



JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT OF THE 33rd MEETING OF THE ASEAN DIRECTORS-GENERAL OF CUSTOMS

4 – 6 June 2024

1. The 33rd Meeting of the ASEAN Directors-General of Customs (DGs) was held on 4 – 6 June 2024 in Phu Quoc, Viet Nam. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Nguyen Van Can, Director-General of Viet Nam Customs Department, and attended by 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS) and the ASEAN Secretariat.
2. The ASEAN Customs DGs reviewed the work and progress of the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Customs (CCC), the Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation Working Group (CPTFWG), the Customs Enforcement and Compliance Working Group (CECWG), the Customs Capacity Building Working Group (CCBWG) as well as the ASEAN Single Window Steering Committee (ASWSC) and its working groups and commended the good progress on Customs Integration with the full support from AMS.
3. The Meeting welcomed the signing of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) to provide a predictable and transparent trading environment among AMS which is in accordance to the principles and standards of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards. The Meeting also commended the positive progress of six AMS, namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, in implementing the first ASEAN AEO MRA (AAMRA) Pathfinder. The AAMRA will benefit certified AMS' AEOs by ensuring faster cargo clearance and priority treatment for cargo inspection for their goods traded within ASEAN. In line with the goal of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025, to achieve a highly integrated and cohesive ASEAN economy, the AAMRA would enhance intra-ASEAN trade by reducing regulatory burden, facilitating the movement of goods, and improving predictability of cargo movement. Considering the positive progress of the Pathfinder among the six AMS, and the readiness of the four remaining AMS, the Meeting recommended AMS to consider the full implementation of the AAMRA by 2025 as one of Malaysia's Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs).
4. The Meeting welcomed Myanmar as the 7th ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS) Participating Member State (PMS), officially joining the ACTS Live Operation effective from 1 March 2024. Principal traders engaging in ACTS movements to Myanmar as the destination can benefit from streamlined customs transit procedures, potentially enhancing intra-ASEAN trade. The Meeting also noted a substantial increase in ACTS movements, starting from 80 movements at the 32nd DG meeting in June 2023 to 217 ACTS movements by this DG meeting, bringing the total of number of ACTS movements to 297 since the launch of the ACTS in November 2020. In this connection, the Meeting encouraged all PMS to intensify public awareness efforts to attract more principal traders to utilise the ACTS. The Meeting also noted that all PMS are ready to issue ASEAN Goods Vehicle Cross Border (AGVCB) Permits to eligible principal traders, allowing principal traders to use one truck for the whole ACTS

journey. In relation to the Authorised Transit Trader (ATT) Scheme, the Meeting noted that four PMS, namely Lao PDR, Malaysia, Singapore, and Viet Nam, have established the ATT Scheme and looked forward for the remaining PMS to complete the establishment of their ATT schemes as soon as possible to further enhance the utilisation of the ACTS.

5. The Meeting welcomed the finalisation of the Outcome of the Survey of Luxor Resolution on Cross-Border E-Commerce assessing the level of implementation of principles outlined under the Luxor Resolution, identifying the gaps among AMS and developing recommendations to narrow the gaps. The Meeting further noted the recommendations and encouraged AMS, under the coordinating role of Indonesia, to speed up the development of the Guideline for the Exchange of Information on E-Commerce Data between Customs Administrations and E-Commerce Operators in the ASEAN region by 2025 to build trust between e-commerce operators and customs authorities, and reduce clearance time for addressing the increasing trade volume of e-commerce.

6. The Meeting commended the 1st Joint Customs Control (JCC) Operation, which was conducted virtually on 1 – 31 December 2023 with the participation of 10 AMS focusing on tackling illicit tobacco flows within ASEAN. During the operation period, there was a total of 15 cases reported by five (5) AMS using the Alert Notice System (ANS), namely Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The 1st JCC Operation was successful to seize remarkable amounts of illicit tobacco, including 1,250 kg dried tobacco leaves; 50,720 packs of cigarettes; 2,367 master cases; and 22,761 reams. The Operation demonstrated the high efforts of the Philippines as the Head of Operation, Malaysia as the Secretariat of Operation, and all AMS for their support and cooperation to make this first regional cooperation successful in combatting illicit tobacco in ASEAN. The Meeting encouraged AMS to continue this regional cooperation to combat illicit trade issues.

