



CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 18TH ASEAN PLUS THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

07 August 2017, Manila, Philippines

“PARTNERING FOR CHANGE, ENGAGING THE WORLD”

1. The 18th ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting (APTFMM) was held on 07 August 2017 in Manila, Philippines. The Meeting was chaired by His Excellency Alan Peter S. Cayetano, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Review and Future Direction of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation

2. The Ministers reaffirmed the important role of the ASEAN Plus Three cooperation framework in promoting peace, security, stability and prosperity in East Asia. They acknowledged the importance of ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture and stressed that the APT would continue to support the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 to pave the way towards deeper regional integration in East Asia. They agreed that the 20th Anniversary of APT Cooperation this year provides great opportunities to take further stock of the past achievements and map out the future directions to further strengthen existing areas of APT cooperation and explore potential new initiatives. In this regard, they looked forward to the adoption of the Manila Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation at the APT Summit in November 2017.

3. They agreed to deepen and strengthen political and security cooperation through the conduct of high-level visits and consultations, strengthening the existing APT mechanisms, and active participation at the relevant ASEAN-led mechanisms. They agreed to maintain focus on attaining economic integration of the East Asian Community and to continue to include political-security concerns and socio-cultural dimensions in their discussions.

4. They welcomed efforts to further strengthen engagement between the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and the Ambassadors to ASEAN of the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea in discussing the implementation of Leaders' decisions and in exchanging views and information on regional and international issues.

5. They welcomed the consensus to replenish the APT Cooperation Fund (APTCF) in accordance with the Terms of Reference of APTCF.



Priority Areas of Cooperation

6. The Ministers appreciated the significant progress achieved under the APT Cooperation Work Plan (2013-2017) in the areas of non-traditional security, finance, food and agriculture, environment and sustainable development, science and technology, tourism, culture, education, civil service, health and people-to-people contacts which paved the way for further progress of the APT Cooperation.

7. They adopted the successor APT Cooperation Work Plan (2018-2022) and tasked senior officials to coordinate its full and effective implementation in consultation with relevant sectoral bodies. The Cooperation Work Plan will continue to serve as a principal guide to enhance the APT cooperation process and cooperation over the next five years towards the long-term goal of establishing an East Asia community.

8. They reaffirmed their commitment to intensify efforts in addressing both traditional and non-traditional security issues such as transnational crimes, climate change, terrorism and violent extremism, maritime security and safety, cyber security, disaster management, pandemic diseases, food security, water resource management, and energy security.

9. They were pleased at the significant progress in the implementation of action plans for the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) II Selected Recommendations. They expressed support to the work carried out by the CPR Plus Three Ambassadors in Jakarta, sectoral bodies and relevant stakeholders in the implementation of selected recommendations of the EAVG II.

Economic Cooperation

10. The Ministers reiterated the vital role of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) towards achieving greater economic integration, promoting trade liberalization in the region and ensuring mutually beneficial partnership. They emphasized that the swift conclusion of negotiations to establish a high-quality and mutually-beneficial RCEP will further enhance ASEAN's integration with its partners.

11. They welcomed the continued growth in trade and investment cooperation between ASEAN and the Plus Three Countries and expressed confidence that the region's economies will remain progressive and resilient to economic shocks despite the volatile global economic environment.



Finance

12. The Ministers acknowledged the official registration of the ASEAN + 3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) with the Secretariat of the United Nations as an international organization and the endorsement by the ASEAN+3 Finance and Central Bank Deputies' Meeting in December 2016 of AMRO's Strategic Direction and Medium-Term Implementation Plan. They also welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between AMRO and the Asian Development Bank in May 2017 to further strengthen cooperation on surveillance, research and capacity building. They underlined the importance of further strengthening the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM) and the Asian Bond Markets Initiative (ABMI) as integral to the regional financial safety net.

Food Security

13. The Ministers underscored the relevant role of the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) Agreement as a mechanism to strengthen regional food security. They encouraged the further implementation of APTERR's Tier 3 program and the utilization of Tier 1 and Tier 2 programs to ensure food security.

Tourism

14. The Ministers expressed appreciation over the effective implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on APT Tourism Cooperation signed in Manila in January 2016. They noted the continued growth of tourist arrivals in ASEAN from the Plus Three Countries and expressed the hope that tourism will remain a strong area of cooperation in the APT.

Narrowing the Development Gap

15. The Ministers underlined the relevance of building deeper cooperation in poverty alleviation. They reiterated their commitment to improve the complementarity between the implementation of UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 in order to advance the standards of living of peoples in ASEAN and the Plus Three Countries over the next decades and pave the way for rural development and poverty eradication to achieve a stronger ASEAN Community through various programs including the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI).



