

## **VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION**

### **MEDIA BRIEFING SESSION**

#### **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF) 2025**

*Title: Unlocking ASEAN's Digital Future: Driving Inclusive Growth  
and Global Competitiveness*

**21 JANUARY 2025**

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Thank you.

As you know, the ASEAN consensus among leaders has been to ensure that it goes beyond normal diplomatic engagement, but to ensure that the intra-trade investments increase and the priority in terms of inclusivity and sustainability that we've talked about, should begin with an ASEAN Energy Grid which covers at least seven countries within ASEAN.

Then, second priority is of course digital transformation within ASEAN, which means Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven, connectivity to take into consideration of the various gaps between those in the urban centres with more connectivity to the less developed areas. But our commitment is to make sure that this sort of transmission and also transformation of digital would cover all areas and angles.

If these two priorities are achieved, I think would be a phenomenal feat for ASEAN as a region, because as you know, it is relative most peaceful region in the world and fastest growing economy, but we have not given emphasis to substantive economic or technological collaboration. And the consensus that we've achieved, therefore, to my mind is very important radical departure from the conventional view of ASEAN leaders in the past.

And this of course, where the experts will have to give an input because we're not starting ground zero, of course, but we are embarking aggressively now till we meet in May together with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and possibly with the participation of China and the United States.

And then, towards that to expand and accelerate the process to make sure that by October, soon after Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in South Korea, (I don't know whether they can still have it in Korea, right?) Then the APEC in Kuala Lumpur would certainly be able to see substantive results. And I think as in my communication with my colleagues, we all want to make a difference. It's no longer biased platitudes about collaboration, but substantive in these two issues.

Thank you.