



Speech by
H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN
At the 22nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation
(AMMSTI-22) Opening Ceremony

26 June 2026 | 8:30am
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Your Excellency Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thongsalith Mangnormek,
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Sports of Lao PDR,

The Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Senior Officials, Esteemed Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very Good Morning!

1. I want to start by expressing my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister and his team for the wonderful Gala Dinner last night and the performances to grace this special meeting here, the 22nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation (AMMSTI-22), in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Science, technology and innovation sit at the heart of ASEAN's agenda; driving our economic growth, strengthening our resilience, and sharpening our competitiveness. For over four decades, AMMSTI, through COSTI, has turned cooperation into capability and ideas into innovation; work that today benefits nearly 700 million people across our entire region¹.
2. This year's theme, "Advancing the ASEAN Plan of Action on STI (APASTI) for a Resilient, Sustainable and Competitive ASEAN", captures where we now stand:

¹ https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/AKF-2025_v3_202601151314.pdf

our resilience, sustainability and competitiveness increasingly hinge on how well we harness STI, from food and energy security to the green transition. With a US\$4 trillion economy, ASEAN's future competitiveness will depend not on what we have achieved, but on how boldly we innovate².

3. That is the agenda before us as we open the 22nd AMMSTI, and I thank the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Lao PDR, under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Sports, for hosting us here in a beautiful capital of Vientiane.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Last year in Jakarta, we launched APASTI 2026–2035. We are now in its first year of implementation, and our task is delivery: COSTI and its Board of Advisors must turn this roadmap into results, while at the ministerial level, ours is to set bold direction, accelerate action, and ensure ambition becomes impact.
5. That ambition takes shape today, as we launch four major initiatives that carry APASTI from roadmap into action.
6. First, we open the ASEAN STI Fund (ASTIF) Call 2026, under the theme "ASEAN Grand Challenge: AI-Enabled Competitive and Resilient Region." With AI expected to contribute up to 18 per cent of ASEAN's GDP by 2030, and our digital economy projected to reach USD 2 trillion³, the case for investing in innovation now is clear. The ASEAN Member States have already concluded the negotiations for the ASEAN Digital Economic Framework Agreement (DEFA). At the moment, we are going through legal scrubbing, and this DEFA is expected to be signed at the 49th ASEAN Summit in November of this year. To sustain ASTIF, I urge Member States to strengthen national contributions and pursue strategic matching funds with our Dialogue Partners.

² <https://www.business.hsbc.co.id/en-gb/insights/innovation-and-transformation/digital-frontier-report>

³ <https://govinsider.asia/intl-en/article/can-asean-unify-its-ai-governance>

7. Second, we launch the ASEAN Technology Management Hub, a platform connecting innovators, researchers, entrepreneurs, investors and policymakers across ASEAN. Innovation creates impact only when ideas move from laboratories to markets and scale across borders, and this Hub will accelerate that journey: technology transfer, commercialisation, and regional partnership. I commend COSTI Cambodia, COSTI Indonesia, the European Union, and all ASEAN Member States for turning this vision into reality.
8. Third, we operationalise the first-ever ASEAN–Republic of Korea High Performance Computing Facility, based in the Republic of Indonesia. With 4.2 petaFLOPS of computing power and a place among the world's TOP500 supercomputers, this shared facility is a strategic regional asset that will power research in AI, climate modelling, disaster forecasting, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing. My appreciation to COSTI Indonesia and the Republic of Korea for the partnership that have built this landmark facility.
9. Finally, we launch the APASTI Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard. Since ASEAN STI cooperation began back in 1978, we have never had a dedicated platform to systematically track our progress and our achievements. With over 100 initiatives under way each year, this dashboard will strengthen accountability, drive evidence-based decisions, and ensure our work delivers measurable outcomes for ASEAN Community Vision 2045.
10. Taken together, these four initiatives send a clear signal: ASEAN is investing in talent, technology, infrastructure, and accountability alike.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Please allow me to close with this: the decisions we make today will determine how ASEAN competes in the global innovation economy, and this is not a moment that allows us for delay. I look forward to carrying that urgency into our discussions later today, as we move from agreement to action on the next phase of ASEAN's STI journey.

Thank you and Good Morning to all Excellencies.

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