



CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 21st ASEAN PLUS THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

9 September 2020, Viet Nam

1. The 21st ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on 9 September 2020 via videoconference, chaired by His Excellency Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

Review and Future Direction of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Cooperation

2. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the APT process in promoting peace, stability and cooperation in East Asia towards the long-term goal of building an East Asian community, with ASEAN as the driving force. The Ministers reiterated the commitment to further strengthening and deepening the APT functional cooperation under the APT process. The Ministers further underlined the mutually reinforcing and complementary nature of the APT with other ASEAN-led frameworks. The Ministers also recognized the contribution of the APT to ASEAN's efforts towards realising the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration and deeper regional integration in East Asia.

3. The Ministers noted the further strengthening of the APT cooperation in wide-ranging areas, and commended the substantive progress in the implementation of the APT Cooperation Work Plan (2018-2022). The Ministers looked forward to the continued effective implementation of the Work Plan through more concrete activities and projects to further enhance APT cooperation in the next years.

4. The Ministers noted the progress in the implementation of action plans for the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) II selected recommendations which would pave the way towards greater APT cooperation. They looked forward to the implementation of the remaining projects and activities under the action plans.

5. The Ministers shared views on the need to further enhance dialogue and cooperation to address non-traditional security issues, including transnational crime as outlined in the APT Cooperation Work Plan 2018-2022, such as trafficking in persons, cybercrime, countering terrorism and violent extremism, border management and illicit drugs trafficking. The Ministers also highlighted the

importance of, and looked forward to, enhancing maritime cooperation to include capability development on maritime industry.

6. The Ministers reaffirmed the role of APT cooperation in effective control and containment of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in mitigating its socio-economic impact on their respective countries and the region, as underlined in the Joint Statement of the Special APT Summit on COVID-19 convened via videoconference on 14 April 2020. The Ministers acknowledged the support and contribution of the Plus Three countries to ASEAN Member States, and ASEAN's initiatives in addressing COVID-19, among others, the establishment of the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund and the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies. The Ministers also noted that China shall circulate the concept note of the establishment of the APT reserve of essential medical supplies.

7. The Ministers further underlined the need to strengthen APT collaboration in advancing the post-pandemic regional recovery. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the ASEAN Plus Three Economic Ministers' Joint Statement on Mitigating the Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on 4 June 2020 and looked forward to the effective implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Plan of Action (APT POA) on Mitigating the Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic adopted at the 23rd AEM Plus Three Consultations on 28 August 2020 to realize the commitment of the ASEAN Plus Three countries to cooperate and collaborate on overcoming the challenges brought about by COVID-19.

8. The Ministers stressed the importance of keeping the markets open for trade and investment, in consideration of their domestic laws and regulations, to strengthen the resiliency and sustainability of regional supply chains and maintain necessary flow of essential goods and services including food, medicines and medical and other essential supplies, including maintaining necessary interconnectedness in the region by facilitating the essential movement of people and goods for diplomatic, humanitarian, scientific and business activities. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to upholding an open, inclusive, transparent, and rule-based multilateral trading system anchored by the World Trade Organization. The Ministers also reaffirmed their support for enhanced regional economic integration. In this regard, the Ministers reiterated commitment to the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement as scheduled to demonstrate the firm commitment of ASEAN and its Partners to upholding an open, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system, while reiterating that the RCEP remains open for India. The Ministers looked forward to the Final Joint Study on "10+3 Cooperation for Improvement of Supply Chain Connectivity (SCC)," to be submitted at the 23rd APT Summit.

9. The Ministers acknowledged the key leadership role of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the fundamental role of the United Nations system in

catalyzing and coordinating the comprehensive global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting recognized the importance of following up the recently adopted resolution at the 73rd World Health Assembly in its entirety, including the Assembly's call for actions by WHO Members States, International Organizations and relevant stakeholders and the WHO Director-General.

10. The Ministers called for the enhancement of APT cooperation in ensuring food security particularly in the post-pandemic period, including through the full and effective utilization of the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) and the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS), to overcome possible food shortages as well as strengthen the resiliency and sustainability of regional food supply chains by working closely together to ensure that markets are kept open and transportation of agricultural and food products are facilitated.

