

**SPEECH BY MR SEAH KIAN PENG  
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AT THE FIRST PLENARY SESSION OF  
THE 45<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (AIPA) GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY  
17 TO 23 OCTOBER 2024**

Your Excellency, Mr Xaysomphone Phomvihane

President of the National Assembly of the

Lao People's Democratic Republic

And President of the 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly

Excellencies

Distinguished Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all of you at our annual gathering of AIPA parliamentarians. It is my pleasure to join my distinguished colleagues and fellow Parliamentarians here today. On behalf of the Singapore delegation, please allow me to express our deepest appreciation to His Excellency Mr Xaysomphone Phomvihane for the smooth arrangements and warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation at this 45th AIPA General Assembly. I also wish to congratulate Laos for its able chairmanship of ASEAN this year, which culminated in the successful convening of the ASEAN Summits recently.

2 Given that we represent national legislatures that are based on different parliamentary and political systems, AIPA plays an important role in fostering and reinforcing mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation within ASEAN. ASEAN unity is also more important than ever as we grapple with an increasingly divided and complex geopolitical landscape. Against the backdrop of these realities, it is critical that ASEAN Member States remain united by a common purpose and work together to maintain a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region.

3 As a platform that brings together legislators from across Southeast Asia from different governance systems and political parties, AIPA serves as a vital bridge between the peoples of ASEAN and the decision-making processes that shape our collective future. Through AIPA, we work towards strengthening the foundations of our nations, promoting mutual understanding among our people, and helping in amplifying the voice of our constituents on the regional stage. As we face increasingly complex global challenges, the importance of AIPA as a forum for collaboration and as a facilitator for regional unity cannot be overstated.

4 As Parliamentarians and members of AIPA, we play an important role in representing the aspirations of our people and supporting our countries in navigating this increasingly fraught international environment. To do so effectively, it is crucial for ASEAN to deepen its integration agenda on the one hand, and work with our external partners to maintain an open and inclusive regional architecture, on the other. This will enable ASEAN to remain adaptable, relevant, and future-ready. We can achieve this in the following ways.

5 First, we must continue to support ongoing efforts to strengthen ASEAN cohesion and integration as we work towards the next phase of ASEAN's development. ASEAN endorsed the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 last year. It is a milestone document that sets out our priorities for the next two decades to strengthen ASEAN integration, particularly in key areas like the digital and green economies. We have made steady progress on ASEAN's digital integration, with the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement targeted for completion next year. We should continue to make progress on the ASEAN Power Grid. This will be critical to our energy transition and by extension, achieving our respective emissions targets. Our efforts in these new growth areas will ensure that our economies and societies are future ready. In that connection, the theme for this year's AIPA General Assembly – The Role of Parliaments in Enhancing Connectivity and Inclusive Growth of ASEAN – under Lao's Chairmanship is timely and relevant.

6 Second, ASEAN must maintain our strong engagement of our external partners in an open and inclusive regional architecture with ASEAN at the centre. The best way

to preserve peace and stability in our region is for our external partners to have a stake in it. We should use ASEAN-led fora to foster trust and cooperation within ASEAN, and between ASEAN and our external partners.

7 Colleagues, we play an important role here as the bridge between ASEAN, the organisation, and the people we each represent at home. We must continue building on existing efforts to reinforce a people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN.

8 With that, I look forward to fruitful discussions with you on how we can continue to work together to ensure that we build a resilient, inter-connected, and future-ready ASEAN and AIPA. Thank you.