

**The Sixth Consultation Between The ASEAN Economic Ministers And Ministers
Of The CER
16 September 2001, Hanoi, Vietnam**

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

1. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the Ministers from the Closer Economic Relations (CER) held their Sixth Consultation on 16 September 2001 in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The Consultation was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Vu Khoan, Minister of Trade of Viet Nam, Hon. Mr. Mark Vaile, Minister for Trade of Australia and Hon. Mr. Niel Walter, Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand.

ASEAN-CER TRADE AND INVESTMENT RELATIONS

2. The Ministers exchanged views on the global economic climate and recent developments in ASEAN and CER. The Ministers noted the continued growth in trade volume between ASEAN and CER. The Ministers also noted that despite the positive economic growth and optimism in the year 2000, there is a growing emergence of consensus that the trend would not continue in view of the slow down in the US, EU and Japan. In this regard, the Ministers underlined their commitment to maintain outward looking policies to attract trade and investment and bolster economic growth. The Ministers further underlined the importance of continuing regional economic integration as a means to promote trade and investment flows.

CLOSER ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (CEP)

3. The Ministers commended the AFTA-CER Experts Group on CEP and the Senior Officials for their efforts in developing the parameters for Closer Economic Partnership (CEP). The Ministers endorsed the Framework for the AFTA-CER CEP which appears as **ANNEX1**.

4. The goals of the CEP will be to:
- a. Deepen and broaden cooperation in all economic fields;
 - b. Promote greater trade and investment flows regionally and globally;

- c. Contribute to trade and investment facilitation through minimising impediments, reducing costs and related capacity building;
- d. Improve business competitiveness;
- e. Narrow the development gap and deliver tangible benefits to all participating countries; and
- f. Promote transparency of regulations and cooperation among relevant authorities.

5. To accelerate the realisation of the CEP, the Ministers agreed to formalise the Framework by means of an instrument for signing at the Seventh AEM-CER Consultations in 2002. The Ministers requested the Senior Economic Officials of ASEAN and CER to formulate the instrument and, in the meantime, begin to carry out the agreed work program. The Ministers requested the ASEAN Secretariat to give a progress report to the AEM Retreat and to the CER dialogue in the first half of 2002.

6. The Ministers agreed that capacity building would be an important aspect of the initial CEP work program and announced several new initiatives designed to build capacity and facilitate trade and investment. In addition, the Ministers tasked relevant officials to work towards implementing the initial work programme of the Framework in the area of standards and conformity assessment. They also agreed to explore the scope for cooperation on common approaches on food regulation, including standards and labelling. The Ministers requested their Senior Economic Officials to ensure that progress was made across all areas of the CEP work program, and tasked them to report back to the 7th AEM-CER consultation for review.

AFTA-CER BUSINESS COUNCIL

7. To revitalise business involvement in the work of the CEP, the Ministers agreed to establish an AFTA-CER Business Council, comprising high-level representatives from the respective business communities. The Ministers invited the new Business Council to meet with them at the next AEM-CER consultation and to provide business views on the priority areas to be addressed under the CEP.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

World Trade Organisation

8. The Ministers supported the launch of a new round of WTO negotiations at Doha. The Ministers renewed their commitment to the strengthening of the rules-based multilateral trading system under the WTO and expressed strong determination to formulate a balanced and sufficiently broad-based agenda for a successful new round launch. The Ministers agreed that the concerns of developing countries must be seriously considered and emphasized the need for more enhanced capacity building to assist implementation. The Ministers welcomed further deepening of the mutual understanding on the possible agenda issues through the discussions made at various occasions, including the General Council Reality Check in Geneva at the end of July. The Ministers also agreed that the WTO should respond to the needs and challenges of the global economy in the 21st century.

9. The Ministers welcomed recent developments regarding implementation issues in Geneva, including the TRIMS extension package, and agreed to work further on these issues. The Ministers reiterated the importance of more enhanced capacity building for the implementation of the WTO Agreements and appreciated the developments to date on the realization of the Strategic APEC Plan for WTO Capacity Building.

10. The Ministers expressed support for the early accession of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam to the WTO.

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

11. The Ministers expressed their strong support for the work being undertaken in APEC for the Shanghai Leaders' Meeting and agreed on the need to reinforce APEC efforts to deliver free and open trade and investment in the region. The Ministers also expressed the hope that Leaders would set an ambitious forward agenda and position APEC at the forefront of international organisations seeking to maximise the benefits of globalisation.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The meeting was attended by:

- ii. H.E. Mr. Vu Khoan, Minister of Trade, Vietnam;
- iii. Hon. Mr. Mark Vaile, Minister of Trade, Australia;
- iv. H.E. Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam;
- v. H.E. Mr. Cham Prasadh, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
- vi. Mr. Hatanto Reksodipoetro, Director General, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Indonesia;
- vii. H.E. Mr. Soulivong Daravong, Minister of Industry and Handycrafts, Lao PDR;
- viii. H.E. Dato' Seri Rafidah Aziz, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
- ix. H.E. Brigadier General David O. Abel, Minister at the Office of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, Myanmar;
- x. Hon. Mr. Niel Walter, Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand;
- xi. H.E. Dr. Thomas G. Aquino, Undersecretary of Trade and Industry, Philippines;
- xii. H.E. Brigadier General (NS) George Yeo, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
- xiii. Mrs. Bootinpa Simaskul, Director-General, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand; and
- xiv. H .E. Mr. Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr., Secretary General of ASEAN.