11. The Ministers noted the region's increased dependence on the digital economy during the pandemic. To this end, they stressed the need for the region to identify challenges and opportunities as the region's economies gird themselves for the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and to harness the latter as a tool to foster APT's economic recovery.

12. The Ministers stressed the need to assist people and businesses affected by the impact of COVID-19, especially the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), start-ups and vulnerable groups, including through facilitating their integration into the digital economy and use of technologies to allow the MSMEs to maintain operations. The Ministers further reaffirmed their continuing support for future initiatives aimed at preparing MSMEs for the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

13. The Ministers recognised the potentials presented by the on-going digital transformation to improve the region's long-term competitiveness and the livelihood of its people. The Ministers support the development of digital economy and innovative growth to enhance the regional resilience. The Ministers expressed support to the progress made on the ASEAN Smart Cities Network and looked forward to the Plus Three countries' close partnership with cities in the network as it evolves over the coming years.

14. The Ministers underlined the importance of the ASEAN+3 Finance process in enhancing regional economic and financial stability. They welcomed the continued commitment by APT Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to strengthen the APT regional financial safety net with Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM) at its center including the amended CMIM Agreement, which came into effect on June 23, 2020, and looked forward to a promising output at the APT Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting scheduled in 2020. The Ministers also commended the APT Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) for its surveillance work, including publishing the APT Regional Economic Outlook 2020, and support to the operation of CMIM.

15. The Ministers commended the accomplishments made in fostering closer regional financial cooperation towards a more resilient, inclusive and integrated APT region. The Meeting welcomed the progress made in implementing the vision document on “Strategic Directions of APT Finance Process” In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministers noted the potential risks to regional financial stability, and stressed the need to foster closer regional financial cooperation and policy coordination and support the AMRO in monitoring the economic and financial development in the region and providing timely risk assessment and policy advice. They reaffirmed commitment to enhancing the readiness of the CMIM, and further promoting the Regional Financial Arrangement (RFA) as an effective and timely self-help mechanism, and a strong and reliable layer of the Global Financial Safety Net.

16. The Ministers commended the efforts of the ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-Korea Centre to promote trade, investment, culture and people-to-people and cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries. The Ministers were pleased to note that the three Centres had established regular consultation meetings and called for the Centres to enhance linkages among them by exploring possible joint projects in areas of common interests.

17. The Ministers were pleased with the progress in implementing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and looked forward to the support of APT countries to advance the implementation of MPAC 2025, particularly in the area of sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence, and people mobility and the strengthening of APT cooperation in enhancing regional comprehensive connectivity. The Ministers reiterated the importance of developing links and synergies between MPAC 2025 and key connectivity initiatives in the region as outlined in the APT Leaders’ Statement on Connecting the Connectivities Initiative adopted by the Leaders at the 22nd APT Summit in November 2019. In this regard, the Ministers noted Thailand’s proposal to organise a regional workshop to explore ways forward on this matter.

18. The Ministers emphasised the importance of cultural exchanges and people-to-people links to heighten awareness and foster intercultural understanding and ASEAN identity in the region. In this regard, the Ministers encouraged effective implementation of the projects under the ASEAN Plus Three Work Plan on Cooperation in Culture and Arts 2019-2021. The Ministers also looked forward to the promotion of the 10+3 Network of Culture Cities and City-Level Exchanges especially through the Network of APT Culture Cities.

19. The Ministers acknowledged the efforts made to implement the priority areas of APT health cooperation, which includes universal health coverage, utilising ICT for healthcare, non-communicable diseases, traditional and complementary medicine, active ageing, human resources for health, responding to communicable and emerging health threats and food safety, as well as issues related to antimicrobial resistance, ending all forms of malnutrition, and disaster health management.

20. The Ministers noted the Joint Statement of the 8th APT Health Ministers Meeting on 30 August 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia supporting the theme of Accelerating Health for All in ASEAN. The Ministers noted the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaborative activities to be undertaken in promoting healthy and active ageing as complemented by the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Active Ageing and Innovation (ACAI) in Thailand. The Ministers acknowledged efforts to strengthen healthcare and welfare system under the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN). They also noted the commitment of the APT health sector to continue efforts on the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) and the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies (APSED III) to enhance ASEAN Member States and Plus Three Countries' capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats.

