

18th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME)

**3 September 2025
Langkawi, Malaysia**

**Statement by
H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn
Secretary-General of ASEAN**

Excellency Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani, Chair of the 18th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and Minister of Plantation & Commodities and Acting Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Malaysia,

Your Excellencies Distinguished Ministers from ASEAN Member States and Timor- Leste,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to join you for the very first time at this 18th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME) on the beautiful island of Langkawi. The pristine natural beauty that surrounds us here serves as a powerful reminder of what we are working to protect and preserve across our region. My gratitude extends to the Government of Malaysia, especially the Minister, for hosting this year's ASEAN ministerial meetings on environment and on transboundary haze pollution in this inspiring setting.
2. These meetings provide a meaningful platform to reaffirm the environment's central role in ASEAN's community-building journey toward ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future. As we gather on this island paradise, we are reminded that our environment forms the foundation of economic growth and serves as the cornerstone of our vision for regional inclusivity, sustainability, and resilience. Without environmental health and sustainability, our aspirations for a prosperous ASEAN remain incomplete and indeed elusive.

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

3. The statements delivered by Your Excellencies demonstrate strong commitment to enhanced regional environmental cooperation. Environmental protection occupies a prominent position on the ASEAN Leaders' agenda, as evidenced by the ASEAN Joint Statements on Climate Change and Biodiversity, and the ASEAN Declaration on Plastic Circularity last year. These documents reflect not only our shared priorities, but also ASEAN's collective recognition that environmental challenges are transboundary by nature and require transboundary solutions and concerted efforts.
4. Environmental issues had feature prominently in the priorities established by Lao PDR under its 2024 ASEAN Chairmanship and continue to advance under Malaysia's leadership as ASEAN Chair this year, which maintains environmental sustainability and climate action at the heart of our regional agenda.
5. The environment sector's achievements under the strong support of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) and the strategic guidance of this AMME deserve recognition. These efforts reflect ASEAN's collective commitment and determination to ensure environmental protection and sustainable development remain central to our shared community.
6. Building on these achievements, we must also look ahead—toward ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future, where environmental sector priorities such as the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme, the ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable City Award Programme, and our collective commitments under multilateral environmental agreements, showcased through ASEAN Joint Statements and ASEAN Pavilions, remain vital to our long-term vision. These initiatives form the foundation of our progress and require continued strengthening and deepening of our work, cooperation and implementation of all of the agreements and decisions.
7. Simultaneously, we face new and cross-cutting challenges. Emerging issues such as the blue economy, circular economy, ASEAN Power Grid, the One Health approach, transboundary air pollution, and carbon market development are reshaping our sector's agenda. ASOEN and AMME must continue providing

proactive guidance and practical policy and leadership to the sector and ASEAN partners while coordinating support for other stakeholders and sectors. Together, these efforts can create new opportunities for resilience building, low carbon development, inclusivity and sustainability while addressing the multitude of challenges ahead.

8. ASEAN Centres serve as specialised institutions that translate regional commitments into concrete ground-level actions. The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) hosted by the Philippines, the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD) hosted by Thailand, the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC) hosted by Singapore, the upcoming ASEAN Centre for Climate Change (ACCC) hosted by Brunei Darussalam, and the ASEAN Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACCTHPC) hosted by Indonesia represent vital mechanisms that deliver technical expertise, capacity-building, and policy innovation to our region . These centres of excellence are building a reservoir of knowledge, expertise, experience, skill and capacity, best practices to our region.
9. In my views, their work integrates science, policy, and practice, enabling ASEAN to respond to new challenges in a timely manner. At a time when climate impacts, biodiversity loss, and air pollution, among others, do not respect national borders, the ASEAN Centres are indispensable — requiring further strengthening and better coordination to ensure an integrated and responsive approach to our shared priorities.
10. Resource mobilization and partnership development are indispensable to our success. The ambitious and complex tasks before us require significant technical and financial resources. We must therefore strengthen partnerships within our region and with our dialogue partners, sectoral dialogue partners, external partners, and other stakeholders who share our commitment to sustainability.
11. Resource mobilisation and partnership prove particularly important for supporting the implementation of the upcoming Post-2025 ASEAN Strategic Plan on Environment (ASPEN) and its supporting sectoral plans, including the ASEAN Climate Change Strategic Action Plan (ACCSAP), the ASEAN Biodiversity Plan, and a successor to the Regional Action Plan on Combating Marine Debris. Effective implementation of these plans will be critical for ensuring

ASEAN's effectiveness and readiness to advance AMS priorities and address emerging environmental and climate issues.

12. ASEAN's success at the regional level directly reinforces its credibility in international climate and biodiversity negotiations and, therefore, advancing our environmental diplomacy. Strong leadership across Chairmanships is essential to maintain continuity and advance these ambitious plans. As ASEAN Chair in 2026, the Philippines is well-positioned to provide strategic guidance, strengthen global engagement, and champion nature-based solutions through its role as host of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. As we begin our work on this island, we are reminded of Langkawi's own story of transformation. Local legend speaks of how this island overcame centuries of hardship to emerge as a beacon of prosperity and natural beauty. May this inspire ASEAN as a whole, showing that through collective commitment and perseverance, we too can chart a course where economic progress and environmental stewardship go hand in hand for the benefit of our peoples and future generations.”

Thank you.
