



**Speech by**  
**H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN**  
**at the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation**  
**(AMMSTI-22) Gala Dinner**

25 June 2026 | 6:00 pm  
Holiday Inn Ballroom, Vientiane, Lao PDR

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

***Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Good Evening.

1. My sincere appreciation to the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, particularly the Ministry of Education and Sports, for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for our meetings here, AMMSTI-22 and COSTI-89. My thanks also go to the Honourable Ministers and representatives of all ASEAN Member States for your presence here this evening, and a special welcome to our new Ministers from Brunei Darussalam, Republic of Indonesia, and Kingdom of Thailand.
2. I am equally grateful to the Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation (COSTI), its Board of Advisors, and our partners from China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, for their tireless efforts throughout this week-long series of meetings here in Vientiane since Monday.
3. I wish to pause here in remembrance of the former Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Culture of Timor-Leste, H.E. José Honório da Costa Pereira Jerónimo,

who passed away in April this year. To his family, and to the people of Timor-Leste, we extend our deepest condolences. His contributions to advancing STI cooperation in our region will be remembered with respect and gratitude.

***Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

4. ASEAN's innovation journey gives us good reason for optimism. ASEAN continues to strengthen its position as an innovation hub, with five ASEAN Member States ranked among the world's top 50 economies in the Global Innovation Index 2025 — matching last year's count<sup>1</sup>. The remaining Member States have also made steady progress, strengthening their innovation ecosystems, expanding digital capabilities, and fostering research and entrepreneurship.
5. In a year shaped by heightened geopolitical tension, intensifying global competition, and rapid technological change, holding this position is itself a notable achievement for ASEAN. There are other encouraging signs too: ASEAN's share of high-tech manufacturing has risen from 38.0 to 41.6 per cent of total manufacturing output<sup>2</sup>, and, in fact, several Member States now invest more than one per cent of GDP in research and development<sup>3</sup> (R & D).
6. As a region, we should take pride in how far we have come. But pride should not become comfort; across the globe, nations are racing to lead in science, technology, and innovation. The marathon we once ran has become a sprint, and we cannot afford to walk while others run.

***Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

7. The Strait of Hormuz crisis and, of course the energy crisis, was a stark reminder of just how interconnected and how vulnerable our world has become. A single chokepoint was enough to send shockwaves through global markets: energy prices

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wipo.int/web-publications/global-innovation-index-2025/assets/89507/global-innovation-index-2025-en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/ASEAN-SDG-Report-2025.v3.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/malaysia/technology/my-research-and-development-expenditure--of-gdp>

rose, shipping costs climbed up, supply chains were disrupted and the cost of doing business grew heavier. ASEAN may sit thousands of miles away from the Middle East, but we felt the effects nonetheless; in our factories, our ports, our laboratories, our markets, and ultimately, in the pockets of our people<sup>4</sup>.

8. When fertiliser supplies came under pressure, biotechnology, precision agriculture, and satellite monitoring helped our farmers produce more with less. When energy markets turned volatile, smart grids and energy storage technologies improved efficiency. When trade routes were disrupted, AI-powered logistics platforms and predictive analytics helped businesses reroute their shipments. Encouragingly, these are exactly the areas ASEAN is already advancing through COSTI. The message is clear: science, technology, and innovation are among our strongest tools for safeguarding ASEAN's future; and they will be central to our deliberations tomorrow under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Sports of Lao PDR and Chair of AMMSTI 2026

***Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

9. As we gather here this evening, I am reminded that beyond the policies, the plans, and the statistics, ASEAN's cooperation is built on something more enduring; the friendship and trust that have carried us forward over the years. With that, I wish you all a pleasant evening, fruitful discussions tomorrow, and continued success for AMMSTI.

Thank you.

\*\*\*End\*\*\*

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=65504&utm\\_source](https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=65504&utm_source)