



**CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF  
THE 20<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN PLUS THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING  
BANGKOK, 2 AUGUST 2019**

1. The 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on 2 August 2019 in Bangkok, chaired by His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

**Review and Future Direction of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation**

2. The Ministers reiterated that the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) process remains important in increasing East Asia cooperation, and moving towards the long-term goal of building an East Asia community, with ASEAN as the driving force. The Ministers also highlighted that the APT process continues to play reinforcing and complementary roles with other regional fora such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Trilateral Cooperation. The Ministers were pleased that the work undertaken by the APT also continues to support efforts towards realising the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and deeper regional integration in East Asia.

3. The Ministers noted the further strengthening of APT cooperation in wide ranging areas, and commended the steady progress in the implementation of the APT Cooperation Work Plan (2018-2022). They called for more projects and activities with concrete outcomes to further implement the action lines in APT cooperation over the next four years. They also underscored the importance of the effective utilisation and prudent management of the APT Cooperation Fund to implement activities under the Work Plan.

4. The Ministers recalled the EAVG II report, including its recommendation to realise an East Asia Economic Community. They looked forward to the substantive progress of the implementation of projects and activities under the EAVG effort.

5. The Ministers recognised the need to further enhance dialogue and cooperation to address non-traditional security issues, including transnational crime under the APT Cooperation Work Plan 2018-2022, such as trafficking in persons, cybercrime, countering terrorism and violent extremism and illicit drugs trafficking. They also looked forward to enhancing maritime cooperation to include capability development on maritime industry.

6. The Ministers noted the global outlook in economic and trade performance and the recent moderation of growth. While noting that trade continues to expand between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries, the Ministers cautioned against rising trade tensions and its impact on growth. They expressed concern over the rising tide of protectionism and anti-globalisation sentiments that continue to plague the global economy and put the

multilateral trading system at risk. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to upholding an open, inclusive, transparent, and rules-based multilateral trading system anchored by the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They noted the work being undertaken to reform the WTO and reiterated their full support to this endeavour. They also reaffirmed their support for enhanced regional economic integration. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the progress in the negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and reiterated their full support towards the conclusion of the RCEP negotiations in 2019 as mandated by the RCEP Leaders, to create a modern, comprehensive, high quality and mutually beneficial agreement. They underscored the importance of multilateralism and regionalism in contributing to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity.

7. The Ministers commended the efforts of the ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-Korea Centre to promote economic and socio-cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries. The Ministers were pleased to note that the three Centres established regular consultations with their counterparts and called for the Centres to enhance linkages amongst themselves by exploring possible joint projects in areas of common interest.

8. The Ministers recognised the important role of the private sector in enhancing economic cooperation in East Asia. They commended the East Asia Business Council's (EABC) work in organising activities to enhance the capacity of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and conducting studies on business awareness on new technologies and their markets. The Ministers reaffirmed their continuing support for future initiatives aimed at preparing MSMEs for the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

9. The Ministers acknowledged the potential presented by the on-going digital transformation of the economy to improve the region's long-term competitiveness and the livelihood opportunities for their people as well as their preparedness for the inevitable 4IR. The Ministers also noted the development of an ASEAN Innovation Roadmap 2019-2025 that would harmonise cooperation and initiatives in related sectors and ongoing efforts for a shared ASEAN High Performance Computing (HPC) Infrastructure. To this end, they expressed support for the progress made on the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) and looked forward to the Plus Three countries' close partnership with cities in the Network as it evolves in the future. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the convening of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network Conference and Exhibition on 22-24 August 2019 in Bangkok and looked forward to sending representatives to it. The Minister acknowledged the important role of the younger generation in innovation and technology cooperation and expressed support for the APT Young Scientists' Forum to be held in China this year.

10. The Ministers commended the significant progress of the ASEAN+3 Finance process in enhancing regional economic and financial stability during the past two decades. In this regard, they welcomed the adoption of a vision document, "Strategic Directions of ASEAN+3 Finance Process," which aims to explore new potential areas of common interest and cooperation, while continuing the work on current initiatives to maintain regional economic and financial stability from a long-term perspective, as well as encourage the collaborations between regional financial institutions and international organisations to strengthen the regional economic governance structure from a long-term perspective. They also welcomed the continued commitment of APT Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to strengthen the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM), which stands at the center of the regional financial safety net of the ASEAN+3

to ensure its operational readiness to address balance-of-payments and short-term liquidity difficulties. They looked forward to the effectivity of the amended CMIM Agreement that resulted from the periodic review completed late last year and approved by the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in May 2019. The Ministers also commended the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office's (AMRO) steadfast macroeconomic surveillance work that enabled them to produce quality economic reports for its members and its flagship report contribution towards strengthening regional macroeconomic and financial stability through conducting regional macroeconomic surveillance and supporting the implementation of the CMIM.

