



**THE AEM-USTR CONSULTATIONS  
14 September 2021 (Video Conference Meeting)**

**JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

1. ASEAN Member States (AMS) and the United States Trade Representative virtually met on 14 September 2021 for AEM-USTR 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. Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative, United States of America (U.S.).
2. The Meeting noted the positive development of the economic relations between ASEAN Member States and the United States, despite the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to ASEAN statistics, the total two-way merchandise trade reached USD 308 billion in 2020 or an increase of 4.6 per cent year-on-year, while the inflow of foreign direct investment from the United States into ASEAN Member States was at USD 34.7 billion, an increase of 0.5 per cent year-on-year.
3. The Meeting expressed deep concern over the adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic to the economies and lives of people around the world. The Meeting reiterated the commitment to explore ways and means to accelerate the economic recovery by keeping markets open for trade and investment, and strengthening cooperation on digital trade and sustainable development. The Meeting underscored the importance of global cooperation, including in ensuring equitable access and distribution of safe and effective vaccines, and expediting a stronger economic recovery from the pandemic.
4. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to a fair, open, transparent, rules-based, and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system centered on the World Trade Organization (WTO), while also recognizing the clear need to reform the WTO to improve its functioning.
5. The Meeting welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the 2020-2021 ASEAN-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA) and the Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) Work Plan. The Meeting also welcomed discussions in exploring the exchange of electronic customs information between ASEAN Single Window (ASW) and the U.S.'s Automated Commercial Environment (ACE), which showcased mutual efforts in facilitating trade in the region. The Meeting also commended the engagement of officials at the U.S.-ASEAN Trade and Labor Dialogue held on 02-03 February 2021 to increase awareness and understanding regarding labour provisions in Free Trade Agreements.

6. The Meeting welcomed activities planned to be conducted under the 2021-2022 ASEAN-U.S. TIFA Work Plan and the continuation of dialogues on labour and environment with a view to further cooperate in promoting workers' rights and to exchange views on the inclusion of environmental provisions in trade agreements. The Meeting also noted various cooperation activities that would support the post-pandemic economic recovery, including sustainable development, digital economy, MSMEs, human capital development and standards and conformance.

7. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the U.S. support to ASEAN under the US-ASEAN Connect across the five broad strategies of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, particularly through its series of activities, namely U.S.-ASEAN Connect Digital Economy Series, U.S.-ASEAN Connect Green Economy Series, and U.S.-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership conducted in 2020, which had contributed tangible values to ASEAN integration agendas and strengthened US-ASEAN relations. The Meeting also commended the effective support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through the "ASEAN-USAID Inclusive Growth in ASEAN through Innovation, Trade, and E-Commerce (IGNITE) project" for cooperation activities under the US-ASEAN TIFA and E3 Work Plan in the three focus areas, namely trade facilitation, digital economy; and science, technology, and innovation by providing technical assistance to ASEAN to implement policies of mutual interests.

8. The Meeting held a discussion with representatives of the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC). The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) for its support and encouraged continued private sector feedback in promoting stronger business and trade ties between the US and ASEAN business communities.

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