



Chairman’s Statement of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with Australia

10 September 2020, Viet Nam

1. The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with Australia was held on 10 September 2020. The Meeting was co-chaired by the Hon. Dato’ Seri Hishammudin Tun Hussein, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, and Senator the Hon. Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women.
2. Recognising the strength of the ASEAN-Australia strategic partnership, the Meeting welcomed the full implementation of the ASEAN-Australia Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-Australia Strategic Partnership (2015-2019) and the fifteen initiatives from the 2018 ASEAN-Australia Special Summit. The Meeting further noted the progress made in the implementation of cooperation initiatives announced at ASEAN-Australia Informal Breakfast Summit in 2018 and looked forward to continuing cooperation under the ASEAN-Australia Plan of Action to Implement the Strategic Partnership for 2020-2024.
3. The Meeting reiterated its support for the priorities of ASEAN this year in advancing a “Cohesive and Responsive” ASEAN under Viet Nam’s Chairmanship and welcomed the *ASEAN Leaders’ Vision Statement on a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN: Rising Above Challenges and Sustaining Growth*, adopted at the 36th ASEAN Summit on 26 June 2020. The Meetings underlined the need to strengthen regional solidarity and maintain ASEAN Centrality to respond effectively to current and future challenges as well as harness opportunities including those brought about by digital transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).
4. The Meeting recognised the unprecedented challenges posed by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and underscored the importance of enhanced international collaboration in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic as well as in strengthening joint efforts for post-pandemic recovery and other public health emergencies. The Meeting expressed condolences for the loss of lives and livelihoods owing to COVID-19 and thanked front line medical and other workers for their tireless contribution.
5. The Meeting welcomed expanding cooperation between ASEAN and Australia to respond to COVID-19 and chart a course for a comprehensive recovery, including cooperation to counter the longer-term socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. The Meeting noted the successful convening of the Special ASEAN-

Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19 on 30 June 2020 and Australia's announcement of a new substantial AUD 23 million package of initiatives at that time to strengthen ASEAN-Australia partnership on COVID-19 response and recovery focusing in three areas, namely health security, stability and economic recovery. The Meeting also welcomed Australia's announcement of a further AUD 60 million package of initiatives under Australia's Partnerships for Recovery policy to support health security, promote connectivity, digital transformation, and economic integration for a strong regional economic recovery. The Meeting welcomed increased engagement between health experts, particularly the first ASEAN-Australia Health Experts meeting on 29 July 2020. ASEAN Ministers welcomed Australia's AUD 1 million contribution to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, and continued support for ASEAN's efforts on comprehensive recovery.

6. ASEAN and Australia's commitment to work closely to promote access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, building and maintaining resilient, open and connected supply chains and supporting a sustained economic recovery.
7. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as the key code of conduct governing inter-State relations in the region, underscored its relevance to the wider region, and recognised its contribution to promoting regional peace, stability and security. Australia welcomed the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Importance of Maintaining Peace and Stability in Southeast Asia, adopted on 8 August 2020.
8. The Meeting underscored the importance of maintaining ASEAN centrality and unity in the evolving regional architecture and reiterated their commitment to supporting an ASEAN-centred regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based, built upon ASEAN-led mechanisms, strengthening the efficiency of and promoting mutually-reinforcing synergy between the ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). The Meeting underscored the importance of multilateralism, regionalism and adherence to international law in contributing to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity.
9. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) which stated principles including strengthening ASEAN centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, a rules-based framework, good governance, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks, equality, and respect for international law. They recognised that the Outlook will serve as a guide for ASEAN engagement in the region to contribute to peace, stability, freedom and prosperity. The meeting welcomed Australia's support and cooperation with ASEAN, in accordance with the principles contained in the AOIP, in the four areas identified in the AOIP, namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, economic and other possible areas of cooperation, through practical projects to promote mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual benefit

through ASEAN-led mechanisms, thereby contributing to peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

