



**35th ASIA-PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE “*Sustaining Cooperation Amid
Competition*”**

**Welcoming Remarks by Mr Herizal Hazri,
Chief Executive**

Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

5 July 2022, 9.30am (UTC+8)

Yang Amat Berhormat Dato’ Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia

Dr Hoang Anh Tuan, Vice President of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and Chair of the ASEAN-ISIS Network,

Colleagues from the ASEAN-ISIS Network,

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you again albeit virtually. In the spirit of receiving you virtually to our home in Malaysia, allow me to welcome you to the Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR) in Bahasa Malaysia.

1. As I just mentioned in English, it is a great pleasure to be with you for the Asia-Pacific Roundtable, also known as the APR this year. This roundtable is organised by ISIS Malaysia on behalf of the ASEAN-ISIS Network – a network made up of Southeast Asia’s leading think-tanks.

Distinguished guests,

2. After three and a half decades of convening, the APR has developed its own niche and reputation. It is recognised as an important annual Track 2 conference in this region. The roundtable now regularly attracts policymakers, thought leaders, intellectuals, practitioners and interested individuals to engage in constructive discussions.

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3. Whether virtual or in-person, the APR continues to serve as a platform for frank and robust discussions on a wide range of issues affecting the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. We do not merely laude successes or broach failures. Our key aim is to analyse critical issues, to create a launchpad for the making of effective policies that matter for the countries in our region.

Dear friends,

4. In last year's roundtable, we deliberated on how the pandemic initiated the greatest phase of disruption to regional architectures and norms. In searching for a theme for this year's conference, we were mindful of "pandemic-parochialism" and were determined to focus on the ongoing "aftermath".
5. In the face of uncertainty, one thing is clear, and it is that rivalry has become rampant. So, it would only be fitting that this year the APR takes on the theme "Sustaining Cooperation Amid Competition". Major power competition, climate and sustainability challenges, and the accelerating development of defence capabilities represent only a handful of challenges where the pandemic has intensified competition.
6. The good news, however, is that there are existing and new mechanisms of cooperation that can help mitigate the negative effects of competition. As countries begin to open up and diplomacy is conducted face-to-face again, cooperation gives us reason to hope that the spirit of competition may be tempered by time-tested relationships. Indeed, competition need not be a dirty word as long as it is balanced by sustained cooperation.
7. Among the issues that the APR will cover this year include an in-depth review of China's Dual Circulation Strategy, which is poised to be a regional gamechanger. With economic and geopolitical implications on supply chains and trading relationships, we will examine how this strategy will change the way China engages with the world.

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8. We will also convene a session on the impact of climate change and COP26 in Asia-Pacific, a region projected to be one of the hardest-hit. We hope to hear from our experts on what are the most pressing challenges and how they would impact strategic security.

9. Reflecting the essence of the theme “sustaining cooperation”, our session on the European Union’s shift to the Asia Pacific explores the prospect that a more proactive European engagement can balance the presence of other actors in the region, and whether the EU can temper possible conflict and competition.

10. On the topic of security, the session on nuclear rearmament examines the competition in developing defence capabilities across the Asia-Pacific. Understanding the changes in this landscape is crucial in cooperating towards the future stability and security of the region.

11. Lastly, the APR will conclude with a session that investigates the impact of emerging minilateral networks on ASEAN’s multilateralism. We need to better understand how, and if, these minilateral frameworks can find synergy with existing ASEAN-led mechanisms, and what this means for multilateralism in our region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. The continued success of the APR over the last three decades is greatly attributed to the support given by successive Malaysian Prime Ministers and the government, as well as the region’s leaders.

13. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Honourable Dato’ Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia, who will be delivering the keynote address of this conference.

14. I would like to also express my thanks and gratitude to the Honourable Dato’ Sri Saifuddin bin Abdullah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, for the continued support and encouragement that he has given ISIS Malaysia and the APR.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

15. I wish to thank the distinguished instigators and speakers for their readiness to share with us their time, knowledge, and expertise and for their contribution towards enhancing the richness of the discussions during this conference.

16. I would also like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our partners, who have been with us through thick and thin – the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Japan in Malaysia and Astro Awani. Their support for the APR process has once again made it possible for us to reconvene for the 35th APR.

17. Last but not least, I wish to convey my sincere appreciation to all my hardworking colleagues at ISIS Malaysia for without their dedication, this event could not have taken place.

18. To the participants, I am humbled by your continuous support and active participation. Probing, thoughtful questions and insightful interventions from the floor are important components of a conference. It is such important inputs that form the distinctive hallmark of the Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

19. Let us all have a fruitful and enjoyable 35th Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

Thank you.

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