



**Remarks by the Secretary-General of ASEAN,  
H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn**

**Meeting between ERIA, Ambassadors of ERIA Member States and Dialogue  
Partners**

ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat, 23 June 2026

---

***Distinguished Mr. Ramon Lopez, Chairperson of the ERIA Governing Board***

***Professor Tetsuya Watanabe, President of ERIA***

***Excellencies Permanent Representatives to ASEAN***

***Excellencies Ambassadors of ERIA Member States and Dialogue Partners***

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Good Afternoon.

1. I thank ERIA for convening this annual gathering, which has become an important fixture in ASEAN's calendar. By bringing together ERIA's leadership with the Ambassadors of ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners, it provides a valuable opportunity to exchange perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing our region. More importantly, it reflects a principle that has long underpinned ASEAN's success: that effective regional cooperation is strengthened when policy is informed by knowledge, dialogue, and partnership.
2. ASEAN's partnership with ERIA has deepened considerably since ERIA's establishment in 2008. Over that period, ERIA has grown into one of ASEAN's most trusted strategic knowledge partners. It provides rigorous research, forward-looking policy recommendations, and technical expertise across a wide range of ASEAN's priority areas. What distinguishes that contribution is not merely the quality of the work itself, but ERIA's commitment and deep understanding of ASEAN's unique context, institutional dynamics, and long-term aspirations. In an era defined by rapid change and compounding uncertainty, that quality of partnership; grounded, contextually aligned, and consistently reliable; is increasingly rare, and is increasingly indispensable.

***Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,***

3. The context in which we meet today requires little or no elaboration for this audience. Goeconomic fragmentation is redrawing trade and investment patterns in ways that create real choices and real costs for every economy in this room. Climate pressures are no longer a future risk; they are a present constraint on development planning. And the pace of technological change, particularly in

artificial intelligence, is outrunning the regulatory and institutional frameworks designed to govern it.

4. Against this backdrop, ASEAN's fundamentals: a combined GDP exceeding four trillion US dollars, a population approaching 700 million, and a projected position as the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030; represent significant, but not self-realising, potential. The question is not whether ASEAN can thrive, but whether the region has the strategic foresight and institutional capacity to convert that potential into sustained and inclusive outcomes.
5. Sustaining this momentum will require ASEAN to deepen its resilience, sharpen its competitiveness, and strengthen its adaptability, not as reactive responses to external shocks, but as deliberate, forward-looking choices. The adoption of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 is a landmark in that effort. It articulates a collective aspiration to build a resilient, innovative, dynamic, and people-centred Community. Crucially, it challenges all of us to think beyond the incremental, and to redefine what ASEAN can and should be over the next two decades.
6. Realising that Vision will require more than political commitment. It will demand consistent, rigorous and analytical support, policy innovation, and the kind of independent strategic foresight that only a trusted research and knowledge partner can provide. As ASEAN moves from vision to implementation, we look to ERIA to serve as a critical bridge, translating complex and rapidly evolving challenges into practical, evidence-based policy recommendations that can guide ASEAN's decision-making with confidence and clarity.
7. This year carries particular significance, as ASEAN advances its agenda under the Chairship of the Philippines. The theme — "A Resilient, Inclusive, and Sustainable ASEAN Community for a Future-Ready People" — places a clear emphasis on building an economy that is future-ready, resilient and capable of converting today's pressures into tomorrow's opportunities. ERIA's research agenda is well-placed to support and amplify that vision.
8. The priorities before us span a wide and demanding range. Navigating the geoeconomic consequences of geopolitical tensions, including those arising from the Middle East and the shifts now reshaping the global trading environment, is one dimension. Accelerating digital transformation, supporting MSMEs, fostering innovation, and advancing the green economy are the others. None of these yield to partial or incremental analysis. ASEAN needs a research and knowledge partner capable not only of examining these challenges with depth, scope, and rigour, but of proposing solutions that are concrete and implementable. In all of these areas, we look to ERIA to continue rising to the occasion.

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

9. Many of you occupy a distinctive position in ERIA's ecosystem, not merely as observers of its work, but as the bridge between regional analysis and national decision-making. ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners have been generous in their support of ERIA over the years, and as ERIA's mandate

grows, that support, financial, political, and institutional, will matter more, not less.

10. The coming period will test and challenge that partnership in meaningful ways. The uncertainties reshaping the global environment, in trade, in technology, in the green transition, place growing demands on the quality of regional analysis and the speed with which it reaches decision-makers. So too does the scale of what Vision 2045 ask of ASEAN over the next two decades. Meeting both will require more than continued engagement.
11. What we ask of ERIA, and of this room, is a shared commitment to ensuring that ERIA has the resources, the independence, and the access it needs to do its work well and to contribute to ASEAN meaningfully.
12. I look forward to today's discussions as a contribution to that effort.

Thank you.

\*\*\*