



**THE TWENTY-FOURTH AEM-CER CONSULTATIONS  
9 September 2019, Thailand**

**JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

1. Economic Ministers from the ten ASEAN Member States, Australia and New Zealand (Closer Economic Relations – CER) met on 9 September 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand for the Twenty-Fourth AEM-CER Consultations. The Consultations were co-chaired by H.E. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand; Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Australia; and Hon Damien O'Connor, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand.

2. The Ministers welcomed a significant 16.8 per cent increase in ASEAN's total trade with Australia from USD 58.0 billion in 2017 to USD 67.8 billion in 2018, based on Australia's data. The total merchandise trade between ASEAN and New Zealand also grew by 8.0 per cent, from USD 9.5 billion in 2017 to USD 10.3 billion in 2018, based on ASEAN's preliminary data. According to Australia's and New Zealand's data, Australia's direct investment in ASEAN in 2018 accounted for 5.7 per cent of Australia's total direct investment abroad – valued at US\$28.0 billion, while New Zealand's direct investment in ASEAN for the same year was valued at USD 546 million, accounting for 3.6 per cent of New Zealand's total investment abroad.

3. The Ministers also welcomed the full ratification of the First Protocol to Amend the AANZFTA Agreement by all Parties and noted that the First Protocol has been implemented by all Parties since March 2019.

4. The Ministers welcomed the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AANZFTA which was signed in 2009. The Ministers commended the positive impact of AANZFTA to economic growth in the region, as well as bringing the 12 Parties closer. In particular, the support from the economic cooperation activities under AANZFTA, had been of great value in terms of capacity building, institutional cooperation and support for the AANZFTA built-in agenda. The Ministers released a separate statement to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AANZFTA.

5. The Ministers welcomed the FTA Joint Committee Work Plan for the AANZFTA Upgrade Negotiations, with a view to concluding the Second Protocol to Amend the AANZFTA. The Ministers noted that such negotiations will cover Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation, Rules of Origin, Services, Investment, Competition, E-Commerce, as well as develop a chapter on Government Procurement which covers

cooperation and transparency. The Ministers reiterated that the outcomes of the upgrade should ensure the Agreement continues to add greater commercial value to businesses and take into accounts developments in other fora including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations.

6. The Ministers welcomed the establishment of additional subsidiary bodies under the FTA Joint Committee, namely the Committee on E-Commerce, the Working Group on Government Procurement, the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation, the Sub-Committee on Financial Services, and the Sub-Committee on Telecommunication Services to carry forward the relevant work to upgrade AANZFTA.

7. The Ministers also welcomed the outcomes of the FJC engagement with businesses, held on the sidelines of the FTA Joint Committee Meeting in April-May 2019. The Ministers encouraged all Parties to continue promoting closer engagement with businesses and other stakeholders, as part of the strategy to implement the “AANZFTA Business Engagement Strategy” and “Guiding Principles and Enabling Framework for Stakeholder Engagement” in 2018.

8. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to conclude the RCEP negotiations in 2019, as instructed by Leaders. To this end, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work together to achieve a modern, comprehensive, high quality, and mutually beneficial RCEP.

9. At the Joint Ministerial Working Lunch between ASEAN and CER Ministers on World Trade Organization Reform, the Ministers emphasized the importance of the rules-based multilateral trading system, which has provided many benefits to all countries, including ASEAN, Australia, and New Zealand. The Ministers released a separate statement to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AANZFTA.

10. In their interface with representatives of the Australia-ASEAN Chamber of Commerce (AustCham ASEAN) and the ASEAN New Zealand Business Council (ANZBC), the Ministers noted industry feedback on cross-cutting and specific sector non-tariff measures (NTM) and non-tariff barriers (NTB) as well as proposed approaches to tackling the identified NTMs. The Ministers expressed appreciation on the feedback and suggestions, and encouraged the business representatives to continue to engage with Ministers and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council and to play their part in continuing to raise awareness of the opportunities created by the ASEAN Economic Community and AANZFTA.

11. The Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 8<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-CER Integration Partnership Forum (IPF) held on 30 April 2019 in Melbourne, Australia under the theme of ‘Digital Trade and Inclusive Growth’. The IPF provided an invaluable platform for Parties to exchange views on the development of digital trade and the need to have appropriate regulations. The Ministers further welcomed New Zealand’s efforts to refresh the Forum, ensuring its continued relevance as a forum for a two-way exchange of views on current trade and economic integration issues, as well as on issues related to the AANZFTA upgrade negotiations.

## **LIST OF MINISTERS**

1. **Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham**, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Australia;
2. **H.E. Dato Dr. Amin Liew Abdullah**, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II, Brunei Darussalam;
3. **H.E. Pan Sorasak**, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
4. **H.E. Enggartiasto Lukita**, Minister of Trade, Indonesia;
5. **H.E. Mrs. Khemmani Pholsena**, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR;
6. **Mr. Mohd Zahid Abdullah**, Senior Director for the ASEAN Economic Integration Division, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia (representing H.E. Darell Leiking, Minister of International Trade and Industry), Malaysia;
7. **Mr. Than Aung Kyaw**, Director General, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relation (representing H.E. Thaung Tun, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations), Myanmar;
8. **Hon Damien O'Connor**, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand;
9. **H.E. Ceferino S. Rodolfo**, Undersecretary, Department of Trade and Industry (representing H.E. Ramon M. Lopez, Secretary of Trade and Industry), Philippines;
10. **Mr. Gabriel Lim**, Permanent Secretary for Trade and Industry, Ministry of Trade and Industry (representing H.E. Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Trade and Industry), Singapore;
11. **H.E. Jurin Laksanawisit**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce, Thailand;
12. **H.E. Tran Quoc Khanh**, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade (representing H.E. Tran Tuan Anh, Minister of Industry and Trade), Viet Nam; and
13. **H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi**, Secretary-General of ASEAN.