

ASEAN Day Message
of
Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia
8th August 2021

1. Today marks another auspicious day for all the ASEAN people as we proudly commemorate the 54th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Together, we have embarked on a long and fulfilling journey to nurture the growth of this regional organisation into a closely-knitted and people-oriented entity. In over five decades, ASEAN has expanded membership to all but one regional nations, promoted political, economic and social integration among members and with its partners, and continued to project itself as one of the most dynamic and most vibrant grouping in the world in terms of economic potentials and comparative advantage. Holding the helm of ASEAN Chairmanship this year, Brunei Darussalam aspires to take the ASEAN process forward under the banner “We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper”, a theme most befitting for the current daunting geopolitical and socio-economic challenges on the path toward realizing the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.
2. ASEAN was created to safeguard and advance peaceful development and serve as a platform for enhancing the well-being and livelihood of the peoples in the region. The spirit of mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality and non-interference which Member States have forged since 1967, along with the consensus-based approach continue to be the fundamental guiding principles of our community building process. For this reason, ASEAN has always been an integral part of Cambodia’s foreign policy. Through ASEAN framework, we have been able to maximize opportunities to cultivate friendly ties and cooperation with countries in the region and external partners around the globe for the sake of upholding durable peace, security, prosperity, and national development across all spectrums.
3. As a regional grouping, ASEAN has so far been successful in ensuring that its people enjoy relative peace, stability, security and steady development. Economically, ASEAN has made significant progress to become the third largest economy in Asia and the sixth largest in the world. Now, ASEAN is facing a huge obstacle on its path. The severe effect of COVID-19 pandemic since early last year has largely pushed regional and global economies into recession and caused immense hardship to people’s life. At the same time, growing geo-political competition and rivalry between major powers that has escalated into trade and

technology war are putting greater pressure on peace, security and further prosperity on ASEAN as whole. This is not to mention a host of existing and emerging non-traditional issues that ASEAN is confronting, such as the challenge due to the fast transformation of technology, climate change, environmental degradation, transnational crimes including illicit drug and human trafficking and terrorism.

4. It is against this backdrop that Cambodia will, in less than five months, take on its role of ASEAN Chairmanship for the third time since joining the association in 1999. During its chairmanship year in 2022, Cambodia will endeavour to promote an action-oriented approach that is based on openness, honesty, good faith, solidarity, and harmony within ASEAN to effectively address the common challenges facing our region. More importantly, with the support and strong solidarity of ASEAN Member States and its external partners, Cambodia will seek to ensure tangibility of benefits for the peoples across the whole region, without leaving anyone behind.
5. A foreseeable priority for us is to ensure more satisfactory outcomes of ASEAN efforts to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our immediate task is to further intensify cooperation in implementing various measures under the five broad strategies of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, namely (1) Enhancing health systems; (2) Strengthening human security; (3) Maximizing the potential of the intra-ASEAN market and broader economic integration; (4) Accelerating inclusive digital information; and (5) Advancing toward a more sustainable and resilient future.
6. Cambodia aims to further advance ASEAN Community building process with emphasis on fulfilling all agreed key targets and initiatives under the three ASEAN Community Blueprints 2025, including the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025), and the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan IV (IAI Work Plan IV). At the same time, we resolve to sustain ASEAN as a region of critical importance for global trade, investment and supply chains through, among others, generating maximum benefits from the existing Free Trade Agreements and recently signed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
7. As we prepare groundwork for the Post-2025 ASEAN Community Vision, Cambodia will continue to push for a more vibrant and harmonious ASEAN Community. We will seek to enhance the protection of migrant workers and increase support for green and inclusive development agenda. The digital transformation of the MSMEs and women and youth entrepreneurship do merit our focus in this regard. MSMEs are the backbone of our region's economy; they

account for up to 99% of businesses, the majority are women-owned (60% in Cambodia), and employ more than 80% of the workforce in ASEAN countries. Therefore, supporting these areas not only engenders inclusive recovery and growth, but also ensures that the UN SDGs targets are not missed.

8. While women's role beyond socio-economic development is well recognized, Cambodia will work to support Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Further afield, we aspire to promote ASEAN's international profile and proactive contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping operations and peace building, including through humanitarian aspects of landmines - an area where ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) can play a significant role.
9. Cambodia cherishes ASEAN as an outward-looking organization. While seeking to bind all Southeast Asian nations as a strong family, we will strive to further deepen and broaden relations and cooperation with external partners in the spirit of equality, mutual interest and respect. Cambodia will explore the possibility of elevating partnerships with existing ASEAN Dialogue Partners and expanding the list of external partners on the basis of ASEAN principles, including those outlined under the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). To overcome the negative geopolitical trend, we resolve to promote the agendas that nurture collaborative spirit and support for ASEAN centrality and regional tranquility and progress.
10. I hope that as we raise the ASEAN flag today, everyone is reminded of how far we have come over a half century and how proud we, as the people of ASEAN, have been since its inception. As we continue on this journey together, I am confident that ASEAN is well prepared to overcome all the unprecedented challenges in order to prove once again that we have the determination and capability to further strengthen and promote peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region for the well-being of our peoples.

HAPPY ASEAN DAY
