

2025 PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' RETREAT

Issued in Langkawi, Malaysia on 19 January 2025

1. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat (AMM Retreat) was convened on 19 January 2025 in Langkawi, Malaysia. The Retreat was the first major meeting under Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship 2025 with the theme "Inclusivity and Sustainability". The Retreat was also attended by the Foreign Minister of Timor-Leste as Observer.
2. We had candid and in-depth discussions on ASEAN's priorities in 2025 and the follow-up to the 44th and 45th ASEAN Summits and Related Summits to further advance the ASEAN Community, strengthen ASEAN unity and Centrality, and enhance mutually beneficial cooperation with ASEAN partners.
3. We reiterated our strong commitment to upholding regionalism and multilateralism with full adherence to key principles, shared values and norms enshrined in the UN Charter, the ASEAN Charter, the Declaration on Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ Treaty), the 2011 Declaration on the East Asia Summit on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).
4. We expressed strong support towards Malaysia's key priorities and deliverables in advancing ASEAN's collective vision of a resilient, people-centred, and forward-looking ASEAN Community while advancing economic growth and regional connectivity, and enhancing regional resilience.
5. We emphasised the importance of realising these priorities to ensure ASEAN's continued role as a key driver of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region, and looked forward to the successful implementation of these initiatives under Malaysia's Chairmanship in an inclusive and sustainable manner.
6. We welcomed the excellent progress made by the High-Level Task Force on the ASEAN Community Post-2025 Vision (HLTF-ACV) in developing the Strategic Plans of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 (ACV 2045): Resilient, Innovative, Dynamic and People-Centred ASEAN. In this regard, we looked forward to the adoption of the ACV 2045 and all its Strategic Plans at the 46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur. We looked forward to the convening of the ASEAN Future Forum 2025 next month in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, which would continue to complement the exercise of developing the Strategic Plans of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 as well as their future implementation.
7. We reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening ASEAN's institutional capacity and effectiveness through enhanced role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, and the East Asia Summit Group of Ambassadors, in discussing and responding to pressing regional challenges.
8. We underscored the importance of ASEAN's efforts in promoting peace, conflict management and conflict resolution in the region. We recognised the potential of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) in support of ASEAN's efforts in promoting peace and stability in the region.

9. We looked forward to the development of the report on complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which will help guide us in advancing our green agenda, as we strive towards a more sustainable and resilient future, set out in the ACV 2045.

10. We reiterated our commitment to preserve the Southeast Asian region as a nuclear weapon-free zone and free of all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the SEANWFZ Treaty and the ASEAN Charter. We noted that the Executive Committee of the SEANWFZ Commission is continuing to explore the possibility of allowing individual Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) which are willing to sign and ratify the Protocol to the SEANWFZ Treaty without reservations and provide prior formal assurance of this commitment in writing to go ahead with the signing. We welcome any NWS that are ready to do so. We reaffirmed our commitment to continuously engage all the NWS, including those with reservations, and intensify efforts of all parties to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

11. We welcomed the progress of the negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), including the completion of the third reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT), and emphasised the importance of maintaining positive momentum in this regard, towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

12. We reaffirmed our collective resolve to combat transnational crime, including people smuggling, trafficking in persons, drug trafficking, cybercrime, money laundering, and the growing threat of online scams. We welcomed the inaugural meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) Working Group on People Smuggling and the proposal to establish the Working Group on Money Laundering as significant mechanisms to enhance regional capacity and coordination, contributing to strengthening regional security.

13. We stressed the importance of intensifying regional cooperation to effectively address cyber threats, as ASEAN continues to advance in its digital transformation. We welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) located in Singapore with Malaysia as first regional coordinator. We reaffirmed our commitment to advancing CERT-related information sharing and capacity building that will enable ASEAN Member States to quickly exchange information and where appropriate, work together to address common threats.

14. We reaffirmed the roles of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus in promoting strategic dialogue and enhancing practical cooperation including through the seven ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups. We welcomed the progress in enhancing civil-military coordination for the management of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts. We commended efforts to advance discussions on the proposed application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the defence sector and supported the strengthening of cooperation among ASEAN Member States in the defence industry.

15. We looked forward to the convening of the Dialogue among ASEAN National Security Advisors as a forum to address issues of strategic concern and to contribute to strengthening the resilience and institutional capacity of ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms as well as in shaping the region's inclusive and comprehensive security architecture.

16. We encouraged regional cooperation in international commercial arbitration and mediation. These efforts aim to foster a robust arbitration and mediation landscape in accordance with established international standards to drive economic growth in the region.

