

**Keynote Address**  
**by H.E. Thongloun SISOULITH,**  
**President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic**  
**at the Opening Ceremony of the 44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and**  
**Related Summits**

9 October 2024, National Convention Centre, Vientiane

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- *Your Majesty,*
- *Excellencies Heads of State and Government,*
- *Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the outset, on behalf of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the people, and on my own behalf, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all distinguished delegates to Vientiane for the **44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and Related Summits** hosted by the Lao PDR.

It is my great honour and privilege to deliver this keynote address at the Opening Ceremony of the **44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and Related Summits** today.

This year, the Lao PDR has the honour of assuming the ASEAN Chairmanship for the third time since our accession to ASEAN on 23 July 1997. Each time we have held the rotating Chairmanship, we have received invaluable support and assistance from our ASEAN family, dialogue partners, and friendly nations, as we are now for the 44th and 45th ASEAN Summits.

- *Your Majesty,*
- *Excellencies,*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen,*

ASEAN is a regional inter-governmental organization defined by its diversity. Over the course of its evolution, ASEAN has successfully overcome numerous challenges, leading to the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. Today, ASEAN is home to nearly 700 million people, making it the third-largest economy

in Asia and the fifth-largest globally. Projections indicate that ASEAN will become the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030.

In the near future, ASEAN will encompass all Southeast Asian nations with Timor-Leste's accession as a full member, reaffirming ASEAN's diversity and immense potential while creating new opportunities for ASEAN and its external relations.

ASEAN's achievement over the years have delivered tangible benefits to its people, reflecting the region's shared aspirations, intentions, unity, and solidarity amidst diversity. These accomplishments further demonstrate that cooperation, guided by the **'ASEAN Way,'** resonates with the unique characteristics of Southeast Asia with a shared goal of maintaining and promoting peace, stability, and sustainable socio-economic development within the region and beyond.

- ***Excellencies,***
- ***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

The regional and international environments are undergoing rapid and complex changes, presenting new challenges. In this context, ASEAN must continue to uphold its common cause of peace, stability, and sustainable development, as well as its commitment to multilateralism based on equality and mutual benefit. ASEAN should further strengthen cooperation grounded in the principles of **'the ASEAN Way'** to promote the resilience of the ASEAN Community and to reinforce the unity, solidarity, and centrality of ASEAN in its conduct of external relations.

- ***Your Majesty,***
- ***Excellencies,***
- ***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

The Lao PDR has consistently pursued a foreign policy of **"peace, independence, friendship, and cooperation."** ASEAN forms an important pillar of the Lao PDR's foreign policy. Since joining ASEAN in 1997, the Lao PDR has actively contributed to promoting cooperation within ASEAN and strengthening relations between ASEAN and its external partners. We have fulfilled our obligations and commitments with a strong sense of responsibility for the collective benefit of the ASEAN family.

The Lao PDR is proud to be a member of the ASEAN family, whose achievements, including its *thriving* external relations, have significantly contributed to our country's socio-economic development.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all ASEAN Member States, ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, and the ASEAN Secretariat for their unwavering support and assistance to the Lao PDR in the conduct of ASEAN affairs, particularly during our previous chairmanships, including our third ASEAN Chairmanship in 2024. Under the theme **“ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience,”** this chairmanship aligns with ASEAN's collective goals of promoting connectivity and resilience, as well as our aspiration to transform the Lao PDR from a landlocked country into a land-linked hub of regional and international connectivity.

I strongly believe, with the longstanding tradition of cooperation and mutual support within the ASEAN family and from our external partners, the 44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and Related Summits will be a resounding success.

I extend my best wishes for good health, happiness, and success to Your Majesty, Excellencies, and all delegates. I hope you have a pleasant and memorable stay in the Lao PDR during the Visit Laos Year 2024.

**On this auspicious occasion, I hereby declare the 44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits and Related Summits officially open.**

**[Thank you.]**