Poverty Eradication

16. The Ministers noted with appreciation the progress of cooperation among APT Countries on poverty eradication, in line with the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication 2016-2020. They looked forward to greater regional cooperation on poverty eradication through the work of the ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. They encouraged the continued sharing of knowledge and best practices and conducting relevant activities such as the ASEAN Plus Three Village Exchange Programme.

Women and Children

17. The Ministers recognised the importance of advancing the rights and empowerment of women and children in ensuring sustainable development and inclusive growth in the region. They expressed satisfaction over the establishment of a robust enabling policy environment for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in national and regional policies, plans and programmes. They noted the acceleration of women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in the region and looked forward to more collaboration in this area through the work of the ASEAN Plus Three Committee on Women (ACW+3).

18. The Ministers noted the 6th ASEAN Plus Three Ministerial Meeting on Youth held on 20 July 2017 in Jakarta. They urged the APT to develop synergy in the five priority areas of the Work Plan.

19. The Ministers acknowledged the convening of the ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC) to be held on 28-30 October 2017. Indonesia will organize the Youth Camp in collaboration with the Islamic University of Darul Ulum (UNIPDU), Jombang, Indonesia.

Social Welfare and Development

20. The Ministers noted the ongoing collaboration in APT on social welfare and development especially for vulnerable and marginalised communities, including children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. They expressed the need to strengthen regional collaboration in order to implement the Strategic Framework on Social Welfare and Development 2016-2020, the five-year work plan of the Senior Officials' Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD).



ASEAN Connectivity

21. The Ministers expressed support to the effective implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 in order to achieve a seamlessly and comprehensively connected and integrated ASEAN that will promote competitiveness, inclusiveness and a greater sense of community. They noted the importance of resource mobilization, quality of infrastructure and cooperation with Dialogue Partners, external parties and international institutions in realizing the goals of these strategic areas in accordance with international standards.

22. The Ministers acknowledged the efforts to develop the 15 initiative concept notes to prepare for the implementation of the MPAC 2025 that were presented at the *Forum/Workshop on MPAC 2025 Initiatives and Project Concepts* held on 12-14 July 2017 in the Philippines.

Civil Service

23. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the ACCSM+3 Work Plan 2016-2020 during the Third Joint Technical Working Group Meeting for the ACCSM+3 and Third Heads of Civil Service Meeting for the ACCSM+3 held in Manila on 15-17 November 2016. They welcomed the signing of the ASEAN Declaration on the Role of the Civil Service as a Catalyst for Achieving ASEAN Vision 2025 by the ASEAN Leaders during the 30th ASEAN Summit in Manila on 29 April 2017.

Labour

24. The Ministers noted with appreciation the close cooperation under the ASEAN Plus Three Labour Ministers Meeting in support of the ASEAN Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation of new initiatives continued on priorities concerning employment services, employment of vulnerable groups including social security, human resource development, income security, and skills development, among others. They welcomed the support of the Plus Three Countries on the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work in ASEAN and the ASEAN Labour Ministers' Work Programme 2016-2020. The Ministers looked forward to the finalization of the Instrument on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers that is proposed for signing at the 31st ASEAN Summit in November 2017.



Health

25. The Ministers welcomed the consensus reached at the 7th APT Senior Officials' Meeting on Health Development (APT SOMHD) held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam on 20 April 2017. This identified priority areas of collaboration for 2017-2018 that include: Universal Health Coverage, Information Communication Technology (ICT) for Healthcare, Non-Communicable Diseases, Traditional Medicine, Active Ageing, Human Resource for Health, Responding to Communicable and Emerging Health Threats, Antimicrobial Resistance, Ending All Forms of Malnutrition, and Food Safety. They looked forward to the continuous support and assistance from the Plus Three Countries in achieving the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda (APHDA) for 2016-2020 including collaborative initiatives in the ASEAN Plus Three Universal Health Coverage Network (UHC).

26. They noted the 13th ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting and related Ministerial Meetings to be held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam on 3-7 September 2017 with the theme of "Together Towards a Healthy ASEAN"; and the round-table discussion during the 7th ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministerial Meeting (APTHMM) on the topic of 'Improving Health Throughout the Life Course'.

Culture

27. The Ministers were pleased at the efforts to carry out the Work Plan on Enhancing ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation in Culture 2013-2017 to forge closer inter-cultural exchange and understanding in APT. They looked forward to the implementation of the Workshop on Disaster Risk Management for Cultural Heritage Sites in ASEAN Plus Three Countries to be held in Bagan, Myanmar in November 2017.

