



Opening Remarks by H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn

Secretary-General of ASEAN

Australia-ASEAN Energy Leadership Dialogue

30 September 2026, Adelaide, Australia

- The Hon. Tom Koutsatonis MP, Treasurer/Minister for Energy and Mining of South Australia,
- The Hon. Lawrence Ben, Assistant Minister for Copper, Steel, Critical Metals and Minerals of South Australia,
- Mr. Francis Wong OAM, Chairman, Australia-ASEAN Business Forum,
- Excellencies ASEAN Ambassadors,
- Excellencies Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning!

1. This Forum brings together many strands of the ASEAN-Australia relationship, and today, I would like to speak about one that runs through nearly all of them and that is energy. ASEAN's demand is rising fast, and Australia holds much of what will help meet it: resources, capital and expertise.
2. ASEAN is entering a new phase of growth, integration and transformation under the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, and energy will sit at the centre of that journey. The task before us is not just to produce more energy. It is to build a system that is secure, resilient, interconnected and sustainable, while remaining affordable and reliable for our people, businesses and industries.
3. This is also a substantial economic opportunity. ASEAN is a region of almost 700 million people, the third largest trading block in the world, with growing energy demand, expanding industries, rising digitalisation and significant infrastructure needs. The scale of investment required will be considerable, and

energy cooperation between us must increasingly be about investment, partnerships and projects.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. ASEAN has already built strong momentum. Last year, we adopted the Enhanced Memorandum of Understanding on the ASEAN Power Grid, reinforcing our commitment to a deeper electricity connectivity and cross-border power trade. We have advanced the ASEAN Submarine Power Cable Development Framework, which will matter increasingly for connecting mainland and maritime Southeast Asia. And together with the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, we have established the ASEAN Power Grid Financing Initiative to help mobilise public, private and development financing for regional transmission and interconnection projects.
5. Together, these steps show that ASEAN is putting in place the policy, regulatory and financing architecture needed to move from regional ambition towards implementation.
6. We are seeing real progress on the ground, too. The Lao PDR–Thailand–Malaysia–Singapore Power Integration Project has shown that multilateral, multidirectional power trade can work in our region, with electricity trading of up to 200 megawatts using existing interconnections. ASEAN is now advancing the Brunei Darussalam–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines Power Integration Project and other priority interconnections, marking a significant shift from bilateral links towards a genuinely integrated regional electricity market.
7. The regulatory foundations are being strengthened alongside this. The ASEAN School of Regulation, established under the ASEAN Energy Regulators Network, is building regional capacity in regulatory frameworks, legal arrangements and market reform. This vital groundwork gives investors the confidence to commit.
8. At the same time, recent geopolitical developments have reminded us that energy transition cannot be separated from energy security. At the Special

ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting in April this year, ministers underscored the need for stronger regional preparedness against risks affecting global oil and gas markets as well as the energy supply chains. ASEAN is therefore strengthening its petroleum security arrangements, while continuing to advance supply diversification, intra-ASEAN energy trade, renewable energy, energy efficiency, biofuels and emerging technologies.

9. The ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation 2026–2030 is setting the direction. We aim to reduce energy intensity by 40 per cent from 2005 levels, raise renewable energy up to 30 per cent of total primary energy supply, and reach 45 per cent renewable energy in installed power capacity by 2030. Our cooperation is expanding, too, into the technologies that will shape the next generation of energy systems: storage, renewable energy markets, digitalisation, carbon capture, utilisation and storage, low-carbon technologies, and certainly civilian nuclear energy for those Member States interested in pursuing it.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. This is where Australia becomes particularly important. Australia brings energy resources, critical minerals, technology, expertise, financing capability and deep experience in major infrastructure development. ASEAN offers rapidly growing markets, manufacturing capacity, major infrastructure demand and long-term investment opportunities on a considerable scale. Our partnership align naturally.
11. We value Australia's continued support for ASEAN's clean energy transition, including through the Energy Cooperation Program under Aus4ASEAN Futures, and its support for the ASEAN Power Grid and the ASEAN Centre for Energy. We also welcome the work between Singapore and Australia on a Cross-Border Electricity Trade Framework, an early sign of what cross-border electricity trade between our regions could look like.
12. But the opportunity ahead is broader than just energy alone. ASEAN and Australia should increasingly see each other as partners across the entire

energy value chain: from critical minerals to renewable energy technologies, from electricity grids to storage, low-carbon fuels, from financing to digital solutions and resilient supply chains.

13. For the business community, that opportunity is concrete. ASEAN's transition will require capital, technology and experienced project developers, together with partners prepared to stay for the long term. Investors, in turn, need policy certainty, regulatory clarity, credible projects and sensible risk-sharing. Closing that gap is where governments and business now have to work far more closely together.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. A few things would help this Forum move that work forward. First, Regional frameworks need to stay ambitious while remaining practical, predictable and responsive to national circumstances. Industry needs to be engaged early, before projects are designed rather than after. Commercial viability, and the barriers that stand in its way, are best understood by those building the projects. Supply chains built on our complementary strengths should be made more diversified, secure and competitive. That should generate not only trade, but investment, value addition, jobs and skills across our economies.
15. Underlying all of this is a question of execution. ASEAN already has the strategies, the frameworks, the priority interconnections, the institutions and the financing mechanisms that taking shape. What remains is deciding which projects are ready, what barriers still stand, how risk should be allocated, where public finance can unlock private capital, and how ASEAN and Australian companies can work together to bring these projects to market.
16. Those are the questions I hope this Forum will discuss, and turn into partnerships and investment opportunities that can actually be taken forward. What ASEAN and Australia build together here will shape how our region powers itself for decades to come.

17. I wish Your Excellencies and everyone a productive and successful Forum and related meetings. Thank you very much and a very good morning to all of you.
