

ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING (AMM)

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MALAYSIA

Y.B. DATO' SERI UTAMA HAJI MOHAMAD BIN HAJI HASAN

OPENING REMARKS

25 MAY 2025

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Distinguished ASEAN Colleagues,

Timor-Leste Foreign Minister, H.E. Bendito Freitas,

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

1. Before we begin, on behalf of the Government and the people of Malaysia, I'd like to warmly welcome all of our colleagues and delegates, to Kuala Lumpur.

2. It is our distinct honour to host you in our beloved capital, on the occasion of the 46th ASEAN Summit. The last time we gathered on Malaysian soil for an ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, it was on the shores of Langkawi.
3. It was there that we envisioned the path that lies ahead for the ASEAN Community. A path that, while not free of challenges, promises great opportunity and growth, so long as we walk together.
4. Let us briefly revisit that discussion.
5. At the time, I cautioned that superpower competition, and the resulting shifts in the global order, have the potential to disrupt our region's landscape.
6. Fast forward to today, and ASEAN nations are among those most heavily affected by the U.S.-imposed tariffs.
7. The U.S.–China trade war is dramatically disrupting production and trade patterns worldwide. A global economic slowdown is likely to happen.
8. On top of that, we are also grappling with the accelerating impacts of climate change and technological disruption. Around the world, temperatures and sea levels are rising, and artificial intelligence is evolving faster than any government is responding.

Excellencies,

9. These issues are expected to hit Southeast Asia particularly hard.
10. The low-lying countries of our region are exposed to rising sea levels. Our already warm climate may see an increase in extreme weather events, and overwhelm public health infrastructure if temperatures continue to climb.
11. And our populations, who enjoy high internet penetration rates, are vulnerable to the malevolent use of A.I. and other unregulated, disruptive tech.
12. It is therefore with great urgency that I remind you all, of the great need for us to approach the issues on the horizon, as a collective. We must take an active role in weathering the turbulence of the coming years.
13. We must seize this moment to deepen regional economic integration, so that we can better shield our region from external shocks.
14. As we advance our community-building efforts, we must confront the reality, that reducing the income disparities within ASEAN, must be viewed as a priority.

15. Therefore, aside from increasing the volume of trade within our region, we must also continue to enhance the mechanisms that facilitate intra-ASEAN trade.
16. By tailoring them to our member states' unique strengths, we can address uneven economic growth within this grouping.
17. Diversifying our partnerships will also empower us to handle future shocks that come from external economic factors.
18. We must respond to the potential fallout from global trade disruptions together. With cohesion and solidarity, and strategic autonomy as one ASEAN community.
19. This collective effort will enable ASEAN to weather challenges, minimise impact on our people, and continue to grow sustainably with a future-proof mindset.

Excellencies,

20. ASEAN encompasses a region where geo-political ambitions, as well as economic and security interests, intersect. External pressures are rising, and the scope of challenges has never had higher stakes.

21. ASEAN Centrality is our compass as we engage the world, and navigate the complexities of our external relations.
22. We must remain the driver of our regional architecture. Only ASEAN speaks for Southeast Asia.
23. This centrality will continue to be tested. It is therefore crucial that we reinforce the ties that bind us, so as to not unravel under external pressures. For ASEAN, unity is now more important than ever.
24. As the world becomes more polarised, ASEAN must offer a different path. We must continue to promote a model grounded in dialogue, cooperation, and multilateralism.
25. We must think seriously about how we can constructively and positively contribute to global developments and evolution.
26. This includes speaking out firmly, as one voice, on issues of peace, justice, equality, humanity and international law.

Excellencies,

27. Crises around the world continue unabated. The total siege of Gaza by the Israeli forces is causing mass starvations and deaths.

28. The atrocities committed against the Palestinian people continue to reflect indifference and double standards.
29. They are a direct result of the erosion of the sanctity of international law.
30. ASEAN cannot remain silent. We have a voice in world affairs, and we must use our voice to speak up for the oppressed, and offer solutions grounded in principles and international law.
31. At the regional level we have asserted and demonstrated our proactiveness. ASEAN took swift and immediate action following the tragic earthquake that struck parts of Myanmar and Thailand.
32. Our quick response is a reflection of the spirit of compassion, solidarity and humanity that inspired the founding of ASEAN itself.
33. It is also a testament to the unwavering commitment of the ASEAN family to support Myanmar in this time of adversity.
34. We call on the stakeholders in Myanmar to cease hostilities, and to extend and expand the ceasefire, to facilitate the long and difficult path towards recovery, and ease the suffering of the people of Myanmar.
35. This tragedy has reminded us that crises do not recognise borders.
36. Natural disasters are much like the global challenges we face today. They demand collective resolve and solidarity.

37. That same spirit must now guide us as we confront the challenges within and beyond the region, uncertainties of the present and of the future.

Excellencies,

38. Malaysia's ASEAN theme of "Inclusivity and Sustainability" is not merely a slogan. It is a strategic moral proposition.
39. It speaks not only to our aspirations, but to our obligations. It is anchored in the conviction, that ASEAN's future must be built on the twin pillars of equitable growth, and enduring resilience.
40. Inclusivity calls on us to narrow development divides, empower our people, and ensure that no Member State, community, or segment of society is left behind.
41. This means advancing economic integration in a way that is truly people-centred — where prosperity is shared and growth is broad-based.
42. Meanwhile, sustainability reminds us of our duty to future generations. As we grapple with climate change, food and water insecurity, and technological disruption, we must be visionary.
43. The values of inclusivity and sustainability, must be embedded in the fabric of ASEAN's future, with ASEAN Centrality and unity at the core.

Excellencies,

44. Tomorrow our Leaders are scheduled to adopt the “ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future”, which lays the foundation for ASEAN for the next two decades.
45. This is not merely a ceremonial marker. It is the birth of a collective endeavour for the future, reaffirming our shared commitment to a secure, peaceful, resilient, and people-centred ASEAN.
46. The ASEAN Community Vision 2045 presents a bold ambition: to make ASEAN a resilient, innovative, and people-oriented community. Deeply integrated economically, socially cohesive, and globally respected.
47. The 46th ASEAN Summit allows us to situate these values at the heart of ASEAN’s trajectory, as we look toward the realisation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045.
48. The success of this Vision begins with us laying the groundwork today. The foundations we build now will determine, whether that vision becomes a reality or remains an aspiration.
49. Let us face the future not as individual nations charting separate paths, but as one community, anchored in mutual respect and shared goals.

50. Our strength has always come from our diversity, and the conviction that differences are not divisions.
51. Rather, they are building blocks for bridges to greater understanding, and appreciation of how our individual and collective characteristics contribute, to enrich ASEAN and the ASEAN Community.
52. The world is watching, but more importantly, our people are depending on us. Let us move forward with clarity, unity, and purpose. The future of ASEAN depends on the choices we make today.
53. Malaysia will spare no effort to ensure that our Chairmanship advances this shared vision.
54. I look forward to fruitful and meaningful deliberations ahead. Thank you.