



**THE NINTH AEM-CANADA CONSULTATIONS  
29 August 2020, Video Conference Meeting**

**JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

1. Economic Ministers from the ten ASEAN Member States and Canada (“the Ministers”) met [virtually] on 29 August 2020 for the 9<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) - Canada Consultations. The Consultations were co-chaired by H.E. Tran Tuan Anh, Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam and the Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion, and International Trade, Canada.

2. The Ministers welcomed the deepening of trade relations between ASEAN Member States and Canada with total two-way merchandise trade reaching USD 20.5 billion in 2019 (according to Canadian statistics). According to Canadian statistics, stock of Canadian foreign direct investment in ASEAN Member States amounted to USD 13.2 billion. Stock of ASEAN foreign direct investment in Canada amounted to USD 396 million.

3. The Ministers expressed deep concern over the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, especially the effect it has had on people around the world. Ministers discussed the impact of COVID-19 on economies around the world and its impact on businesses particularly on MSMEs. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of keeping markets open for trade and investment to strengthen recovery efforts and facilitate the flow of essential goods and services. The Ministers agreed to refrain from imposing unnecessary measures, including non-tariff measures that could disrupt the flow of essential goods and services to address the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring that any measures introduced comply with the existing WTO rules. The Ministers also underscored the importance of concerted efforts to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19, including but not limited to the following sectors: travel and tourism, manufacturing, retail and other services sectors. Ministers agreed to pursue facilitative measures that will expedite economic recovery.

4. The Ministers endorsed the 2021-2025 JDTI Work Plan, which reflects the commitment of both sides to continue enhancing the depth and breadth of economic relations. The Ministers were pleased to note the successes achieved under the 2016-2020 Work Plan to implement the ASEAN-Canada Joint Declaration on Trade and Investment (JDTI Work Plan), particularly in enhancing ASEAN and Canada’s collective understanding of the scope of a possible ASEAN-Canada Free Trade Agreement (FTA), strengthening trade and investment linkages among our private sectors and supporting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) development in the ASEAN region.

5. The Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-Canada Trade Policy Dialogue held virtually on 8-12 June 2020 focusing on four areas which are new to ASEAN, namely Government Procurement (GP), Environment, Labor, and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The Ministers also noted other constructive exchanges between ASEAN and Canadian officials on the next steps toward a possible ASEAN-Canada FTA. The Ministers tasked officials to develop a reference paper that would identify – on a “without prejudice” basis – the possible FTA’s objectives, proposed chapters/elements, including the potential level of ambition for each, areas of convergence and divergence, and other relevant considerations. The reference paper will be submitted for the Ministers’ further consideration at the next AEM-Canada Consultations in 2021.

6. The Ministers noted the available technical support to ASEAN under Canada’s Expert Deployment Mechanism for Trade and Development (EDM), and encouraged ASEAN Member States to use the EDM for capacity building activities and technical assistance in areas relevant to the trade and investment agenda of Canada and ASEAN. Ministers also encouraged officials to explore ways to continue collaborating to enhance understanding of issues of interest and develop creative approaches to narrow the gaps in our shared understanding of a possible FTA. Ministers highlighted that this could be achieved through technical assistance, capacity building, and other opportunities for both ASEAN and Canada to share their expertise and experiences.

7. The Ministers held a discussion with representatives of the Canada-ASEAN Business Council (CABC) and noted the CABC’s key advocacy on the need to further enhance ASEAN-Canada trade relations through a free trade agreement. The Ministers commended CABC for working together with the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) and other Joint Business Council (JBC) members in submitting a comprehensive set of recommendations on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic through a report entitled “A Pathway Towards Recovery and Hope for ASEAN. The Ministers further commended the CABC for its continuous commitment in strengthening ASEAN-Canada business-to-business relations through its various activities despite the challenging situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. The Ministers recognized the critical role of the multilateral trading system in laying the foundations for a strong, sustained and socially inclusive economic recovery, and agreed to work closely together through greater coordination, especially in areas of mutual interest, including WTO reform.

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## LIST OF MINISTERS

1. **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. **The Honourable Mary Ng, MP**, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion, and International Trade, Canada;
4. **H.E. Agus Suparmanto**, Minister of Trade, Indonesia;
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. Than Aung Kyaw**, Director General, Foreign Economic Relations Department, 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. **Ms. Auramon Supthaweethum**, Director-General, Department of Trade Negotiations, Ministry of 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.