17. We reaffirmed our commitment to the ASEAN economic agenda, particularly on enhancing the region's competitiveness and resilience in a time of digital transformation and in the face of an increasingly complex and unpredictable global environment. We are encouraged by ASEAN's on-going efforts toward developing a comprehensive, high-quality, and forward-looking ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) and looked forward to its conclusion by 2025. We underscored the need to leverage our collective strengths and harness digitalisation to foster deeper economic integration, and promote sustainable and inclusive growth to ensure the long-term prosperity and stability of the region and our peoples.

18. We expressed full support for Malaysia's priorities to navigate the region's economic agenda. We looked forward to the implementation of the Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs), anchored by four (4) Strategic Thrusts namely (i) Enhancing Trade and Investment; (ii) Creating an Inclusive and Sustainable Pathway; (iii) Promoting Integration and Connectivity of Economies; and (iv) Building a Digitally Resilient ASEAN that reflects a holistic and forward-looking approach to advancing ASEAN's economic objectives while addressing key regional challenges and opportunities.

19. We underscored the importance of elevating culture and heritage value creation, targeted towards harnessing the rich cultural diversity and heritage assets of Member States to contribute towards enhanced economic growth, cultural resilience and sustainable development.

20. We acknowledged the need to advance regional efforts in addressing environmental challenges, including biodiversity loss, climate change, natural disasters, sustainable use and management of water resources, among others, towards promoting sustainable development and achieving carbon neutrality through stewardship, partnership, and ownership. We looked forward to the early operationalisation of the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change.

21. We reaffirmed our commitment to realise the ASEAN Power Grid (APG) by 2045, and encouraged efforts to accelerate the establishment of the APG to promote regional energy connectivity, security, and resilience.

22. We reaffirmed our commitment to advancing green jobs and skills to drive sustainable and inclusive development across ASEAN.

23. We reaffirmed our resolve to strengthen regional capacities for the prevention, preparedness, and response to public health emergencies for a healthy, resilient and prosperous ASEAN.

24. We reiterated the commitment to further promote equitable, inclusive and sustainable development across the ASEAN Community by aligning sub-regional growth with the comprehensive development of ASEAN.

25. We emphasised the importance of enhanced ASEAN-wide collaboration, focusing on innovation and engagement to advance youth development and sports excellence.

26. We looked forward to Timor-Leste being a full member of ASEAN, and recognised the progress made by Timor-Leste in implementing the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership, as well as welcomed the enhanced participation of Timor-Leste in ASEAN Meetings following the adoption of the revised Guidelines for the Implementation of the Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste. We reiterated our commitment, and called on our external partners to continue providing capacity building assistance to Timor-Leste. We looked forward to the establishment of the Timor-Leste Unit in the ASEAN Secretariat, to intensify efforts in facilitating Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN.

27. We are convinced that ASEAN can play a greater role in fostering a stable and predictable environment through adherence to principles of international law, mutual respect, and the peaceful

resolution of disputes, including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We also underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. We reaffirmed our steadfast commitment to an ASEAN-centred, open, inclusive, transparent, resilient, and rules-based regional architecture that upholds international law, in light of evolving regional and international challenges.

28. We noted the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/144 emphasising in the Preamble, the universal and unified character of the 1982 UNCLOS, and reaffirmed that the Convention sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector, and that its integrity needs to be maintained.

29. We reaffirmed the importance of the TAC as the key code of conduct in governing inter-state relations in the region and as a foundation for maintaining regional peace and stability. We called on all High Contracting Parties to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty. We welcomed the growing interest of non-regional countries to accede to the TAC, on the basis of respect for and in conformity with the purposes and principles of the TAC. We are committed to strengthening relations with ASEAN's current partners and engaging those who have acceded to the TAC. We also looked forward to substantive preparations of the 50th anniversary of the TAC next year.

30. We underscored the value and relevance of the AOIP in promoting regional peace, security, stability, and prosperity in light of geopolitical tensions affecting the region, including in building mutual trust and confidence as well as reinforcing an open, transparent, resilient, inclusive, and rules-based regional architecture with ASEAN at the centre that upholds international law. We noted the establishment of the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Business Network (AIPBN) and the intention to convene the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum this year.

31. We reaffirmed our commitment to promote the implementation of concrete AOIP projects and activities, under the four priority areas in our engagement with external partners, through the various ASEAN-led mechanisms. We underscored the importance of advancing an AOIP that builds mutual trust and confidence as well as reinforce an open, transparent, resilient, inclusive, and rules-based regional architecture with ASEAN at the centre that upholds international law.

32. We reaffirmed the importance of strengthening ASEAN unity and Centrality, and our strong commitment to shaping and leading the evolving regional architecture through existing ASEAN-led mechanisms. We agreed to conduct our engagement with external partners based on shared interest, constructive engagement, and mutual benefit, underpinned by ASEAN Centrality, which would contribute to the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045. We looked forward to the adoption of the 7 Plans of Action between ASEAN and the relevant Dialogue Partners for the new period beginning in 2026.