21. The Ministers welcomed the commitment of the APT Health Ministers made at their meeting via videoconference on 7 April 2020 to enhancing free, open, transparent and timely sharing of information, data and expertise on COVID-19 prevention, detection, control and response measures, epidemiologic surveillance updates, risk assessment results, epidemiological and clinical studies on the virus and the disease, treatment experience, including the application of traditional medicine and technical guidelines. The Ministers also recognized the importance of cooperation in development, manufacturing and distribution of anti-viral medicines and vaccines, adhering to the objectives of efficiency, safety, equal accessibility and affordability and noted the role of the International Vaccine Institute (IVI) in developing and delivering vaccines. The Ministers also encouraged continuing commitment, after overcoming the challenges related to COVID-19 and revitalising national health systems, on collaboration in learning from the regional and national experiences in responding to COVID-19 challenges, as well as to further strengthen and institutionalise preparedness, surveillance, prevention, detection and response mechanisms of the ASEAN and Plus Three Countries on public health emergencies and other crises. The Ministers emphasized emergency measures deemed necessary for responding to public health emergencies must be proportionate, transparent and temporary and consistent with WTO rules and not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption of global and regional supply chains. Given the region's susceptibility to infectious diseases, the Meeting noted the need to explore ways to further strengthen cooperation in the area of public health and the possibility the establishment of an initiative for disease control, prevention and therapy to address the indirect effects of the pandemic during the recovery phase post-COVID-19. The Ministers noted Indonesia's initiative on the establishment of the APT Task Force on Pandemic to mitigate future pandemics and other epidemics diseases and the APT Network of Pharmaceutical Industries to help sustain supply chain connectivity in the region. The Meeting also emphasised the importance of equitable access and distribution of affordable vaccines among APT countries, once available.

22. The Ministers reiterated the commitment to advancing cooperation in promoting sustainable, inclusive and innovative development, as well as in strengthening cooperation with all stakeholders, including the private sector, to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Ministers called for development of collaborative projects to protect and conserve the environment and biodiversity, to promote sustainable use as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilization of natural resources, including water resource management, and to address the climate change, air pollution and marine plastic debris. In this regard, the ASEAN Ministers welcomed continuous contribution of the Plus Three countries to reduce marine debris. The Ministers noted the successful convening of the 16th APT Environment Ministers Meeting held on 9 October 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The Ministers noted the progress of the APT Marine Plastic Debris Cooperative Action Initiative and welcomed the convening of the ASEAN Plus Three Youth Environment Forum on 8-13 September 2019 in Phuket, Thailand.

23. The Ministers reaffirmed the commitment to forging closer cooperation in poverty alleviation for sustainable development, promoting and protecting the human rights of vulnerable groups, and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women. The Ministers commended the adoption of the ASEAN Enabling Master plan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and looked forward to its implementation.

24. The Ministers reiterated the need for the resumption of safe travels to jumpstart the region's economic recovery. To this end, they look forward to discussions on special travel arrangements or "travel bubbles" that may facilitate the safe and orderly travel of individuals across the region.

25. The Ministers reiterated the need for an enabling environment with supporting instruments that would facilitate student mobility with quality assurance among the APT countries. In this regard, they looked forward to the continued implementation of the APT Guidelines on Transcripts and Supplemental Documents for Academic Records of Exchange Students, which was adopted by the APT Education Ministers in November 2018. The Ministers also noted the: (i) adoption of the APT Plan of Action on Education 2018-2025 by the APT Education Ministers and its ongoing implementation; (ii) successful convening of the 7th Meeting of the Working Group on Student Mobility and Quality Assurance of Higher Education among APT Countries in September 2019 in Singapore; and (iii) 10th APT Senior Officials Meeting on Education in November 2019 in Bangkok.

26. The Ministers commended the efforts of the APT Meeting on Youth in providing greater access for engagement among youth in APT countries and establish effective communication through various annual youth exchanges and community immersions which provide opportunity for meaningful cross-cultural understanding. The Ministers commended the commitment of ASEAN Youth

Ministers to further strengthening APT collaborations on youth development with a view to addressing the challenges of Industry 4.0, digitalisation and the evolving demand of the labour market and noted with satisfaction the contribution of youth empowerment activities and people-to-people exchange programmes among APT countries. The Ministers welcomed the holding of an APT Student Camp, which will be held in 2021. The activity is the implementation of EAVG II Recommendation No. 24, which aimed to boost people-to-people connectivity in the East Asia region.

