



Opening Remarks

Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN

at the Opening Ceremony of the ASEAN – Japan Centre Exhibition

ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat, 11 August 2026

Your Excellency YONETANI Koji, Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN;

Your Excellency, Gerard Ho, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore to ASEAN;

Your Excellency HIRABAYASHI Kunihiro, Secretary-General of ASEAN-Japan Centre;

Excellencies, Permanent Representatives of ASEAN Member States to ASEAN;

Distinguished Guests as well participants from the ASEAN-Japan Young Environmental Leaders Network;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good Morning, and a very warm welcome to the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat. It is a pleasure to have you with us today.
2. Over the years, ASEAN has established a diverse number of ASEAN Centres of Excellence. Each serve as a hub of expertise and innovation in support of the region's integration agenda. Guided by their respective mandates, these Centres contribute across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.
3. Together, they play a vital role in advancing ASEAN's vision of a united, resilient, and people-centred Community. They do so by generating knowledge, strengthening regional cooperation, building capacity, and promoting

innovation in their respective fields. Spread across the ASEAN Member States, these Centres reflect the richness of ASEAN's expertise. They demonstrate that the region's collective strengths are driven not only by its institutions, but also by a vibrant network of specialised centres working together towards shared regional goals.

4. To recognise and celebrate their invaluable contributions, my colleagues and I began exploring how the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat could become a more vibrant platform for highlighting the work of ASEAN Centres of Excellence and ASEAN-accredited Entities. This vision gave rise to the idea of establishing dedicated exhibition spaces within our premise, complemented by features across our digital platforms and social media.
5. Our aspiration is this: to bring the remarkable work of these Centres and Entities closer to our visitors and stakeholders, while increasing appreciation of the expertise, innovation, and partnerships that drive ASEAN's Community-building efforts. By shining a greater spotlight on their achievements, we hope to deepen public understanding and encourage new collaborations. We also hope to strengthen connections across the ASEAN ecosystem, and reaffirm that ASEAN's progress is the result of a collective regional endeavour.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Today, I am glad to welcome the ASEAN-Japan Centre. Established in 1981, it is one of ASEAN's longest-standing Centres, in partnership with Japan, and the first to set up an exhibition booth under this initiative at the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat. The longstanding contributions of the AJC are indeed well known, having helped deepen and strengthen the enduring friendship and strategic partnership between ASEAN and Japan. We are especially grateful that our colleagues have travelled all the way from Tokyo to join us today, and your presence makes this occasion all the more meaningful.
7. For more than four decades, of course 45 years, the ASEAN-Japan Centre has served as a bridge connecting ASEAN and Japan. Through its work in promoting trade, investment, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges, the Centre has helped strengthen economic linkages while fostering deeper mutual understanding between our people. Since the establishment of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2023, the Centre has further aligned its programmes and activities to support the implementation of

the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation and its Implementation Plan.

8. The flagship initiatives featured in this exhibition range from promoting sustainable business partnerships and tourism to empowering the next generation of leaders and fostering cultural exchange. They demonstrate how the Centre supports the implementation of our priorities under the CSP, while strengthening the people-to-people ties that remain at the heart of ASEAN-Japan relations. They also illustrate how practical cooperation can make a meaningful contribution to the ASEAN Community-building efforts and integration.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. I had the opportunity to visit the Centre in Tokyo in June 2023, where I witnessed first-hand its dedication to fostering cooperation between ASEAN and Japan. I was particularly encouraged by the opportunity to engage with students visiting the Centre. It gave me a chance to share with them the important role young people play in carrying forward the friendship and cooperation that ASEAN and Japan have built over the past five decades. Their enthusiasm and commitment reaffirmed my conviction that investing in young people is indeed investing in the future of our partnership.
10. I am therefore pleased to see the AJC continuing this meaningful work and journey, by bringing participants from the ASEAN-Japan Young Environmental Leaders Network to join us today. Their presence reflects our shared commitment to empowering the next generation of leaders, and to strengthening the people-to-people connectivity that has long shaped ASEAN-Japan relations, cooperation and partnership.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Once again, I extend my warmest congratulations and sincere appreciation to the ASEAN-Japan Centre. I hope many visitors will come to enjoy this wonderful exhibition for the next three days.
12. As we recently celebrated the 59th Anniversary of ASEAN, please allow me to conclude by wishing everyone a Happy ASEAN Day. We look forward to building on our shared achievements together, further strengthening the CSP

for the benefit of present and future generations, and working together towards a more resilient, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous region.

Thank you.
