Adopted

THE SIXTH AEM-UK CONSULTATION
22 September 2026, Manila, Philippines

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Sixth ASEAN Economic Ministers – the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (AEM-UK) Consultation was held on 22 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. Lord Anas Sarwar, Minister of State for Trade, Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade of the UK.

2. In commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the ASEAN–UK Dialogue Partnership in 2026, the Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to advance the ASEAN-UK economic partnership. The Meeting noted that the total trade in goods and services between the UK and ASEAN was £62.0 billion in 2025, an increase of 17.4% or £9.2 billion in current prices from 2024. According to ASEAN's preliminary statistics, the foreign direct investment (FDI) from the UK was recorded at USD 9.1 billion in 2025 making the UK the sixth largest source of FDI inflows to ASEAN in 2025.

3. The Meeting exchanged views on regional and global economic developments, noting that rising geopolitical tensions and regional conflicts collectively threaten the rules-based international order. The Meeting noted the developments in the Middle East have contributed to volatility in global energy markets and disruption to some supply chains, creating challenges for businesses, including higher operating cost and increased uncertainty. Particular attention was given to the implications for MSMEs, which are more vulnerable to fluctuations in energy prices, input cost and shipping disruptions. In this challenging climate, the Meeting stressed that closer and more substantive economic partnership between ASEAN and the UK is essential and reaffirmed the commitment to strengthen trade and investment ties and deepen supply chain integration. In this regard, the Meeting further reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and the shared resolve to constructively engage all trading partners to address legitimate trade concerns in a balanced and forward-looking manner.

4. The Meeting endorsed the new Joint Ministerial Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation and the updated ASEAN-UK Economic Work Plan, anchored in shared priorities of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan 2026-2030 and the UK's Trade and Industrial Strategies. The Meeting highlighted the priority areas of cooperation, including maintaining open markets; strengthening economic resilience; advancing financial services cooperation and regulatory reform; promoting digital economy, science, technology and innovation collaboration; supporting clean energy transition; and enhancing public-private sector partnerships, underpinned by cross-cutting efforts on professional business services, skills and inclusion. The Meeting highlighted that these themes provide the basis for a

more focused, strategic, and impactful economic partnership between ASEAN and the UK through cooperation across a range of priority areas. These efforts will enable both sides to respond to common challenges and deliver tangible benefits to our peoples.

5. The Meeting noted the successful implementation of the current ASEAN–UK Work Plan to Implement the Joint Ministerial Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation, recognising that the Work Plan has served as an effective and valuable framework in laying the foundations of the ASEAN-UK economic relationship over the past five years, with wide-ranging activities carried out across eleven (11) priority areas, including in the areas of high-level policy dialogue, supply chain resilience, regulatory excellence, digital innovation, MSME development, public–private partnership, financial services, sustainable growth, infrastructure, skills and education, and women's economic empowerment.

6. The Meeting noted the significant progress in the implementation of the ASEAN-UK Economic Integration Programme (EIP) across all three pillars of cooperation. Under the Regulatory Reform pillar, the Meeting noted the UK's support for strengthening ASEAN's regulatory frameworks as well as for continued cooperation on intellectual property, standards and competition policy. The Meeting also noted ongoing efforts to promote financial inclusion and widen the access to quality financial services to MSMEs and women. The Meeting welcomed ongoing ASEAN-UK cooperation in the financial sector, including on sustainable finance, regional financial integration, cross-border payments, and the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence. The Meeting acknowledged UK support on trade digitalisation and trade facilitation initiatives under the Open Trade Pillar over the past year, including through the Outreach Programme on the upgraded ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), development of the 2026 Annual Report on the Implementation of Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) in ASEAN, and Capacity Building and development of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Guidelines. The Meeting further noted the plan to support the implementation of the Cross-Border E-Payments and Digital Finance activity under the Digital Trade Outreach Toolkit. The activity is expected to enhance MSMEs' readiness to engage in cross-border digital trade while contributing to ASEAN's broader digital economic integration agenda.

7. The Meeting noted several other areas of economic cooperation between ASEAN and the UK on a broad range of areas. The meeting noted the convening of the second ASEAN-UK Analytical Dialogue held in August 2026, which highlighted the importance of enhancing economic security and horizon scanning to identify, monitor and mitigate emerging global economic risks.

8. The Meeting also welcomed collaboration under the ASEAN-UK Green Transition Fund in supporting ASEAN's sustainable growth and energy transition objectives, including initiatives related to climate-aligned investment, sustainable infrastructure development and the ASEAN Power Grid. The Meeting further welcomed the upgraded InvestASEAN website supported by the ASEAN Green Investment Catalyst Project through the ASEAN-UK Green Transition Fund, developed by ASEAN Secretariat with technical support from United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), which aims to enhance the visibility of climate-aligned investment opportunities across the region. The Meeting noted the UK's support through the ASEAN-UK Sustainable Leadership

in Infrastructure Programme (ASLIP) and further welcomed cooperation on critical minerals, including Green Transition Fund-supported initiatives and UK support for the ASEAN Minerals Investment Forum.

9. The Meeting noted the UK's continued support for Philippines' ASEAN Chairship, including support for several Priority Economic Deliverables (PED), particularly in PEDs on Strategic Trade Management, establishment of the ASEAN Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries, and Advancing ASEAN Regional Payments Connectivity through the development of a regulatory comparison dashboard.

10. The Meeting noted the discussions of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 26 – 29 March 2026. The Meeting reaffirmed its strong commitment to WTO, and its importance in ensuring an open, predictable, transparent, non-discriminatory and rules-based multilateral trading system. The Meeting underscored the urgency of delivering meaningful and comprehensive WTO reform, including dispute settlement system, to improve all its functions 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 commands credibility and confidence, and 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 in fostering new ideas, advancing discussion on emerging trade issues and building momentum toward multilateral outcomes.

11. The Meeting noted the recommendations presented by the UK-ASEAN Business Council (UKABC), particularly its priorities in supporting the adoption of sustainability disclosure standards, advancing digital economy cooperation, including the Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA), and promoting trade harmonisation. The Meeting also noted UKABC's focus on energy security and connectivity, including support for the ASEAN Power Grid, as well as its continued efforts in facilitating high-level business engagement through the UK-ASEAN Business Forums 2026, roundtables and partnerships with ASEAN stakeholders.

12. The Meeting welcomed Timor-Leste's accession as the 11th Member State of ASEAN and looked forward to its closer engagement in ASEAN-UK 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 providing the necessary capacity-building and technical assistance to support Timor-Leste's effective integration into the regional economy.

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