



Welcome Address

Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN

at the 59th ASEAN Day Celebration “Navigating our Future, Together”

ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat, 8 August 2026

Your Excellency Sugiono, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) of ASEAN,

Excellencies, Ambassadors from our Dialogue, Sectoral Partners, and Development Partners,

Excellency, Secretary-General of AIPA,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very Good Morning to all of you.

1. It is my distinct honour to welcome His Excellency Sugiono, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, who will deliver the ASEAN Day Address, today. We will also listen to His Excellency Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., President of the Republic of the Philippines, who will deliver the Chair's Message in his capacity as Chair of ASEAN 2026.
2. To all our distinguished guests, welcome to the 59th ASEAN Day Celebration. Each year, ASEAN Day gives us an opportunity to celebrate how far our region has come and to reflect on why ASEAN continues to matter in the lives of our people. In a world that is becoming more contested, yet more interconnected, ASEAN's purpose is more enduring than ever.
3. Fifty-nine years ago, our founding fathers envisioned a Southeast Asia bound together by friendship, dialogue and cooperation. What began in 1967 as an

association of five countries has grown into a community of eleven Member States, home to nearly 700 million people, one of the world's most dynamic economic regions, and an important contributor to peace and stability in the wider Indo-Pacific.

4. This year's theme, “**Navigating Our Shared Future, Together**”, which of course is also the theme of the ASEAN Chair, the Philippines, reminds us that while every country has its own priorities and circumstances, our people share many of the same hopes: peace, dignity, opportunity, and a better life for their children. Achieving these aspirations depends increasingly on how we respond to challenges that transcend national borders. This is why ASEAN's habit of cooperation remains relevant today.

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5. This year's ASEAN Day is especially meaningful for several reasons.
6. First, we celebrate ASEAN Day for the very first time as a family of eleven Member States. I warmly welcome Timor-Leste as ASEAN's newest family member. Timor-Leste's accession marks the culmination of many years of partnership, progress, and preparation. It also reflects ASEAN's confidence that our Community is stronger when it becomes more inclusive. We look forward to Timor-Leste's full contribution and participation in the work of ASEAN and of course in the ASEAN family in the years ahead.
7. This year also marks the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). For five decades, the Treaty has provided a steady foundation for inter-state relations in our region, guided by the principles of mutual respect, respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, renunciation of the treat and use of force, and mutually beneficial cooperation. These principles have served our region well through decades of geopolitical shifts and economic fragmentation. They have enabled ASEAN to preserve peace, build trust, and maintain the stability that has underpinned our region's remarkable growth.
8. Those principles indeed matter. The world around us is becoming more volatile and unpredictable. Conflicts beyond our region have disrupted trade routes, driven up food and energy prices, and added to uncertainty into our economy. Many families across Southeast Asia continue to feel the strain of rising living costs. At the same time, strategic competition and changing patterns of trade and investment are reshaping global supply chains, creating both challenges and

opportunities for our region while reminding us how closely our prosperity is tied to developments way beyond our borders.

9. Climate change presents an equally urgent challenge as well. Across Southeast Asia, communities are experiencing more frequent floods, droughts and extreme weather. They threaten homes and livelihoods, disrupt agriculture and food security, and test the resilience of our communities and economies. Above all, they remind us that the well-being of our people is increasingly shaped by challenges that no country can confront alone.
10. The same is true of many other issues of our time. Whether it is energy crisis, economic disruption or strategic tensions, national borders offer little protection from their consequences. They remind us that many of the issues before us are shared, and that cooperation often gives us more options than acting alone.
11. This is not a new lesson for ASEAN. For nearly six decades, our region has weathered financial crises, natural disasters, public health emergencies and geopolitical challenges. We do not always agree on every issue, but we continue to engage one another with patience, mutual respect and a willingness to find common ground. That habit of working together and culture of dialogue remains some of the strengths of ASEAN that we have today.
12. It is against this backdrop that the ASEAN Community Vision 2045: *Our Shared Future* assumes particular significance and relevance. More than a long-term plan, it provides a common direction and strategic compass as ASEAN responds to a changing world in an unprecedented era of our time while preserving the principles that have underpinned our Community since its founding. However, ASEAN must maintain unity, enhance its Centrality, and work even harder to overcome differences and challenges in the spirit of solidarity.

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13. Next year, ASEAN will celebrate its 60th Anniversary. As we look ahead, one of our greatest strengths will continue to be our people, especially our young people. Almost half of ASEAN's population is under the age of thirty. They are growing up in a region that is more connected than ever before. They study across borders, build businesses that serve regional markets, collaborate through digital platforms and engage with the wider world with confidence and creativity.
14. Whether ASEAN continues to thrive over the next sixty years will depend, in part, on whether this generation sees ASEAN not simply as an institution of

governments, officials, and diplomats, but as something that is of value to them in that it creates opportunities in their everyday lives. That means continuing to expand opportunities for young people to learn, work, innovate and collaborate across our region. It means creating more space for them to contribute ideas, build partnerships and shape solutions to the issues that matter most to them, from education to sustainability, from employment to entrepreneurship, and from digital transformation to community development. Ultimately, these must benefit them in the present and in the future.

15. If ASEAN is to remain relevant in the decades ahead, its future cannot simply be passed from one generation to the next. It should be built with the active participation and contribution of those who will inherit it.

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16. Today, we honour the vision, the hard work, and perseverance of those who built ASEAN through patience, persistent dialogue and cooperation. We also look ahead to how we can continue to carry that legacy forward in a world which is very different from the one our founding fathers knew.
17. As we do so, we have much to build on: the important principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, the long-term direction set out in ASEAN Community Vision 2045, and the energy, the creativity, and the fresh perspectives of our young people. Together, they give ASEAN a strong foundation and a renewed sense of purpose of regional cooperation for the decades ahead.
18. The circumstances have changed, but the qualities that have enabled ASEAN to endure remain much the same: the willingness to listen, the patience to work through our differences, respect for one another, and the conviction that we are stronger when we work together. In this spirit, I wish to underscore the importance of strengthening ASEAN's resilience and relevance, ASEAN's peace and stability, as well as the ASEAN conviction and belief by overcoming our differences, our challenges, and our difficulties.
19. Therefore, on this 59th ASEAN Day, we celebrate not only what ASEAN has achieved, but also the trust and confidence that, by continuing to work together, our Community will remain relevant, resilient, peaceful and stable for generations to come.

20. Before I conclude my remarks, now it is my pleasure and honor to invite Excellency Sugiono, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, to deliver the ASEAN Address this morning.

21. Happy 59th ASEAN Day!

Thank You.
