



OPENING REMARKS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ASEAN-IPR

ASEAN-UK YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY (YPS) FORUM: BUILDING SHARED UNDERSTANDING ON THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY ENABLED TRANSNATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

***18 February 2025
Jakarta, Indonesia***

Duration: approximately 10 minutes

- Your Excellency, Ambassador Sarah Al Bakri Devadason, Chair of the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council;
- Your Excellency, Sarah Tiffin, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to ASEAN;
- Excellencies, Members of the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council.
- Representatives from ASEAN bodies, sectoral bodies and entities;
- Distinguished speakers, resource persons, participants and guests;
- Dear friends of ASEAN and ASEAN-IPR;
- Ladies and gentlemen,

- Good morning!
- Kofi Annan, the former UN SG famously once said “you are never too young to lead, and never too old to learn”.
- This is a timeless reminder of the balancer between youth and wisdom, and encourages everyone, including young leaders such as many of you here today, to step forward and embrace lifelong learning.

- Since the early years of ASEAN’s inception, our Leaders have always emphasised the importance of young people in ASEAN’s community-building.

- The youth is recognised by ASEAN as the future of an integrated ASEAN Community. They comprise approximately a third of the combined population of ASEAN, consisting the latest event cohort of ASEAN youth. According to the ASEAN Youth Development Index, by 2038, youth population of the region is projected to peak at over 220 million.
- This means that our region holds a massive number of future leaders, change makers and innovators – who are both our asset and hope for the future.
- Naturally, it is our responsibility to ensure them with meaningful opportunities to influence policies which would have a direct impact on their lives.
- The ASEAN Community offers exciting new prospects for education and employment, in particular for the young generation of the region.
- However, it has been apparent in recent times that the youth have also been targeted to be pawns in acts of misinformation, disinformation, radicalism and extremism – through instruments of technological advance such as the internet and social media – where the youth is known to be the largest users in the region and throughout the globe.
- That is why the ASEAN-IPR has always put the youth on the forefront of its activities.
- The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security in 2015 defines a significant shift from viewing young people as passive victims or perpetrators of violence and toward seeing them as a critical catalyst in shaping ongoing and future peacebuilding efforts.
- Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda, which highlights the active participation of youth, become one of the key focus areas in the global concert to achieve cohesive and peaceful society. Moreover, as we are witnessing that today's generation of youth is the largest demographic group, it sheds light on how peace and security are interconnected to the broader agenda of young people's stake in sustainable development.
- Building on its regional convening role, ASEAN has worked to integrate Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda to incorporate young generation as one of the key stakeholders in the region's security architecture.

- At this point, I would like to highlight some activities that has been initiated by the Institute which has targeted the youths as beneficiaries or put the youth groups on the forefront as actors and thinkers.
- In 2018, the ASEAN-IPR organised a **Youth Conference on Peace & Tolerance** – to empower the youth and enhance their capacity to prevent the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism. This was an initiative of Indonesia and convened in Jakarta. It resulted in “ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance” along with a Plan of Action – which until now stands as a point of reference for the Institute in conducting activities for the youth.
- In 2021, in the middle of the pandemic, we convened a **Youth & Technology (Youth-Tech) Workshop & Training**, which was also an initiative by Indonesia, pursuant to the previous Youth Declaration. This Training aimed to encourage youth participants in utilising technology, namely the internet and social media platforms, as instrument to promote narratives of peace.
- In 2022, in conjunction with the commemoration of the International Day of Peace on 21 September, ASEAN-IPR and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Jakarta co-organised a **Dialogue on Peace and Multilateralism: the youth as Agents of Future Change**. Through panel discussion and knowledge café set-ups, more than 125 youth participants dialogued on the importance of youth as agents of future change to participate in peace processes and peacebuilding at multilateral, regional and national frameworks in order to achieve sustainable peace.
- Later in 2022, we partnered with the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR to co-organise **Workshop on Youth, Peace and Security** in Vientiane, Lao PDR. With the objective to advance the youth peace and security agenda within ASEAN, the Workshop also provided opportunity for meaningful dialogues between youth participants with government officials and officials of regional and international organisations – to brainstorm ideas and formulate recommendations for concrete actions in ASEAN Member States.
- In 2023, we partnered with the Netherlands Embassy in Jakarta to commemorate **International Day of Peace Commemoration for the Youths of ASEAN** – with a panel discussion on lessons learned in developing national action plan on youth peace and security; as well as a

youth consultation simulation, where youth participants were given space to share their thoughts on how they could contribute recommendations or solutions to several themes related to youth issues and peacebuilding.

