



**THE FIFTH AEM TROIKA OPEN-ENDED DIALOGUE
WITH SWITZERLAND TRADE MINISTER
20 September 2026, Manila, Philippines**

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Fifth ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Troika Open-ended Dialogue with Switzerland was held on 20 September 2026 in Manila, Philippines. The Consultation was co-chaired by H.E. Ma. Cristina A. Roque, Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry of the Philippines and H.E. State Secretary Helene Budliger Artieda, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland.

2. The Meeting exchanged views on regional and global economic developments, noting that rising geopolitical tensions, including unilateral trade actions and regional conflicts collectively threaten the rules-based international order. The Meeting also took note that these developments, compounded by the Middle East crisis which has heightened the volatility in global energy markets – including disruptions to oil and gas supply chains – have inflicted significant costs on businesses, heightened inflationary pressures, and created an increasingly unpredictable operating environment, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In this challenging climate, the Meeting stressed that a closer and more substantive economic partnership between ASEAN and Switzerland is not only essential but also imperative. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and its commitment to strengthening trade and investment ties, including by exploring methods to foster Swiss private sector engagement with ASEAN, while advancing deeper and more resilient supply chain integration. In this regard, the Meeting further reaffirmed the shared resolve to constructively engage all trading partners to address legitimate trade concerns in a balanced and forward-looking manner, and to refrain from any unilateral measures that could further destabilise global economic conditions.

3. The Meeting took note of the outcomes of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 26 - 29 March 2026 and reaffirmed its strong commitment to upholding an open, predictable, transparent, free, fair, inclusive, sustainable, and rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. The Meeting underscored the urgency of delivering meaningful and comprehensive WTO reform to improve all its functions, including the dispute settlement system, and to equip the WTO with the tools necessary to address the realities of today's global economy. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to work in close coordination to advance a reformed, revitalised and effective WTO that delivers tangible outcomes for all WTO Members, including developing and least

developed countries. The Meeting also recognised the positive role that plurilateral initiatives play at the WTO, including the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs), in addressing emerging trade issues and supporting multilateral outcomes.

4. The Meeting welcomed the finalisation of the 2026 – 2030 ASEAN-EFTA Joint Declaration on Economic Cooperation (JDC) Workplan, recognising it as an important step forward in providing a structured and comprehensive framework to strengthen and deepen the ASEAN-EFTA economic relationship. The Meeting noted that the Workplan focuses on fostering cooperation through the sharing of information, experiences, and best practices, as well as policy dialogue, taking into account the strategic direction of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and EFTA's economic priorities, ensuring it reflects the shared interests and complementarities of both sides. The Meeting looked forward to the full and effective implementation of the Work Plan and called on officials to maintain momentum in translating its objectives into concrete and meaningful outcomes that advance ASEAN-EFTA economic cooperation.

5. The Meeting welcomed Timor-Leste's accession as the 11th Member State of ASEAN and looked forward to its closer engagement in ASEAN-Switzerland meetings and economic cooperation mechanisms. The Meeting acknowledged Timor-Leste's continued efforts to advance its effective participation and full integration to ASEAN including through the implementation of its ASEAN economic commitments in the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN. In this regard, the Meeting reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting Timor-Leste's effective integration into the regional economy, through existing ASEAN - Switzerland sectoral dialogue partnership.
