



PRESS CONFERENCE

MR. AHMAD ZULQARNAIN ONN

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

41st ASEAN SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION (ASSA) MEETINGS

“Navigating the Future of Social Security: Integration, Innovation, and Inclusion”

Seda Manila Bay Hotel, Manila, Philippines | 25 November 2024

Good morning, and Mabuhay!

It is my great pleasure to be here at the 41st ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA) Meetings, hosted by the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), in collaboration with the Social Security System (SSS) and the Philippine Social Security Association (PhilSSA).

First, allow me to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Their Excellencies, Ambassadors, and Chiefs of Mission from ASEAN countries and Australia for honouring us with their presence. Your attendance underscores the shared commitment of ASEAN nations to advancing social security for all citizens.

I would also like to commend the exceptional efforts of our Filipino colleagues, led by Mr. Jose Arnulfo Veloso, ASSA Vice Chairman and President and General Manager of GSIS, together with his dedicated team. Their hard work and the renowned hospitality of the Philippines have laid a strong foundation for the success of this event.

As we gather here, it is worth reflecting on ASSA’s remarkable journey. Since its founding in 1998 by seven institutions—including Malaysia’s Employees Provident Fund (EPF), where I come from, and the Philippines’ GSIS—ASSA has grown into a dynamic network of 20 Member Institutions from 10 ASEAN nations. Today, ASSA



remains a united front, dedicated to our collective vision of a secure, inclusive, and thriving ASEAN.

This year's theme, "Navigating the Future of Social Security: Integration, Innovation, and Inclusion," captures the essence of what is required to address the pressing challenges confronting our region. These include a rapidly ageing population, high informality, increasing cross-border labour mobility within ASEAN, and, most urgently, the accelerating effects of climate change.

Our region's extensive coastlines and densely populated low-lying areas make us among the most vulnerable globally to climate-related risks. Climate change threatens livelihoods, exacerbates inequality, and endangers food security. Recent disasters, such as devastating typhoons, have starkly highlighted these vulnerabilities, particularly for those without adequate social protection. These events emphasise the urgent need to strengthen our social security systems to effectively support communities during increasingly frequent and severe climate-related disasters.

In this context, the ASSA Sustainability Pledge, scheduled for discussion at tomorrow's Board Meeting, represents a significant step towards enhancing climate resilience within our social protection frameworks. This pledge reflects our collective resolve to address the growing challenges posed by climate change and build systems that safeguard our most vulnerable populations.

Over the next two days, we will convene to discuss pressing issues under this year's theme, focusing on three key pillars:

- a. Integration: Strengthening regional cooperation to create a robust, cohesive social security network across ASEAN.
- b. Innovation: Leveraging technology to improve efficiency, reduce fraud, expand coverage, and enhance accessibility.
- c. Inclusion: Ensuring that all members of society, particularly the most vulnerable, are protected under social security schemes.



Today's programme will feature seminars showcasing good practices and successful initiatives by ASSA Member Institutions. These sessions provide valuable platforms for knowledge exchange, enabling us to collectively address shared challenges and enhance our regional capacity to meet the evolving needs of our populations.

As we look ahead, I have every confidence in the leadership of Mr. Jose Arnulfo Veloso as the incoming ASSA Chairman for the 2024/2025 term. The 41st ASSA Meetings mark an important opportunity to drive meaningful advancements, reaffirming GSIS's capability to steer ASSA towards meaningful and lasting improvements for the ASEAN region.

With the strong leadership demonstrated here today by GSIS, I am optimistic that ASSA will continue to drive transformative change, benefiting both current and future generations across ASEAN.

Let us move forward with renewed determination to build a more secure, inclusive, and resilient future for ASEAN.

Thank you.