11. The Ministers emphasised the importance of pursuing the nine strategic areas of cooperation under the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Strategy on Food, Agriculture and Forestry (APTCS) 2016-2025, along with knowledge sharing, technology transfer and investment promotion to further deepen regional collaboration. The Ministers underscored the important role of the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) Agreement as a mechanism to strengthen regional food security. In this regard, the Ministers commended the commitment of the APT countries to further strengthen the mechanism through the signing of the Protocol to amend the APTERR Agreement and to extend annual contributions to the operational cost of APTERR for a further five-year period (2018-2022).

12. The Ministers were pleased to take note of the continued cooperation among ASEAN Plus Three countries through various initiatives of the APT Centre for the Gifted in Science (ACGS), including the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN+3 Teacher Workshop for the Gifted in Science, the 12<sup>th</sup> ACGS Board of Directors (BOD) Meeting, and the 8<sup>th</sup> ASEAN+3 Junior Science Odyssey (APT JSO).

13. The Ministers were pleased with the progress in implementing the MPAC 2025 and looked forward to the support of APT countries to advance the implementation of MPAC 2025, to cover the strategies on Sustainable Infrastructure, Digital Innovation, Seamless Logistics, Regulatory Excellence, and People Mobility, and to strengthen APT cooperation in enhancing regional connectivity. They underscored the importance of developing links and synergies among MPAC 2025 and key connectivity initiatives in the region, particularly in the development of quality infrastructure in accordance with international standards. To this end, they endorsed efforts to develop an APT Leaders' Statement on Connecting the Connectivities Initiative to be adopted at the 22<sup>nd</sup> APT Summit in November 2019.

14. The Ministers emphasised the importance of cultural exchanges to promote people-to-people ties in the region. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN Plus Three Work Plan on Cooperation in Culture and Arts (2019-2021) to enhance inter-cultural exchanges and understanding, as well as looked forward to the effective implementation of the said Work Plan. The Ministers also welcomed the establishment of the Network of APT Culture Cities to promote city-level exchanges among the East Asian Cultural Cities and the ASEAN City of Culture. The Ministers also welcomed ASEAN Cultural Year 2019.

15. The Ministers acknowledged the efforts made to implement the priority areas of APT health cooperation, which include promoting universal health coverage, utilising Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for healthcare, non-communicable diseases, traditional and complementary medicine, active ageing, and human resources for health, responding to communicable and emerging health threats and food safety, as well as addressing issues related to antimicrobial resistance, all forms of malnutrition, and

disaster health management. The Ministers noted Japan's expansion of the target areas under the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative. The Ministers welcomed Thailand's initiative in establishing the ASEAN Centre for Active Ageing and Innovation (ACAI) in 2019 and hosting of the APT Symposium on Strengthening Demographic Policy Cooperation and the Regional Conference on Promoting Decent Work for Older Persons in ASEAN+3 in April and June 2019, respectively.

16. The Ministers reiterated the commitment towards advancing cooperation in promoting sustainable development, as well as strengthening cooperation with all stakeholders, including the private sector, to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, the Ministers called for development of collaborative projects to protect and conserve the environment, including biodiversity, promote sustainable use as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilisation of natural resources, including water resource management, address the impact of climate changes and the issue of marine plastic debris. The Ministers looked forward to supporting the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in ASEAN Region, the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue and the ASEAN Centre for Active Ageing and Innovation. The Ministers appreciated the aims of the G20's Osaka Blue Ocean Vision to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050. The Ministers also looked forward to the implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Youth Environment Forum (AYEF) in September 2019 in Thailand. The Ministers reaffirmed their support for empowering the youth and their communities in taking responsive and sustainable actions to address climate change.

17. The Ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to forging closer cooperation in poverty alleviation for sustainable development, and to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women. The Ministers commended the adoption of the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and looked forward to supporting its programmatic implementation. The Ministers likewise looked forward to enhancing cooperation on promoting active ageing in light of the ongoing development of the Regional Plan of Action to implement the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN, which is being led by the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD).

18. The Ministers noted the ongoing endorsement process currently implemented for the ASEAN Plus Three Plan of Action on Education 2018-2025 and reaffirmed the need for greater promotion and establishment of an enabling environment and instruments for student mobility. The Ministers welcomed the approval of the APT Guidelines on Transcripts and Supplemental Documents for Academic Records of Exchange Students by the 4th APT Education Ministers Meeting (APT EMM) in November 2018 as the Guidelines would facilitate the recognition of academic records of exchange students, and thus promoting quality-assured student exchanges among APT countries.

19. The Ministers commended the efforts of the APT Senior Officials' Meeting on Youth in providing greater access for engagement among youth in APT countries and establishing effective communication through various annual youth exchanges and community immersion activities which provide opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural understanding as well as promote and inculcate the culture of peace and respect for diversity among the youth of East Asia.

