



**THE TWENTY-THIRD AEM-CER CONSULTATIONS  
1 September 2018, Singapore**

**JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

1. Economic Ministers from the ten ASEAN Member States, Australia and New Zealand (Closer Economic Relations – CER) met on 1 September 2018 in Singapore for the Twenty-Third AEM-CER Consultations. The Consultations were co-chaired by H.E. Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore; the Hon Mark Coulton MP, Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Australia (representing Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Australia); and Hon Damien O’Connor, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand.

2. The Ministers welcomed the 11.7 per cent increase in ASEAN’s total merchandise trade with Australia, from USD 52.9 billion in 2016 to USD 59 billion in 2017; while total merchandise trade with New Zealand increased by 20.4 per cent, from USD 7.9 billion in 2016 to USD 9.5 billion in 2017, in line with stronger regional and global economic and trade expansion. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows from Australia into ASEAN also increased by 33.4 per cent from USD 1.6 billion in 2016 to USD 2.1 billion in 2017; while FDI inflows from New Zealand into ASEAN increased by 84.5 per cent from USD 0.2 billion in 2016 to USD 0.3 billion in 2017.

3. The Ministers endorsed officials’ recommendations from Stage Two of the AANZFTA General Review to guide negotiations to upgrade the Agreement, including in the areas of rules of origin, customs procedures (to include trade facilitation), services, investment, e-commerce, competition (to include consumer protection) and government procurement. Ministers also endorsed a recommendation on trade and sustainable development.

4. The Ministers tasked officials to commence implementation of the recommendations at the 11<sup>th</sup> FJC Meeting and Related Meetings in Australia in the first half of 2019 with a view to concluding text of a second protocol to amend AANZFTA within an expeditious timeframe. The FJC will devise a workplan that takes into account progress in other negotiations in determining the schedule of meetings to implement these recommendations. The outcomes should ensure the Agreement retains its relevance to business and adds value to developments in other fora including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations.

5. The Ministers reviewed the implementation of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Agreement. They welcomed the work done to stock-take Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) and tasked officials to finalise the NTM Work

Plan at the next meeting of the FTA Joint Committee. The Ministers also reiterated the importance of monitoring the utilisation of AANZFTA tariff preferences and having such data available to generate quantitative evidence on the benefits of AANZFTA, and to facilitate identification of specific sectors or issues where follow-up might be needed to improve FTA utilisation.

6. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the AANZFTA Product Specific Rules (PSRs) in HS 2017 nomenclature, and urged Parties to expedite the transposition of the AANZFTA Tariff Reduction Schedules (TRSs) to HS 2017 nomenclature to enable the TRSs and PSRs to be implemented at the same time, by 1 January 2019. Ministers noted the progress on the built-in agenda on full cumulation and Declarations of Origin, with workshops scheduled over the next 12 months. They noted these workshops would increase understanding of these two important issues.

7. The Ministers also reviewed the ratification of the First Protocol to Amend the AANZFTA Agreement and welcomed the positive feedback that the remaining Party is expected to ratify the Protocol by end-2018.

8. The Ministers welcomed the implementation of the findings from the Stage One AANZFTA General Review Report, including the adoption of revised Rules and Procedures for the AANZFTA Joint Committee and agreement to establish additional subsidiary bodies for customs procedures and trade facilitation, e-commerce, financial services, and telecommunication services to carry forward work on AANZFTA.

9. The Ministers also welcomed the AANZFTA Business Engagement Strategy (2018-2023) (<http://aanzfta.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/AANZFTA-Business-Engagement-Strategy-adopted.pdf>), focused on raising business awareness of AANZFTA, business to government dialogue, engagement in economic cooperation and collaboration among businesses. The Ministers also welcomed the development of a stakeholder engagement strategy, focused on raising awareness of AANZFTA and creating opportunities for dialogue with relevant stakeholders.

10. ASEAN Ministers expressed appreciation to Australia and New Zealand on the commitment to provide ongoing funding for economic cooperation under AANZFTA beyond 2019. The Ministers noted the effectiveness of the AANZFTA Economic Cooperation Support Program (AECSP) in supporting the implementation of the AANZFTA and in enhancing cooperation among the AANZFTA Parties as illustrated in the AECSP Communications Package. The Ministers looked forward to the design of a new programme to replace the AECSP.

11. The Ministers recognised the importance of swiftly concluding the RCEP negotiations in contributing to open and inclusive regional economic integration. To this end, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work together to achieve a modern, comprehensive, high quality, and mutually beneficial RCEP.

12. The Ministers noted the outcomes of the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, held on 17-18 March 2018 in Sydney, including the ASEAN-Australia Business Summit. ASEAN and Australia have made progress on the economic outcomes

announced at the Special Summit and will continue to work closely on their implementation.

13. The Ministers also held a dialogue with the Australia-ASEAN Chamber of Commerce (AustCham ASEAN), the Australia-ASEAN Business Council (AABC), and the ASEAN New Zealand Business Council (ANZBC). The Ministers encouraged the business representatives to continue to engage with Ministers and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council and to play their part in raising awareness of the opportunities created by the ASEAN Economic Community and free trade agreements.

14. The Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-CER Integration Partnership Forum (IPF) held on 5 April 2018 in Da Nang, Viet Nam under the theme of Good Regulatory Practice and NTMs, which provided an invaluable platform for Parties to exchange practices and ideas on how to tackle NTMs and facilitate trade. The Ministers further welcomed New Zealand's efforts to refresh the Forum, ensuring its continued relevance as a forum for a two-way exchange of views on current trade and economic integration issues.

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## LIST OF MINISTERS

1. **The Hon Mark Coulton MP**, Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Australia (representing Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Australia);
2. **Ms. Nor Ashikin Johari**, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam (representing H.E. Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II, Brunei Darussalam);
3. **H.E. Pan Sorasak**, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
4. **H.E. Enggartiasto Lukita**, Minister of Trade, Indonesia;
5. **H.E. Mrs. Khemmani Pholsena**, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR;
6. **H.E. Darell Leiking**, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
7. **H.E. U Soe Win**, Union Minister for Planning and Finance, Myanmar;
8. **Hon Damien O'Connor**, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand;
9. **Ms. Anna Maria Rosario D. Robeniol**, Assistant Secretary, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines (representing H.E. Ramon M. Lopez, Secretary of Trade and Industry, Philippines);
10. **H.E. Chan Chun Sing**, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
11. **H.E. Chutima Bunyapraphasara**, Deputy Minister of Commerce, Thailand (representing H.E. Sontirat Sontijirawong, Minister of Commerce, Thailand);
12. **H.E. Tran Tuan Anh**, Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam;
13. **H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi**, Secretary-General of ASEAN.