



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

**Remarks at the
Commemorative Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and
Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC)**

8 August 2026, ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat

Your Excellency Evangeline T. Ong Jimenez-Ducrocq, *Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines to ASEAN and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR),*

Your Excellency Derry Aman, *Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia to ASEAN,*

Excellencies, Permanent Representatives to ASEAN,

Excellencies, Ambassadors of High Contracting Parties to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning and a happy ASEAN day. It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. Today's ceremony complements the commemorative activities organised by the Republic of the Philippines as ASEAN Chair and provides an opportunity for the ASEAN Secretariat, along with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to ASEAN and members of the diplomatic community in Jakarta to mark this historic milestone together.

It is especially fitting that we gather on ASEAN Day as we reflect not only on ASEAN's journey over the past six decades but also on one of the foundational instruments that has helped shape that journey. This special occasion reaffirms our shared commitment to the enduring principles of the TAC and their continued relevance and meanings to ASEAN and the wider international community.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fifty years ago, ASEAN's Founding Fathers took a bold, deliberate, decisive and visionary decision by adopting the TAC as the region's foundational code of conduct governing inter-state relations. They recognised that lasting peace and cooperation could only be sustained through mutual respect, sovereign equality, non-interference, non-use of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Those key principles have guided relations and cooperation among ASEAN Member States for five decades and continue to shape ASEAN's engagement with its partners in the region and in the world at large, given the fact that the 62 High Contracting Parties are from all regions across the globe.

Throughout ASEAN's journey, six milestones have fundamentally shaped our Community: of course we have the Bangkok Declaration of 1967; we have the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) Declaration in 1971; we have the TAC in 1976; we have the SEANWFZ Treaty in 1995; we have the ASEAN Charter which was adopted in 2007 and ratified in 2008, and of course, finally, we have the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) in 2019.

All of these today are celebrated and commemorated with the TAC. Together, these instruments continue to underpin ASEAN Community-building efforts and guide ASEAN's engagement with the world on the one hand and underscore the importance of ASEAN's strategic autonomy on the other.

The world of 2026 is very different from that of 1976. Yet the need for rules and norms that uphold law over power, restraint over coercion, and dialogue over conflict, cooperation over confrontation, remains as enduring and vital as ever. As strategic competition intensifies and conflicts persist in many parts of the world, the fundamental principles enshrined in the TAC continue to provide a valuable framework for building trust, managing differences peacefully, and fostering cooperation.

From five original signatories, the TAC has grown to 62 High Contracting Parties representing every region of the world. Of course, we had a significant celebration a few weeks ago in Manila under the Philippines' Chairship. This remarkable expansion, with more countries joining in the future, reflects the trust and confidence that countries place in the principles embodied in the TAC and in ASEAN's approach to fostering peace, stability, and cooperation. It also illustrates how the TAC has evolved over time from a regional agreement into a globally recognised framework for interstate relations based on dialogue, mutual respect, and peaceful cooperation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The High-Level Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the TAC, held in Manila just two weeks ago, was a successful commemoration of this important milestone. The participation of Ministers and senior representatives from almost all High Contracting Parties reaffirmed their commitment to the TAC and highlighted its continuing relevance in today's strategic environment.

As we commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the TAC, our task is not only to honour its legacy but also to ensure that the Treaty continues to serve future generations. This means translating its principles into practical cooperation that addresses shared challenges and advances our common interests.

The TAC should continue to serve not only as a political commitment but also as a practical instrument for promoting dialogue, cooperation, and mutual trust among its High Contracting Parties, as well as in promoting peace and stability in the region and the wider world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this respect, I welcome the adoption of the *Guidelines on Modalities for Engagement with High Contracting Parties under the TAC* at the recent ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Manila. For the very first time, ASEAN has a structured framework to engage High Contracting Parties, particularly those that are not yet formal partners of ASEAN, in dialogue and practical cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

No doubt, this represents an important step towards unlocking the full potential of the TAC as a valuable platform for dialogue and cooperation. I encourage all High Contracting Parties to make full use of this framework so that the Guidelines become a living document that fosters meaningful cooperation and delivers tangible outcomes for all High Contracting Parties and of course, for our peoples.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The inauguration of the TAC Flag Corner behind me at the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat today is more than a symbolic gesture. It reflects how a treaty concluded by ASEAN's founding members has grown into a framework embraced by countries around the world. Each flag displayed here represents a shared commitment to the principles of peace, friendship and cooperation embodied in the TAC.

It is indeed meaningful and timely that we dedicate this Flag Corner to all the High Contracting Parties on this anniversary of the TAC on this ASEAN Day. Earlier today, we celebrated ASEAN's journey and the progress that our Community has made over nearly six decades. This ceremony reminds us that peace and prosperity do not happen by chance and should never be taken for granted. They are built patiently over time – through mutual trust, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the rules and principles that have guided ASEAN since its founding.

For fifty years, the TAC has helped provide that foundation. May this Treaty continue to guide ASEAN and its partners in fostering peace, stability, and cooperation for many years to come.

I thank you.