33. We looked forward to the ASEAN-New Zealand Commemorative Summit in Malaysia later this year in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the ASEAN-New Zealand Dialogue Relations.

34. We looked forward to the convening of the 2nd ASEAN-GCC Summit in 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, and agreed to further advance the effective implementation of the ASEAN-GCC Framework of Cooperation (2024-2028). We also looked forward to the convening of an ASEAN-GCC+China Summit to enhance and deepen economic collaboration.

35. We agreed to deepen cooperation under the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) cooperation framework to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the East Asian region. We welcomed substantive progress in the implementation of the APT Cooperation Work Plan (2023-2027).

36. We reaffirmed our commitment to further strengthening the EAS as a premier Leaders-led forum for dialogue and cooperation on broad strategic, political, and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability, and economic prosperity in the region, with ASEAN as the driving force. We underscored the importance of the East Asia Summit (EAS) and supported the Chair's proposal to develop and finalise a Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the EAS, an EAS Joint Statement, and thematic statement(s) to further enhance the implementation of the EAS Plan of Action (2024-2028) as outcome documents of the East Asia Summit.

37. We agreed to revitalise the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in a holistic and comprehensive manner to maintain its effectiveness, relevance and function as the leading regional security forum in the Asia-Pacific region, enabling it to address current and emerging political and security challenges through a more substantive, constructive and interactive dialogue while also pursuing preventive diplomacy. We also discussed the ways forward on the Hanoi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) which is set to expire this year.

38. We also exchanged views on regional and international developments, reaffirming our shared commitments to promoting sustainable peace, security, stability, and prosperity within ASEAN and beyond.

39. We expressed our deep concern over the escalation of conflicts and humanitarian situation in Myanmar and the minimal progress on the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC). We reaffirmed our united position that the 5PC remains our main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar and further reaffirmed the corresponding Leaders' decisions. The Leaders upheld the decision limiting Myanmar's participation at the ASEAN Summits and Foreign Ministers' Meetings to the non-political level and reiterated that ASEAN community building and decision-making should not be affected. We denounced the continued acts of violence against civilians and public facilities and urged all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt indiscriminate violence, exercise utmost restraint, ensure the protection and safety of all civilians and civilian infrastructures, and create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogue. We welcomed the progress of the provision of ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar by the AHA Centre to implement Point 4 of the ASEAN Leaders' 5PC.

40. We welcomed the appointment of H.E. Tan Sri Othman Hashim as the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar for 2025. We expressed our full support to the Special Envoy in carrying out his mandate in facilitating efforts towards finding an inclusive, durable and peaceful resolution in Myanmar through promoting concrete progress on the implementation of the 5PC.

41. We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea. We further reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability, avoid actions that may further complicate the situation, and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. Concerns were expressed by some Ministers on the land reclamations, recent actions and ongoing developments in the area which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region.

42. We expressed grave concern over the surge in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) intercontinental ballistic missile testing and ballistic missile launches and the increased tension in the Korean Peninsula, which are a worrisome development that threatens peace, and stability in the region. We urged the DPRK to take action to de-escalate tension and called on all concerned parties to resume peaceful dialogue, including to create a conducive environment towards the realisation of lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. We re-emphasised the importance of full compliance with all relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions and to abide by international law. We stressed the importance of continued peaceful dialogue among all parties concerned in order to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula.

43. With regard to Ukraine, as for all nations, we continued to reaffirm our respect for sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity. We reiterated our call for compliance with the UN Charter and international law. We underlined the importance of an immediate cessation of hostilities and the serious engagement in a genuine dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. We supported the efforts of the UN Secretary-General in the search for a peaceful solution. We also called for the facilitation of rapid, safe, and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those in need in Ukraine, and for the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and persons in vulnerable situations.

44. We expressed grave concern over the continued war in Gaza and the Middle East and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has been exacerbated following the 7 October attacks. We condemned all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, which have resulted in immense number of casualties, particularly innocent women and children, the restricted access to food, water, and other basic needs, leading to the further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We welcomed the ceasefire agreement in Gaza and urged that the implementation of this agreement to be carried out immediately and comprehensively. We called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, especially ASEAN nationals, women, children, the sick and the elderly. We underscored the importance of release from any arbitrary detention. We urged all parties concerned to work towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict with a view to realising the two-State solution in accordance with international law and the relevant UNSC and UNGA resolutions, including UNGA resolution A/RES/ES-10/23 on the Admission of New Members to the UN dated 10 May 2024 which we all voted in favour. We emphasised the importance of intensifying humanitarian assistance to those in need, including through the restoration of UNRWA's role, and for post-conflict reconstruction in Gaza.