



**H.E. DR. KAO KIM HOURN, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN
REMARKS (PRE-RECORDED) AT THE
INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE 4th ASEAN-INDIA YOUTH SUMMIT
“Strengthening ASEAN-India Partnership in the Indo-Pacific”
12 February 2023 | Hyderabad, India**

His Excellency Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar; Honorable Minister of External Affairs of India,

Major General Dhruv Katoch, Director of India Foundation,

Representatives of ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth,

Distinguished youth delegates and participants,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be given this opportunity to share my thoughts with you on ‘Strengthening the ASEAN-India Partnership in the Indo-Pacific’ at this Inaugural Session of the 4th ASEAN-India Youth Summit.

Events such as this are crucial to providing our youth with a platform to exchange their ideas and perspectives on the pertinent issues facing our world today. I believe that the regular participation of youth in global and regional fora will bring tangible results in cultivating good knowledge, values, and fostering spirit among our young people.

On that note, allow me to congratulate the 150 youth delegates from ASEAN and India for your participation in this youth summit at Hyderabad. You are in a unique position to harness and be inspired by the creativity and innovation of the city in furthering your efforts to strengthen ASEAN-India relations.

Excellencies and distinguished participants,

The ASEAN-India relationship has expanded rapidly these past few decades, where it was established as a sectoral dialogue partnership in 1992 to a full dialogue partnership in December 1995.

The Joint Declaration on ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity, a landmark guiding document signed in 2004, sets out the roadmap for a long-term ASEAN-India engagement. Seven years later, in 2015, the ASEAN Leaders welcomed India's 'Act East Policy' noting that it could complement the ASEAN Community-building efforts.

On the economic front, the *ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement* signed in 2009 paved the way for the creation of one of the largest free trade areas in the world, with more than 2 billion people and a combined GDP of 5.51 trillion US Dollars. Building upon these achievements, ASEAN and India have been taking joint actions across various areas of cooperation under political and security, economic and socio-cultural spheres.

At the 19th ASEAN-India Summit held last year in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, the Leaders of ASEAN and India agreed to establish a *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)*. They also welcomed opportunities to promote practical cooperation in key priority areas as identified in the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, the sustainable development goals, as well as economic cooperation.

This substantial progress clearly signifies a long-term commitment between ASEAN and India to work together more closely towards a deeper and more meaningful partnership, for the benefit of our countries and our peoples.

Under Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship this year, our region will focus on a number of priority areas, including food security, energy security, global health architecture, financial stability, and the mainstreaming of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo Pacific.

This broad set of priorities are central to furthering ASEAN's resilience and contribution to peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region and the world at large. It is also very much in line with ASEAN and India's vision towards strengthening cooperation and partnership.

Excellencies and distinguished participants,

In realising the shared goals of ASEAN and India, it is crucial that the youth, as our current and future leaders, are equipped with needed skills, capabilities and values that will further contribute to the advancement of peace and prosperity in the region and beyond. To realise this, we need synergy, coherence, and continuous collaboration.

Therefore, I applaud India for its longstanding commitment in leading the regular convening of ASEAN-India Youth Summit, which has been part of our joint efforts to sustain socio-economic ties as well as to enhance connectivity and people-to-people exchanges. I would also encourage for our young people to be given more opportunities to engage high-level policy-makers in deliberating over dynamic and innovative solutions to contemporary challenges.

Another important part of our youth development policies is in increasing investment in youth programmes relating to education and skills, as well as employment and opportunity. In light of the impact that COVID-19 has had on educational systems, such as school closures and the use of digital technology in education, we need to ensure that young people in our region are not left behind.

I am pleased that ASEAN is taking further steps in upskilling and reskilling its human resources through collaboration with its Dialogue Partners, including India. Notably, both ASEAN and India are proactively realising their shared commitment through socio-cultural cooperation, which includes the scholarship provision at Nalanda University and the faculty exchanges under the ASEAN-India Network of Universities.

The *Entrepreneurship Development Centres* and the *Centres for the English Language Training* have also been established in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam as part of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI). On that note, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of India for continuously advocating people-to-people connectivity and enhancing quality human resource development among our young people.

To our youth delegates,

I would like to impress upon you that through continuous engagement and a passion to make a difference, you have a golden opportunity here to create positive changes across the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. I hope that you will remember this event as a life-changing experience that offers you the chance to contribute to bringing the governments and people of ASEAN and India closer together. I wish you all a successful event with fruitful discussions.

Thank you.
