



**PRIME
MINISTER**

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
AT THE 48TH ASEAN SUMMIT (PLENARY)**

ASEAN Community Building and the Way Forward:

1. Ensuring Regional Energy Security and Resilience
2. Stabilising Food Security
3. Safety of ASEAN nationals

Cebu, Philippines, 8 May 2026



Palácio do Governo,
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Your Majesty,
Your Excellency Chair of ASEAN,
Excellencies ASEAN Leaders

I would like to begin by extending my sincere appreciation to the Chair of ASEAN, His Excellency President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation and to convey my warm regards to my fellow ASEAN Leaders.

Timor-Leste commends the Philippines for its leadership of ASEAN in 2026 under the inspiring theme, *“Navigating Our Future, Together.”*

We are confident that, under the Philippines’ stewardship, ASEAN will continue to navigate the geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges before us with unity and resolve.

Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome His Excellency, Lê Minh Hưng, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to his first ASEAN Summit. I look forward to working with you both bilaterally and within the ASEAN family.

And may I add my warmest congratulations to H.E. Anutin Charnvirakul on his recent reappointment as Prime-Minister of Thailand. My congratulations also to H.E. Sonexay Siphandone on his recent re-election as Prime Minister of Lao PDR.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

Geopolitical tensions are increasingly shaping the global economy. Energy and food systems are under growing strain, driven by conflict, climate change, and international instability.

These developments show that economic security, food security, and strategic stability are deeply interconnected and require collective action.

As we reflect on ASEAN Community-building, allow me to highlight three priorities.

First, on energy security and resilience.

Energy security has become an urgent strategic challenge. It is testing our resilience and our national security.

International conflict is fuelling inflation, disrupting supply chains, and placing pressure on public finances.

For countries exposed to imported fuel and volatile prices, these pressures are acute.

In this context, ASEAN must continue to diversify supply, invest in resilient infrastructure, and deepen practical cooperation.

The ASEAN Petroleum Security Agreement and the ASEAN Power Grid are key pillars of our collective response.

These initiatives can strengthen regional preparedness and support more stable energy markets.

Timor-Leste is committed to developing its energy and petroleum sector in a way that contributes to ASEAN's collective energy security.

Our shared objective is to build a more secure, diversified, and sustainable energy system for our region.

Second, on food security.

Excellencies,

The energy crisis is also a food security crisis.

Rising fuel prices increase the cost of production, transport, and fertiliser, making food more expensive and less accessible, particularly for import-dependent countries.

For Timor-Leste, food security is a strategic national priority. In response, we are strengthening food security through programs that improve agricultural productivity, expand irrigation and support farmers, fishers, and rural communities.

ASEAN must continue to build resilient, sustainable, and productive food systems so that food remains available, nutritious, and accessible to all, including during periods of global disruption.

Third, and equally important, is the safety of ASEAN nationals.

Excellencies,

The safety of ASEAN nationals must remain a core expression of a people-centred ASEAN.

Conflict in the Middle East has heightened security risks for ASEAN nationals and shown the importance of effective regional cooperation on consular assistance, evacuation, and crisis response.

We express our appreciation to Singapore for extending evacuation assistance to ASEAN nationals during the crisis. This was a practical expression of ASEAN solidarity.

At the same time, transnational crime, human trafficking, online scam networks, and crisis-related exploitation are becoming more widespread and interconnected within our region.

It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of people are subjected to forced labour linked to cyber-crime.

These challenges require coordinated responses. They call for stronger cooperation across law enforcement, immigration, labour protection, border management, victim protection, and public awareness systems.

In view of these present day challenges, it is vital that we ensure all ASEAN citizens have reliable energy, secure access to food and stronger protection of their safety.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for Timor-Leste's inclusion in the ASEAN Charter, marking our full membership and integration as a Member State.

In this spirit, we thank you for your continued support and trust as Timor-Leste, stands ready to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2029.

Thank you.