



Chairman's Press Release on the ASEAN-United Kingdom Open-Ended Troika Meeting 8 April 2021

1. The ASEAN-United Kingdom (UK) Open-Ended Troika Meeting was held on 8 April 2021 via videoconference to discuss the critical situation on the COVID-19 pandemic, initiatives to build a resilient and sustainable economic recovery, and efforts to address the adverse impact of climate change.
2. The Meeting was chaired by The Honourable Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam, in his capacity as the Chair of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM), and attended by His Excellency Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, as the incoming Chair of the AMM, His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN, and The Right Honourable Dominic Raab MP, First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the UK. Other Foreign Ministers and high representatives of ASEAN Member States also participated in the Meeting.
3. The Meeting expressed condolences on the loss of lives and extended sympathies to those suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting extended heartfelt gratitude to all medical professionals, healthcare workers, and other frontline personnel involved in containing and responding to the pandemic. The Meeting acknowledged the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, which has deeply affected countries' economies and social development, as well as people's well-being, welfare and livelihood. The Meeting commended the unprecedented efforts by scientists and medical experts in developing vaccines in the fight against the pandemic as well as the commitment shown by many countries around the world, including ASEAN Member States and the UK, to secure a fair, safe, timely and equitable access to the vaccines for their peoples.
4. The Meeting underscored the need for close, coordinated, and multilateral collaboration in the efforts to recover from the pandemic, particularly on vaccine production, access and distribution. The Meeting welcomed joint efforts between ASEAN Member States and the UK to facilitate the rapid and safe distribution of treatments, vaccines, anti-viral medicines and tests, and to ensure that these medical resources would be available to the people. The Meeting highlighted the USD 6.3 billion fund raised for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) and welcomed the UK's pledge for GBP 548 million funding, which will help distribute over one billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to nearly 92 developing countries, including ASEAN Member States in 2021. The Meeting also welcomed the ongoing deliveries of vaccines to ASEAN Member States under the COVAX arrangements and looked forward to these deliveries continuing and growing further. The Meeting encouraged the UK to support ASEAN's COVID-19 related initiatives to advance regional recovery, particularly in the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan, and the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies (RRMS). The Meeting noted the ASEAN Declaration on an ASEAN Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework, and several ASEAN Member States expressed their interests to work with the UK to allow the safe movement of essential business people and officials, students and medical tourists. ASEAN Member States congratulated the UK on the steady progress of its vaccination programme, and on the initiation of its four-step roadmap out of lockdown. In this regard, the Meeting agreed to explore opportunities for the UK to share best practices and lessons learned from this programme with ASEAN Member States.

5. The Meeting welcomed the UK's proposals, as G7 President, to deepen engagement between the ASEAN and G7, and looked forward to the ASEAN Chair and ASEAN Secretary-General attending the G7 Meeting of Foreign and Development Ministers in the UK in May 2021. This will help create stronger ties between ASEAN and the G7, including underpinning cooperation to ensure better preparedness for future pandemics. The Meeting welcomed the plan to convene a virtual Global Vaccine Confidence Summit.
6. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the UK for its contribution towards ASEAN's health-related response and recovery initiatives, including refocusing GBP50 million of its funding within ASEAN specifically to tackle the pandemic, such as: (i) GBP1 million for the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund; (ii) GBP0.5 million for ASEAN on policies to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19; and (iii) GBP4.8 million for strengthening ASEAN national health systems to prevent, detect and control the threat of the pandemic. The Meeting underscored the importance of further enhancing practical cooperation between ASEAN and the UK in the area of health. In particular, the Meeting agreed to explore opportunities to strengthen cooperation on addressing mental health issues, through capacity building and the sharing of best practices. With regard to curbing the spread of COVID-19, the Meeting agreed to explore further cooperation on genetic surveillance of new and emerging variants for early detection. The Meeting also noted that the Bio Circular Green Economic Model could be explored as one possible strategy for post-COVID-19 recovery to achieve a more sustainable and resilient future, and encouraged ASEAN-UK cooperation on this matter through ASEAN bodies and centres, including the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue. Additionally, the Meeting welcomed the UK's support towards ASEAN's efforts in narrowing the development gap in the region, especially in the context of addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. The Meeting affirmed the need for stronger collaboration to build back better with a more resilient and sustainable global economy, as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement. In the lead up to the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the UNFCCC to be held in the UK in November 2021, the Meeting looked forward to shared capacity-building with ASEAN Member States under the framework of the ASEAN-UK Cooperation on COP26. The Meeting recognised the importance of Nationally Determined Contributions implementation, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities principle, long-term strategies and net zero targets ahead of COP26, and welcomed the successful convening of the virtual ASEAN-COP26 Climate Dialogue on 24-25 September 2020. ASEAN Member States welcomed the UK's increasing commitments to support ASEAN, among others with demand driven science-based green recovery. ASEAN Member States also recognised the UK's assistance to develop green financial systems, sustainable infrastructure and energy efficiency across the region through the ASEAN Low Carbon Energy Programme and the Global Green Recovery Challenge Fund in accordance with national circumstances and priorities of ASEAN Member States. ASEAN Member States underlined climate change as one of ASEAN's priorities under its ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2025, which is also aligned with the broader outcomes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Meeting agreed that ASEAN and the UK should continue to collaborate on climate change, and looked forward to in-depth discussions on addressing the adverse impact of climate change at the COP26 in accordance with the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibility.

