

**THE THIRD MEETING OF THE ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS AND THE  
MINISTERS OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, JAPAN AND REPUBLIC OF  
KOREA**

**4 May 2001, Siemreap, Cambodia**

**Joint Press Statement**

1. The Third Meeting of the ASEAN Economic Ministers and Ministers of the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea was held in Siemreap, Cambodia on 4 May 2001.
2. The Ministers discussed the Leaders' initiatives from the ASEAN + China, Japan and Korea Summit held on 25 November 2000 in Singapore, exchanged views on international economic issues such as APEC and the WTO, and endorsed six projects in IT, environment, SMEs, Mekong Basin development and standards and conformity assessment for implementation by member countries.

**Progress of Cooperation**

3. The Ministers noted that bilateral trade between ASEAN and the three Northeast Asian countries grew by 38.2% between the first half of 1999 to the first half of 2000. The volume of trade grew from US \$ 66.5 billion in Jan-June 1999 to US \$ 91.9 during the same period in 2000. The Ministers agreed that, with the increased level of cooperation among countries in the region, there was a huge potential for further expanding trade and investment flows among the countries of East Asia.
4. The Ministers agreed on the need for enhanced cooperation in IT, given the importance given by the Leaders to the New Economy and the ongoing efforts by ASEAN to implement the e-ASEAN initiative. The ASEAN Ministers welcomed the inclusion of officials from China, Japan and Korea in the e-ASEAN + 3 Working Group, which will serve as a focal point for ICT collaboration between ASEAN and Northeast Asia. The ASEAN Ministers also welcomed the various initiatives being taken by China, Japan and Korea to assist ASEAN in fostering the New Economy, particularly through human resource development in the IT sector. In this connection, the Ministers noted with interest the proposal for public and private sectors to donate used ICT equipment to high schools, particularly in the newer ASEAN Member Countries.
5. The Ministers recalled the decision at their second meeting in October 2000 for Senior

Economic Officials to submit projects proposals in priority areas of cooperation and welcomed the large number of proposals drawn up by member countries. They endorsed the following six project proposals recommended by the senior economic officials.

- (a) Strengthening the Competitiveness of ASEAN SMEs : To address the challenges and opportunities of globalisation, the project would allow SMEs to establish SME networks and gain experience in technical and managerial skills to further enhance their productivity.
  - (b) Training Programme on Practical Technology for Environmental Protection: The project offers practical training in environmental protection, in particular on water pollution treatment.
  - (c) Asian Common Skill Standard Initiative for IT Engineer: By adopting a common skill standard for IT engineers, countries would be in a better position to address the shortage of IT personnel. The project will allow countries to share information in setting such standards, in particular, the development of IT Engineer Examinations.
  - (d) Conformity Assessment Development Program in Industrial Standard: The project will enhance the competency of countries' conformity assessment system, especially in the areas of testing, inspection and quality/environment management, to ensure their products and services would meet international standards. Such competency would also promote greater participation on the part of ASEAN and Northeast Asian countries in international mutual recognition arrangements.
  - (e) Software Development in the Mekong Basin Project: Human resource development is crucial for countries in the Mekong Basin to continue to attract foreign direct investment and trade to help in their development. The project offers courses on laws and practices pertaining to international trade and investment and English language training to further enhance human resources in the Mekong Basin.
  - (f) ASEAN Satellite Image Archive and Environmental Study: One of the important challenges facing the region is the impact of rapid modernization and industrialization on environment such as deforestation, water quality, flood, longer dry seasons and public health. The project will allow countries to share existing resources in remote sensing and satellite image archives to study, manage and resolve these environmental problems.
6. The Ministers urged the early implementation of the six projects, which should be shepherded and coordinated by the proposing countries, in order to ensure that progress can be reported to

the ASEAN + China, Japan and Korea Summit in November 2001 in Brunei Darussalam. The Ministers hoped that, besides the above six projects, additional projects may be proposed and discussed by senior economic officials.

### **International Economic Issues**

7. The Ministers considered a wide range of international and regional economic matters of common interest. They agreed on the importance of shaping the discussions in APEC and the WTO given the need to reduce the risks to economic growth in the region as a result of the slowdown in global economic activity.

### **APEC**

8. The Ministers welcomed China's APEC chairmanship for the year 2001 and expressed their full support for the realization of the theme - "Meeting New Challenges in the New Century: Achieving Common Prosperity through Participation and Cooperation" - to ensure that all member economies are in a better position to reap the benefits of globalisation and the new economy.
9. The Ministers expressed their full support for the forthcoming meeting of the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade which will be held in Shanghai, China on 6-7 June 2001. The Ministers agreed that APEC economies should work collectively to face up to the challenges posed by globalisation, the digital divide, the development of the new economy and the multilateral trading system. In particular, they affirmed APEC's role in enhancing cooperation as important to meeting the downturn in the global economy and to preventing the recurrence of economic difficulties.
10. The Ministers were briefed on the preparations for the upcoming APEC High-Level Meeting on Human Capacity Building to be held on 15-16 May 2001 in Beijing, People's Republic of China. The meeting will bring together members of the business community, academics and public sector in the region to address the challenges to human resources development given economic globalisation and the rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The Ministers fully supported the initiative and will ensure the participation of their respective private sectors and academics in the meeting.

### **World Trade Organization**

11. Reflecting on the likely slowdown in global economic activity, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the strengthening of the rules-based multilateral trading system and expressed support for its primacy.
12. The Ministers welcomed deepening of mutual understanding on the possible agenda for a new round of the WTO, such as anti-dumping and investment, through the sessions held in Kuala Lumpur by member countries in January 2001. The Ministers strongly affirmed that these efforts made by member countries would be an important contribution to developing a balanced and sufficiently broad based agenda, including anti-dumping, and to launching a new round in Doha.
13. The Ministers agreed that developing country concerns must be seriously addressed in the new round. The Ministers emphasized the need for more enhanced capacity building for the implementation of the WTO Agreements. The Ministers also agreed that the WTO should respond to the needs and challenges of the global economy in the 21st century.
14. The Ministers welcomed the impending accession of the People's Republic of China and supported the acceleration of the accession process for Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam.

#### **Date and Venue of the Next Meeting**

15. The Ministers agreed to convene again in September 2001 during the Thirty-Third Meeting of the ASEAN Economic Ministers in Ha Noi, Viet Nam.

## **LIST OF MINISTERS**

The Meeting was attended by:

- a) H.E. Dr. Adisai Bodharamik, Chairman of AEM and Minister of Commerce, Thailand;
- b) H.E. Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam;
- c) H.E. Mr. Cham Prasidh, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
- d) H.E. Mr. Shi Guangsheng, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, People's Republic of China;
- e) H.E. Mr. Nazaruddin Nasution, Indonesian Ambassador to Cambodia;
- f) Mr. Hidehiro Konno, Vice Minister, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan;
- g) H.E. Mr. Hwang Doo-Yun, Minister of Trade, Republic of Korea;
- h) H.E. Mr. Soulivong Daravong, Minister of Industry and Handicraft, Lao PDR;
- i) Mr Sidek Hassan, Deputy Secretary-General (Trade), Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
- j) H.E. Brigadier General David O. Abel, Minister at the Office of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, Myanmar;
- k) Mr. Thomas Aquino, Undersecretary, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines;
- l) H.E. B.G. (NS) George Yeo, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
- m) Mr. Luong Van Tu, Vice Minister, Ministry of Trade, Viet Nam; and
- n) H.E. Mr. Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr., Secretary-General of ASEAN.