Plus Three Centres

28. The Ministers underscored the important role of the ASEAN-Japan Centre, the ASEAN-Korea Centre and the ASEAN-China Centre in the promotion of trade, investments, tourism as well as cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts. They stressed the importance of promoting coordination and linkage among the three centres to effectively enhance trade and investment cooperation as well as cultural and people-to-people exchanges among the APT countries



Track 1.5 Engagement

29. The Ministers noted the outcomes of the 15th East Asia Forum (EAF) in Hunan, China on 30 June 2017 with the theme “20 Years of APT Cooperation: Towards the East Asia Economic Community,” including the concept paper on the East Asia Economic Community Blueprint.

Track 2.0 Engagement

30. The Ministers noted the outcomes of the following; 26th Country Coordinator Meeting of the Network of East Asian Think Tanks (NEAT) on 30 March-1 April 2017 in Seoul, Republic of Korea; Regional Workshop Review of the NEAT and the East Asia Forum (EAF) held on 21-22 June 2017 in Siem Reap, Cambodia; and the NEAT Working Group entitled “ASEAN Plus Three Collaboration on Active Ageing: The Time to Act” on 13 July 2017 in Bangkok. They also noted the proposed NEAT Working Group on Water Pollution: Developing a Workable Regional Framework to Tackle Water Pollution in ASEAN Plus Three to be held on 28 August 2017 in Jakarta.

31. The Ministers acknowledged the successful completion of the 12th Annual Meeting of Deans and Directors of Diplomatic Training Institutions of ASEAN Plus Three Countries held on 20-21 April 2017 in Manila, Philippines with the theme “Building a Community of 21st Century Diplomats in East Asia.” They encouraged all APT countries to hold further consultations on pursuing a common course curriculum on APT that will build knowledge in the region’s priority areas and share national experiences and best practices.

Other Areas of Cooperation

32. The Ministers underlined the relevance of enhancing cooperation in the areas of human rights, agriculture, forestry, energy security, education, youth, sports, climate change, natural resources conservation, water resources management, active ageing, ICT and cyber security, and disaster risk reduction and management.

Regional and International Issues

33. The Ministers discussed issues affecting regional and international developments. They reaffirmed the important role of the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) cooperation framework in promoting peace, security, stability and prosperity and pursuing a vision towards the East Asia Economic Community.



Global Economy

34. The Ministers acknowledged the regional efforts towards concluding the negotiations on a high-quality Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) to provide a clear signal to the global economic community that ASEAN and its partners fully embrace the principles of open trading. Asia, especially ASEAN and the larger East Asian region, with focus on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), should take the lead in advancing economic integration in the middle of anemic growth and anti-free trade rhetoric in other parts of the world.

35. They expressed support for the continued focus on connectivity and boosting regional infrastructure development. They emphasized the need to strengthen the resiliency of the region's financial institutions against any vulnerability or crisis through the conduct of capacity building measures using institutions and initiatives such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Expanded Partnership Towards Quality Infrastructure that was unveiled by Japan in May 2016.

36. The Ministers noted the proposal to conceptualize a successor East Asia Vision Group III (EAVG III) to advance the region's development towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) that could be launched five years hence at the 25th ASEAN Plus Three Summit. They called for the collaboration among governments, business leaders in disruptive technology and concerned stakeholders in the region to work on the new Blueprint on 4IR.

Korean Peninsula

37. Expressing grave concern over the escalation of tensions in the Korean Peninsula, the Ministers urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to immediately comply fully with its obligations under all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

38. They emphasized the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concern, including the abduction issue. They supported initiatives to improve inter-Korean relations towards establishing peace in the Korean Peninsula and noted the latest initiative of the Republic of Korea proposed on 6 July 2017 in Berlin. ASEAN Ministers expressed its readiness to play a constructive role in contributing to peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula.



Maritime Security Issues

39. The Ministers affirmed that peace and security in the region is paramount. They underscored the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoid actions that may further complicate the security situation in the region, and pursue the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They also stressed the important functional role of the APT in introducing and implementing projects that directly deal with vital regional issues to help push the dialogue process among APT countries.

Climate Change

40. The Ministers expressed grave concern over the adverse effects of climate change on the region in the form of floods, typhoons, coastal erosion, droughts and landslides. They affirmed the commitment towards the ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change for the 23rd Session of the Conference of Parties (COP 23) to the UN Convention on Climate Change to be held in Bonn, Germany in November 2017.

Other Matters

41. The Ministers discussed the preparations for the Commemorative Summit to mark the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation to be held on 13 November 2017 in Manila, Philippines. Two outcome documents will be issued in the 20th APT Summit, namely: the Manila Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of APT Cooperation and the APT Leaders' Statement on Food Security Cooperation.

42. The Ministers looked forward to the convening of the 19th ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Singapore in 2018.