10. The Meeting welcomed the progress made towards the full conclusion of the negotiations of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement and looked forward to the signing of this modern, comprehensive, high quality and mutually beneficial agreement by the end of this year to demonstrate the firm commitment of ASEAN and Australia to upholding an open, inclusive and rules-based multilateral trading system.
11. The Meeting reaffirmed their commitment to deepening political-security cooperation, including on traditional and non-traditional security issues such as countering terrorism and other transnational crimes, combatting trafficking in persons, people smuggling, and maritime security cooperation. In this regard, the Meeting appreciated Australia's active participation in ASEAN-led mechanisms, particularly in co-sponsoring several documents as well as co-chairing a number of activities on these issues. The Meeting welcomed the ASEAN-Australia Informal Defence Ministers' Meeting held at the margins of the ADMM Retreat in Ha Noi, Viet Nam on 19 February 2020 as well as the strong ongoing cooperation between ASEAN and Australia on cyber issues, building on the inaugural ASEAN-Australia Cyber Policy Dialogue in 2018 in Singapore, and looked forward to the next Cyber Policy Dialogue. The Meeting also welcomed continuing cooperation and ongoing consultations between Australia and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights.
12. The Meeting welcomed Australia's contribution to ASEAN's goal of deepening regional economic integration under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025, including support for the development and effective implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan III. The Meeting acknowledged the substantial work of the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II (AADCP II), and its contribution to regional connectivity, digital transformation, narrowing the development gap, agricultural development and regional capacity-building since 2008. The Meeting welcomed Australia's support for the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) and noted the ongoing implementation of the ASEAN-Australia Smart Cities Initiative announced in 2018, including the establishment of a Smart Cities Trust Fund with the Asian Development Bank.
13. The Meeting welcomed Australia's interest and support in sub-regional development including Mekong region and the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA). The Meeting welcomed joint efforts to boost digital economy cooperation between ASEAN and Australia, such as through the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) and the ASEAN-Australia Digital Trade Standards Initiative. The Meeting recognised the positive impact of the AANZFTA on economic growth in the region and noted the successful convening of the 25th ASEAN Economic Ministers and the Ministers of Australia and New Zealand (Closer Economic Relations) (AEM-CER) Consultations in August 2020. The Meeting also welcomed Australia's interest and support for sub-regional development, including in the Mekong region.

14. The Meeting highlighted the importance of deepening collaboration, including reinforcing ASEAN-Australia trade and investment prospects, supporting regional connectivity through the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, and boosting cooperation in the digital economy to counter the longer-term socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. The ASEAN Ministers welcomed Australia's announcement of a new substantial package of initiatives to strengthen ASEAN-Australia partnership on COVID-19 response and recovery focusing in three areas, namely health security, stability and economic recovery. The Meeting further noted the importance of developing vaccines that are accessible and affordable to all, and encouraging collaborative research between the private sector and government-funded institutions, while underscoring the need to work with the WHO. In this regard, the Meeting acknowledged the importance of refocusing cooperation under the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP) and the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II (AADCP II) to address regional challenges caused by COVID-19.
15. The Meeting discussed the important role of women, especially women medical workers, in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting underlined the need to enhance cooperation in this area, including by supporting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in regional COVID-19 response and recovery.
16. The Meeting acknowledged the strong people-to-people links between ASEAN and Australia. Towards this end, the Meeting welcomed the success of the 'Australia now ASEAN' public diplomacy program which marked the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN-Australia relations in 2019. The Meeting acknowledged the contribution of education, sports, arts and cultural exchange programmes between ASEAN and Australia, including through the New Colombo Plan, Australia Awards, and programmes run by the Australia-ASEAN Council, which continue to deepen social and cultural linkages and further strengthen people-to-people links between ASEAN and Australia.
17. The Meeting also appreciated Australia's continued support for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), which included the technical support for the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT).
18. The Meeting recognised the challenge COVID-19 poses for maintaining people-to-people connections and committed to working closely to restore regional travel, business and education links, as health conditions allow. The Meeting appreciated Australia's continued support on environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, including the conservation of forests and sustainable land management practices, and marine debris.
19. The Meeting encouraged cooperation in digital education, particularly in enhancing capacity building through programmes in ICT-related training and the sharing of best practices in utilising various ICT tools. Given the negative impacts on mental health brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Meeting also

encouraged cooperation in mental health issues, particularly on promoting community understanding and awareness as well as capacity building and aftercare services.

20. The Meeting discussed the value of more regular engagement between leaders, particularly as ASEAN and Australia further enhanced cooperation on COVID-19 response and recovery. The Meeting endorsed Australia's proposal for annual ASEAN-Australia Leaders' Summits for the consideration of Leaders at the Second ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit scheduled to be held in November 2020 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam.
21. The Meeting discussed the situation in the South China Sea, during which serious concerns were expressed by some Ministers over recent developments in the South China Sea, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region. They reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. They further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. They emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the DOC that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.
22. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea. They further underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. The Meeting encouraged the substantive negotiations towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, within a mutually-agreed timeline. The Ministers stressed the importance of undertaking confidence building and preventive measures to enhance, among others, trust and confidence amongst parties. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS which is recognised as the basis for determining legitimate interests of littoral states and sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

