

**SPEECH BY MR SEAH KIAN PENG
SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
AT THE FIRST PLENARY SESSION OF
THE 46TH ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
(AIPA) GENERAL ASSEMBLY
16 TO 22 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Tan Sri Dato' Dr Johari bin Abdul

President of AIPA and

Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malaysia

Distinguished Colleagues

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 I extend my warmest greetings to all at our annual gathering of AIPA parliamentarians at this 46th General Assembly of AIPA. On behalf of the Singapore delegation, I wish to convey my heartfelt appreciation to Tan Sri Dato' Dr Johari for the gracious hospitality and thoughtful arrangements made for us. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Malaysia for its outstanding and able leadership as ASEAN Chair as well as AIPA Chair this year. Your chairmanship has been instrumental in advancing our collective aspirations.

2 As members of AIPA, we play the critical role of a bridge-builder, bringing together the policymakers of ASEAN, and nurturing greater understanding, trust, and collaboration among our nations. As parliamentarians, we play a key role in helping our peoples understand what ASEAN does, and why ASEAN matters to them. We also gather feedback regarding their concerns and aspirations so that we can ensure that ASEAN's policies benefit them in meaningful ways. By connecting the peoples and legislatures of ASEAN, AIPA remains a unique and indispensable forum that unites parliamentarians and deepens the bonds of understanding among and between our peoples.

3 Today, ASEAN faces increasingly complex challenges, such as the fracturing of the rules-based international order and the multilateral trading system which has underpinned ASEAN's prosperity for the past few decades. To navigate these uncertain times, it is critical for ASEAN to strengthen our internal unity to respond effectively with one common voice. Our shared goals of regional unity, peace, and stability remain the cornerstone of the ASEAN family. I am confident that we remain committed to supporting one another in resolving any differences within the ASEAN family and achieving amicable solutions to any disputes. Externally, ASEAN must strengthen our cooperation with external partners, and in doing so maintain an open and inclusive regional architecture. I believe there are two areas that we should focus on to achieve this.

4 First, ASEAN must accelerate its integration and community-building efforts. The ASEAN Community Vision 2045, which was adopted by the Leaders at the 46th ASEAN Summit in May, charts out ASEAN's integration priorities for the next two decades. We continue to make good progress on ASEAN's economic integration. This year, we concluded negotiations on the upgrade of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), which will further enhance the flow of goods in the region. We are redoubling efforts to realise the substantial conclusion of the ambitious and high-quality ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement hopefully by the end of this year, which will allow us to tap on the immense potential of the region's emerging digital sector. We are also making progress to realise the ASEAN Power Grid, which will be key to achieving our shared goals of decarbonisation, energy transition, and energy security.

5 Second, ASEAN must deepen its engagement and cooperation with external partners to ensure that they continue to have a stake in our region's stability and prosperity, based on the principle of ASEAN Centrality. The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) remains the primary framework through which ASEAN engages our external partners. We should continue to pursue tangible progress under the four priority areas of the AOIP to keep the region open and inclusive. I am pleased that ASEAN has achieved some milestones in strengthening our trade cooperation with external partners. We recently upgraded our trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand;

concluded the upgrading negotiations on the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0 which will be signed in October; and will soon commence negotiations to upgrade the ASEAN-ROK Free Trade Area.

6 As we convene in Kuala Lumpur, I am certain that the proceedings of the General Assembly will reaffirm AIPA's invaluable contribution to fostering mutual understanding, trust, and confidence across the ASEAN community. Our mandate is to ensure that ASEAN remains people-oriented and people-centred and continues to foster a shared identity that transcends national boundaries. Our hope is that this will help us to move towards our common vision of building a peaceful and prosperous future, not only for our region, but also beyond our shores.

7 With that, my delegates and I look forward to fruitful discussions with my friends and fellow parliamentarians on how we can work together towards continued peace, stability, and prosperity in our region, and to a productive and enjoyable week ahead. Thank you very much.