8. The Meeting expressed deep sympathies for the loss of life and displacement of people following recent natural disasters in the region, including the flooding and landslides in Indonesia and Timor Leste. ASEAN Member States welcomed the UK's contribution of GBP1.25 million through the Red Cross to assist 24,000 affected people in Viet Nam and 10,000 people in the Philippines to ensure access to health, water and livelihoods support. ASEAN Member States expressed appreciation to the UK for its continued support on building resilience to climate impacts across the region, including through partnerships with ASEAN cities supporting resilient infrastructure and through its continued partnership with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre).
9. The Meeting acknowledged the UK as the region's 12th largest trading partner and the region's 6th largest foreign direct investment (FDI) source in 2019. The Meeting welcomed the significant value of trade between ASEAN and the UK, with total trade equalling GBP36.4 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2020. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to free trade within the international rules-based system, noting that this is vital to economic recovery and future growth. The Meeting recognised the importance of maintaining resilient global supply chains and supporting global economic recovery by keeping markets open to trade and investment, free from unnecessary restrictions in accordance with countries' respective commitments within the international rules-based system. This will facilitate sustainable and inclusive global and regional economic growth by working closely with all relevant international and regional organisations and financial institutions, restoring business confidence in the region, and supporting regional connectivity. The Meeting noted the work by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to study ASEAN-UK supply chains and assess the resilience of trade before and during COVID-19. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged greater collaboration between ASEAN and the UK, including enhancing their economic cooperation as a means for rebuilding their economies following the impact of the pandemic. The Meeting also supported to enhancing the supply chains between ASEAN and the UK by assessing the resilience of trade between ASEAN and the UK's firms and identifying ways to further strengthen these supply chains. The Meeting noted the progress of the ASEAN Accelerated COVID Economic Support (ACES) programme, which looks at the impact of COVID-19 on selected value chains in ASEAN, and which provides technical considerations to ASEAN on policies to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 and support the implementation of the ACRF.
10. The Meeting welcomed the UK's renewed commitment to further deepen technology ties with ASEAN, in support of the region's economic recovery and preparedness for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including through the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN), Digital Trade Network and UK-South East Asia FinTech Series. The Meeting noted that the UK ASEAN Digital Business Challenge Programme will support ASEAN Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to deliver innovative solutions to business challenges. The Meeting noted the UK's proposal for an ASEAN-UK Digital Innovation Partnership, which would support ASEAN's Digital Innovation ambitions as set out in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, the ASEAN Digital Master Plan 2025, and the ASEAN Digital Integration Framework Action Plan 2019-2025 (DIFAP) and draw on the expertise of the UK's Government Digital Service, and looked forward to receiving the Concept Note of the proposal.
11. The Meeting welcomed the UK's engagement with the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ABAC) to design a private sector-led regional digital trade connectivity roadmap that complements the ASEAN Single Window Programme. The Meeting recognised the UK's commitment to continuing this engagement and support in the implementation of the Regional Digital Trade Connectivity recommendation. The Meeting further welcomed the UK's plan to hold a second ASEAN-UK Economic Dialogue and ASEAN-UK Business Forum, developed in partnership with the ABAC. The Meeting further encouraged ABAC and the ASEAN-UK Business Council to deepen its engagement in the effort to boost the economic growth of ASEAN and the UK.

12. The Meeting acknowledged the success of the recent ASEAN-UK course on Sustainable Infrastructure in ASEAN, and noted that this course continues the UK's support for ASEAN to develop infrastructure which facilitates economic prosperity as well as addresses the pressing demands of climate change. ASEAN Member States welcomed the UK's support for MPAC 2025 through capacity building and knowledge sharing, including through the GBP19 million UK Prosperity Fund ASEAN Economic Reform Programme.
13. The Meeting highlighted the importance of promoting trust, confidence, dialogue and cooperation to maintain peace, security, stability and the rule of law in the region. The Meeting underlined the enduring contribution of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) towards promoting peace, security and stability in the region, to which the UK became a High Contracting Party in 2012. ASEAN Member States appreciated the UK's support for ASEAN Centrality and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The Meeting discussed its shared interest in maintaining the integrity of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and reaffirmed that the Convention sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector.
14. The Meeting discussed maritime cooperation such as maritime environmental protection, including marine debris. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting welcomed participation from ASEAN Member States in the UK's facilitated capacity building activities on maritime law and maritime security.
15. The Meeting discussed regional and international issues. The UK welcomed the convening of the Informal ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 2 March 2021 and noted the ASEAN Chairman's Statement on 1 February 2021 and the ASEAN Chair's Statement on the Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 2 March 2021, which among others expressed concern over the situation in Myanmar, called on all relevant parties to exercise utmost restraint and refrain from further violence; recalled the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter, including adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and, respect for fundamental freedoms and promotion and protection of human rights; and acknowledging the calls for the release of political detainees and for the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Myanmar to engage with the parties concerned. The Meeting acknowledged ASEAN's positive and constructive role in facilitating a durable and peaceful solution to the situation in Myanmar, which has to be negotiated among the key stakeholders in Myanmar. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed ASEAN's readiness to assist Myanmar, including through the good offices of the Chairman of ASEAN and the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The Meeting further underscored the importance of efforts to addressing the root causes of the situation in Rakhine State. The Meeting encouraged the UK as a key-player in the multilateral fora to support ASEAN Centrality in responding to the situation in Myanmar.
16. The Meeting noted the publication of the UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. The Meeting welcomed the UK's commitment to strengthening ties with ASEAN, including through the UK's application for ASEAN Dialogue Partner status. The Meeting looked forward to continued and closer cooperation between ASEAN and the UK, and further strengthening the ASEAN-UK relationship towards achieving common interests in order to accelerate sustainable socio-economic growth of the region.
