

OPENING REMARKS
ADR'S INSTITUTE FORUM
“RENEWING THE MULTILATERAL RESPONSE: BUILDING
AN ASEAN COALITION OF CONCERN”
ASIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT (AIM)
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[Acknowledgements]

Good afternoon, everyone.

It's a pleasure to see you all here today. As a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Philippines has long placed ASEAN at the heart of its foreign policy. Whether dealing with global trade concerns or regional political upheaval, successive Philippine governments have consistently adhered to the spirit of 1967 by uniting around our friends and neighbors in the region. By speaking with one voice, ASEAN has not just succeeded in maintaining peace

between its members, it has also opened a path to collective prosperity by increasing trade and investment in Southeast Asia.

These successes have not come easily. The calendar of ASEAN ministerial meetings and official conferences is testament to this. Over the last 50 years, ASEAN has been challenged by political, economic, security, or humanitarian crises on continental Southeast Asia and within the region's waters. Today, as always, there is again talk about ASEAN divisions and disunity. Not every state in the region shares the Philippine perspective on the maritime disputes: a group of ten very different countries results in ten different sets of priorities and concerns.

But, each time an event threatens to drive us apart, ASEAN members have found some way to reach common ground and move forward together, recognizing that our permanent interests are more vital than our temporary disagreements. The recently-released ruling from the Permanent Court of Arbitration has now charted a new opportunity for ASEAN members, claimants or not, to rally once more over the principles that initially brought us together – regional cooperation, shared prosperity, and an abiding belief in the moral right of small states to claim the same rights and privileges as anyone else in the international community. Southeast Asia has a permanent interest in upholding international law.

The creation of ASEAN in 1967 was an act of will by its founding fathers, a commitment to a brighter future when their circumstances were so bleak. In the last 49 years, we marvel at how the peoples of Southeast Asia have steadily embraced this commitment with much vigour and resiliency. This gives me faith that ASEAN, as always, will endeavor to find a strong, shared voice once more."

I look forward to today's discussion on ASEAN and the multilateral response. I expect the different perspectives from today's forum to enrich our understanding of the Association, its principles, pressures, and path forward.

Thank you.