20. The Ministers welcomed the successful convening of the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Plus Three Ministerial Meeting on Youth (7<sup>th</sup> AMMY+3) on 19 July 2019 in Vientiane, Lao PDR with

the theme “Enhancing the Role of Youth in ASEAN for Sustainable Development and Regional Integration,” which reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthening APT collaborations on youth development to address the challenges of Industry 4.0, digitalisation and the evolving demand of the labour market and noted with satisfaction the contribution of youth empowerment activities and people-to-people exchange programmes among APT countries.

21. The Ministers noted the commitment of the APT Labour Ministers’ Meeting in November 2018, for promoting “green” jobs to contribute towards conserving the environment, developing technical and vocational education and trainings on “green” skills, raising occupational safety and health standards, as well as designing and implementing policies on “green” jobs and “green” skills in collaboration with tripartite partners, ASEAN Dialogue Partners and other stakeholders.

22. The Ministers commended the steady progress of implementation of the ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matter (ACCSM+3 Work Plan 2016-2020) which covered areas of mutual interests including e-governance, human resource management development, public sector productivity and reform, good governance, local administration capacity building and cooperation, and research and innovation. The Ministers welcomed the initiatives supported by the APT Cooperation Fund that sought to strengthen the overall capabilities of the ASEAN Civil Services, including the Study Visit Programme on Public and Human Resources Management in the Plus Three countries, the ASEAN Guideline on Public Service Delivery, and Baseline Study on Governance Systems among APT Countries.

23. The Ministers noted the decision of the 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (6<sup>th</sup> AMMDM) in October 2018 in Malaysia to explore engaging cooperation with relevant dialogue partners, including with China, Japan and the ROK through the ASEAN Plus Three platform.

24. The Ministers acknowledged the important contribution of the East Asia Forum (EAF) as a Track 1.5 level platform for government, business, academia and think tanks to further increase cooperation with East Asia. In this regard, they welcomed the convening of the 17<sup>th</sup> EAF, hosted by Japan on 10 – 12 July 2019 in Odawara under the theme “Bolstering Free and Open Economy in East Asia,” which discussed sustainable development in East Asia and Dialogue Partners’ engagement, improvement of the trade environment including RCEP, and “Society 5.0” driven by the “Industry 4.0.”

25. The Ministers also recognised the important contributions of the Network of East Asia Think-Tanks (NEAT) towards APT cooperation and welcomed the outcomes of the 30<sup>th</sup> NEAT Country Coordinators Meeting (CCM) in May 2019 in Tokyo, the Working Group Meeting on Networking Cultural Institutions for Socio-Cultural Connectivity in East Asia in July 2019, and the Working Group Towards Building a Sustainable Society in East Asia. The Ministers looked forward to the successful outcomes of the 31<sup>st</sup> CCM and the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of NEAT, which will be held on 22 August and 23 August 2019, respectively.

26. The Ministers also acknowledged the importance of “connecting the connectivities” within the APT, including people-to-people connectivity and welcomed the holding of an APT Student Camp, which will be held in October 2019. The activity is the implementation of EAVG II Recommendation No. 24, which aimed to boost people-to-people connectivity in the East Asia region.

27. The Ministers underscored the importance of forging closer cooperation in other areas such as tourism, energy security, and minerals. The Ministers also encouraged the APT countries to explore closer cooperation in other areas such as women empowerment and gender equality, as well as narrowing the development gap in ASEAN, including through the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI).

28. The Ministers expressed their support for Thailand's proposal for the establishment of the APT Website, to be launched during the 22<sup>nd</sup> APT Summit, which would serve as a useful tool to provide up-to-date information on the growing number of APT activities, increase the visibility and enhance public awareness of the APT cooperation among the APT countries.

### **Regional and International Issues**

29. The Ministers stressed the importance of continued peaceful dialogue amongst all parties concerned, supported by peaceful efforts of the international community, in order to realise lasting peace, security, and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula and welcomed the efforts of the Republic of Korea (ROK), the United States and China to establish a sustainable dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The Ministers welcomed the meeting between United States (US) President Donald Trump and Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un on 30 June 2019 at the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) on the Korean Peninsula. The Ministers urged all concerned parties to resume and continue peaceful dialogue and work together towards progress in the realisation of lasting peace, security, and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula, including through the full and expeditious implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration, the Joint Statement by the US and DPRK Leaders and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration. They reiterated their commitment to the full implementation of all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions by all UN members and noted international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. Some Ministers emphasised the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the resolution of the abductions issue.

### **Other matters**

30. The Ministers discussed the preparations for the 22<sup>nd</sup> APT Summit to be held on 4 November 2019 in Thailand. The Ministers reiterated their support for the adoption of the APT Leaders' Statement on Connecting the Connectivities Initiative and the launch of the APT Website at the 22<sup>nd</sup> APT Summit.

31. The Ministers looked forward to the convening of the 21<sup>st</sup> APT Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Viet Nam in 2020.

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