

**H.E. Ambassador Jane Duke
Australian Ambassador to ASEAN**

Opening Remarks

ASEAN-Australia Young Leaders Forum

Thank you.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Australian Embassy Jakarta, also home to the Australian Mission to ASEAN, as well as to the city of Jakarta, ASEAN's diplomatic centre.

I would like to acknowledge our distinguished guests this morning, His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi Secretary General of ASEAN, Dr Imran Lum, Dr Sue Thompson, Professor Shamit Saggar and Dr Evi Fitriani.

The Australia Mission to ASEAN, through the ASEAN-Australia Council and Australia Now program, is proud to support the ASEAN-Australia Strategic Youth Partnership and I am pleased to be here today to mark the opening of the inaugural ASEAN-Australia Young Leaders Forum.

I have personally seen the dedication and energy with which the Forum organisers have brought this event together. Cameron and Hayley, as former New Colombo Plan ASEAN Fellows and interns at the Australian Mission to ASEAN, I'm so pleased to see the benefits of those experiences flowing through to this forum.

I truly admire and commend the way in which you have built a network of similarly passionate, engaged and inspiring young people – ready to understand and engage with your peers across our regional neighbourhood.

Programs like the **Australia Awards** and **New Colombo Plan**, of which many of our Australian delegates are alumni, rightly place people at the heart of our engagement

with ASEAN. It is exactly this type of enthusiasm for engaging with our region, and building closer people-to-people ties that DFAT hopes to inspire through these scholarship programs.

I congratulate all Forum delegates on their selection to participate in the Forum this week. It is a significant achievement for each of you to be here not just as engaged and innovative young leaders in your fields, but also as representatives of your respective countries and you should feel rightly proud.

Over the next four days, hearing from experts on ASEAN-Australia relations, discussing key issues impacting the future of our region, and a program of cultural activities, site visits and skills development workshops will help you better understand our region, foster intercultural understanding and build networks that are vital to the future of the ASEAN-Australia Partnership.

ASEAN sits at the heart of the Indo-Pacific region, geographically, diplomatically, strategically and economically.

Over the last 50 years, ASEAN has transformed the region from conflict and poverty, to one of peace and prosperity. It has set norms, set expectations of behaviour and built habits of dialogue. It has deftly engaged major powers by convening the region's strategic forums.

Over 650 million people call the ASEAN region home (for scale that is 26 times Australia's population). It is a region of significant economic potential, currently a US\$2.5 trillion economy and forecast to become the world's fourth largest economy by 2030. Taken together, ASEAN is Australia's third largest trading partner, and much of the rest of our trade passes through ASEAN member state waters on its way to our top two trading partners.

Australia's future peace, prosperity, stability and our success, is inextricably linked to the success of our ASEAN neighbours.

2019 marks 45 years of Australia's diplomatic relations with ASEAN. Over that time, our relationship has grown into the vital strategic partnership that it is today.

We are proud of our long history of engagement but we do not take it for granted.

As our region experiences unprecedented strategic, economic and technological change, understanding how ASEAN and Australia can work together to address challenges and harness opportunities has never been more important.

Delegates, you are our future policy, social and business leaders.

I hope each of you will use of this opportunity to learn from one another and build those personal connections that will be so important to our future as neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region.

I look forward to discussing some of the challenges and opportunities for the future of ASEAN Australia relations with you at our upcoming panel discussion.

Take the time to get to know one another, share your stories and stay in touch.

Our future is in your hands. And that makes me feel very confident.