

**SPEECH BY MR TAN CHUAN-JIN
SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
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Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin

President of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia

Distinguished Colleagues

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 It is my pleasure to join my distinguished colleagues and fellow Parliamentarians here today. It is good to see both new and familiar faces in-person again after a long while.

2 On behalf of the Singapore delegation, I would also like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Samdech Heng Samrin for your hospitality and arrangements for this AIPA Assembly. I would also like to congratulate Cambodia for an excellent ASEAN Chairmanship, which culminated in the successful ASEAN Summits just a few weeks ago.

3 As our region looks towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia's Chairmanship theme of "ASEAN A.C.T: Addressing Challenges Together" reflects the strength and unity of ASEAN in surmounting the gravest public health emergency in decades.

4 The COVID-19 pandemic remains a key challenge for all of us. The emergence of new variants, such as the XBB strain, have reinforced the importance of staying vigilant and prepared as a region. We must continue to work together to overcome the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our societies and economies. We should continue to support the initiatives which we established to respond to and manage COVID-19. These include the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund (or CARF) and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan.

5 The CARF had played an important role in our recovery from COVID-19. It enabled us to purchase COVID-19 vaccines for our peoples. I am hearted to learn that the CARF would now be used to purchase vaccines and antivirals for Monkeypox. This is an example of how COVID-19 response has prepared us to quickly adapt and deal with possible future outbreaks and pandemics.

6 Even as we emerge from the pandemic, we are faced with an upsurge in geopolitical tensions and major power rivalry. Issues like the escalating tensions between the US and China, cross-strait tensions, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have profound implications for our part of the world. They could also potentially upset the peace, stability, and prosperity which our region has enjoyed for more than five decades.

7 In order to effectively respond to these challenges, ASEAN must remain open and inclusive, and at the centre of the regional architecture. ASEAN Member States must continue to look forward, maintain our sense of unity, and underscore ASEAN Centrality. ASEAN should continue to be a platform that fosters trust, dialogue and cooperation within ASEAN as well as between and among ASEAN's partners.

8 As Parliamentarians, we play an important role in representing the needs of our citizens and supporting our respective countries' responses to the increasingly troubled geopolitical environment. We must redouble our efforts to take on future challenges that lay ahead. There are three things we can do.

9 First, we must continue to uphold a rules-based world order, underpinned by international law, and maintain an ASEAN-centric

regional architecture to preserve peace and stability. As a small state, Singapore staunchly supports international law and the UN Charter, and cannot accept any violation of a country's sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity.

10 Second, we must continue to engage, build stronger ties, and deepen cooperation with our external partners. I am glad that we have announced two new Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships with the US and India this year. Many of our external partners are eager to step up and do more with ASEAN. I commend my fellow Parliamentarians who have been integral to our engagement with our external partners despite the pandemic.

11 Third, we should continue to invest in ASEAN's future. We should continue to broaden and deepen cooperation in the areas of digitalisation, smart cities, climate change, sustainable development, and connectivity. It is critical for ASEAN to be future-ready, and harness the potential of technology to create opportunities for our peoples and businesses.

12 We should leverage existing mechanisms such as the ASEAN Smart Cities Network to share experiences and best practices on building more resilient, sustainable and connected communities. As

Shepherd of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, Singapore looks forward to facilitating more projects under the Network.

13 I look forward to fruitful discussions with friends and fellow Parliamentarians on how we can ensure that ASEAN remains relevant and fit-for-purpose for future generations. Thank you.

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