



SPEECH BY

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**JAKARTA FORUM 2026 IN COMMEMORATION OF THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE ASEAN-CHINA COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP & SPECIAL
REPORT LAUNCH**

*“Towards A More Robust and Productive ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic
Partnership to the Greater Benefit of the Region and the World”*

22 June 2026, Jakarta

Excellency Wang Qing, Ambassador of the People’s Republic of China to ASEAN,

***Excellency Sarah Al Bakri Devadason, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to
ASEAN and Country Coordinator of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations,***

***Excellency Dr. Hassan Wirajuda, former Foreign Minister of Indonesia and Rector of
Universitas Prasetiya Mulya,***

***Excellency Ong Keng Yong, former Secretary-General of ASEAN and Executive
Deputy Chairman of S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies,***

Excellency Dr. Chem Widhya, Secretary General of AIPA,

Excellency Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Excellencies Permanent Representatives to ASEAN,

Excellencies Ambassadors of our Partners, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

1. When ASEAN and China established their dialogue relations thirty-five years ago, few could have anticipated how far that relationship would come. Today, China is ASEAN's largest trading partner — for sixteen consecutive years — while ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner since 2019. In 2025 alone, merchandise trade between our two sides reached USD 1.3 trillion. Investment flows have followed a similar trajectory, with foreign direct investment from China to ASEAN

amounting to USD 20.0 billion.¹ These are not simply numbers. They are the measure of a relationship that has grown significantly, over three and a half decades, into one of the most strategic partnerships in our region; and one whose importance extends well far beyond this region.

2. The world in which this partnership must now operate is not the world in which it was established and built. Geopolitical tensions are rising and becoming much more complex. Economic fragmentation is accelerating. Energy and food supply chains, as the ongoing crisis in the Middle East has made plain, are more vulnerable to geopolitical shocks than any could assume. Climate pressures are intensifying at an unprecedented level. And the pace of technological advances is outrunning many of our governance frameworks.
3. Our region is not insulated from these forces. But it is also not passive before them. ASEAN remains one of the world's most dynamic centres of growth and transformation. And in that context, a stronger ASEAN-China partnership is not merely desirable — it is indeed necessary.
4. It is therefore fitting that we gather here at the Jakarta Forum 2026, as ASEAN and China mark the fifth anniversary of our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, to ask not only how far we have come, but how ambitious we are willing to be.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

5. Over the past three and a half decades, ASEAN-China relations have shown a consistent capacity to evolve and to become more dynamic. From a Dialogue Partnership in 1991 to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2021, the relationship has steadily deepened; expanding across political-security, economic, socio-cultural and connectivity domains.
6. A list of important priorities include trade and investment, connectivity, digital transformation, agriculture, education, health, tourism, sustainable development, energy cooperation, maritime cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges: this breadth of cooperation today reflects a strong partnership that has grown with the times.
7. Last year's signing of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol is perhaps the clearest demonstration of this dynamic partnership. By extending the framework into digital economy, green economy, supply chain connectivity, consumer protection, and MSME development, ACFTA 3.0 does not simply update a trade agreement; rather it repositions ASEAN-China economic cooperation to meet future opportunities and challenges in the years ahead. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership reinforces this even further, deepening

¹ ASEAN Secretariat. FDI data as of December 2025

regional integration and strengthening economic resilience across a broader membership.

8. The foundation of relations between the two side, in other words, is solid. The question is what we should continue to build on it. Allow me to suggest five important priorities.
9. **The first is peace and stability;** because none of the rest is possible without it. ASEAN appreciates China's longstanding support for ASEAN Centrality, its active participation in ASEAN-led mechanisms, and its support for the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We highly value China's commitment to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and to the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.
10. On the South China Sea, both sides have continued to make substantive progress in negotiations on the Code of Conduct, with a view to concluding them within this year. That is an important signal as well as a firm commitment by both sides. Sustained dialogue, confidence-building measures, adherence to international law, and the peaceful management of disputes must remain the foundation of our pragmatic approach. And in a period of global uncertainty, ASEAN and China must also work together to uphold and maintain multilateralism and strengthen an open, inclusive, rules-based regional architecture with ASEAN at its centre and as a pillar of peace and security.
11. **The second priority is digital transformation and innovation.** ASEAN has recently concluded negotiations on the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) which we are targeting to sign this year. When fully realised, DEFA is expected to expand the region's digital economy to up to USD 2 trillion by 2030, a figure that would have seemed extraordinary not long ago, but which now represents a realistic horizon and a win-win cooperation.
12. China's strengths in technology, innovation, digital infrastructure, e-commerce, and emerging technologies make it a natural partner in this transformation. Greater cooperation in areas such as artificial intelligence, smart manufacturing, fintech, digital connectivity, and cross-border digital trade has and can become new engines of growth and innovation for the region. The opportunity here is undoubtedly substantial. The question is how deliberately we want to pursue it.
13. **Third, energy cooperation.** The ongoing crisis in the Middle East has laid bare the vulnerability of global energy and food supply chains to geopolitical shocks. It is a reminder that energy security is not an abstract policy concern, but a foundation of economic resilience. ASEAN and China should therefore deepen cooperation to strengthen both energy and food security alongside supply chain resilience. This means greater collaboration in renewable energy, electric vehicles, battery ecosystems, energy efficiency, and green financing. Investments are not simply climate commitments, but are strategic choices for long-term competitiveness. The

ASEAN Power Grid, in particular, offers a tangible pathway to stronger regional energy connectivity and deserves renewed momentum.

14. **Fourth, resilience against transnational threats.** Cybercrime, online scams, human and drug trafficking, terrorism, and transnational organised crime do not respect borders and jurisdiction, and they cannot be addressed by any country alone. Closer cooperation in information-sharing, better coordination in law enforcement, stronger capacity-building, and more effective technology-enabled solutions will be essential.
15. **Fifth, people-to-people connectivity.** Partnerships endure because people sustain them. Tourist arrivals from China to ASEAN reached 21.8 million in 2025², making China the largest external source of tourists to the region. Educational exchanges, scholarship programmes, youth initiatives, cultural cooperation, academic networks, and city-to-city partnerships continue to deepen the human ties that give this relationship its durability, resilience and relevance. These are not soft additions to the partnership. They are its long-term foundation.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

16. The significance of what ASEAN and China can do together extends well beyond our immediate neighbourhood. Together, we form one of the world's largest economic regions and are increasingly important drivers of global growth, especially during this challenging global economy. By strengthening supply chain resilience, supporting global economic recovery, advancing climate action, and enhancing energy security, ASEAN and China can contribute meaningfully, not just to regional stability and prosperity, but also to global stability and prosperity.
17. It is a role that neither side can play successfully alone. And it is one that gives this partnership a strategic purpose beyond our own immediate interests. As we mark this fifth anniversary, and also the 35th anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, we should be reminded that much more remains possible. A more robust and productive ASEAN-China partnership must be forward-looking. It must be practical. It must be inclusive. And above all, it must remain people-centred.
18. Let us continue working together to ensure that our cooperation remains a force for peace, prosperity, resilience, and sustainable development; for the greater benefit of our region and the world at large.

Thank you.

² ASEAN Statistics, preliminary Tourism Data as of 12 February 2026. For 2025, data for Timor-Leste available up to Q2 only and Malaysia's data refer to total visitor arrivals, including both tourists and excursionists. Brunei Darussalam's data by country of origin cover arrivals by air only.