sphere, ASEAN and Australia continue to work closely to strengthen confidence-building and support peace and stability through ASEAN-led mechanisms. In fact, Australia has been advocating the work of preventative diplomacy and supporting the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). Economically, our ties continue to deepen through trade, investment, and connectivity, supported by frameworks such as the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). At the same time, we are expanding cooperation into new areas, including renewable energy, the digital economy, innovation, and emerging technologies.
8. We welcome Australia's commitment to deepening economic engagement with Southeast Asia through the "Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040." This economic strategy of Australia reflects a growing recognition within Australia that Southeast Asia is not peripheral to its future prosperity. It is central to it.
9. But ultimately, the strength of this partnership is measured not only in agreements or frameworks or documents. It is measured in the real connections between our peoples. Educational exchanges, scholarships, tourism, and youth programmes have strengthened understanding between ASEAN and Australian communities for decades. In 2025 alone, 5.4 million Australians visited ASEAN countries. Behind that figure are millions of individual experiences - students studying abroad, businesses building partnerships, families reconnecting, and young people discovering new cultures and perspectives.
10. This is how lasting regional partnership and relationships are built: gradually, consistently, and person by person.

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

11. The ASEAN-Australia partnership has endured because it has never stood still. It has continued to evolve alongside the changing realities of our region. Today, the strategic environment is becoming more complex and more uncertain. Geopolitical tensions are rising. Climate pressures are intensifying. Technologies are transforming economies and societies at unprecedented speed. Supply chains, energy security, and economic resilience have become central concerns for all countries.

12. Against this backdrop, the ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership remains an important platform for cooperation and engagement. As we commemorate its fifth anniversary, we should see this not only as an opportunity to reflect on what ASEAN and Australia have achieved together, but also to look ahead to the next phase of the partnership. The strong foundations built over the past fifty years position us well to deepen cooperation in areas that will shape the future of our region and our peoples.
13. I am confident that ASEAN and Australia will continue to deepen this partnership in ways that deliver lasting benefits for our peoples and contribute significantly to a region that remains peaceful, stable, and prosperous for generations to come.

Thank you.