27. The Ministers commended the steady progress of implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM+3) Work Plan 2016-2020 which covered areas of mutual interests including e-governance, human resource management and human resource development, productivity in public sector, good governance, public sector reform, local administration capacity building and cooperation, and research and innovation. The Ministers welcomed the development of the ACCSM+3 Work Plan 2021-2025 which would further promote good governance and support the agility of ASEAN's civil service in facing global challenges. The Ministers applauded the finalisation of the ASEAN Guideline on Public Service Delivery, which was supported by the APT Cooperation Fund, and looked forward to the implementation of the Guidelines that would strengthen the capabilities of ASEAN civil service to deliver high quality public service to the people of ASEAN.

28. The Ministers noted the strengthening of the APT cooperation in the labour sector through the development of the first ASEAN Plus Three Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM+3) Work Plan 2021-2025 that would cover the areas of human resources development, inclusive growth, sustainable development as a response to the ASEAN economic integration, social dialogue, and occupational safety and health in the workplace. The Ministers looked forward to the effective implementation of the Work Plan through practical activities and projects. The Ministers agreed to strengthen cooperation in support for the realization of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Human Resource Development for the Changing World of Work adopted at the 36th ASEAN Summit with the view to preparing the ASEAN's workforce for the future of work.

29. The Ministers noted the decision of the 7th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) in October 2019 in Myanmar on ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management's (ACDM) engagement with ASEAN Dialogue Partners from China, Japan and the ROK to explore the possibility of establishing ASEAN Plus mechanisms on disaster management. The Ministers encouraged the enhancement of regional cooperation on disaster management and emergency response by promoting cooperation on policy coordination, information exchanges and conducting joint exercises to effectively promote disaster management and reduce disaster risks and losses in the region.

30. The Ministers acknowledged the important contribution of the East Asia Forum (EAF) as a Track 1.5 level platform for government, business, academia and think tanks to further deepen East Asia cooperation. In this regard, they looked forward to the convening of the 18th EAF under the theme “Strengthening the ASEAN Plus Three cooperation for economic and financial resilience in face of emerging challenges”, to be hosted via videoconference by Viet Nam.

31. The Ministers also recognised the important contributions of the Network of East Asia Think-Tanks (NEAT) towards APT cooperation. The Ministers welcomed the outcomes of NEAT meetings last year, which advocated for socio-cultural connectivity and the establishment of smart and sustainable cities in East Asia. Cultural institutions and related networks need to be strengthened.

32. The Ministers also underscored the importance of forging closer cooperation in other areas such as science, technology and innovation, tourism, media, energy security, and minerals. The Ministers further noted that the APT tourism sector is developing an APT Tourism Cooperation Work Plan 2021-2025 for adoption in the first quarter of 2021. In addition, the Ministers encouraged the APT countries to explore closer cooperation in other areas such as MSMEs, climate change, women empowerment and gender equality, disaster management and narrowing the development gap.

Regional and International Issues

33. The Ministers recognized the efforts and achievements in advancing the peace process on the Korean Peninsula over the last two years. The Ministers stressed the importance of continued sustainable peaceful dialogue amongst all concerned parties in order to achieve peace and stability in a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. The Ministers urged all parties concerned to resume peaceful dialogue and continue working towards the goals of lasting peace and stability in a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, including through the full and expeditious implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration, the Pyongyang Joint Declaration and the Joint Statement by the Leaders of the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). The Ministers underscored the significance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and noted the ROK’s proposals to advance inter-Korean relations. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to the full implementation of all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The importance of international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula was stressed in the meeting. The Ministers stressed the need to promote a conducive atmosphere to peaceful dialogue among the concerned partners, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms. The Ministers noted views expressed by some Ministers on the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the resolution of the abductions issue.

Other Matters

34. The Ministers discussed the preparations for the 23rd APT Summit to be held in November 2020 in Viet Nam. The Ministers welcomed and supported Viet Nam's proposal for an APT Leaders' Statement on Strengthening APT Cooperation for Economic and Financial Resilience in face of Emerging Challenges to be issued at the 23rd APT Summit.
