



THE TWENTIETH AEM-CER CONSULTATIONS
23 August 2015, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. Economic Ministers from the ten ASEAN Member States and from Australia and New Zealand (Closer Economic Relations - CER) met on 23 August 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for the Twentieth ASEAN-CER Consultations. The Consultations were co-chaired by H.E. Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade and Industry of Malaysia; the Honourable Andrew Robb, Australia's Minister for Trade and Investment and the Honourable Timothy Groser, Minister of Trade of New Zealand.

2. The Ministers acknowledged the strengthened and long-term partnership among the Parties with the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of ASEAN's Dialogue Relations with Australia last year, and with New Zealand in 2015. The Ministers further welcomed the deepening economic relations between ASEAN and CER through the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations and the steady growth of trade and investment in the region.

3. The Ministers, in particular, noted ASEAN's total merchandise trade with Australia and New Zealand at combined value of USD 81.1 billion in 2014, with ASEAN being a net exporter to CER.

4. ASEAN was Australia's second largest trading partner in 2014, with total two-way merchandise trade of USD70.4 billion, and was the recipient of foreign direct investment stocks of USD23.9 billion from Australia at 31 December 2014. In the same year, merchandise trade between ASEAN and New Zealand reached USD 10.7 billion and ASEAN received USD 319 million of FDI inflows from New Zealand. With ASEAN becoming a strategic location in global supply chains, the Ministers noted the need to ensure that the trade and investment regime among the Parties is progressing and business-friendly.

ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA)

5. The Ministers were encouraged by the utilisation of AANZFTA tariff preferences. The Ministers encouraged Parties to continue the work that would enable businesses to maximize the use of the opportunities arising from AANZFTA.

6. The Ministers recalled the signing of the First Protocol to Amend the Agreement Establishing the AANZFTA in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in August 2014. The Ministers noted the progress of each Party's domestic ratification process and confirmed that the First Protocol should enter into force on 1 October 2015 for at least ten Parties. The Ministers noted that the First Protocol should make AANZFTA more business-friendly, transparent and administratively efficient.

7. The Ministers stressed the need for Parties to exercise the utmost flexibility in the transition to First Protocol's implementation to avoid confusion among traders and businesses, and endorsed the arrangements for implementation so far agreed, which include: (a) the revised Certificate of Origin Form for AANZFTA and its continuation sheet and (b) transitional guidelines on completing the information of the origin conferring criterion on the AANZFTA Certificate of Origin Form. These arrangements will help to ensure that businesses are adequately informed about the changes resulting from the First Protocol.

8. The Ministers highlighted the need to progress the effort to facilitate trade and increase business use of AANZFTA through the timely transposition of tariff reduction schedules and product specific rules from Harmonized System (HS) 2012 to HS 2017, and development of a framework for a pilot project on full origin cumulation for certain products or sectors aimed at facilitating the voluntary participation of all Parties.

9. The Ministers also noted that further work is required to achieve concrete and meaningful outcomes in AANZFTA implementation and that there is a need to accelerate progress in the FTA's built-in agenda, particularly in the: (a) review of non-tariff measures (NTMs), (b) review of the cumulation rule and the product specific rules (PSRs), (c) review of services commitments, and (d) schedules of reservations in the Investment Chapter.

Broader Economic Cooperation

10. The Ministers welcomed the FTA Joint Committee (FJC)'s assessment of the AANZFTA Economic Cooperation Support Program (AECSP) which covered the following elements: progress in AANZFTA implementation; degree of AANZFTA's relevance to business; extent of the Agreement's contribution to enhancing regional economic integration; and effectiveness of the AECSP in supporting these elements.

11. The Ministers noted that the AECSP has delivered results and tangible outcomes in terms of capacity-building, at individual and institutional levels, by developing technical expertise among officials and enhancing ASEAN Member States (AMS) institutions in the areas of trade in goods, services, investment, intellectual property and competition.

12. The Ministers agreed to extend AECSP up to 30 June 2018 subject to budget availability and relevant financial approval processes, with priority given to supporting projects which focus on areas of FTA implementation that have not been achieved,

particularly the built-in agenda. The Ministers tasked the FJC to make recommendations for the design of a possible new economic cooperation program (to succeed AECSP), alongside the General Review of AANZFTA in 2016.

13. The Ministers noted the progress in communicating the benefits and impact of AECSP through program highlights and series of factsheets on several economic cooperation activities and encouraged Parties to continue to demonstrate the benefits and mainstream AECSP beyond the immediate term.

LIST OF MINISTERS

1. **The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP**, Minister for Trade and Investment, Australia;
2. **The Hon. Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng**, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam;
3. **H.E. Pan Sorasak**, Secretary of State for Commerce, Cambodia (representing H.E. Sun Chanthol, Senior Minister and Minister of Commerce, Cambodia);
4. **Mrs Sondang Anggraini**, Adviser to the Minister on Trade and Diplomacy, Ministry of Trade, Indonesia (representing H.E. Thomas Trikasih Lembong, Minister of Trade, Indonesia);
5. **H.E. Mrs Khemmani Pholsena**, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR;
6. **H.E. Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed**, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
7. **H.E. Dr. Kan Zaw**, Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar;
8. **The Hon. Timothy Groser**, Minister of Trade, New Zealand;
9. **H.E. Gregory L. Domingo**, Secretary of Trade and Industry, the Philippines;
10. **Mrs Ow Foong Pheng**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore (representing H.E. Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore);
11. **Mr Thawatchai Sophastienphong**, Director-General of the Department of Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand (representing H.E. Gen. Chatchai Sarikulya, Minister of Commerce, Thailand);
12. **H.E. Nguyen Cam Tu**, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam (representing H.E. Vu Huy Hoang, Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam);
13. **H.E. Le Luong Minh**, Secretary-General of ASEAN.