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Head of Delegation
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Distinguished delegates from the AIPA Member and Observer Parliaments,

I am Jeon Yong-gi, Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.

At the outset, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency Heng Samrin, President of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia and his officials at the Secretariat for the successful organization of the 43rd AIPA General Assembly.

Today, I would like to speak to you about how Korea and ASEAN have developed cooperation and solidarity over the past decades and what challenges are ahead of us going forward.

Esteemed delegates,

The development of the Internet and digital technology has made our world borderless. However, geographic proximity is still an important factor when it comes to international cooperation.

In addition, in the era of the “new normal” with emerging risks and threats, such as climate change, communicable disease, terrorism, and energy crisis, we are called upon to cooperate with countries in our region to identify common solutions.

Not many examples are needed to prove this point. Security, trade, environment, health, tourism, and cultural exchanges – possible crises in all these areas require regional solidarity.

That is why Korea, China, Japan and ASEAN should work together to explore the way forward and pursue shared growth in today’s rapidly changing global environment.

Honorable delegates,

This year marks the 33rd anniversary of the Sectoral Dialogue Partnership between Korea and ASEAN. We regard each other as close and special partners.

Do you know which region attracts the most Koreans in the world? In about five years between 2013 and 2019, we saw a two-fold increase in the number of Koreans visiting this area from 4.9 million to over 10 million. As you might have guessed, it is ASEAN.

ASEAN is Korea's 2nd largest trading partner. As of last year, our bilateral trade posted US\$ 176 billion. Given the recent trajectory of trade, the volume is expected to grow further in the post COVID-19 era.

Moreover, our leaders get together every year for ASEAN-ROK summits and we have been carrying out a wide range of projects through the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund, or AKCF.

Let me go into a little detail on AKCF since the Fund is a great example of Korea's commitment and sincerity toward enhanced cooperation with ASEAN.

AKCF, which is fully funded by the Korean government, has a cumulative amount of US\$ 153 million since its launch in 1990. AKCF has supported about 420 projects in total in many sectors, including public health, education, vocational training, economic resilience, and environment.

The Korean government has continued to increase its annual contribution to further strengthen cooperation with ASEAN. Starting from the initial contribution of US\$ 1 million, it has grown to US\$ 16 million in 2022, projected to reach US\$ 20 million in 2023.

It is time to take stock of the outcomes of our cooperation and think about the way forward.

First of all, we need to work together to support the economic recovery of ASEAN, whose high growth has been dampened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We welcome the entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP, which is expected to build on the Korea-ASEAN FTA. Based on this strong foundation for free trade and investment, we need to take steps to guard against uncertainties in the global economy.

Since we are still inside a long tunnel of the pandemic, we also need to enhance cooperation in the health sector. As part of the effort, we held the first ROK-ASEAN Health Ministers' Meeting in Bali, Indonesia in May this year.

Distinguished delegates,

This year, we will hold the Dialogue with Observer Parliaments under the theme "Investing in Peace, Sustainable Development and Post COVID-19 Recovery." Recalling this theme, let us communicate and cooperate in solidarity to build a stronger foundation for peace and prosperity in the region. I would like to seek your continued interest and support.

Thank you for your kind attention.