7. The Meeting endorsed “*The Guidelines of the ASEAN Customs Performance Management Guide*”, which would serve as a reference for AMS in adopting and implementing performance management principles in their respective administrations to improve the performance of ASEAN Customs officers.

8. The Meeting also endorsed “*The Guidelines of the Best Practices of the Knowledge Management Implementation*” which can be employed by ASEAN Customs administrations to optimise resources, find solutions, and ensure that lessons learned could be applied in the future in terms of knowledge management.

9. The Meeting also agreed to support the delivery of the Study of the New Generation of the ASEAN Single Window (ASW) which is set as one of the 2024 Priority Economic Deliverables under Lao PDR’s Chairmanship. The study will provide recommendations on policy, technical and legal aspects to enable the interoperability of the ASW with other platforms of the private sector and Dialogue Partners. The Meeting also encouraged relevant sectoral bodies and working groups to intensify the discussion with Dialogue Partners to enable the exchange of electronic trade administration documents as soon as possible to support the private sector.

10. The Meeting expressed its sincere appreciation for Dialogue Partners, including Australia, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the World Customs Organisation (WCO), for providing technical assistance and sharing best practices with AMS. ASEAN Customs administrations are making good efforts to modernise and simplify customs procedures. In this connection, the Meeting looked forward to closer partnerships with its partners to discuss and explore opportunities to cooperate in all areas of customs, particularly in relation to issues related to sustainability, green customs, cross-border e-commerce, AEO MRAs, combatting illicit trade, control of plastic waste, movement of circular economy products, among others.

11. The Meeting acknowledged the constructive and deepened consultations between ASEAN Customs administrations and the Joint Business Councils (JBCs) and commended the full implementation of e-Form D in the ASEAN region since January 2024 and the close cooperation between the EU-ABC and relevant customs sectoral bodies in tackling illicit trade based on the JBCs' recommendations. The Meeting underlined that the strong partnership between Customs administrations and the private sector would open more opportunities for cooperation and increase mutual benefits for all. This would eventually enhance intra-ASEAN trade, facilitate the seamless movement of goods, support the supply chain resilience and reduce transaction costs. To this end, the Meeting encouraged relevant sectoral bodies and the JBCs to work closely and find creative ways to effectively respond to an ever-changing environment. A dynamic engagement is essential to drive regional economic growth and create a more cost-effective, efficient, and responsive Customs administrations.

12. The Meeting also noted the progress of the negotiations of some Free Trade Agreements (FTA), particularly the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and ASEAN – China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) upgrade negotiations. Those upgrades, based on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) baseline and the inclusion of value-added elements of the current evolution of customs initiatives, would further enhance supply chain connectivity, foster the seamless movement of goods, promote transparency and predictability in Customs, facilitate customs clearance, and reduce trade transactional costs, among others. In this connection, the Meeting encouraged all Member States to strive further to substantially conclude those negotiations in 2024, announce their outcomes to the public in 2025, and in turn, bring real benefits to the private sector.

13. The Meeting also encouraged relevant country coordinators to develop the new cycle of the Strategic Plan on Customs Development (SPCD) for the period of 2026-2030 and to submit the outcomes at the next Customs DG Meeting in 2025. The Meeting also encouraged relevant country coordinators and other Member States to take into account the recent trends of customs developments at the WCO and relevant international organisations, alongside relevant initiatives in the ASEAN region and the private sector's recommendations, to consider the new elements such as digitalisation, customs automation, circular economy, carbon neutrality, and sustainability, in the new cycle of SPCDs.

