

2021 CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 22ND ASEAN PLUS THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

Adopted on 3 August 2021

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1. The 22nd ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on 3 August 2021 via videoconference and chaired by The Honourable Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam.

REVIEW AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF ASEAN PLUS THREE (APT) COOPERATION

2. The Meeting 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 Meeting reiterated the commitment to further strengthening and deepening the APT functional cooperation under the APT process. The Meeting further underlined the mutually reinforcing and complementary nature of the APT with other ASEAN-led frameworks. The Meeting also recognised the contribution of the APT to ASEAN's efforts towards realising the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and deeper regional integration in East Asia.
3. The Meeting 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 Meeting looked forward to the continued effective implementation of the Work Plan through more concrete activities and projects to further enhance APT cooperation in the coming years. In view of the conclusion of the Work Plan by the end of 2022, the Meeting looked forward to the development of the new APT Cooperation Work Plan for 2023-2027.
4. The Meeting noted the importance of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) as a guide for ASEAN's engagement in the wider Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. The enhancement of APT cooperation in the four key areas of cooperation identified in the AOIP, namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development, economic and other areas of cooperation to further promote mutual trust and confidence as well as to contribute to peace and prosperity in the region, was also encouraged in the Meeting.
5. The Meeting shared views on the need to further enhance dialogue and cooperation to address non-traditional security issues, such as trafficking in persons, cybercrime, countering terrorism and violent extremism, border management and illicit drugs trafficking. The Meeting also highlighted the importance of and looked forward to enhancing maritime cooperation to include capability development on the maritime industry.
6. The Meeting reaffirmed the role of APT cooperation in mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting 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 Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED), the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies (RRMS), the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and Implementation Plan, the ASEAN Strategic Framework for Public Health Emergencies and the ASEAN Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework (ATCAF). The Meeting noted the need to expand vaccine cooperation and promote equitable access to and accelerate production and distribution of safe, effective, quality and affordable vaccines for all, as well as to consider ASEAN's potential as a regional vaccine hub. The Meeting also noted that China's proposal for the establishment of an APT Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health

Emergencies is currently being discussed and considered by the relevant APT sectoral body. Efforts to ensure that this proposal complements the RRMS were also encouraged by some Ministers.

7. The Meeting further underlined the need to strengthen APT collaboration in advancing the region's recovery from the adverse socio-economic effects of the pandemic. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed the progress of implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Plan of Action (APT POA) on Mitigating the Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic which was endorsed at the 23rd AEM Plus Three Consultations on 28 August 2020, and the ASEAN Plus Three Economic Ministers' Joint Statement on Mitigating the Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic adopted on 4 June 2020, which would further strengthen collaboration and cooperation between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries, as well as preparing the region for future situations, and achieving post-pandemic economic recovery. The Meeting stressed the importance of keeping the markets open for trade and investment to strengthen the resiliency and sustainability of regional supply chains and maintain necessary flow of goods and services, as underlined in the APT Leaders' Statement on Strengthening APT Cooperation for Economic and Financial Resilience in the Face of Emerging Challenges adopted by the Leaders at the 23rd APT Summit in November 2020. The Meeting also reiterated the commitment to the entry into force and full implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement.
8. The Meeting called for the enhancement of APT cooperation in ensuring food security particularly in the post-pandemic period, including through the effective utilisation 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.
9. The Meeting 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 them in using digital economy and technologies to allow MSMEs to maintain operations, and embracing the digital transformation accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic with the view to ensure their business resilience. The Meeting further reaffirmed their continuing support for future initiatives aimed at preparing MSMEs for the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).
10. The Meeting recognised the potential of digital transformation to boost the region's long-term competitiveness and improve the livelihood of its people. The Meeting supported the development of digital economy and innovation to strengthen regional resilience. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the strong interest of the Plus Three countries in advancing smart and sustainable cities development in the region through the ASEAN Smart Cities Network and ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy.
11. The Meeting underlined the importance of the ASEAN+3 Finance process in enhancing regional economic and financial stability. It welcomed the continued commitment by APT Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to strengthen the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM), including the entry into force of the amended CMIM Agreement on 31 March 2021. The Meeting also commended the APT Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) for publishing the APT Regional Economic Outlook 2021, as well as updating the Medium-term Implementation Plan (MTIP) 2021-2025 to strengthen its role as a capable and trusted adviser for all APT members.

