

**PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE 25th ASEAN ECONOMIC
COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING**

TALKING POINTS FOR THE AEC COUNCIL CHAIR

25 May 2025, 11:20 – 11:45am, KLCC Convention Centre

His Hon. Liew Chin Tong, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Investment, Trade & Industry, Malaysia

Dato' Hairil Yahri Yaacob, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Investment, Trade & Industry, Malaysia

Colleagues, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good morning, and our apologies on the delay for this session – the AEC Council had a lot to go through in our agenda this morning.
2. As part of the preparations for the 46th ASEAN Summit and its related meetings, Malaysia, through the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI), successfully hosted the **25th ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council Meeting** today at the **Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC)**.
3. We would like to thank the Economic Ministers and their delegations from all **ASEAN Member States**, as well as **Timor-Leste**, for their **active participation and valuable contributions** towards the **successful convening** of this meeting. Their presence underscores the **shared commitment to advancing**

ASEAN's economic integration, while strengthening regional cooperation under the AEC agenda.

4. The AEC Council is the **ASEAN key coordinating body** overseeing the work of the various sectors under the **ASEAN Economic Community Pillar**. As such, it serves as a **critical platform to review the progress of regional economic initiatives** and **discuss key deliverables** leading up to the 46th ASEAN Summit.
5. At the meeting, the AEC Council deliberated on **several pressing issues**, including the **rising geopolitical tensions and the impact of US tariff measures on ASEAN's trading and investment landscape**.
6. The Ministers of the AEC Council collectively acknowledged that **ASEAN would need to break away from a "business-as-usual" approach**, and **adopt bolder, more agile, and forward-looking strategies to safeguard and advance ASEAN's socio-economic interests**.
7. We reaffirmed that ASEAN's **centrality, non-alignment, neutrality and unity** remain the bedrock of our **resilience and success**. The region's **diversity, collective economic strengths, political stability, and shared commitment** serve as **foundational building blocks** to successfully navigate current and future challenges.

8. Let me now share with you a few of the **key outcomes of the 25th AEC Council Meeting**:
9. **First**, the AEC Council welcomed the **full completion of Lao PDR's Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs)** for 2024, marked by the successful **adoption of the Roadmap on Digital Trade Standards**. This milestone reflects the continued commitment in advancing the ASEAN's digital economy agenda.
10. **Secondly**, on the status of Malaysia's 18 PEDs, I am pleased to report that **two of our PEDs** for 2025 have been successfully concluded. These are: (1) The **full conclusion of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) 3.0 Upgrade Negotiations**; **and** (2) The **successful conclusion of the upgrade of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA)**.
11. Both upgraded agreements are scheduled to be **signed at the sidelines of the upcoming 47th ASEAN Leaders' Summit in October 2025** in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We remain confident that these milestones will serve as **pivotal enablers for ASEAN's sustained growth and competitiveness**.
12. The **successful conclusion of these negotiations** is expected to **enhance the region's economic integration** and **generate significant economic benefits** for ASEAN, as we continue to navigate an increasingly volatile global economic landscape. In particular, ATIGA — long regarded as the **cornerstone of ASEAN's economic integration** — will now feature **forward-**

looking and commercially meaningful provisions aimed at **further boosting regional trade, enhancing supply chain resilience**, and promoting **deeper economic integration** within ASEAN.

13. **Third**, we are also pleased to announce the **conclusion of negotiations on the Enhanced Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on the ASEAN Power Grid (APG)**. This is scheduled to be signed at the **43rd ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting (AMEM)** in October 2025.
14. The **APG** is a strategic initiative in **strengthening ASEAN's regional energy security, connectivity, and sustainability**. In this context, we also welcomed ongoing work towards the establishment of the **APG Financing Facility Framework**, which will **enhance cross-border flows of foreign direct investments (FDIs)** and **new funding opportunities** for regional energy-related projects. AEC Council also expressed full support for the convening of a **joint meeting** between ASEAN's **Energy, Finance, and Economic Ministers** in **August 2025**.
15. **Fourth** update: **we wish to highlight the status of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025**, which is now in its final year of implementation. We are pleased to report that, as of April 2025, the **overall implementation rate** stands at a

commendable 97%, comprising 75% completed measures and 22% currently in progress.

16. The AEC Blueprint 2025 has played a **pivotal role** in shaping ASEAN's economic architecture over the past decade. It has served as the **strategic roadmap** for building a **highly integrated and cohesive ASEAN economy**, promoting **inclusive and innovation-led growth**, and deepening **regional connectivity and competitiveness**. Through the Blueprint, ASEAN has made significant strides in areas such as **trade liberalisation, investment facilitation, MSME development, digital transformation, and sustainable economic initiatives**.
17. This **impressive 97% implementation rate** not only demonstrates **ASEAN's collective commitment to economic integration** but also **reinforces the region's ability to respond to global uncertainties** in a cool, calm and calculated manner. The **key learnings and progress under the AEC Blueprint 2025** will serve as a **solid foundation** for the development of the **AEC Strategic Plan 2026–2030**, which will chart the region's next phase of economic growth and transformation.
18. **In this context, the year 2025 marks another pivotal milestone for ASEAN**, as we prepare to launch the successor to the AEC Blueprint 2025 — which is the **ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Strategic Plan 2026–2030**. This forward-looking document will be **launched as part of** the Compendium with the overarching **ASEAN Community Vision 2045 at the 46th ASEAN Summit**.

Tomorrow, we will witness the signing of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration.

19. The **AEC Council reaffirmed support and commitment** to the **effective implementation of the AEC Strategic Plan**, which will guide ASEAN's post-2025 economic integration agenda.
20. The AEC Council also looks forward to the **Regional Socialisation of the AEC Strategic Plan**, that will be held on 12 June 2025 in Kuala Lumpur. This session will serve as a **key multi-stakeholder platform** to **socialise and share** the **economic benefits** of the **AEC Strategic Plan**.
21. AEC Council also **discussed and reaffirmed support to facilitating and accelerating Timor-Leste's accession** to the required **ASEAN's Economic Agreements (AEAs)**, as outlined in the **Roadmap** adopted by Leaders in **2023**. As Chair, Malaysia expressed that **Timor-Leste's accession is a priority for our Chairmanship in 2025**. We shared our strong view that **Timor-Leste's entry as ASEAN's 11th Member State** will **further strengthen** our region's **economic growth and potential**.
22. We also **continued our exchange on the economic outlook and continuing uncertainties** due to the volatile geo-economic situation and their likely impact to the region. Taking note of the outcomes of the special AEM and the special AEM-Dialogue Partner consultations, as well as the first ASEAN Geoeconomics Task Force meeting on 16 May 2025, the **Council acknowledged**

the need for collective action to respond to and address disruptive global trade policies.

23. On that note, I would now like to open the session to questions from the media.

Thank you.