



**THE TWENTY-SEVENTH AEM-METI CONSULTATIONS
15 September 2021, Video Conference Meeting**

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. ASEAN Member States (AMS) and Japan virtually met on 15 September 2021 for the 27th AEM-Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Consultations. The Consultations were co-chaired by H.E. Dato Dr. Amin Liew Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II, Brunei Darussalam, and H.E. KAJIYAMA Hiroshi, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan.
2. The Meeting noted the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the bilateral trade and investments between ASEAN and Japan. According to preliminary ASEAN data for 2020, two-way trade between ASEAN and Japan reached USD 204.0 billion, decreasing by 9.7 per cent year-on-year, while total FDI inflows from Japan amounted to USD 8.5 billion, or a decrease of 64.4 per cent year-on-year. This placed Japan as ASEAN's fourth largest trading partner and third largest external source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) among ASEAN's Dialogue Partners in 2020.
3. The Meeting looked forward to the full ratification of the First Protocol to Amend the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement to incorporate the Chapters on Trade in Services, Movement of Natural Persons (MNP), and Investment by all Parties as soon as possible, towards its early entry into force for all Parties. The Meeting reiterated the importance of ensuring the implementation of the said Protocol in a timely manner, which aims at further broadening and deepening bilateral ASEAN-Japan economic relations, strengthening post-COVID-19 recovery efforts, and in creating a more conducive business environment for services providers and investors to expand their presence in the region. The Meeting reviewed the progress of implementation of the AJCEP Agreement and looked forward to the full implementation of AJCEP tariff commitments in HS 2017 by all Parties and the AJCEP Product Specific Rules (PSRs) in HS 2017.
4. The Meeting welcomed the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement and looked forward to its early entry into force by early January 2022 as a target and its full implementation. The Meeting noted that the RCEP Agreement sends a strong signal of the region's commitment to an open, free, inclusive, rules-based and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system that will enable the region to achieve post-pandemic economic recovery.
5. The Meeting welcomed the progress in the implementation of the ASEAN-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan ("Action Plan"), which was adopted at the Special AEM-METI Video Conference held on 29 July 2020, such as promoting supply chain resilience, demonstration projects using digital solution, and promoting trade facilitation,

including the commencement and progress of the discussion towards introducing the electronic CO data exchange scheme for AJCEP. The Meeting expressed appreciation on the successful progress and fruitful outcome through “the Dialogue for Innovative and Sustainable Growth (DISG)”, launched at the 26th AEM-METI Consultation last year, and “ASEAN-Japan Business Week”. Furthermore, the Meeting recognized the importance of the steady implementation of the Action Plan, and reaffirmed the need for ASEAN and Japan to further enhance cooperation towards Post-COVID-19 growth. Therefore, the Meeting welcomed the “ASEAN-Japan Priority for Innovative and Sustainable Growth,” as a next course of focused action to enhance the steady implementation of the Action Plan, and tasked officials to review and upgrade the Action Plan in line with this Priority in 2022. The Meeting looked forward to more meaningful progress and outcome under the DISG and the implementation of other supporting activities to continue the steady implementation of the Action Plan.

6. The Meeting noted and acknowledged the key takeaways from DISG activities and the various activities carried out by AMEICC, which correspond to the Action Plan. The Meeting expressed their appreciation to Japan for its continuous support to ASEAN economic development.

7. The Meeting welcomed the outcomes of the 13th dialogue between the Secretary-General of ASEAN and the Federation of Japanese Chambers of Commerce and Industry in ASEAN (FJCCIA) with Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), which successfully resumed after the absence of 2020 from COVID-19. The Meeting noted the FJCCIA proposals which support the ACRF realization and consist of three broad strategies such as i) Broader Economic Integration, ii) Inclusive Digital Transformation, and iii) More Sustainable and Resilient Future. The Meeting looked forward to further actions by FJCCIA and JETRO in cooperation with the ASEAN Secretariat and other relevant organizations.

8. The Meeting welcomed activities from the ASEAN-Japan Business Council (AJBC) and JETRO, and realized the importance of private sectors, both large and MSMEs, in moving towards resilient economic recovery, developing open innovation towards post COVID-19, and appreciated their participation in the DISG" and "ASEAN Japan Business Week". The Meeting shared the importance of MSMEs as mentioned by AJBC, that supporting MSMEs and rural area is important for sustainable and inclusive growth. The Meeting commended JETRO's activities such as Strengthening of Supply Chain Program, and welcomed newly launched business platform, Japan Innovation Bridge (J-Bridge) which supports open innovation process in digital and green industries, and hoped to see further business collaborations for creating new business value to contribute to materialize ACRF.

9. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to an open, free, inclusive, transparent, rules-based, and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system centered on the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Meeting underscored its support to uphold and abide by international rules and obligations and its commitment to keeping markets open for trade and investment. The Meeting also called for meaningful outcomes towards the WTO reforms at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference.

10. The Meeting also acknowledged the contribution of Japan to the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), which continued to support and contribute to ASEAN economic integration and AEC-building efforts.
