



THE FOURTH ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS
AND THE MINISTERS OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA,
JAPAN AND REPUBLIC OF KOREA CONSULTATION
12 September 2001, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

1. The ASEAN Economic Ministers and Ministers from the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea held their fourth consultation in Ha Noi, Viet Nam on 12 September 2001. The consultation was co-chaired by H. E. Mr Vu Khoan, Minister of Trade of Viet Nam; H.E. Mr. Sun Zhenyu, Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, People's Republic of China; H.E. Mr. Takeo Hiranuma, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan; and H.E. Mr. Hwang Doo-Yun, Minister for Trade, Republic of Korea.

2. The Ministers exchanged views on the global economic climate and recent developments in ASEAN and Northeast Asian countries. The Ministers noted the continued growth in trade volume between ASEAN and China, Japan and Korea which grew by 27.5% from US \$ 158.2 billion in 1999 to US \$ 201.7 billion in 2000. The Ministers also noted that despite the positive economic growth and optimism in the year 2000, there is a growing consensus that the trend would not continue in view of the slow down in the US, EU and Japan. In this regard, the Ministers underlined their commitment to maintain outward looking policies to attract trade and investment and bolster economic growth. The Ministers further underlined the importance of continuing regional economic integration as a means to promote trade and investment flows.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION PROJECTS

3. The Ministers noted the implementation status of the six economic cooperation projects endorsed during the Third AEM+3 Meeting held in Siemreap, Cambodia on 4 May 2001:

- (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.

4. The Ministers considered and endorsed the project on "Asia e-Learning Initiative", which involves sharing information on the latest e-learning trends and technologies, building consensus on interoperability of e-learning system, and effective utilisation of e-learning in Asia.

5. The Ministers requested the Senior Economic Officials to further expedite the implementation of the approved projects.

e-ASEAN initiative

6. The Ministers recalled their decision to establish an eASEAN+3 Working Group during the last meeting which would serve as a forum for ICT collaboration between ASEAN and Northeast Asia. The Ministers welcomed the successful outcome of the first meeting of the eASEAN+3 Working Group held on 5 July 2001 in Siemreap, Cambodia, including initiatives to accelerate the implementation of the e-ASEAN Framework Agreement.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

7. The Ministers exchanged views on international and regional economic issues of concern, including the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM).

World Trade Organisation

8. The Ministers supported the launch of a new round of WTO negotiations. The Ministers renewed their commitment to the strengthening of the rules-based multilateral trading system and expressed strong determination to formulate a balanced and broad-based agenda, including among others, antidumping, market access and giving effect to special and differential treatment, for the new round and to launch the round in Doha. The Ministers agreed that the concerns of developing countries must be seriously considered and emphasized the need for more enhanced capacity building to assist implementation. The Ministers welcomed recent developments regarding implementation issues in Geneva, including the TRIMS extension package, and agreed to work further on these issues.

9. The Ministers reiterated the importance of more enhanced capacity building for the implementation of the WTO Agreements and appreciated the developments to date on the realization of the Strategic APEC Plan for WTO Capacity Building. The Ministers expressed support for the early accession of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam to the WTO. The Ministers noted the progress made in the accession of China to the WTO and looked forward to China's full participation as a WTO member at the Doha Ministerial Conference.

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

10. The Ministers welcomed the preparations being undertaken by China for the forthcoming APEC Economic Leaders Meeting (AELM) in Shanghai, China on 20-21 October 2001. The Ministers also welcomed the outcomes of the APEC High-Level Meeting on Human Capacity Building, which was held in Beijing, China on 15-16 May 2001.

Asia Europe Meeting

11. The Ministers noted with appreciation Viet Nam's chairmanship of the Third Asia-Europe Economic Ministers Meeting held on 10-11 September 2001 in Ha Noi. The Ministers underlined the importance of ASEM and expressed their strong support for the realization of its theme calling for "Asia-Europe Partnership for Prosperity and Stability in the New Millennium".

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ASEAN+3 AND ASEAN+1 SUMMITS

12. The Ministers were pleased with the preparations being undertaken by Brunei Darussalam for the ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+1 Summits, which will be held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam from 5-6 November 2001.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

- (i) H.E. Mr. Vu Khoan, Minister of Trade, Viet Nam;
- (ii) H.E. Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam;
- (iii) H.E. Mr. Cham Prasidh, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
- (iv) H.E. Mr. Sun Zhenyu, Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, People's Republic of China;
- (v) H.E. Ms. Rini M.S. Soewandi, Minister of Industry and Trade, Indonesia;
- (vi) H.E. Mr. Takeo Hiranuma, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan;
- (vii) H.E. Mr. Hwang Doo-Yun, Minister for Trade, Republic of Korea;
- (viii) H.E. Mr. Soulivong Daravong, Minister of Industry and Handicrafts, Lao PDR;
- (ix) H.E. Dato' Seri Rafidah Aziz, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
- (x) H.E. Brigadier General David O. Abel, Minister at the Office of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, Myanmar;
- (xi) H.E. Dr. Thomas G. Aquino, Undersecretary of Trade and Industry, Philippines;
- (xii) H.E. B.G. (NS) George Yeo, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
- (xiii) H.E. Mr. Adisai Bodharamik, Minister of Commerce, Thailand; and
- (xiv) H.E. Mr. Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr., Secretary-General of ASEAN.