

2026 ASEAN LEADERS' DECLARATION ON MARITIME COOPERATION

Adopted in Cebu, Philippines on 8 May 2026

WE, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, on the occasion of the 48th ASEAN Summit on 8 May 2026;

REAFFIRMING our shared commitment to maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region, as well as to 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 international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

EMPHASISING the universal and unified character of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and reaffirming that the 1982 UNCLOS 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 and maritime sectors, and that its integrity needs to be maintained;

NOTING WITH SATISFACTION that all ASEAN Member States are now Parties to the 1982 UNCLOS, reflecting ASEAN's shared commitment to upholding international law, in particular the 1982 UNCLOS, and strengthening maritime cooperation to enhance peace, security and prosperity in the region;

ACKNOWLEDGING that maritime issues are multi-dimensional and complex requiring holistic, integrated and comprehensive action in accordance with international law;

RECOGNISING the importance of maintaining peace, stability and security in the maritime domain, as well as ensuring safety and freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce, in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS;

RECOGNISING the importance of maintaining stable and reliable global energy supply chains and maritime trade routes, as well as minimising disruptions to the flow of energy and essential goods, including food, and strengthening logistics, energy connectivity and supply chain resilience;

RECOGNISING the importance of enhancing regional connectivity and cooperation to strengthen awareness, protection, and resilience of critical underwater infrastructure (CUI), including submarine cables and pipelines, in light of evolving maritime challenges;

RECOGNISING issues relating to the marine environment, including marine pollution, marine ecosystem conservation and threats to marine biological diversity, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction; in accordance with international legal frameworks, including the 1982 UNCLOS and the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, to support regional cooperation towards the sustainability of marine ecosystems and marine development;

RECOGNISING the profound and growing threat that sea level rise poses to the coastal communities, livelihoods, and territorial integrity of ASEAN Member States, underscoring the urgent need for

strengthened regional and international cooperation to address the human, economic, and security dimensions of this challenge in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS;

RECOGNISING the importance of marine scientific research and the transfer of marine technology, in accordance with the 1982 UNCLOS, as essential foundations for sustainable maritime cooperation;

PROMOTING maritime security and maritime cooperation through ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, as well as other internationally-accepted maritime conventions and principles, and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific adopted in 2019, which envisages ASEAN Centrality as the underlying principle for promoting cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, including maritime cooperation;

RECOGNISING the importance of promoting a stronger sense of ASEAN identity by highlighting the maritime heritage of Southeast Asian nations, which has significantly contributed to global civilization and played a vital role in global navigation history;

RECALLING the ASEAN Declaration on Cooperation in Search and Rescue of Persons and Vessels in Distress at Sea in 2010, the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the Blue Economy adopted in 2021, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on Maintaining and Promoting Stability in the Maritime Sphere in Southeast Asia adopted in 2023, the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework adopted in 2023, the Inaugural ASEAN Maritime Outlook adopted in 2023, Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) adopted in 2002, the East Asia Summit (EAS) Statement on Enhancing Regional Maritime Cooperation adopted in 2015, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Statement on Strengthened Cooperation on Marine Environmental Protection and Conservation in 2015, the ARF Ministerial Statement on Enhancing Cooperation among Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies in 2016, the ARF Statement on Cooperation to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing in 2017, the EAS Leaders' Statement on Combating Marine Plastic Debris in 2018, the EAS Leaders' Statement on Marine Sustainability in 2020, the ARF Statement on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety in 2024;

REAFFIRMING our support for the Philippines' Chairship priorities under the theme "Navigating Our Future, Together" and recognising the importance of maritime cooperation and resolved to identify and implement specific maritime cooperation initiatives, and;

FURTHER REAFFIRMING the importance and value of the relevant ASEAN-led and ASEAN Plus One mechanisms in promoting coordinated maritime cooperation, including the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting and Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (SOM-DOC and JWG-DOC);

HIGHLIGHTING the importance of alignment with existing international and regional frameworks such as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14: Life Below Water on strengthening marine and ocean cooperation, UNCLOS and its implementing agreements, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), all relevant international conventions and agreements related to maritime safety, security and environmental protection, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), among others;

REAFFIRMING the importance of upholding international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the 1982 UNCLOS, as well as ASEAN's shared principles, values and norms as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), Declaration of

the EAS on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations (Bali Principles): mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations; the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means; renunciation of the threat or use of force; and effective cooperation;

