



H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN
Opening Remarks
***Opening Ceremony of the 13th ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural
Development and Poverty Eradication***
22 November 2023, Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore

Excellency Mr. Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development of Singapore, and Chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication,

Excellencies and Heads of Delegations from ASEAN Member States,

Excellencies, representatives from the Senior Officials Meetings on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is with great pleasure that I join you at the 13th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Excellency Minister Masagos Zulkifli for hosting us, and for the excellent hospitality and arrangements for the meeting. In fact, last night was a wonderful dinner. There was a lot of happiness and there was a lot of enjoyment, so thank you very much for that wonderful start.

I congratulate the SOMRDPE Leaders for successfully convening the 20th SOMRDPE Meeting and 16th SOMRDPE Plus Three Meeting, as well as the 12th ASEAN Public-Private-People Partnership Forum on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, and the 6th ASEAN Leadership Award on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

ASEAN has achieved great strides in eradicating extreme poverty in the region. While such gains have been undermined by the global pandemic, the region's prospects for growth signals that the tide is turning. The IMF forecasted that the economies in ASEAN are expected to see growth of 4.2 percent in 2023 and 4.6 percent in 2024.

As ASEAN continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is extremely important that the invaluable lessons we learned are embedded in the national strategies so that we recover stronger, more resilient, and leaving no one behind. We have to translate economic growth into impactful outcomes for each and every citizen of ASEAN.

It is in this spirit that the theme of our meeting today bears special significance. The theme “Strengthening Community-based Approaches and Social Protection for Poverty Alleviation,” invites us all to revisit the critical nexus between community-based approaches and social protection in reducing poverty. The life-saving significance of social protection measures proved undeniable during the early response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in preventing people from sliding deeper into poverty.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

ASEAN accords high-level political commitment to promoting social protection in the region evidenced by the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection and its regional action plan. ASEAN likewise recognises the strategic importance of community-based approaches as it is at the community where convergence occurs.

Let me thus convey my great hope that through this Ministerial Meeting, ASEAN will be able to forge stronger ties, raise our collective ambitions to eradicate poverty in line with the UN SDGs, and concretise our cooperation so that our peoples will feel the presence of ASEAN in their lives.

As ASEAN embarks on two landmark initiatives in the next few years, namely the completion of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the development of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, I encourage all ASEAN Member States to seize the opportunities these initiatives present to us. The first initiative presents an opportunity to build on our learnings and celebrate our successes and achievements, and the Vision 2045 and its roadmap invite us to envision a more ambitious, inclusive and resilient ASEAN Community for all.

I just want to share that at the moment, the ASEAN Leaders has already taken note of the draft ASEAN Community Vision 2045. This is the first time in a while that ASEAN has a 20-year vision. At the moment, the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community’s Post-2025 Vision as well as the High-Level Task Force on Economic Integration, and SOCA are now working on the strategic plans. We will have four strategic plans to implement the ASEAN Community Vision 2045. The first strategic plan would be for political-security, another one is on economic, third is sociocultural, and the last one is on connectivity.

In conclusion, let me emphasise the utmost necessity of strong partnerships and cooperation at all levels, to ensure that our efforts can bring tangible impacts to the peoples of ASEAN. I look forward to our fruitful exchange of views and our lively discussions this morning.

Thank you.
