



**THE TWENTY-SIXTH AEM-METI CONSULTATIONS  
28 August 2020, Video Conference Meeting**

**JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

1. Economic Ministers from the ten ASEAN Member States and the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan (“the Ministers”) met virtually on 28 August 2020 for the Twenty-Sixth AEM-METI Consultations. The Consultations were co-chaired by H.E. Tran Tuan Anh, Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam, and H.E. KAJIYAMA Hiroshi, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan.
2. The Ministers noted that, according to preliminary ASEAN data for 2019, two-way trade between ASEAN and Japan reached USD 225.9 billion, accounting for 8.0 per cent of ASEAN’s total trade, while total FDI inflows from Japan amounted to USD 20.4 billion, accounting for 12.7 per cent of total FDI inflows to ASEAN. This placed Japan as ASEAN’s fourth largest trading partner and second largest external source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) among ASEAN’s Dialogue Partners in 2019.
3. The Ministers acknowledged the unprecedented challenges brought about by the COVID-19 global pandemic, which have resulted in loss of lives and livelihood as well as economic slowdown for most, if not all, economies in the region. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to take collective actions to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic and resolved to ensure macroeconomic and financial stability by keeping the markets open for trade and investment and ensuring the supply chain connectivity, particularly for the flow of essential goods such as medical supplies, medicines and food in the region in compliance with the WTO rules, and refraining from introducing or maintaining measures (i.e. of non-tariff barriers) that could disrupt the flow of essential goods and services necessary to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministers also underscored the importance of coordinated efforts in promoting economic and social resilience in the region, including through the signing of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in 2020 and enhancing the application of digital technologies and promoting cross-border transfer of information and data by electronic means to harness the opportunities in the digital economy, as well as to strengthening consumer and business trust while respecting both domestic and international legal frameworks.
4. The Ministers were pleased to note the progress in the implementation of the ASEAN-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan (Action Plan) which was adopted by the Ministers at the Special AEM-METI Virtual Meeting on 29 July 2020. The Action Plan contained the concrete activities to realise the three objectives in the ASEAN-Japan Initiatives on Economic Resilience in Response to the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak, namely: (i) sustaining the close economic ties developed by ASEAN and Japan; (ii) mitigating the adverse impact of COVID- 19 on the economy; and (iii)

strengthening economic resilience. The Ministers expressed hope that the successful implementation of the Action Plan will help ASEAN and Japan to lessen the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to regional economic growth after COVID-19. Furthermore, acknowledging that economic cooperation between ASEAN and Japan should adapt to current socio-economic challenges, the Ministers welcomed the launch of “Dialogue for Innovative and Sustainable Growth (DISG)” in order to enhance the steady implementation of the Action Plan and accelerate “Innovative and Sustainable Growth” across the region to achieve simultaneously strengthening industrial competitiveness and addressing various socio-economic challenges through mobilizing various stakeholders including businesses and academics.

5. The Ministers recognized the important role of the rules-based multilateral trading system in driving economic recovery in the post-pandemic period, particularly in helping businesses to move towards more resilient and sustainable growth. A predictable, transparent, non-discriminatory and open global trading system will be essential for inclusive and sustainable economic recovery. In this regard, the Ministers reiterated their commitment to ensure the enforcement of existing international rules and reinvigorate the WTO to be a stronger and more effective organization.

6. The Ministers welcomed the entry into force of the First Protocol to Amend the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement to incorporate the Chapters on Trade in Services, Movement of Natural Persons (MNP), and Investment on 1 August 2020 among Japan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, and on 1 October 2020 for Brunei Darussalam. The Ministers expected the other signatory states to complete their domestic procedures to ratify the Protocol so that it may enter into force for all Parties by the end of this year. The Ministers expected that the implementation of the Protocol will further broaden and deepen bilateral ASEAN-Japan economic relations, particularly for services providers and investors to expand their businesses in the region.

7. The Ministers reviewed the progress of implementation of the AJCEP Agreement and underscored the importance of ensuring that the AJCEP remains to be a vital component of post-COVID-19 recovery efforts. The Ministers noted on-going efforts to implement tariff commitments under the AJCEP Agreement based on the latest HS code and encouraged all Parties to expedite such implementation in this regard. The Ministers also looked forward to the implementation of the transposition of the AJCEP Product Specific Rules (PSRs) in the latest HS code to facilitate the bilateral trade. The Ministers also looked forward to the signing of the RCEP Agreement in November 2020 and emphasized that the RCEP remains open for India. The Ministers agreed that, in the light of the unprecedented challenge brought about by the COVID-19 global pandemic, the signing of the RCEP Agreement would be the region’s strongest response.

8. The Ministers welcomed the result of the first survey undertaken by the Federation of Japanese Chambers of Commerce and Industry in ASEAN (FJCCIA) and JETRO, which highlighted the strong commitment of Japanese companies to continue and to expand their businesses in the region despite the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The Ministers noted the policy recommendations from the FJCCIA in strengthening supply chain resilience in ASEAN, accelerating digital transformation, and preparing the ASEAN human resources in the post-COVID era.

9. Ministers welcomed the proposals from the ASEAN Japan Innovation Network (AJIN) on strengthening the supply chain between ASEAN and Japan, accelerating digitalization and in achieving sustainable and inclusive growth in ASEAN. The Ministers commended the specific support programs led by JETRO in line with the above-mentioned Action Plan which includes i) Helpline for recovery & restoration, ii) Strengthening of regional supply chain, and iii) DX platform for ASEAN-Japan collaborative innovation. The Ministers expressed their expectation for further practical inputs from AJIN and JETRO into forthcoming “Dialogue for Innovative and Sustainable Growth (DISG)”.

10. The Ministers noted the various activities carried out by AMEICC, which correspond to the Action Plan and include i) support for the Regional Digital Trade Transformation in ASEAN proposed by ASEAN-BAC through the survey research; ii) financial support for strengthening overseas supply chains; iii) financial support for joint pilot projects between ASEAN and Japanese companies to solve social and economic challenges in ASEAN through 4th Industrial Revolution Innovation; iv) development of Mekong sub-region through the formulation of the Work Program under Mekong Industrial Development Vision 2.0; and v) AMEICC’s Working Group activities regarding SME cooperation, chemical industry and automobile industry. The ASEAN Economic Ministers expressed their appreciation to Japan for its continuous support to ASEAN economic development.

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## LIST OF MINISTERS

1. **Dr. May Fae'zah Ariffin**, Permanent Secretary (Economy), Ministry of Finance and Economy, Brunei Darussalam (representing H.E. Dato Dr. Amin Liew Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II, Brunei Darussalam);
2. **H.E. Pan Sorasak**, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
3. **H.E. Agus Suparmanto**, Minister of Trade, Indonesia;
4. **H.E. KAJIYAMA Hiroshi**, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan;
5. **H.E. Mrs. Khemmani Pholsena**, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR;
6. **H.E. Dato' Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali**, Senior Minister and Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
7. **Mr. Aung Naing Oo**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Myanmar (representing H.E. Thaung Tun, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Myanmar);
8. **H.E. Ramon M. Lopez**, Secretary of Trade and Industry, Philippines;
9. **H.E. Chan Chun Sing**, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
10. **H.E. Dr. Sansern Samalapa**, Vice Minister for Commerce, Thailand (representing H.E. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce, Thailand);
11. **H.E. Tran Tuan Anh**, Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam; and
12. **H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi**, Secretary-General of ASEAN.