



**WELCOMING REMARKS BY
YBHG. DATO' ZAINOL RAHIM ZAINUDDIN
AT IDFR's FORUM ON ASEAN: SHAPING A MORE
INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

2 OCTOBER 2025

YB. Datuk Mohamad Bin Alamin;
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia;

YBhg. Dato' Ahmad Rozian Abd. Ghani
Deputy Secretary-General (Bilateral Affairs) of the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs, Malaysia;

Your Excellencies;

Distinguished Speakers and Moderators;

Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Dato'-Dato,' Datin-Datin;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

***Assalamualaikum, salam Malaysia MADANI, and a very
good morning.***

INTRODUCTION

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the “Forum on ASEAN: Shaping a More Inclusive and Sustainable Future,” which the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations is honoured to organise.
2. On the 8th of August 1967, the Bangkok Declaration was signed—officially establishing ASEAN.
3. Since then, ASEAN membership has doubled to include other Southeast Asian nations. At the end of this month, another historic milestone will be achieved, as Timor-Leste is expected to become **ASEAN’s 11th Member State—completing ASEAN’s namesake: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations.**
4. ASEAN will continue to work together as a larger entity towards a more peaceful and prosperous Southeast Asian region.
5. Malaysia is honoured to be the ASEAN Chairman for 2025 at this inaugural juncture of ASEAN progressing forward.

6. Cognizant of the complexities we face today due to climate change, economic uncertainties, and geopolitical contestation, it is more necessary to build a resilient, dynamic, and people-centred ASEAN. The **ASEAN Community Vision 2045** provides a guideline in this regard.

INCLUSIVE, PEOPLE-CENTRED ASEAN

7. Through this Vision, **ASEAN's collective value** is realised in fostering an inclusive community that leverages the shared strengths and diverse perspectives of its Member States to drive regional stability, prosperity, and interconnected growth for all.
8. Moving towards a people-centred ASEAN, more people are engaging with ASEAN directly more than ever before. This is evident in the high number of participants who attend public events, such as **forums, sustainability fairs, and ASEAN Day celebrations**, organised throughout 2025.
9. It is worth noting that **ASEAN Day celebrations** were designed to be **fully inclusive**, with a **sign language interpreter available** and partnerships with businesses, which they themselves champion inclusivity.

10. ASEAN events also prioritise sustainability by using eco-friendly banners and locally made souvenirs, ensuring **all resources are fully utilised**.
11. In addition, the official **MyASEAN2025 site** launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recorded a total of **over 1.2 million visitors** in less than 10 months. This is a positive indication that interest in ASEAN has gone mainstream.
12. The perception that ASEAN is only for the bureaucratic elites clearly holds no weight now. The public's growing attention to, and increased participation in, ASEAN-related events is evidence **that ASEAN has become relevant to everyone**.

OBJECTIVE OF THE FORUM

13. It is in this regard that IDFR is pleased to organise this timely public forum on **ASEAN: Shaping a More Inclusive and Sustainable Future**. Our discussions today will explore sustainable solutions and inclusive strategies to enhance our region's stability, peace, and security across political, economic and socio-cultural spheres.

14. It is for this reason that we have gathered **distinguished panellists from across our region**. Their expertise in their respective fields will no doubt make for an in-depth, robust, and meaningful discussion.
15. But for these discussions to have **relevance and drive meaningful change**, we need to place **ASEAN's fundamental values** at their core.
16. **An example of this is the practice of quiet diplomacy**, which has proven to be effective in addressing complex challenges that continue to plague many countries. Our **shared wisdom** is something we should be proud of and continue to build on.

Ladies and gentlemen,

17. Inclusivity is about giving people access to opportunities that are often out of reach. It is about providing a platform for all voices to be heard. It is about really listening to people's concerns with sincerity. And it is about coming together and finding a solution to our common challenges to secure a future that benefits us all.

18. I am encouraged to see such a diverse group of participants from Malaysia and abroad here today, representing **all levels of society**: from the business sector, academia, NGOs, and grass-roots organisations, all the way to our **students and youth leaders**.
19. **This is what inclusivity looks like.**
20. By focusing on the principles of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, we can ensure our collective work here contributes directly to building an **inclusive, resilient, and people-centred future**.
21. But let us not view this forum merely as a day of discussion. Let this forum serve as the platform where diverse insights—from policy makers to youth leaders—can result in actionable strategies.
22. Ultimately, the strength of ASEAN is in our shared commitment to **translating these ideas into reality for everyone**.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

23. And on that note, it is my earnest hope that this event will serve as a stepping stone for continued efforts in increasing our contributions to ASEAN and the world.

24. Finally, I would like to thank our distinguished panellists, moderators, and everyone here today for attending our **“Forum on ASEAN: Shaping a More Inclusive and Sustainable Future.”**

Thank you.