



**THE THIRTY-FIRST AEM-METI CONSULTATION
24 September 2025, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Thirty-first ASEAN Economic Ministers – Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (AEM-METI) Consultation was held on 24 September 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Consultation was co-chaired by H.E. Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul Aziz, Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry of Malaysia, and H.E. Yoji Muto, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan. The Meeting also welcomed the participation of H.E. Filipus Nino Pereira, Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, who joined the Consultation as an observer.
2. The Meeting noted that, according to ASEAN's preliminary statistics, the total two-way trade between ASEAN and Japan reached USD 236.4 billion in 2024, whilst total foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from Japan into ASEAN were valued at USD 17.5 billion in 2024. These figures placed Japan as ASEAN's fourth largest trading partner and fifth largest source of foreign direct investment last year.
3. The Meeting exchanged views on regional and global economic challenges including the current global trade tensions which have caused uncertainty, impacted supply chain resiliency, and brought significant challenges to businesses, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as to global trade dynamics. Amidst this backdrop, the Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to upholding a predictable, transparent, free, fair, inclusive, sustainable, and rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at its core. The Meeting underscored the importance of fostering closer economic cooperation between ASEAN and Japan amid the emerging global economic landscape.
4. The Meeting welcomed the successful convening of the Special AEM-METI Consultation on 20 May 2025 via videoconference and reiterated the importance of enhancing supply chain resilience, digital transformation, energy transition, innovation, and critical industries. The Meeting also reaffirmed its commitment to foster a conducive investment environment through exploring industry-specific cooperative initiatives such as those in the automotive sector, clean energy, and the ethical, responsible development and deployment of artificial intelligence.
5. The Meeting welcomed the progress report of the Future Design and Action Plan (FDAP) of Innovative and Sustainable ASEAN-Japan Economic Co-Creation 2023-2033, which serves as a strategic blueprint for advancing ASEAN-Japan economic relations in a forward-looking and mutually beneficial manner. The Meeting welcomed the initiatives undertaken under the FDAP across its four pillars of

strengthening cyber-physical connectivity, co-creation of dynamic human capital, promoting open innovation beyond borders, and realizing sustainability.

6. The Meeting noted the updates on the implementation of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement. In particular, the Meeting welcomed the completion of the transposition of the AJCEP Product Specific Rules (PSRs) into Harmonised System (HS) 2022, acknowledging that this will enhance clarity, usability, and consistency of the rules of origin, thereby facilitating greater utilisation of the AJCEP by businesses and contributing to increased trade flows between ASEAN and Japan. The Meeting also noted the possibility of updating the rules and standards, including in existing agreements such as the AJCEP and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) to ensure they remain relevant to businesses. The Meeting further welcomed Japan's support for ASEAN priorities including the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA).

7. The Meeting welcomed the Master Plan for the Next-Generation Automotive Industry ("Master Plan") as a reference for initiatives to strengthen the ASEAN automotive industry's competitiveness through varied pathways, stressing decarbonisation, digitalisation, servitisation, and regional harmonisation. The Meeting also welcomed the ASEAN-Japan AI Innovation and Co-Creation Roadmap ("AI Roadmap") which aims to promote strategic collaboration between ASEAN and Japan on AI deployment and adoption in the region, while recognising the importance of ASEAN's digital transformation and Japan's support thorough the development of AI talent, AI business cases, and knowledge sharing. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) for its contribution to the development of the Master Plan and the AI Roadmap and looked forward to the continued implementation of these two initiatives.

8. The Meeting also noted the contributions of the ERIA Digital Innovation and Sustainable Economy Centre (E-DISC) in advancing regional cooperation in digital transformation. The Meeting welcomed E-DISC's initiatives across its three key priority areas of i) Digital trade, ii) Data governance, and, iii) Innovation and entrepreneurship. The Meeting encouraged E-DISC to continue supporting ASEAN's transition to a digitally driven, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

9. The Meeting welcomed the various initiatives of the AEM-METI Economic and Industrial Cooperation Committee (AMEICC), which span across three pillars: (i) sectoral working groups on the automotive industry, the chemical industry, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the Mekong sub-region (ii) the promotion of collaborative projects, and (iii) research, capacity building, and related activities. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for Japan's support to ASEAN in developing the ASEAN Strategic Action Plan for MSME Development (SAP-MSMED) 2026-2030 and for its continued support in the implementation and follow-up of the ASEAN Strategic Action Plan for SME Development (SAP-SMED) 2016-2025.

10. The Meeting noted the importance of intellectual property (IP) cooperation driven through annual ASEAN-Japan IPR Action Plans, emphasising that capacity building is essential for establishing user-friendly, prompt, and quality patent examinations. The Meeting further noted on the annual ASEAN-Japan Heads of IP

Offices meeting which discusses and takes stock of the work items in the Action Plan. The Meeting welcomed further IP cooperation aimed at strengthening supply chain resilience, particularly in the semiconductor sector, leveraging ERIA's research and tailored training programs.

11. The Meeting acknowledged the critical role that the WTO has played in fostering global economic growth and underscored the importance of working together to advance WTO reform to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in addressing current and emerging global trade challenges, such as ensuring a global level playing field. In this regard, the Meeting reaffirmed its commitments to work towards necessary reform of the WTO to improve all its functions, including having a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all WTO members. The Meeting recognised the role that plurilateral discussions and negotiations may play in advancing issues of interest and call for the consideration to incorporate the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement and the Agreement on Electronic Commerce into the WTO legal framework. The Meeting expressed its commitment to delivering meaningful and pragmatic outcomes at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14), to be held in Cameroon in March 2026. The Meeting also noted the ongoing discussions on the WTO moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions with a view to provide certainty and predictability for the digital economy.

12. The Meeting was apprised of ongoing regional efforts to promote energy transition through practical pathways, such as the Joint Statement and its Action Plan for Next Decade adopted at the 2nd ASEAN Zero Emission Community (AZEC) Leaders' Meeting in Lao PDR in October 2024, which outlined initiatives to support energy transition.

13. The Meeting noted the recommendations of AJBC, JETRO, and FJCCIA, highlighting the need to keep markets open, advance FTAs, strengthen the ASEAN Single Window, the early introduction of e-CO under AJCEP and RCEP, harmonise standards, and enhance supply chain resilience. The Meeting also noted proposals to support green transition initiatives, digital transformation, and responsible business practices, while promoting human capital development, financial inclusion, and mobility. The Meeting also appreciated the continued support of the Japanese business communities in advancing ASEAN's decarbonisation efforts, fostering innovation among startups, and enhancing human capital development in the region.

14. The Meeting noted Timor-Leste's continued commitment to the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN and looked forward to the full and effective fulfilment of all the criteria outlined in the Roadmap. The Meeting reaffirmed its support for Timor-Leste's integration efforts into ASEAN and expressed readiness to provide continued capacity building and technical assistance to facilitate its effective inclusion into the regional economy.
