

**THE SEVENTH CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS
AND MINISTERS OF THE CER
14 September 2002, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam**

Joint Press Statement

1. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the Ministers from Australia and New Zealand (Closer Economic Relations - CER) held their Seventh Consultations on 14 September 2002 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. The Consultations was co-chaired by H.E. Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources of Brunei Darussalam; the Hon. Mr. Mark Vaile, Minister for Trade of Australia; and the Hon. Mr. Jim Sutton, Minister for Trade Negotiations of New Zealand.

ASEAN-CER Trade and Investment Relations

2. The Ministers exchanged views on recent international economic developments, including the prospects for global recovery and issues affecting ASEAN and CER. They noted the trade between ASEAN and CER was valued at US\$ 20.3 billion in 2001. They also noted the potential of increasing trade and investment in the future. In this regard, the Ministers underlined the importance of continuing regional economic integration as a means to promote trade and investment flows.

3. The Ministers noted that 2003 would mark the 20th anniversary of CER, signifying the ongoing economic integration of Australia and New Zealand. The annual average growth of around 9 per cent in trans-Tasman trade over the past decade highlights the benefits to business and the wider communities of this successful agreement.

Closer Economic Partnership (CEP)

4. The Ministers signed [*the Joint Ministerial Declaration on the AFTA-CER CEP*](#), which introduced a formal and structured approach to promoting trade, investment and regional economic integration between ASEAN and CER.

5. The Ministers agreed to set a target of doubling trade and investment by 2010 to ensure that the CEP was ambitious and results-oriented, with a practical focus on increasing trade and investment for the benefit of business and the wider communities in all ASEAN and CER countries. Reduced impediments to trade and lower business costs in the region would stimulate higher economic and employment growth.

6. The Ministers noted the progress made in the implementation of the CEP Initial Work Programme. They encouraged ASEAN and CER sectoral bodies to increase their collaboration and accelerate work on finalizing work plans, complete with targets and timeframes, to implement the CEP Work Programme. The Ministers recalled that, under the CEP Initial Work Programme, priority has been given to elimination of technical barriers to trade and non-tariff barriers, customs cooperation, capacity building, trade and investment promotion and facilitation, standards and conformity assessment, electronic commerce and small and medium enterprises.

7. The Ministers agreed to establish the AFTA-CER CEP Implementation and Coordination Group (ACCICG), which would be responsible for: i) coordinating and directing the work programme under the CEP; ii) providing for the exchange of views on regional and multilateral economic and trade issues; and iii) identifying new areas of cooperation; and endorsed its terms of reference.

AFTA-CER Business Council

8. The Ministers welcomed the opportunity to meet with the newly-established AFTA-CER Business Council (ACBC), and congratulated the ACBC on its successful inaugural meeting at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 8 July this year. The Ministers welcomed the ACBC's views on issues and priorities for further developing the CEP.

9. The Ministers acknowledged the ACBC's proposals to enhance business linkages between ASEAN and CER closely related to the CEP work programme, in the areas of small and medium enterprises, human resource development, and information and communications technology and e-commerce. The Ministers noted that the ACBC had identified non-tariff barriers as a major impediment to increasing ASEAN-CER trade flows and concurred with the ACBC that this should be one area of primary focus over the next year.

10. The Ministers tasked the ACCICG to take into account the comments and views of the ACBC in the implementation of the CEP Work Programme, in particular on the efforts to double trade and investments by 2010.

World Trade Organisation

11. The Ministers welcomed the launch of the WTO Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and renewed their commitment to the strengthening of the rules-based multilateral trading system. They particularly welcomed the development focus of the DDA, especially the provision of trade-related technical assistance and capacity building, and expressed strong determination to continue to work in placing the needs and interests of developing countries at the heart of the WTO work program.

12. The Ministers recognised the important role trade liberalisation can play in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty and called on WTO members to continue to work to improve market access and eliminate trade distorting subsidies, particularly in sectors of interest to developing countries. The Ministers undertook to work together to ensure a successful Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun, Mexico on 10-14 September 2003. The Ministers committed their personal involvement to ensure the completion of the DDA negotiations by the agreed deadline of 1 January 2005.

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

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

14. The Ministers reiterated their strong support for work being undertaken in APEC to free and open trade and investment in the region. They stressed the need to make progress in implementing the Shanghai Accord and to implement fully the APEC Leaders' statement on counter-terrorism.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

- **H.E. Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib**, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam;
- **Hon. Mr. Mark Vaile, Minister of Trade**, Australia;
- **H.E. Mr. Cham Prasidh**, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
- **H.E. Mr. Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti**, Coordinating Minister for Economy, Indonesia;
- **H.E. Mr. Soulivong Daravong**, Minister of Industry and Handicrafts, Lao PDR;
- **H.E. Dato' Seri Rafidah Aziz**, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
- **H.E. Brigadier General David O. Abel**, Minister at the Office of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, Myanmar;
- **Hon. Mr. Jim Sutton**, Minister for Trade Negotiations, New Zealand;
- **H.E. Mr. MAR Roxas**, Secretary of Trade and Industry, the Philippines;
- **H.E. B.G. (NS) George Yeo**, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
- **H.E. Mr. Adisai Bodharamik**, Minister of Commerce, Thailand;
- **H.E. Mr. Luong Van Tu**, Vice Minister of Trade, Viet Nam; and
- **H.E. Mr. Rodolfo C. Severino, Jr.**, Secretary-General of ASEAN.