



**THE TWENTY-SEVENTH AEM – CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS (CER)
CONSULTATION
18 September 2022, Siem Reap, Cambodia**

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. ASEAN Member States (AMS), Australia and New Zealand met on 18 September 2022 for the 27th ASEAN Economic Ministers – Closer Economic Relations (AEM-CER) Consultation. The Consultation was co-chaired by H.E. PAN Sorasak, Minister of Commerce, Kingdom of Cambodia; Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, Assistant Minister for Trade, Australia; and the Hon Phil Twyford, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand.

2. The Meeting noted that the economies of ASEAN, Australia, and New Zealand continued to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The total two-way trade between ASEAN and Australia increased by 26.4 percent in 2021, from USD 75.56 billion in 2020 to USD 95.51 billion in 2021, based on Australia's data. The Meeting also noted that the total two-way trade between New Zealand and ASEAN increased by 7 per cent from USD 11.3 billion in 2020 to USD 12.05 billion in 2021, based on New Zealand's data. According to Australia's and New Zealand's data, Australia's foreign direct investment (FDI) flow to ASEAN in 2021 amounted at USD 20.57 billion, while New Zealand's FDI flow to ASEAN for the same year was valued at USD 340.26 million.

3. The Meeting noted that the post-pandemic economic recovery remains vulnerable to global economic challenges. The Meeting expressed its concerns on the continued risks to global food and energy security, and rising inflationary pressures.

4. The Meeting reaffirmed the commitment to continue working closely in addressing and mitigating the adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, as well as advancing the regional economic recovery by leveraging digital trade and sustainable development and keeping markets open for trade and investment. The Meeting appreciated Australia's contribution of AUD 83 million under ASEAN-Australia 'Partnership for Recovery' initiatives, AUD 1 million to support the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), and the establishment of the ACRF Support Unit at the ASEAN Secretariat, with the support of the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program (AADCP) II, to help monitor and evaluate timely implementation of the ACRF. The Meeting further appreciated New Zealand's contribution to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund and its support to COVAX facility as an Advance Market Commitment for vaccines for developing countries.

5. The Meeting welcomed the progress of upgrade negotiations of the Second Protocol to Amend the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area. The Meeting reiterated the importance of ensuring that the Agreement remains of a high standard, fit for purpose, future-proof against emerging challenges, relevant for businesses, and responsive to economic recovery. The Meeting tasked Senior Economic Officials to commence the preparation for the signing of the Second Protocol and looked forward to its entry into force for all Parties. The Meeting noted that the upgraded AANZFTA would provide value-added elements that take into account modern trade practices, including government procurement, trade and sustainable development, and micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), competition, electronic commerce, and trade facilitation.

6. The Meeting welcomed the outcomes of the AANZFTA Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP) as reflected in the AECSP Communication Package 2022. The Meeting noted significant contribution of the AECSP in strengthening the capacity of and addressing the implementation gaps among AANZFTA Parties. The Meeting noted that the AECSP has supported a total of 94 projects and benefited over 16,000 government officials and businesses from across the region. The Meeting appreciated the continuous contribution from Australia and New Zealand to support economic cooperation under the AANZFTA. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the AANZFTA Support Unit after twelve years of fruitful implementation of the AECSP and welcomed the AANZFTA Implementation Support (AIS) programme as the succeeding economic cooperation programme for the AANZFTA starting 1 July 2022. The Meeting also welcomed Australia's and New Zealand's continued commitment to support ASEAN beyond the AECSP, particularly through the US\$32 million (A\$46 million) Regional Trade for Development (RT4D) initiative.

7. The Meeting welcomed the outcomes of the 9th ASEAN-CER Integration Partnership Forum (IPF) under the theme of "Trade and Sustainable Development" held virtually on 20 June 2022. The Meeting noted that the forum provided insights to create an enabling environment for businesses and policymakers to achieve inclusive economic growth that boosts living standards for all and safeguards the environment at the same time.

8. The Meeting welcomed the successful outcomes of the Twelfth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC12) held on 12-17 June 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Meeting expressed its optimism that the series of decisions made at MC12, namely the "Geneva Package" would significantly help reinvigorate the WTO and improve the trust of the global community in the multilateral trading system. While highlighting the need to reform the WTO to ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose and forward looking, including having a fully and well-functioning two-tier dispute settlement system accessible to all members by 2024, the Meeting also reiterated its support for a rules-based, non-discriminatory, open, free, inclusive, equitable, and transparent multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core.

9. The Meeting expressed its support for Indonesia's G20 Presidency under the theme "Recover Together, Recover Stronger" and Thailand as host of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) under the theme "Open. Connect. Balance.". The Meeting noted that these processes provide a unique opportunity for all participating

countries/economies to jointly advance the collective global and regional agenda and efforts to bring peace, prosperity and sustainable and inclusive development to all our peoples.

10. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to ASEAN Centrality and unity in the evolving regional architecture and reiterated its commitment to support an ASEAN-centred regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based, built upon ASEAN-led mechanisms to support the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The Meeting underscored the importance of multilateralism, adherence to international law, and respect for sovereignty in contributing to global and regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

11. The Meeting welcomed the insights proposed by the Australia-ASEAN Chamber of Commerce (AustCham ASEAN) to enhance trade and investment in the region. The Meeting encouraged Australian business communities to provide cross-border internship and job exchange as well as promote RCEP, ATIGA, and AANZFTA to business communities in ASEAN and Australia.