- Another wonderful initiative by Indonesia, we had an **ASEAN-IPR Training: Enhancing the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding** last year. The Training was designed to equip youth participants with the knowledge and skills needed to serve as effective agents of peace in their communities, including a study visit to learn impactful work of grassroots peace initiatives and engage with fellow youths who are doing positive change at the community level.
- At the tails end of last year, as we get ready to convene a **Regional Conference on Cybersecurity and the Role of Information Technology in Fostering Culture of Peace in ASEAN**, we conducted a youth essay competition – which aimed to stimulate discourse among young minds on how technology impacts security, trust and stability in the region. We are happy to share with you that 11 youth whose essays were selected will also be youth participants in the Regional Conference, which will be convened in Bangkok next week.
- We also conducted series of competitions which include: the Youth Peace Poems, Youth Peace Essays and Youth Peace Figures in the previous years which generated a huge interests of young generation to participate.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Compared to the rest of the world, Southeast Asia has a significantly higher social media penetration rate, with nearly two-thirds or 61.5 percent of its population actively engaged on social media platforms, representing a larger share of global social media users than its population proportion.
- Young people and the internet are like the story of *the Prophet Moses and his staff* (even though the story and the concept of internet are completely unrelated), anything that once seemed impossible, or improbable, could happen if youth are given internet access. Thus, young people with internet access are the keys to endless possibilities.
- In the era of social media, young people are able to create a work field that previous generation would not have imagined before: **becoming social media influencers**.

- In many countries, public policies, even political decisions could be influenced by young people through their campaigns on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and most recently – Tik-Tok.
- While previous generations are often haunted by fear of being replaced by artificial intelligence, young people enthusiastically use AI to enhance their daily lives and activities.
- However – we cannot deny possible negative impact of these things. Among them which I've mentioned earlier: misinformation, disinformation, radicalism and violent extremism.
- At this juncture, young people could take on two opposing roles – they could be actors in spreading hoaxes and disturbing narratives; or they could be heroes in combatting false information, while also spreading narratives of peace.

- We are here today, cheering you on to be the heroes for your future.
- Through this Forum, we aim to build shared understanding amongst you on the connection between digital technology and the range of technology-enabled transnational threats – which include possible misinformation, disinformation and extremism in ASEAN Member States.
- This Forum marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, which laid the groundwork for Youth, Peace and Security and the role of young people in peacebuilding.
- The ASEAN-IPR in partnership with the United Kingdom and The Asia Foundation, wish to provide a platform for you all to engage with your fellow ASEAN citizens and peers from the UK – hoping to amplify your understanding towards a sustained resilience against transnational threats in your respective home countries, and the region as a whole.
- In the coming three-days, you will engage in what we hope would be a lot of learning opportunities on youth, peace and security – particularly the role of youth in countering technology-enabled security threats, whether traditional or non-traditional.
- We look forward to hearing your engagement with one another, observing dialogue amongst your peers, and ideas on how you could be agents of peace in this highly technological world, and foster positive change in your respective communities.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude H.E. Ambassador Sarah Tiffin, the UK Mission to ASEAN and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) for their generous support and avid partnership.
- We are privileged and thankful to be able to partner with the United Kingdom and The Asia Foundation, in convening this Forum.
- Of course, we would like to extend our appreciation to the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council and Advisory Board, for their continued support of this initiative and subsequent initiatives of the Institute focusing on the youth.
- Finally, I thank all participants of this Forum. I hope your voices are heard and shared on how the future of ASEAN Community to be shaped from this forum.
- As Franklin Delano Roosevelt said “we cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the (better) future”.
- For ASEAN-IPR, we will work on how this Forum would go beyond what we do today, and sustain its impact from your engagement with one another, discussions, thoughts and recommendations.
- We hope this forum will provide proper platforms for the youth to voice their concerns and act on issues that they are passionate about and those that would directly impact their generation.
- We live in an imperfect world. But it is our common interests to join hand in hand to ensure that our world is peaceful, harmonious, and prosperous. I hope our endeavours will create huge impacts to the Youth as Agent of Peace and provide aspirations to embrace changes.
- The best way to predict the future is to invent. It is to include inventing the best opportunity for the youth.
- Have a fruitful discussion.
- Thank you.
