



H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN

**Opening Remarks at the
*International Investment Forum on Critical Minerals***

4 June 2026, St Regis Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia

Professor Tetsuya Watanabe, President of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA),

Your Excellency Michael V. Cabalda, Assistant Secretary for Mining Concerns, Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Republic of the Philippines,

Mr. Hideaki Iwasaki, Director General of Sectors Group 1, Asian Development Bank,
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ground beneath the global economy is shifting: quite literally. What lies under ASEAN soil is increasingly deciding who will lead the next generation of clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and digital infrastructure. I wish to thank ERIA, especially Professor Watanabe, for convening this Forum and for bringing together the governments, investors, and industry leaders whose decisions will shape that future.

Critical minerals are no longer simply commodities. They have become strategic assets; the essential inputs for electric vehicles, semiconductors, renewable energy systems, and the digital economy. They are not only indispensable to economic growth but also to economic security. As the world accelerates both the energy transition and digital transformation, securing sustainable and resilient supply chains for these resources has emerged as one of the defining challenges and opportunities of our time.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN is exceptionally well placed to meet this challenge. We bring together abundant reserves of nickel, tin, bauxite, and rare earth elements; a dynamic manufacturing base; rapidly expanding clean energy industries; and strategic geographic connectivity. Our market of nearly 700 million people amplifies all of these advantages and opportunities. Together, they position ASEAN not merely as a source of raw minerals, but as an emerging centre for value-added processing, manufacturing, and regional supply chain integration as well as a global centre for economic growth.

The opportunity before us, however, is not simply about what lies in the ground. It is about how much value we can build above it. The real prize is downstream - in refining, advanced manufacturing, technology adoption, and the innovation ecosystems that attract long-term investment and create high-quality jobs for our people. We recognise this as a strategic pillar of the region's long-term economic transformation and sustainable development objectives.

ASEAN has been deliberate in translating this ambition into real action. The Declaration of the 9th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Minerals in 2023 reaffirmed the region's commitment to several priorities: attracting responsible investment, strengthening regional value chains, promoting sustainable practices, and encouraging technological innovation across the minerals sector.

Building on that foundation, ASEAN Member States adopted the ASEAN Minerals Development Vision, or what we call the AMDV, at the 10th Ministerial Meeting in Vientiane last year.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The AMDV envisions ASEAN as a leading destination for minerals investment, including in critical minerals, building production and trade through technological advancement, sound governance and best practices in sustainability, protecting the environment, empowering communities, and contributing to the region's economic development.

Critically, it identifies critical minerals as a strategic sector for ASEAN and reflects the region's commitment to ensuring that minerals development advances sustainability, inclusivity, and economic resilience.

This year, under the Philippines Chairship, we are taking the next step: the development of an *ASEAN Critical Minerals Strategy* as one of ASEAN's Priority Economic Deliverables. The Strategy is built around the following objectives; strengthening supply chain resilience, enhancing investment attractiveness, promoting sustainable and responsible minerals development, supporting downstream value creation, and positioning ASEAN as a trusted partner in the global minerals ecosystem.

Together with the AMDV and the ASEAN Minerals Cooperation Action Plan 2026–2030, it provides a coherent regional framework for the sector that is in line with the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026–2030. Across all these efforts, ASEAN remains committed towards ensuring that mineral developments is guided by sound governance, environmental stewardship and international best practices – delivering lasting benefits to our economies and communities alike.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At a time of growing uncertainty - shifting trade patterns, supply chain disruptions, and intensifying efforts to diversify minerals sourcing - the importance of trusted partnerships has never been greater. ASEAN does not approach this moment lightly. Guided by inclusiveness, cooperation, and rules-based economic engagement, we seek to be not only a source of strategic resources, but a reliable partner for investment, innovation, and long-term industrial development.

We welcome the growing interest from partner countries and international stakeholders in deepening cooperation with ASEAN on minerals development. This engagement reflects confidence in the region's potential and it underscores that the challenges ahead are best addressed collectively.

Unlocking that potential will require substantial investment across the full value chain: from exploration and extraction, through processing, refining, recycling, and logistics, to clean energy infrastructure and advanced manufacturing. Public-private partnerships, technology collaboration, and innovative financing will also be essential. To support these efforts, ASEAN is developing the ASEAN Minerals Investment Forum, or AMVest, as the region's flagship platform for minerals investment cooperation, connecting governments, investors, financial institutions, and development partners in support of sustainable investment across the region.

Stronger linkages between platforms like AMVest and international initiatives such as this Forum will be key to building a more integrated, competitive, and sustainable regional minerals ecosystem.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The future of critical minerals development will be shaped not only by who has the resources, but by who has the governance, the partnerships, and the sustainable commitment to develop them well. ASEAN's ambition is to be both: a region rich in strategic minerals and a region that is trusted to develop them responsibly.

Forums like this one matter because they are where trust is built, where partnership is made, where governments and investors find shared ground, where technology and knowledge move across borders, and where the partnerships that underpin the resilient supply chains are formed. We hope today's discussions yield new collaborations and help reinforce ASEAN's position as a strategic destination for sustainable critical minerals investment.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This will not happen through documents and declarations alone. It will require investment and innovation, and a collective willingness to act. ASEAN is ready. We look forward to building this future together. I wish you all productive discussions and a successful Forum.

With that, I thank you, and a very good morning to all of you.
