



**THE AEM-USTR CONSULTATION
20 September 2026, Manila, Philippines**

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The ASEAN Economic Ministers – United States Trade Representative (AEM-USTR) Consultation 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 Ambassador Rick Switzer, Deputy United States Trade Representative.
2. The Meeting noted that based on ASEAN's preliminary statistics, two-way merchandise trade between ASEAN and the U.S. stood at USD 550.5 billion in 2025. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow from the U.S. to ASEAN was recorded at USD 30 billion in the same year.
3. The Meeting exchanged views on regional and global economic challenges as well as the importance of keeping trade corridors open to facilitate trade flows, including energy supplies and other essential goods. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening trade and investment ties, while advancing more resilient supply chains. In this regard, the Meeting further reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and the shared resolve to constructively address trade concerns.
4. The Meeting welcomed the implementation of the 2025-2026 ASEAN-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA) Work Plan, which delivered good outcomes in many areas including digital economy, trade facilitation, intellectual property rights, good regulatory practices, and agriculture. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitments for deeper trade and investment ties through the endorsement of the 2026-2027 ASEAN-U.S. TIFA Work Plan, focusing on areas of shared strategic interests such as the digital economy, micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) development, trade facilitation, intellectual property rights, standards, good regulatory practices, labour, agriculture, competition and consumer protection, and strategic trade management.
5. The Meeting noted that the ASEAN-U.S. TIFA, signed in 2006, has served as the cornerstone of ASEAN-U.S. economic engagement for two decades. The Meeting underscored the importance of ensuring that the TIFA remains relevant, responsive, and forward-looking, and to continue to align it with the evolving priorities of both ASEAN and the United States, while reinforcing its role as the primary platform for advancing ASEAN-U.S. economic cooperation in the years ahead.

6. The Meeting recognized the important contribution of the U.S.-ASEAN Connect Series and the ASEAN-U.S. Partnership Programme in strengthening the ASEAN-U.S. economic relationship. The Meeting noted that the U.S.-ASEAN Connect Series has served as an effective platform for promoting digital cooperation, supporting MSMEs, fostering business linkages, and connecting U.S. and ASEAN businesses, investors and entrepreneurs across key sectors, thereby contributing to a more dynamic and commercially vibrant economic relationship. The Meeting also recognized the significant role of the ASEAN-U.S. Partnership Programme in providing targeted technical assistance and capacity building to ASEAN Member States. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the continued support of the U.S. through these programmes, recognising that sustained and deepened U.S. technical assistance and engagement will be essential in advancing shared economic priorities.

7. The Meeting underscored the need to meaningfully reform the WTO to improve all its functions. The Meeting reaffirmed WTO Members' commitment to work together to improve the WTO so that it is responsive to their needs and interests. The Meeting also recognised the positive role that plurilateral initiatives can play at the WTO, including the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs), to foster new ideas, advance discussion on emerging trade issues, and build momentum toward multilateral outcomes.

8. The Meeting noted the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC)'s recommendations particularly toward achieving a robust ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) as well as advancing trade facilitation and resilient regional supply chains. The Meeting also welcomed USABC's support of the Philippines ASEAN Chairship 2026 priorities.

9. The Meeting welcomed Timor-Leste's accession as the 11th Member State of ASEAN and looked forward to its closer engagement in ASEAN-U.S. meetings and economic cooperation mechanisms. The Meeting acknowledged Timor-Leste's continued efforts to advance its effective participation and full integration into 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 its commitment to continue providing the necessary capacity-building and technical assistance to support Timor-Leste's effective integration into the regional economy.
