



H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN
Pre-Recorded Remarks at the
Closing Ceremony of the
ASEAN-China Years of People-to-People Exchanges (ACYPPE)

11 December 2025, Melaka, Malaysia

Leaders and Representatives from the ASEAN Member States,

Leaders and Representatives from the People's Republic of China,

His Excellency Tun Seri Setia Dr. Haji Mohd Ali Bin Mohd Rustam, Governor of Melaka,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning. Thank you for joining us for the Closing Ceremony of the ASEAN–China Years of People-to-People Exchanges. I would like to acknowledge the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Malaysia–China Friendship Association for graciously hosting this event in Melaka. While I wish I could be there with you in person, I'm glad to share these remarks with you.

Today marks the conclusion of two significant years of collaboration—the ASEAN–China Years of People-to-People Exchanges in 2024 and 2025. The genesis of this initiative can be traced to the 26th ASEAN–China Summit in 2023, where Leaders endorsed the designation of 2024 as the ASEAN–China Year of People-to-People Exchanges.

The objective was clear: enhance cultural connections and promote greater interaction among our peoples. Over these two years, that vision has been realised through diverse activities that fostered understanding and friendship across ASEAN and China, demonstrating our shared commitment to deepening mutual understanding, strengthening relationships, and broadening cooperation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN is home to approximately 224 million young people, a figure projected to peak in 2038. This makes youth central to ASEAN's development agenda. In China, the youth population aged 14-35 stands at about 400 million—28.4 percent of the total population. When engaged effectively, this demographic can drive economic progress, innovation, and social transformation across both ASEAN and China.

Over the past two years, ASEAN and China have implemented numerous initiatives promoting youth development and education. Programmes like the ASEAN–China Youth Campus and the ASEAN-China Young Leaders Exchange Festival have provided platforms for young people to develop leadership skills, engage in dialogue, and contribute ideas for regional cooperation.

Educational exchanges have flourished. Scholarships and mobility programmes such as the ASEAN-China Young Leaders Scholarship have offered students and educators opportunities for higher learning, knowledge-sharing, and professional development. These initiatives have strengthened cross-cultural competencies and created networks that will benefit both regions for years to come.

Beyond youth and education, these exchanges have encompassed culture and arts, tourism, sports, innovation and entrepreneurship, media, capacity building, and social protection. These activities have strengthened ties between communities and created opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and leadership development across ASEAN and China.

As you reflect on the achievements of the ASEAN–China Years of People-to-People Exchanges, I hope you will recognise the importance of fostering deeper understanding, strengthening connections, and building lasting friendships between our peoples.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While this commemorative period concludes, the momentum generated must be sustained and expanded. We can harness technology to enhance connectivity and reach those who were unable to participate in physical exchanges. Our future is digital, but it must also be inclusive and human-centred. Knowledge exchange and people-to-people engagement remain essential. Sustained collaboration with China ensures that the achievements of the past two years continue to advance the long-term vision of cohesive, connected, and vibrant ASEAN–China relations.

I want to express my appreciation to all partners, institutions, and participants who contributed to the success of these initiatives. As you celebrate your collective achievements, I encourage you to reaffirm your commitment to sustaining and expanding people-to-people engagement for a stronger, more connected ASEAN–China community.

The bridges we build between our peoples today become the pathways our children will walk tomorrow. Let us continue to build them strong, build them wide, and build them with the vision of a shared future where understanding transcends borders and friendship knows no boundaries.

Thank you.
