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OPENING REMARKS
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Asian Think Tank Network Forum 2026
Resilient & Sustainable Supply Chains: The Strategic Role of FDI
6 October 2026, NUS Singapore

1. Welcome and Acknowledgement

Good morning, and a very warm welcome to all of you.

Following Dean Bambang's opening remarks, it is my pleasure to welcome our distinguished speakers, researchers, policymakers, development partners, think tank representatives, and participants joining us both in person and online. Your presence enriches this Asian Think Tank Network, or ATTN, Forum.

We are delighted to have you with us.

This year marks the 12th ATTN Forum. For more than a decade, the ATTN has provided a platform for evidence-based policy research and for elevating regional perspectives on development challenges and opportunities.

This gathering would not be possible without the support of our valued partners:

- the ADBI, represented by Dean Bambang Brodjonegoro;
- the UN ESCAP, represented by Director Rupa Chanda; and
- the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, represented by Director Iqbal Singh Sevea

2. Context and Significance

The theme of this year's ATTN Forum could not be more timely.

Asia and the Pacific remains at the center of the global economy. Our region is home to approximately 4.8 billion people, representing nearly 60 percent of the world's population.[1] It also accounts for roughly 40% of global exports and remains a major driver of global growth.[2]

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[1] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (2025). Statistical yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2025. ESCAP. https://www.unescap.org

[2] Asian Development Bank. (2025). Asian development outlook 2025. ADB. https://www.adb.org/publications/asian-development-outlook-2025
World Trade Organization. (2024). World trade statistical review 2024. WTO. https://www.wto.org

Yet recent years have reminded us how vulnerable supply chains can be.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a stark reminder of how quickly disruptions can ripple through global economy. Production slowdowns, logistical bottlenecks, and supply shortages highlighted the need to build supply chains that are not only efficient, but also resilient and sustainable.

These challenges have been further compounded by geopolitical tensions, climate-related disasters, and growing economic uncertainty. Together they have reshaped the way governments and business think about trade, investment, and supply chain resilience.

In this environment, strong policies matter. Equally important is the evidence that informs them. This is why collaboration between researchers and policymakers is more important than ever.

3. Key Challenge and Opportunity

The question before us is clear: **How do we build resilience while sustaining growth?**

The answer lies in a combination of strategic investment, sound institutions, effective policies, and regional cooperation.

Foreign direct investment, or FDI, can play a central role in this transformation.

FDI is no longer simply a source of capital and jobs. It is increasingly a channel for technology transfer, innovation, skills development, and participation in regional and global value chains.

This opportunity is significant.

Developing Asia attracted roughly one-third of global FDI inflows in recent years.[3] At the same time, regional trade agreements such as RCEP have created the world's largest trading bloc, covering about 30 percent of global GDP and population.[4]

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[3] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2025). World investment report 2025: International investment in the digital economy. UNCTAD. https://unctad.org/publication/world-investment-report-2025
Asian Development Bank. (2025). Asian economic integration report 2025. ADB. https://www.adb.org/publications/asian-economic-integration-report-2025

[4] Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (2024). Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). ASEAN Secretariat. https://rcepsec.org

Together, these trends create new opportunities for economies to diversify supply chains, strengthen competitiveness, and attract higher-quality investment.

But resilience is more than managing risks. It is about creating opportunities. It is about supporting livelihoods. It is about protecting resources and improving the quality of life of the billions of people who call this region home.

4. Purpose of the Forum

This is where the ATTN can make a meaningful contribution.

Over the next two days, we will examine how FDI can support resilient and sustainable supply chains. We will exchange research findings. We will share policy experiences. And we will explore practical solutions that governments, businesses, and development partners can implement together.

Just as importantly, the ATTN Forum brings together researchers and policymakers from across the region. This interaction is essential. Good research informs better policy. Better policy creates better outcomes.

Our goal is simple: **to generate insights that can be translated into action.**

5. Call to Action

As we begin our discussions, I encourage everyone to make the most of this opportunity. Let us be open to new ideas. Let us learn from one another. Let us challenge assumptions and test them against evidence. And let us focus not only on understanding the challenges, but also on identifying practical solutions.

The issues we face are complex. No single institution, economy, or stakeholder can address them alone. Progress requires partnership. It requires collaboration among governments, businesses, development partners, research institutions, and think tanks.

Most importantly, it requires a shared commitment to turning knowledge into action. As we often remind ourselves, today's challenges require better evidence, stronger cooperation, and policies that transform knowledge into action.

6. Transition

Before I conclude, let me thank each of you for being part of this ATTN Forum.

The challenges before us are significant, but so are the opportunities. By working together, sharing evidence, and learning from one another, we can help shape policies that strengthen resilience, support sustainable growth, and improve lives across Asia and the Pacific.

I hope the conversations over the next two days will inspire new ideas, stronger partnerships, and practical actions for the region.

With that, let us turn to our keynote session and hear insights that will help frame and enrich our discussions throughout the Forum.

Thank you very much.

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