

Remarks of Philippine Ambassador H.E. Leslie J. Baja
ASEAN Day, 8 August 2024

Assalamu Alaikum. Esteemed guests, friends, and colleagues, on behalf of His Excellency Hasrul Azwar, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia in Morocco and Chairperson of the ASEAN Committee in Rabat, and my colleagues from the ACR, I would like to warmly welcome you to ASEAN Day 2024.

As we commemorate the 57th founding anniversary of ASEAN, we pay tribute to all those who have laid the foundations and dedicated their life's work towards achieving the common desire to live in a region of lasting peace, security and stability, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and social progress.

Since 1967, the member states of ASEAN were able to surmount their differences, recognizing the fundamental importance of amity and cooperation, and the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, non-interference, consensus and unity amidst diversity. Today, ASEAN has stayed true to the vision of its founding fathers, and is now recognized as one of the world's dynamic regional rules-based organization and a stalwart model of regional integration.

ASEAN has made significant strides in areas of peace and security, and economic and social development. In the political sphere, ASEAN concluded the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia which has about 51 signatories including Morocco. It also established the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1994 which serves as a venue for dialogue with key international partners to promote confidence building and preventive diplomacy. Recognizing that the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions are amongst the most dynamic in the world and are considered as centers of economic growth, it adopted the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific in 2019. We also hope to conclude a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea to mitigate the risk of conflicts in this area.

In the economic field, ASEAN has continuously deepened cooperation in trade, services, and investment, and moved towards a single market and production base through the signing of the ASEAN Free Trade Area Agreement in 1992 and several FTAs with other partners, as well as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership composed of the 10 member-states and 5 dialogue partners. At present, ASEAN is the 5th largest economy in the world and projected to be the 4th largest by 2030.

In the socio-cultural front, ASEAN has enhanced people to people connectivity, contributed to social progress through poverty reduction and developed safeguards to promote and protect human rights.

This year, the Lao People's Democratic Republic took up the reins of ASEAN Chairmanship with the theme "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience". Under its leadership, ASEAN hopes to intensify cooperation under the three community pillars and further strengthen ASEAN's relations with external partners, while maintaining ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture. Coincidentally, we celebrate this year the 50th anniversary of ASEAN's dialogue partnership with Australia.

ASEAN hopes to achieve these aspirations with our partners who are represented here today and Morocco, its newest sectoral dialogue partner, and a stable and reliable ally in the African region. We hope to see Morocco play a more proactive role in initiating programs to operationalize the Practical Cooperation Areas which serves as the overall framework for our cooperation over the next five years.

At the heart of ASEAN's journey towards regional integration are its peoples. Celebrating this auspicious occasion is a reminder to all ASEAN nations of our shared commitment to promote the vital interests, ideals, and aspirations of over 650 million people in our region. Ultimately, it is their prosperous lives that will continue to enrich and safeguard the legacy of ASEAN in the years to come.

In conclusion, I wish to thank our Indonesian colleagues for once again offering their Chancery as the venue of this year's commemoration.

I wish you all a happy ASEAN day!