



WELCOME REMARKS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ASEAN-IPR

**SEMINAR ON THE TREATY OF AMITY AND COOPERATION (TAC) IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

*2 October 2025
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

H.E. Dr. Abdul Razak Ahmad, Chair of the ASEAN-IPR Advisory Board and our gracious host,

Excellencies, Members of the ASEAN-IPR Advisory Board,

H.E. Ms. Danielle Heinecke, High Commissioner of Australia to Malaysia,

Distinguished Officials and Faculty Members of Asia Pacific University,

Academes, Lecturers, Dear Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. *Selamat pagi*. A very good morning to you all!
2. It is truly both a pleasure and privilege for me to welcome you all to this **Seminar on the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia: Past, Present, and Future**.
3. Let me begin by extending our deepest appreciation to our host and the Chair of ASEAN-IPR Advisory Board, Dr. Abdul Razak Ahmad and his dedicated and very able team, for initiating this important Seminar as well as the warm hospitality extended to all of us.
4. We also would like to extend our gratitude to the Australian High Commissioner for their generous support to this event.
5. Today's Seminar is convened under the auspices and in the spirit of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation – or ASEAN-IPR – University Tour, one of the Institute's flagship activities to bring ASEAN and ASEAN-IPR closer to academic communities.

6. The objective of the ASEAN-IPR University Tour is clear: to engage directly with students and scholars, so that ASEAN is not seen as distant, but as part of your classrooms, your research, and your daily discussions.

7. Based on previous editions or iterations, ASEAN-IPR's University Tour programme would usually among others delve deeper into ASEAN's history, principles, the work of ASEAN-IPR and look into the lessons learned and best practices of peacebuilding, conflict management and conflict resolution in the region – be it inter-state or intra-state conflicts.

8. This activity is meant to inspire students to explore ASEAN in their studies, and even to consider it as a focus for their research or final theses. More than knowledge-sharing, the ASEAN-IPR's University Tour is about igniting inspiration — showing that ASEAN belongs to the youth and the scholars, the next generation who will one day shape the ASEAN's future.

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Next year we will mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia 1976, or what we usually call the TAC – a landmark document in ASEAN's history.

10. When it was signed in 1976, Southeast Asia was still emerging from conflict and division. The TAC laid out guiding principles of peaceful coexistence, respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

11. The TAC gave Southeast Asia the foundation to grow – not through rivalry, but through mutual trust and cooperation.

12. The TAC has had a real impact in changing the dynamics in the region, particularly in transforming the trust deficit into strategic trust.

13. Over the years, the TAC has grown beyond only ASEAN Member States. It has been embraced by 57 signatories/High Contracting Parties around the

world as of October 2024. What began as a regional compact has become a trusted global framework for peace and cooperation.

14. As Malaysia's Tun Abdul Razak, one of ASEAN's Founding Fathers, reminded us at the signing of the ASEAN Declaration in 1967:

“We the nations and peoples of Southeast Asia must come together to shape a new perspective and a new framework for our region – one built by ourselves, free from the dictates of outside power.”

15. These words still echo today, reminding us that ASEAN was born from courage, unity, and a determination to stand on our own feet.

16. Another ASEAN Founding Father, Thailand's Thanat Khoman, also offered a vision that endures:

“What we decide today is only the beginning of a long journey of achievements – a journey that should bring hope and well-being to millions of our people.”

17. This message was clear, ASEAN must never stand still, but continue as a living journey of unity, progress, and purpose.

18. The theme of this seminar today both reminds us of and captures the TAC's continuing journey.

- i. **In the past**, it was a visionary step by ASEAN's Founding Fathers.
- ii. **In the present**, the TAC continues to serve as our compass and code of conduct to promote regional peace and stability.
- iii. **For the future**, the challenge is how to ensure its principles remain relevant amidst non-traditional security issues such as climate change, cybersecurity, disinformation, and shifting geopolitical dynamics.

19. And here is where universities play a vital role. Academic communities bring fresh perspectives, constructive ideas, and critical thinking that can enrich ASEAN's continuing journey.

20. To the students here today — the TAC is not just a treaty signed almost 50 years ago in 1976. It is a **living framework** that belongs to your generation. Its principles are values you can carry in your own lives. They are tools that will shape you as the future leaders of this region.

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

21. Lastly, I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage all Advisory Board Members to continue being proactive in engaging local universities. By doing so, ASEAN-IPR can further contribute to raising awareness on ASEAN, the TAC, other ASEAN instruments related to peace, as well as the work of ASEAN-IPR itself.

22. The TAC is not only a legacy of the past, but also a promise for the future — a promise of peace and unity for generations to come.

23. I wish this Seminar provides a reflection on its historical impact, assess current challenges, and offer guidance on how the TAC can adapt to future geopolitical dynamics while reinforcing ASEAN's norms and regional stability

24. Therefore, we should combine our vision with pragmatism to address the constantly changing and evolving regional challenges. Those challenges must be converted into opportunities. And create space for dialogue.

25. ASEAN shall continue to be the driving force in the promotion of a regional architecture that is conducive to the maintenance of regional peace and stability guided by the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 “Resilient, Innovative, Dynamic and People-Centered ASEAN” adopted by the 46th ASEAN Summit on 26 May 2025 in Kuala Lumpur.

26. With that, I wish you all a productive and inspiring seminar. I thank you.
Terima kasih.
