

Shaping Our Shared Future: Resilience, Renewal, and Vision 2045

By Dr. Kao Kim Hourn

Secretary-General of ASEAN

1. The world in 2026 faces many uncertainties. Geopolitical rivalries have grown stronger, instability has spread to various regions, and the open, rules-based international order that supported years of shared prosperity is under increasing stress. Geoeconomic fragmentation, supply chain issues, and the fast pace of technological change require urgent, united responses that no single nation can provide on its own. In times of complexity and disruption like these, regional solidarity shows its value and necessity. The ASEAN Future Forum 2026 in Hanoi takes place in this context, serving as a timely call for vision, determination, and coordinated action.
2. As we navigate towards the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, the third AFF serves as a valuable compass for this collective endeavour. Hosted by Viet Nam under the theme "Shaping a Shared Future Together: Peace, Prosperity, and People-Centred Development", the Forum shifts the conversation from problem diagnosis to concrete and actionable solutions. Viet Nam's commitment to convening governments, businesses, academics, and youth underscores its vital role as a catalyst for regional unity, enabling ASEAN not only to respond to global trends but to actively shape them.¹
3. ASEAN's enduring strength lies in its proactive adaptability and institutional resilience; qualities that are now more indispensable than ever. We uphold regional stability through strategic trust, open dialogue, and steadfast adherence to ASEAN Centrality. Rather than pursuing peace through exclusion or alignment with any single power, we are committed to ensuring that Southeast Asia remains an open, inclusive, and rules-based region where all partners can engage constructively.
4. Our resilience is fundamentally dynamic. Faced with economic fragmentation, we have advanced regional integration, with total trade rebounding to over USD 3.8 trillion and driving deeper economic ties both within the region and with global partners.² Confronted with supply chain disruptions, we pivoted towards expanding digital connectivity and accelerating the green transition. This forward-looking

¹ Dr. Kao Kim Hourn. (2024). Secretary-General of ASEAN Dr. Kao Kim Hourn on ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future. *The ASEAN Magazine*. <https://theaseanmagazine.asean.org/article/secretary-general-of-asean-dr-cao-kim-hourn-on-asean-2045-our-shared-future/>

² ASEAN Statistical Highlights 2025 (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2025), <https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ASH2025v251112.pdf>.

approach positions ASEAN as a reliable force for peace and a trusted partner in the global economy.

5. The true test of our resilience lies in our ability to realise the ASEAN Community Vision 2045: Resilient, Innovative, Dynamic, and People-Centred. This vision charts an ambitious future: one in which ASEAN emerges as the world's fourth-largest economy, pioneers sustainable growth models, and strengthens its position as the epicentre of growth in the Indo-Pacific.
6. While the opportunities are immense, so too are the challenges. Bridging the digital divide, strengthening cybersecurity frameworks, balancing rapid industrial growth with ambitious climate action, and ensuring food security will require unprecedented coordination and resource mobilisation. Equally important is narrowing development gaps to ensure that no one is left behind.
7. To seize these opportunities, we must continue modernising our institutions, enhancing the resilience of our production and supply chains, and promoting greater use of local currencies in cross-border transactions to reduce external vulnerabilities.
8. Realising this bold vision demands strong champions. Viet Nam has demonstrated such leadership through its strategic pragmatism and deep commitment to regional solidarity.
9. Through platforms such as AFF 2026, Viet Nam is advancing inclusive, pragmatic diplomacy that bridges high-level policy discussions with tangible grassroots impact. I am confident that Viet Nam will continue to empower the next generation, drive digital innovation, accelerate the green transition, and forge consensus across our ASEAN Community. By championing initiatives that strengthen the ASEAN NextGen workforce and foster innovation-led growth, Viet Nam serves as a vital anchor for our collective aspirations. Its ability to convene stakeholders and host critical strategic dialogues helps ensure that ASEAN remains united, agile, dynamic, and decisive.³
10. With the proactive leadership of member states such as Viet Nam and the unwavering commitment of our peoples, ASEAN will not merely navigate the complexities of our time; we will thrive together as a unified pillar of peace, stability, and shared prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

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³ Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, "The Road Ahead: Insights from the ASEAN Future Forum," ASEAN Secretariat, March 2025, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/SG-Dr.-Kao-Article-on-The-Road-Ahead-Insights-from-the-ASEAN-Future-Forum-Final-002.pdf>