



WELCOMING REMARKS (DAY 1)

YBHG. TAN SRI AHMAD BADRI MOHD ZAHIR
Chairman of the Employees Provident Fund Board

**40TH ASEAN SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION (ASSA) SEMINAR
AND BOARD MEETING**

“Embracing Diversity, Building a Shared Future”
Hilton Kuala Lumpur | 20 November 2023

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh. Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad Bin Maslan

Deputy Minister of Finance | Malaysia

Her Excellency Mrs. Keo Chanthavixay

Chairwoman of the ASEAN Social Security Association and Director General of Lao Social Security Organisation

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah

Vice Chairman of the ASEAN Social Security Association and Chief Executive Officer of the Employees Provident Fund Malaysia

Mrs. Bouahome Phommachane

Secretary General of the ASEAN Social Security Association and Deputy Director General of Lao Social Security Organisation

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Hajah Nik Amlizan Mohamed

Chief Executive Officer of Retirement Fund (Incorporated) Malaysia

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Sri Dr. Mohammed Azman Bin Dato' Aziz Mohammed

President of the International Social Security Association and Group Chief Executive Officer of Social Security Organisation Malaysia



Board Members of the ASEAN Social Security Association and Heads of Delegation,

Delegates from the Member Institutions of ASEAN Social Security Association,

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to the 40th ASSA Seminar and Board Meeting

1. On behalf of the Employees Provident Fund, it is my pleasure to welcome all distinguished guests to Kuala Lumpur for the 40th ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA) Seminar and Board Meeting, as well as the commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of ASSA. Your presence and unwavering support have contributed greatly to the success of this annual event.
2. A special acknowledgment is extended to Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Maslan, Deputy Minister of Finance I Malaysia, for gracing this event, thus underscoring the commitment of the Malaysian Government to enhance social security not only within our borders but across the entire Southeast Asian region.

On the 40th ASSA Seminar and Board Meeting

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

3. Established in February 1998, ASSA has been a beacon of progress, consistently driving the development of social security in the Southeast Asian region.
4. This year marks a historic milestone as we come together to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of ASSA. The theme for this year, "Embracing Diversity, Building a Shared Future," aligns seamlessly with our collective vision for an inclusive and equitable future, with a strong focus on enhancing social security in ASEAN countries.

The ASEAN's Current Social Security Landscape

5. Over the past quarter-century, our region has faced significant challenges, from natural disasters to a global pandemic of unprecedented scale. These events have reshaped the labour market and the social security landscape, demanding agile and forward-thinking solutions.
6. In particular, we face a critical issue concerning the vulnerability of informal workers across ASEAN countries. It is staggering to note that some 244 million workers in the ASEAN region derive their income from informal employment, constituting nearly 79% of the region's employed population. This percentage surpasses the global average of 61% and the Asia Pacific average of 68%.
7. The share of informal employment varies across member states, ranging from 34% in Brunei Darussalam to more than 80% in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Indonesia. The substantial scale of the informal labour market not only impedes economic productivity, but also undermines individual wellbeing and overall social cohesion.
8. The lack of access to social security and employment benefits, typically accorded to those in formal employment, leaves them without essential safety nets. These workers are disproportionately exposed to economic hardships and instability, insufficient access to healthcare, absence of retirement benefits, and minimal job security. This predicament not only jeopardises their wellbeing, but also underscores the pressing need for comprehensive social protections that can bridge this gap and promote social and economic equity.
9. In an increasingly interconnected world, where individuals often traverse national boundaries for employment or other opportunities, ensuring the seamless transfer of social security benefits is also crucial. This is not only relevant to informal workers, but extends to all individuals who may find themselves working or residing in different ASEAN countries. By harmonising

policies and establishing effective mechanisms for cross-border portability, we can contribute to a more comprehensive and supportive regional social security framework.

Acknowledging the Role of Members

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

10. Social protection is not merely a system; it is a transformative force that has the potential to change lives and uplift the most vulnerable among us. By weaving comprehensive support systems into the fabric of our society, we manifest a future where every individual, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to not just survive, but to thrive and contribute to the collective wellbeing of our community.
11. The policies and programmes designed to bolster social protection mark a commendable stride in the right direction. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that our path towards establishing a robust and inclusive social protection system is an ongoing and dynamic journey. Your presence here today, representing the great minds committed to improving the lives of citizens, is a testament to this ongoing dedication.
12. As we embark on this journey, let us remember the significance of our mission, that is to safeguard the wellbeing of individuals and families, and to build a more inclusive and secure society.
13. In conclusion, I express my gratitude for your commitment and participation. Together, we can make a difference and create a lasting impact.
14. With that, I end with...

Wabillahi taufiq wal hidayah wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

Thank you.