

OPENING REMARKS

THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY COUNCIL (26TH AECC)

**24 October 2025
Ballroom2, Level 3
Kuala Lumpur Convention Center**

Your Excellencies, esteemed ASEAN Economic Community Council (AECC) Ministers, Indicative AECC of Timor-Leste, Deputy Secretary-General of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

- We have now come to the second meeting for today, and also the main highlight of the AEC which is the 26th AEC Council Meeting.
- Once again, I extend a warm welcome to Your Excellencies and distinguished delegations both physically and virtually to Kuala Lumpur. Today will mark a significant moment as we conclude several key deliverables under the AEC, to be presented to our Leaders during the 47th ASEAN Summit Plenary on 26 October 2025, just two (2) days from now.

Scene Setting on ASEAN's Collective Effort in Economic Integration

Your Excellencies,

- As I have also noted at the 57th AEM Meeting last month, our discourse at the ASEAN level today happens at a vital time for our region and the global economy. While the global economic landscape may appear fragile, with uncertainties in markets, shifting supply chains and rising protectionist sentiments, ASEAN stands firm – united, resilient and forward-looking. ASEAN's strength has always been in our ability to stand together and act collectively, no matter the challenges that come our way. Over the decades, our shared commitment to regional integration, open markets and inclusive growth has safeguarded ASEAN's position as a trusted hub of stability and opportunity in the global economy.
- This spirit of unity and cooperation continues to define us today. Whether through intra-ASEAN collaboration or partnerships with external economies, we have proven that constructive engagement is the key to enduring progress.
- In saying this, I look forward to hearing the progress report on the initiatives undertaken and achievements accomplished under the AEC this year, as reflected in the sequence of agenda items for our discussion. These updates will allow us to take stock of how far we have come, while identifying areas that require renewed focus and collective effort.

- In particular, I look forward to the reporting of Malaysia's 2025 Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs), which have brought tangible progress to ASEAN's economic integration. If I may share some of the key achievements, are the signing of the upgraded ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), the substantial conclusion of the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) negotiations and the signing of the ASEAN-China FTA 3.0 Upgrade Protocol - all three (3) to be announced or signed at the margins of the 47th Summit.
- We also take pride in advancing sustainability and regional resilience through initiatives such as the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation (APAEC) 2035, the Enhanced MoU on the ASEAN Power Grid as well as the Center of Excellence for MSMEs in Green Transition. These successes under Malaysia's Chairmanship this year reaffirm our shared determination to strengthen ASEAN's economic unity, competitiveness, and forward-looking vision.
- I also look forward to facilitating our discussion on the future direction of the AEC, as we continue our journey towards realising the AEC Post-2025 Vision.

General Flow for the 26th AECC

Your Excellencies,

- It is expected for today's meeting to be concise yet productive. Although we have 12 agenda items to cover within three (3) hours, I am confident that the progress and momentum of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) initiatives, as reflected in today's updates, will demonstrate positive developments – a showcase of the dedication and hard work of our Senior Economic Officials and Sectoral Bodies in carrying out the mandates entrusted by Ministers.
- Given that most items will be a straight-forward reporting of progress under the AEC, I suggest that we minimise our intervention on areas that are for notation and instead focus our discussions on specific areas or issues that may require the AECC's guidance or decision – to ensure a more streamlined and efficient deliberation today.

- We will also place emphasis on the items requiring AECC's endorsement for subsequent submission to the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) and, thereafter, to the 47th ASEAN Summit.
- In this regard, I wish to record my appreciation in advance to the ASEAN Secretariat for your support in anchoring most of the presentations and progress updates for this meeting.

Your Excellencies,

- Before we proceed with the first agenda of this meeting, I would like to welcome Timor-Leste's participation today and in accordance with the Revised Guidelines adopted by the 35th ACC, Timor-Leste is invited to engage in today's discussions.
- I am optimistic that we will have a fruitful discussion. Together, let us move with confidence and purpose, knowing that the choices we make today will shape the ASEAN of tomorrow.