COMMEMORATING the 50th Anniversary of the TAC and reaffirming its importance and relevance as a foundational code of conduct for interstate relations and a cornerstone of regional peace and stability for the promotion of perpetual peace, everlasting amity, and cooperation - including maritime cooperation - in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter;

HAVE HEREBY RESOLVED, IN A SPIRIT OF AMITY AND COOPERATION, TO:

1. **AFFIRM** that the 1982 UNCLOS provides the legal framework within which all activities in the ocean and seas must be carried out, including regional maritime cooperation;
2. **FURTHER AFFIRM** that the duty to cooperate, including in the protection and preservation of the marine environment, is a fundamental principle of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS;
3. **ENSURE** any cooperation is in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, the 1982 UNCLOS, other relevant UN treaties and conventions including those of the International Maritime Organization, the ASEAN Charter and relevant ASEAN treaties and agreements, as well as ASEAN's shared values, norms and principles, including strengthening ASEAN Centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, a rules-based framework anchored in international law, complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks, good governance, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, equality, mutual respect, mutual trust, and mutual benefit;
4. **STRENGTHEN** maritime cooperation in areas such as: defence and maritime law enforcement; security and safety of navigation; maritime transport connectivity, including maintaining the safety of maritime trade routes, port development and sustainable shipping, maritime search and rescue (SAR); marine environmental protection (MEP); Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUUF); marine pollution; marine litter and plastic pollution; critical underwater infrastructure (CUI) including submarine cables and pipelines; blue economy; ocean science; ocean governance; as well as in marine scientific research, transfer of marine technology capacity-building, training, joint exercises, maritime domain awareness (MDA), information-sharing mechanisms and exchange of best practices, consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS;
5. **ADVANCE** the work of the ASEAN Coast Guard Forum (ACF), with a view to listing the platform under Annex 1, as a platform for cooperation among maritime law enforcement agencies, contributing to strengthen capacity and coordination, and to explore and develop concrete and effective regional responses to maritime security challenges and other maritime challenges including combatting transnational crimes, and transboundary challenges in coordination with existing mechanisms such as the AMF, the EAMF, the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, the ARF, the EAS and other relevant mechanisms;
6. **STRENGTHEN** cooperation in maritime safety and search and rescue, including through capacity-building and developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) where necessary, in accordance with relevant international instruments and best practices as well as

strengthen implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Cooperation in Search and Rescue of Persons and Vessels in Distress at Sea;

7. **REAFFIRM** the importance of the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety, particularly on maritime cooperation, so as to promote mutual trust and confidence;
8. **ENDEAVOUR** to conclude the negotiation of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);
9. **STRENGTHEN** global and regional cooperation among ASEAN Member States and external partners, with the participation of the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, in support of sustainable marine economic development, and in the protection, conservation, preservation, and sustainable use of the marine and coastal environment, including biodiversity, ecosystem and resources, and in improving resilience and livelihood of local and coastal communities, through implementation of relevant ASEAN and international agreements and frameworks;
10. **EXPLORE** and develop modalities for cooperation on addressing the environmental risk of pollution including marine debris and plastics pollution particularly in respect of ecologically sensitive areas, which may include developing a successor document to the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris and a possible agreement on marine plastics pollution in ASEAN;
11. **STRENGTHEN** cooperation among ASEAN Member States to pursue greater understanding of maritime issues and promote compliance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, including through the planned establishment of the ASEAN Maritime Centre in the Philippines, which will support the work of ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms on maritime-related issues and will promote cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration among ASEAN Member States, while avoiding duplication of efforts;
12. **INTENSIFY** maritime cooperation through ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting and Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (SOM-DOC and JWG-DOC) as well as other relevant mechanisms, and reaffirm the importance of enhancing cross-pillar and cross-sectoral coordination in promoting maritime cooperation in the region, including through the publication of the ASEAN Maritime Outlook and other initiatives under these mechanisms; and
13. **SUPPORT** engagement on maritime cooperation with ASEAN's external partners while upholding ASEAN Centrality at the forefront of all collaborative initiatives and activities with an integrated and comprehensive approach, including by mainstreaming and implementing AOIP through projects and activities, particularly on the priority area of maritime cooperation.

ADOPTED in Cebu, Philippines on the Eighth Day of May in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Six, in a single original copy in the English language.