

OPENING REMARKS BY MINISTER CHAN CHUN SING AT THE 15th AEM-ROK CONSULTATIONS ON THURSDAY 30 AUG 2018, 11.45AM AT SHANGRI-LA HOTEL SINGAPORE

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to extend to all of you a very warm welcome to Singapore.
 - a. I would like to express my appreciation to Mr Kim Hyung-Chong, Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy, and the Korean delegation, who have made the trip from Seoul to join us today.
2. ASEAN and the Republic of Korea enjoy warm and robust bilateral economic ties.
 - a. Our economic relations have grown steadily over the last few decades.
 - b. Today, Korea is ASEAN's fifth largest trading partner and our fifth largest source of FDI, while ASEAN is Korea's second largest trading partner.¹
 - c. Last year, our bilateral trade grew 22.6 per cent, to reach USD152.5 billion.²
3. To further deepen ASEAN-Korea economic relations, we must continue to fully utilise, liberalise and improve the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Area (AKFTA) to ensure its relevance to our businesses.
 - a. In particular, we look forward to the full ratification of the Third Protocol to Amend the ASEAN-Korea Trade in Goods Agreement (AKTIGA) before the end of this year.
 - b. We are also in the midst of negotiations to further liberalise tariffs on Sensitive Track products.
 - c. This may not be an easy task, but we must continue to persevere, as it will establish stronger supply chains among ASEAN and Korea, and allow us to reach the target of USD200 billion in bilateral trade by 2020.
4. We should continue to broaden economic cooperation in mutually beneficial areas to include initiatives that positively impact ASEAN and Korean SMEs.
 - a. One such area is the digital economy. In the face of rapid technological changes and disruption of business models, ASEAN and Korean SMEs face similar challenges in the need to constantly adapt and innovate.

¹ **Source:** ASEANStats.

² **Source:** ASEANStats.

- b. Hence we strongly welcome initiatives under the Technology Advice and Solutions from Korea (TASK) to facilitate such exchanges.
- c. We also welcome the various capacity building projects that are either underway or being explored under the Economic and Technical Cooperation aspect of the AKFTA.

5. Beyond our bilateral engagement, Korea is an active and important partner of ASEAN in various regional cooperation mechanisms such as the ASEAN Plus Three and the East Asia Summit.

6. Korea has also been a constructive partner in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations as we work toward substantively concluding this agreement by end 2018.

7. Let me encourage everyone to participate actively and purposefully in our discussions, and to work towards positive outcomes.

8. I would now like to invite Minister Kim to deliver his opening remarks.

Thank you.