



OPENING REMARKS

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MALAYSIA

32ND ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM (ARF)

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**Excellencies Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN
Regional Forum,**

Secretary-General of ASEAN,

- 1. On behalf of the Government of Malaysia, it is my honour and privilege to welcome my Colleagues to Kuala Lumpur, for this 32nd ASEAN Regional Forum.**
- 2. Malaysia greatly values your support and commitment, through this Forum, to further advance our goals of promoting peace, security, and stability in the region and beyond.**
- 3. Today, we meet at a moment of growing geopolitical complexity, and strategic uncertainty. Our region and the broader international system, are being reshaped by a profusion of forces.**

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4. These include intensifying great power rivalry, economic fragmentation, technological disruptions, and other security threats that transcend national borders.
5. For over three decades, the ASEAN Regional Forum has proved to be an indispensable platform, for dialogue and consultation, on regional political and security issues, of mutual interest and concern.
6. We must not underestimate the value of the ARF's achievement. But neither can we be complacent.
7. The security challenges facing the Asia Pacific region today, are increasingly complex and multidimensional. If we fail to respond, the ARF may risk losing its relevance, precisely when effective and reliable multilateral frameworks and leadership are most needed.

- 8. To remain relevant and effective, the ARF must continue to evolve. It must demonstrate greater agility and responsiveness, to new and emerging realities. Prioritising these objectives should be key to ensuring, that the ARF remains an inclusive and credible regional security architecture.**
- 9. Malaysia, as Chair, remains committed to revitalising the ARF. In fact, this is one of Malaysia's priority areas for our Chairmanship under the APSC Pillar.**
- 10. In this regard, I am pleased to note that the ASEAN Senior Officials have been in active deliberations, to address the issue. Discussions are still ongoing, and we will inform and update the non-ASEAN ARF Participants accordingly.**

Excellencies,

11. In addressing an increasingly wide spectrum of regional security challenges, it is imperative that the ARF maintains the resilience of its institution, and the breadth of its cooperation.

12. We must also continue to reaffirm our commitment, to upholding international law and maintaining a stable, rules-based international order.

13. Moving forward, the ARF must place the following measures at the heart of its agenda:

14. First, the ARF must stay responsive to the region's most pressing challenges. Maritime tensions continue in key waterways, raising the risk of miscalculation.

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- 15. Cyber threats are escalating, undermining infrastructure, spreading disinformation, and eroding public trust.**
- 16. Climate change, once a distant risk, now presents multiple threats that worsen insecurity, and displace communities.**
- 17. Second, the ARF must be better equipped to respond swiftly and effectively. Beyond dialogue, it should play a stronger role in early warning and response, especially in humanitarian crises, health emergencies, and conflict prevention.**
- 18. Third, we must move from dialogue to action. The gap between ambition and implementation must be closed. Malaysia calls for stronger cooperation through joint projects in key areas, such as, maritime security, counter-terrorism, and disaster preparedness, and better coordination with other ASEAN-led platforms.**

- 19. Finally, the strength of the ARF lies in its inclusivity — uniting 27 participants with diverse perspectives.**
- 20. We must reaffirm our commitment to dialogue, consensus, and mutual respect. These principles have guided us in navigating differences and maintaining stability, even in challenging times.**
- 21. Together, we must strengthen the ARF as a stabilising force — a forum where trust is nurtured, differences are managed, and partnerships are strengthened.**
- 22. This meeting presents a valuable opportunity for us to take stock of the ARF's progress, reflect on the challenges it faces, and collectively chart a way forward.**
- 23. It also provides a platform for us to exchange views, on pressing regional and international issues of shared concern.**

24. With that, I look forward to constructive and productive discussions ahead.

Thank you.

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