

ASEAN PLUS THREE PLAN OF ACTION ON MITIGATING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In recognition of the Joint Statement of the Special ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) issued by the Heads of State/Government of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea on 14 April 2020 and the Joint ASEAN Plus Three Ministerial Statement on Mitigating the Economic Impact of COVID-19 pandemic, this Plan of Action takes forward the statements into concrete actions. This Plan of Action aims to induce cooperation and coordination between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries under the APT cooperation framework in mitigating the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region, as well as preparing for future emergency situations, and to achieving post-pandemic economic recovery.

This Plan of Action identifies measures to be adopted by the ASEAN Member States and Plus Three countries under two main objectives, which are (1) keeping markets open for trade and investment, in consideration of their individual domestic laws, and regulations, and (2) strengthening the region's economic resilience. In particular, ASEAN and the Plus Three countries will work together to promote and facilitate smooth flow of essential goods, including food, commodities, medicine, medical supplies associated with combating the COVID-19 pandemic in the short-term while striving to strengthen the resiliency, complementarity and sustainability of the region's supply chain connectivity in the long-term including supporting businesses, vulnerable groups, and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) adversely affected by COVID-19, and facilitate timely information-sharing on trade-related measures on essential goods and supplies.

This Plan of Action will be implemented in accordance with the rights and obligations of ASEAN Member States and the Plus Three countries under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994 and WTO covered agreements, and principles of international law as well as being consistent with the Hanoi Plan of Action. It is not in any way intended to limit the policy space of the ASEAN Member States and the Plus Three countries with respect to the adoption and implementation of measures necessary to secure national interests and general welfare of the people and does not create rights nor obligations under international laws.

1. KEEPING MARKETS OPEN FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT

- 1.1 Refrain from maintaining or introducing unnecessary measures that could adversely affect the smooth flow, particularly the export and import of essential goods such as food, commodities, medicines and medical supplies, as well as investment, that are necessary to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.
- 1.2 Ensure that measures restricting cross-border movement of goods and services that are deemed necessary for public health emergency response are targeted, proportionate, transparent, temporary, and consistent with the WTO rules.
- 1.3 Continue to address non-tariff barriers, particularly those that impede the smooth flow of the export and import of essential goods and services in regional and global supply chains amidst the time of COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1.4 Provide timely information on trade-related measures on essential goods and supplies, as well as any subsequent changes made to the measures.
- 1.5 Ensure the smooth and continued flow of trade in essential goods, including encouraging closely coordinating among relevant ministries and agencies to continue to promote trade facilitation measures, especially at land borders, taking into account the standards and recommendations of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- 1.6 Encourage the utilization of all platforms available, including Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), to facilitate and promote the free flow of essential goods, services and investment in contributing to the minimization of the pandemic's economic impact as well as sustainable recovery after the crisis.
- 1.7 Encourage their Governments to establish, at the national level and on a voluntary basis, relevant guidelines that would allow, in the event of global health crises, essential cross-border travel, on an exceptional basis, in accordance with national policies, laws and regulations, and without undermining efforts to prevent the spread of the virus and safeguard public health during the pandemic in order to facilitate essential movement of business people across borders.

2. STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

- 2.1 Enhance cooperation on initiatives that would increase the capacity of ASEAN Member States and the Plus Three countries to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple hazards, natural disasters, and other similar situations.
- 2.2 Endeavour to exchange information regarding the production and trade of essential medical supplies in order to support the initiative to explore the possibility of developing regional stockpiling of such goods in line with joint statement of special APT summit.
- 2.3 Support businesses, particularly the MSMEs, vulnerable groups, business start-ups and economic sectors adversely affected by COVID-19, leverage science, technology, innovation and digital trade to allow them to continue operations and increase market opportunity in the regional and global scales and to repurpose capacities to meet new needs.
- 2.4 Strengthen engagement with stakeholders such as the private sector by having them as significant partners in strengthening regional supply chains, to instil investment confidence, promote business opportunities, and strengthen supply chain connectivity.
- 2.5 Support the implementation of the ASEAN Work Program on Electronic-Commerce, specifically on accessibility and interoperability, human capital development, consumer protection, legal framework and cybersecurity, in support to businesses that will use technologies and digital trade to continue operation and meet future demands.
- 2.6 Facilitate cross-border transfer of information and data by electronic means for the development of the digital economy, as well as to strengthen consumer and business trust in the digital economy, in accordance with the domestic and international legal frameworks and support ongoing negotiations on electronic commerce at the WTO.

- 2.7 Enhance existing platforms to promote and strengthen sharing and exchange of information, experience, and best practices in the region, particularly pre-emptive, mitigative and corrective measures to be taken in response to COVID-19 pandemic's adverse effects on economic activities, such as on how to boost business confidence and the economy
- 2.8 Foster communications among ASEAN Plus Three countries, especially at senior economic officials level, so that the strength and learning of one country may translate into best practices for the region as a whole.
- 2.9 Commit to enhance economic cooperation between ASEAN Member States and the Plus Three countries to create a facilitative trade and investment environment, to expedite the process of economic recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and vulnerable economic sectors, especially on the economic sectors adversely affected by COVID-19 including but not limited to travel, tourism, manufacturing, and retail, among others.
- 2.10 Encourage dialogue between local government authorities of provinces of ASEAN Member States sharing borders to discuss solutions for customs clearance of essential goods, including food, medicines, and medical and other essential supplies while ensuring compliance of preventive measures against the COVID-19 with national regulations.
- 2.11 Reaffirm commitment to sign the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in 2020 to achieve higher level of regional economic integration and cooperation, while emphasizing that RCEP remains open for India and, stressing that as a region-wide free trade area, RCEP will provide a more stable and predictable economic environment to support the much-needed recovery of trade and investment in the region, which has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.12 Promote cooperation in new areas needed to adjust the transformation COVID-19 has brought, such as digital economy and technologies, health care, and intelligent manufacturing.

3. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM

- 3.1 Identify and pursue initiatives under the existing ASEAN Plus Three framework to strengthen joint efforts toward post-pandemic recovery in the region as well as creating a more resilient and sustainable regional economy from future internal and external crises.
- 3.2 Progress under this Plan of Action will be reported to the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) - Plus Three Consultations, and subsequently to the ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers (APTFM) as the main coordinating body, through the Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM) – Plus Three Consultations.

DONE on Twenty Five day of August in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty.