

Welcome Remarks  
by **General (R) Tan Sri (Dr) Mohd Hashim  
Mohd Ali**  
Chairman of the Board  
Institute of Strategic and International Studies  
(ISIS) Malaysia  
at the  
**Book Launch and Seminar on**  
**“New Southern Policy and ASEAN-ROK Relations:  
Enhancing Connectivity, Building Resilience”**  
InterContinental Kuala Lumpur, 29 September 2020

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Excellency,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu'alaikum and 안녕하세요 (*Anyong-haseyo*)

1. I am delighted to welcome you all to ISIS Malaysia's first physical event since Malaysia relaxed some of the MCO restrictions. We cannot hope for a better momentum than hosting a timely seminar and the outcome of a long-term project with one of our closest partners in this era of new normal.

2. Welcome to the Book Launch and Seminar on “New Southern Policy and ASEAN-ROK Relations: Enhancing Connectivity, Building Resilience”.
3. This event is the culmination of ISIS Malaysia’s partnership with Korea Foundation in enriching conversation on the strategic relationship between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea (also called South Korea). It centres on the launching of our latest publication; a book entitled *The New Southern Policy – Catalyst for Deepening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation*. The book itself is a follow up to a similar forum held last year and aims to further the analysis, debate and discussion that transpired in the forum. The launching of the book could not have come at a better moment, especially as states around the world scramble to identify strategic options to weather the difficult times during and after this COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Like other products of intellectual endeavour, this volume does not come out of a vacuum, but rather inspired by the dynamics of ASEAN’s ties with one of its most important Dialogue Partner today: South Korea. Under the leadership of President Moon Jae-in, South Korea has strived to elevate its strategic partnership with ASEAN to an

unprecedented level through the New Southern Policy (or NSP), which was declared three years ago.

5. South Korea's actions thus far have spoken volumes of the country's determination in this. President Moon's visit to the 10 ASEAN Member States in the span of two years was an overwhelmingly positive feat that has generated Southeast Asia's confidence in South Korea. The country has also extended its hands under the framework of the NSP's 3 pillars – People, Prosperity and Peace. This has translated into a plethora of cooperation opportunities, ranging from defence industry, science and technology, medicine, environment, water management, to renewable energy, among others. The creation and empowerment of government agencies specialising in the relationship with ASEAN are further emphasis of the importance that South Korea ascribes to its engagement with ASEAN and Southeast Asia.

6. When it comes to foreign engagement, perception always plays a big role. In South Korea's case, this rule cannot be overstated. It has exemplified itself as a nation that has embarked on an almost quantum-like jump in the past few decades, breaking away from the image of an

underdeveloped economy to become one of the most advanced nations in the world. Moreover, Southeast Asian countries are also more receptive towards South Korea thanks to the latter's lack of historical baggage as a colonial power in this region. The ubiquity of South Korean electronic gadgets, equipment, consumable products and the Korean Wave or *Hallyu* culture in our daily lives further underlines the openness of not only the governments but also the people of Southeast Asia towards South Korea.

7. Nevertheless, it remains closely associated with one of the potential security flashpoints in the Asia Pacific region due to its strained relations with its northern neighbour. In the past few years, we have seen some hopeful strides towards calibrating the tension and introducing North Korea to the international community. The mixed signals that came out of Pyongyang in this year alone seem to suggest that more effort, strategy and patience are needed to take this endeavour forward.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. I am proud to announce that this book differs from other publications on the NSP and ASEAN-ROK relations

because it features more Korea specialists in the region, especially those who are young and upcoming. We are extremely honoured to have 15 contributors from across ASEAN and South Korea submitting their chapters for this publication despite the difficulties that we have faced this year.

9. The launch of this book is accompanied by a Seminar which will attempt to deliberate on some of the timely issues pertaining to the ASEAN-ROK relations. The first session this morning exclusively features several contributors who will emulate some of the conversations that take place in the book. The second session will look at the prospects of this special relations and future of the NSP after the pandemic subsides.
10. Indeed, the hard work that everyone has poured into the book and in organising this event is a testament of the importance they have placed on the ASEAN-ROK relations and the role of ASEAN in maintaining the peace, security and prosperity of the East Asian region, regardless of a pandemic or not. On that note, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the Korean Foundation for their vision to foster a closer cooperation between ASEAN and

South Korea. Through their trust in ISIS Malaysia, together we have successfully created a strongly embedded node of networks within ASEAN-ROK Track Two intellectual and policy exchanges. Looking ahead, ISIS Malaysia hopes to continue its close cooperation with the Korea Foundation, especially under the objective of bringing ASEAN and South Korea together.

11. On behalf of ISIS Malaysia, I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and congratulations to all contributors who have offered their ideas and analysis to this publication. If the ASEAN-ROK relations were to reach a new height, we would need the same degree of intellectualism, frankness as well acumen that all contributors have displayed in their respective chapters.
  
12. Without the initiative of the Korea Foundation Fellow at ISIS Malaysia Dr Hoo Chiew-Ping, this project would not have materialised in the first place. Together with our Analyst Ms Farlina Said, Dr Hoo managed the production of the book from the conceiving point until its launching today. I believe all of us readers who benefit from this book owe it to the leadership of these two bright-minded women

who have devoted their passion in the Korean affairs to finalise the book project.

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13. We acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted a number of agendas and visions that we have planned for this year and beyond. ISIS Malaysia's own operations – including the production of this book in particular – were interrupted as the pandemic threat loomed above us all. We are very fortunate that Malaysia has fared relatively better than others, and we should take this as our responsibility to contribute generously, smartly and unrelentingly in the fight against COVID-19, as long as the situation allows. Therefore, let this Seminar and Book Launch be a testament of ISIS Malaysia's unbroken spirit in fulfilling our mandate and confidence in pushing forward, despite the uncertainties that the future holds.

14. Before I conclude, allow me to take this opportunity to remind everyone to observe the health standards in this new normal setting, as health is the greatest gift that we are rarely grateful for. Remember to wear mask, regularly wash your hands and exercise physical distancing.

15. I hope everyone can benefit from today's seminar as well as from the book.

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