



H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN
Pre-Recorded Remarks at the
Asia Pacific Regional Workshop on Fostering Solidarity for Arms
Regulation and Security Cooperation

26 November 2025, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Excellency Pol. Gen. Por Phak, Secretary of State, Ministry of Interior of the Kingdom of Cambodia,

Ms. Mitzi Austero, Programme Manager of the Nonviolence International Southeast Asia (NISEA),

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my pleasure to share this message with you at the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Fostering Solidarity for Arms Regulation and Security Cooperation. I would like to congratulate the Ministry of Interior of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Nonviolence International Southeast Asia (NISEA) for once again bringing together key stakeholders from across the Asia-Pacific to exchange views and strengthen cooperation on arms regulation and efforts to curb illicit arms flows and smuggling.

This Workshop builds on the outcomes of last year's Workshop on Regional Confidence-Building Towards Multilateral Cooperation for Peace and Security in the Asia-Pacific, which emphasised the need to improve coordination between regional and multilateral mechanisms to address the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

This gathering comes at a crucial time. The Small Arms Survey Situation Update released in October 2025 reports that the global value of authorised exports of small arms and light weapons has nearly doubled over the past five years—from about USD 5 billion in 2019 to approximately USD 9.2 billion in 2024. The Survey has previously noted both the expansion of legitimate trade and the increasing risks of diversion into illicit markets. It has also consistently underscored that as illicit firearm markets become more digitised—with growing evidence of online platforms facilitating weapons trading in some regions—there is an urgent need to strengthen regional coordination and enforcement capacities to confront these evolving threats.

In this context, today's Workshop builds on that momentum. It complements ASEAN's ongoing work to advance global arms control and disarmament objectives, and it provides a valuable space for sharing perspectives that can reinforce ASEAN's collective law enforcement cooperation against arms smuggling.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN remains firmly committed to strengthening regional cooperation in combating arms smuggling. This remains a key priority under the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, alongside seven other transnational crime concerns. Recognising the persistent and complex nature of this challenge, the AMMTC adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Combating Arms Smuggling in 2023.

Initiated by Cambodia, the Declaration identifies several practical areas for collaboration — from strengthening institutional linkages and reviewing legal frameworks, to promoting the ratification of international instruments, raising public awareness, and deepening partnerships with external stakeholders. The Declaration's implementation is guided by the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime (2016–2025), which was recently renewed for the 2026–2035 period at the 19th AMMTC held in September this year. This renewed Plan of Action will guide ASEAN's collective efforts to address both existing and emerging forms of transnational crime in the coming decade.

I would like to commend Cambodia's continued leadership as the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime Voluntary Lead Shepherd for arms smuggling and as Chair of the SOMTC Working Group on Arms Smuggling. Cambodia has been instrumental in driving regional initiatives and supporting capacity-building for ASEAN law enforcement agencies. These efforts not only advance our shared commitments but also strengthen ASEAN's overall ability to prevent and respond to arms smuggling across the region.

ASEAN also values the partnership and sustained support of our external partners, whose engagement helps us remain agile and responsive to evolving trends, technologies, and challenges in this field. The participation of resource persons from the United Nations and NISEA will no doubt enrich today's discussions and further strengthen ASEAN's regional dialogue on this important issue.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As ASEAN works to translate the ASEAN Declaration on Combating Arms Smuggling into concrete action, I encourage all participants to take full advantage of this Workshop — to exchange ideas, share practical experiences, and explore innovative approaches that can reinforce our collective response to arms smuggling in the Asia-Pacific region.

The realities we face today — from expanding illicit networks to the misuse of digital platforms for arms transactions — remind us that no country can confront this challenge alone. Our solidarity, practical cooperation, and shared commitment to peace and security are our strongest tools.

Thank you for your dedication and partnership. I wish you all a productive and successful Workshop.
