

OPENING REMARKS
H.E. DR. KAO KIM HOURN
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN

18th Meeting of Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN Plus Three
(CPR Plus Three)
4 April 2023, ASEAN Secretariat

Excellency Ambassador Derry Aman, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN and Co-Chair of the CPR Plus Three Meeting,

Excellency Ambassador Kwon Hee-seog, Ambassador of the ROK to ASEAN and Co-Chair of the CPR Plus Three Meeting,

Excellency Ambassadors of the ASEAN Plus Three countries,

Excellency Filomeno Aleixo da Cruz, Ambassador of Timor-Leste to Indonesia,

Deputy Secretaries-General of ASEAN, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen and friends,

1. A very good morning. I am pleased to join you today at the opening session of the 18th Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN Plus Three (CPR Plus Three). This is indeed timely as ASEAN continues to navigate through current geopolitical developments and emerging challenges that are increasingly complex and multidimensional in nature.
2. Launched in 1997, the ASEAN Plus Three or APT, is a unique and premier mechanism that emerged amidst the Asian financial crisis which engulfed our region at the time. Although ASEAN had already established individual relations with the Plus Three countries, namely China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the depth and scope of the challenges faced then taught us a valuable lesson that in moving forward, we need a cooperative mechanism to effectively address and respond to crises in a timely manner, thus giving impetus to the creation of the ASEAN Plus Three framework.
3. Since then, the ASEAN Plus Three has broadened and deepened its cooperation from eight priority areas to cover more than 22 areas, anchored on the three ASEAN Community pillars, covering political-security, tourism, agriculture, food security, energy security, education and public health, among others.

4. Indeed, as we work together more closely to navigate the evolving regional architecture, the APT countries continue to commit themselves to safeguarding peace and stability as well as ensuring inclusiveness and resilience, which are in line with our shared goal to achieving greater prosperity and improving the well-being of our people. In this regard, I congratulate the APT cooperation for the significant contributions that has been made thus far towards the ASEAN Community-building agenda on the one hand, and East Asia cooperation on the other hand.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

5. As one of the key building blocks of APT cooperation, CPR Plus Three is an important mechanism. In this regard, allow me to share **three main points** that highlight the vital role of the CPR Plus Three in maintaining and advancing the work of the APT, as well as the ways for the CPR Plus Three to continue strengthening this mechanism, as follows:
6. **First**, the CPR Plus Three and its regular meetings have served as an important mechanism to discuss possible areas and programmes for present and future regional collaboration. It is therefore critical for the CPR Plus Three to continue enhancing its role and engagement in order to further promote APT cooperation, including in responding to emerging regional issues and challenges, as well as ensuring the contribution of the APT framework towards the East Asia region with peace, stability, security, development, and prosperity.
7. **Second**, the CPR Plus Three Meeting continues to make noteworthy contributions in facilitating and following up on the Leaders' decisions and initiatives, including through the development of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan and the regular review of its progress and priorities. I am pleased to note that following the successful implementation of the APT Cooperation Work Plan 2018-2022, the succeeding APT Cooperation Work Plan 2023-2027 has been adopted during Cambodia's Chairmanship of ASEAN last year. I look forward to its full, timely and effective implementation, with the active support and contributions of all the APT countries.
8. **Third**, I also wish to underscore that in facing the current, as well as emerging economic, security, and political challenges, there is a continued need to upholding the ASEAN Centrality in our cooperation which has become increasingly critical. We have witnessed how ASEAN's resilience and strength continue to be tested on a number of issues, ranging from the situation in Myanmar and food and energy security, to climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. In this regard, the continuing support and close collaboration of the ASEAN Plus Three Countries, particularly from the Plus Three partners, and of course now we have already heard about the four priority areas of the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo Pacific (AOIP)*, which is one major area that we need the support from the Plus Three countries, are crucial in ensuring that ASEAN remains adaptive, proactive, and responsive in order to harness the opportunities as well as enhance the concerted efforts in upholding regional peace, stability, security, and prosperity.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

10. I wish to conclude my remarks by commending the good work, the dedication, commitment, and contribution of the CPR Plus Three mechanism in supporting the ASEAN Plus Three cooperation. I would also like to reaffirm my support for the work of the CPR Plus Three and at the same time wish Indonesia much success with its important role as the ASEAN Chair and concurrently the APT Coordinator this year, as we continue our concerted efforts to make ASEAN as the epicentrum of growth. That is the plan in our work priority, particularly our prosperity agenda. In fact, of course I would certainly like to see more trade, more investment, and tourism increasing between and among ASEAN Plus Three countries in the coming months and years.
11. Please rest assured that the ASEAN Secretariat will continue to render its utmost support in carrying out the deliverables of APT Cooperation in 2023 and beyond, as ASEAN works to enhance strategic trust, strengthen cooperation, and serves as the anchor of peace, stability, and prosperity for the East Asian region.
12. In the spirit of friendship and cooperation, I wish all Excellencies and colleagues a productive and engaging discussion in today's meeting.

Thank you very much.
