



**THE EIGHTEENTH AEM-CER CONSULTATIONS**  
**21 August 2013, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam**

**JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

1. The 18th Consultations between the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the Ministers of Australia and New Zealand (Closer Economic Relations – CER) was held in Brunei Darussalam on 21 August 2013. The Consultations were co-chaired by The Hon Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam; the Honourable Mr. Tim Groser, Minister for Trade of New Zealand; and Ms Jan Adams, Deputy Secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

2. The Ministers noted the steady growth of trade and investment within the region, in particular, the 16% increase in total merchandise trade among the Parties in 2012 valued at US \$78.8 billion. The Ministers also noted that trade and investment relations between the Parties, especially within AANZFTA, is at a critical juncture in light of the global economic developments and emerging regional architecture.

**ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA Implementation**

3. The Ministers, recalling that all Parties are now on board the AANZFTA Agreement, underscored the need to maintain the momentum and accord priority to delivering the FTA's commercial benefits and advancing its built-in agenda.

4. The Ministers commended the expeditious and concerted efforts of the FTA Joint Committee and its subsidiary bodies to sustain business confidence and increase utilisation of the FTA's tariff preferences. The Ministers noted the status of finalising the text of the *First Protocol to Amend the AANZFTA Agreement* covering the Chapters on Trade in Goods and Rules of Origin including the Ministers' decision on the removal of FOB value from the Certificate of Origin in certain circumstances. The Ministers also noted the completion of the consolidated Product Specific Rules (PSRs) in HS 2012 and the ongoing technical verification of the tariff reduction schedules transposed from HS 2007 to HS 2012 expected to promote greater transparency and predictability for the private sector.

5. The Ministers, acknowledging the gaps and challenges in the development of a regional framework to monitoring FTA utilisation, noted the proposal to bring together all relevant agencies and implement practical and focused in-country activities to collect and report the data on utilisation of AANZFTA tariff preferences.

## **Moving Forward the FTA's Built-in Agenda**

6. The Ministers noted the substantial progress in moving forward the FTA's key built-in agenda, which includes the agreement on a modular and iterative approach in the mandated review of Non-Tariff Measures, the preparatory work seeking to ensure that Parties arrive at common and shared understanding of the issues in the review of commitments under the services chapter; joint session between services and investment experts on cross-cutting issues in the built-in agenda on trade in services and investment; and the implementation of economic cooperation projects and activities to assist Parties in meeting their obligations in international conventions on intellectual property.

7. Highlighting the importance of competition policy and law in underpinning economic growth and integration in ASEAN and underscoring the need to provide strategic direction for cooperation in the area of competition, the Ministers endorsed the establishment of an AANZFTA Committee on Competition.

## **Economic Cooperation**

8. The Ministers noted the progress of the AANZFTA Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP) which continues to effectively support the implementation of the FTA, particularly in operationalising the Agreement, progressing the built-in agenda and building institutional capacity to enable officials to better engage in emerging economic integration initiatives. With support from Australia and New Zealand, AECSP, at its third year, has actual and committed expenditure of more than AUD 13 million to implement AANZFTA Support Unit activities and economic cooperation projects up to 2014.

9. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of the independent review of the AECSP, in particular its findings that the programme is:

- (i) generating tangible outcomes, especially in terms of the capacity-building in the areas of intellectual property, rules of origin, SPS, standards, services and investment;
- (ii) supporting other ASEAN priorities such as the ASEAN Economic Community-building as well as national reform agendas (e.g. OECD investment policy reviews);
- (iii) increasingly becoming a preferred model for ASEAN-based FTA implementation and related support; and
- (iv) characterised by strong country and regional ownership with substantial in-kind contributions (e.g., staff time) for planning and implementation by ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Member States, and Australia and New Zealand government agencies.

10. The Ministers were pleased to agree in-principle the extension of AECSP to 31 December 2015 and looked forward to strengthening engagement and disseminating the outcomes of the AECSP to all stakeholders through a communications strategy.

#### **ASEAN-CER INTEGRATION PARTNERSHIP FORUM**

11. The Ministers noted the outcomes of the 3rd ASEAN-CER Integration Partnership Forum (IPF) entitled “Competition Policy: The CER Approach” held on 18 June 2013 in Cairns, demonstrating the possibility of soft convergence in competition policy direction, through formal and informal coordination on policy development and regulatory enforcement.

12. Australia and New Zealand encouraged ASEAN to nominate topics for future Forums with the aim of continuously sharing with ASEAN the lessons learned from CER and the Australia-New Zealand Single Economic Market.

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**LIST OF MINISTERS**

1. **Ms Jan Adams**, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
2. **The Hon. Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng**, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam
3. **H.E. Cham Prasidh**, Senior Minister and Minister of Commerce, Cambodia
4. **H.E. Bayu Krisnamurthi**, Vice Minister of Trade, Indonesia
5. **H.E. Nam Viyaketh**, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR
6. **H.E. Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed**, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia
7. **H.E. Kan Zaw**, Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar
8. **Hon. Tim Groser**, Minister for Trade, New Zealand
9. **H.E. Gregory L. Domingo**, Secretary of Trade and Industry, the Philippines
10. **H.E. Lim Hng Kiang**, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore
11. **H.E. Niwattumrong Boonsongpaisan**, Minister of Commerce, Thailand
12. **H.E. Vu Huy Hoang**, Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam
13. **H.E. Le Luong Minh**, Secretary-General of ASEAN