

**Remarks by Datuk Prof Dr Mohd Faiz Abdullah**  
**Chairman, ISIS Malaysia**  
**At the Welcoming/Opening of the 37th Asia-Pacific Roundtable**  
**09:10am, 5 June 2024**  
**Hilton Kuala Lumpur**  
*(targeted delivery time: 10 minutes)*

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His Excellency Dr Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary General of ASEAN,

Dr Yose Rizal Damuri, Executive Director of CSIS Indonesia and Chair of the ASEAN ISIS Network,

Excellencies, distinguished panellists and delegates,

Assalamu'alaikum, warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, and a good morning.

1. Welcome to the 37th edition of the Asia-Pacific Roundtable. ISIS Malaysia convenes this annual strategic-security focused Track 2 roundtable on behalf of the ASEAN-ISIS network.
2. When we, the organisers, reflect on the essence of this Roundtable, at its heart, the APR is a Southeast Asian conference on the Asia- Pacific. We have grown from our humble origins at a literal “roundtable” at ISIS Malaysia’s premises into a globally recognised conference that can be relied on as a platform for thought leaders, policymakers, practitioners and other interested individuals, to vigorously discuss contemporary and forward-looking issues that impact on this region and beyond.
3. Yesterday, we heard from the Foreign Minister at the Welcoming Dinner, who spoke on the fundamentals of Malaysia’s foreign policy, its approach to the region and his vision on how the Foreign Ministry could support the national imperatives.
4. Tomorrow morning, the Prime Minister will once again deliver the keynote where he is expected to reflect on key inflection points in our region. In keeping with the APR tradition, I’m sure we can get the Prime Minister to take a few questions from the floor.

Distinguished delegates,

5. A great deal of thought was put into the theme of the 37th APR. “Crisis in an Interregnum,” quite a mouthful I concede, reflects our assessment of the state of current geostrategic affairs. While crises have always been a constant in the relationships among nation-states and regions, the various mechanisms put in place after the Second World War to prevent and mitigate outbreaks of chaos have brought a degree of stability.
6. True, it is not a perfect system, and many have been let down by it. But many have also progressed under broader predictability and normative rules-based architecture this system was designed to maintain. Over the last two decades, however, this order has been crumbling, and is being reshaped. It might be premature to speculate on its eventual structures, but what is clear is that a unipolarity and perhaps even bipolarity is on its way out. Multipolarity with more flexible forms of cooperative and competitive dynamics, appear to be on the way in. And, to my mind, that has to be the way.
7. In the interim, however, the multilateral mechanisms, rules and norms that are so important to us, have come under tremendous pressure to the point that they are failing to function effectively. These include many ASEAN centred mechanisms, such as the ARF and EAS, with the latter being the only, if not one of the few leaders-led strategic dialogues.
8. Established rules and norms are being disputed, and not infrequently, disregarded by major powers. But these acts of impudence and impunity are increasingly being questioned by those from the Global South. A very simple query is asked – if such rules and norms are selectively followed and selectively ignored by those who purport to uphold them, then what value is there?
9. The international order is thus in an interregnum, an interval between instability and stability. What the APR hopes to address is to get a sense of how the norms and mechanisms that have shaped the existing international order are being affected. How will established and emerging middle and major powers operate in this environment? How will they seek common ground and cooperation, if at all? What are the emerging structures and rules which are being shaped?

10. To address these questions and give shape to the Roundtable, we have a mix of issues and contentious matters to be discoursed via the plenary and concurrent sessions this year that are designed to be both contemporary and forward looking. I will not run through these topics; they are listed in the programme. But I am confident that this special blend of issues we elected to touch on this year, are part of the reason why you are here today.

Distinguished delegates,

11. At this juncture, I would like to express my thanks to all the role-players, instigators and speakers, for their readiness to share their time and expertise with us. Their presence and participation are a crucial contribution to enhancing the richness of the discussions in the APR.
12. I also extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation to our partners: the Australian High Commission, the Delegation of the European Union to Malaysia, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, the Embassy of the United States, the High Commission of India, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, and the Embassy of Japan in Malaysia. Their generous contributions and assistance are instrumental in the successful convening of the APR.
13. The continued success of the APR over these many years is also greatly attributed to the support given by successive Malaysian Prime Ministers and the government, as well as the region's leaders.
14. I would like to record my sincere appreciation to the Honourable Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and the Honourable Foreign Minister, Dato' Seri Utama Mohamad Hasan, for the support and encouragement entrusted on ISIS Malaysia and their confidence in the Roundtable. I also recognise, once again, His Excellency Dr Kao, who will be the main speaker in the second plenary, on ASEAN.
15. Finally, I wish to convey my appreciation to all delegates for their continued support and active participation. Your penetrating questions, insightful observations and spirited interjections will continue to define the character and quality of the APR discourses.

Distinguished delegates,

16. Last year, after 2 years of virtual conferencing, we returned with a vengeance in one of our most widely attended and represented APRs. Indeed, having representative, inclusive panels – with a mix of officials, academics, think tankers, private sector practitioners, established and emerging experts – it is a bar that we hope to exceed this year.
17. One of the key achievements of the APR, aside from its ability to draw in assorted role-players and delegates, is its role as a central networking node for observers and practitioners. This is why we continue to feature in the calendar of regional conferences. Both ISIS Malaysia and the ASEAN-ISIS network remain committed to encouraging dialogue and understanding among delegates at this conference and beyond.
18. I wish all role-players and delegates a productive and enjoyable 37th Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

Thank you.

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