12. The Meeting commended the accomplishments made in fostering closer regional financial cooperation towards a more resilient, inclusive and integrated APT region. The Meeting recognised the potential risks to regional financial stability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and stressed the need to foster closer regional financial cooperation and policy coordination and support AMRO in monitoring the economic and financial development in the region and providing timely risk assessment and policy advice. It reaffirmed the commitment to enhance the readiness of the CMIM, and further promote the Regional Financial Arrangement (RFA) as a reliable layer of the Global Financial Safety Net. The Meeting commended the continuing progress of the ABMI under the ABMI Medium-Term Road Map 2019-2022, and welcomed the formation of four Working Groups to further explore potential areas of APT financial cooperation.
13. The Meeting commended the efforts of the ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-Korea Centre to promote trade, investment, culture, tourism and people-to-people exchanges between and among ASEAN and the Plus Three countries. The Meeting was 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 interest.
14. The Meeting acknowledged the support to implement the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, particularly in the strategic areas of digital innovation and people mobility. The Meeting welcomed the support of APT countries to advance the implementation of MPAC 2025 strategic areas of sustainable and quality infrastructure, seamless logistics and regulatory excellence. Noting the importance of developing links and synergies between MPAC 2025 and key connectivity initiatives in the region, the Meeting commended the convening of the Seminar on Connecting the Connectivities: Synergy through Enhanced Partnerships. The Meeting further welcomed commitments of APT countries to strengthen connectivity cooperation within the region.
15. The Meeting 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 Meeting encouraged the effective implementation of the projects under the ASEAN Plus Three Work Plan on Cooperation in Culture and Arts 2019-2021. The Meeting acknowledged that the Work Plan is nearing its completion in 2021 and looked forward to the development of a new Work Plan. The Meeting 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.
16. The Meeting acknowledged the efforts made to implement the priority areas of APT health cooperation, which includes universal health coverage, utilising ICT for healthcare, prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, traditional and complementary medicine, health and 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.
17. The Meeting 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 which the agreement entered into force in 2020. The Meeting also noted the commitment of the APT health sectors 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. The Meeting looked forward to the 9th APT Health Ministers Meeting to be held in the fourth quarter of 2021.

18. The Meeting welcomed the commitment of the APT Health Ministers made at their meeting via videoconference on 7 April 2020 to ensuring the adequacy of essential medicines, vaccines and medical devices in the region, 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 Meeting also noted the commitment to continuing, after overcoming the challenges related to COVID-19 and revitalising national health systems, the 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 emerging and unprecedented crises.
19. The Meeting recognized the importance of mental health as a critical public health issue which has been exacerbated by disasters and public health emergencies and other emerging and unprecedented crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic. It commended the priority accorded by the ASEAN Health Sector in the promotion of mental health through its ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda. The Meeting welcomed Brunei Darussalam's proposal for an APT Leaders' Statement on Cooperation on Mental Health Among Adolescents and Young Children for adoption at the 24th APT Summit in October 2021, and the conduct of a regional workshop on the sharing of best practices on mental health promotion in school settings amongst APT countries in the first quarter of 2022.
20. The Meeting encouraged greater cooperation to enhance media and information capacity-building through leveraging media convergence particularly in digital journalism, media literacy, production and distribution of media content, as well as development of broadcast systems and services that cater to people with visual and hearing impairment. In doing so, we could better promote media and digital inclusiveness and effective dissemination of government policies, public health and safety information, with a view to minimise the harmful effects of misinformation and fake news, as highlighted at the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 14 April 2020.
21. The Meeting 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 Meeting called for development of collaborative projects to protect and conserve the environment and biodiversity, to promote sustainable use of natural resources, including water resource management and sustainable development of mineral resources, and to address the impact of climate change and the issue of marine plastic debris. The Meeting noted the progress of the APT Marine Plastic Debris Cooperative Action Initiative and looked forward to the convening of the 18th APT Senior Officials' Meeting on Environment in September 2021 to be hosted by Brunei Darussalam as well as the 17th APT Environment Ministers' Meeting in October 2021.
22. The Meeting reaffirmed the commitment to forging closer cooperation in rural development and poverty alleviation for sustainable development, promoting and protecting human rights of vulnerable groups, and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women. The Meeting welcomed the support of the Plus Three countries for the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (RPA-EVAW) and Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children (RPA-VAC) and their participation in ASEAN's initiatives to promote and protect the rights of women and children in the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) Work Plan

2016-2020. The Meeting also commended the adoption of the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and looked forward to its implementation.

23. The Meeting 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, it 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 Meeting 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 8th Meeting of the Working Group on Student Mobility and Quality Assurance of Higher Education amongst APT Countries in November 2020; (iii) conduct of Expert Meeting on the Institutional Provision for New Modes of Higher Education in February 2021; (iv) finalisation and endorsement by the APT Working Group of the Guide on Making Information Available Online to Promote Student Mobility in the ASEAN Plus Three Region; (v) establishment of the drafting team on ASEAN Plus Three Joint Guidelines on the Institutional Provision for New Modes of Higher Education in the ASEAN Plus Three Region; and (vi) looked forward to the 5th APT Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) in October 2021.
24. The Meeting commended the efforts of the APT Meeting on Youth in providing greater access for engagement among youth in APT countries and establishing effective communication through various annual youth exchanges and community immersions which provide opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural understanding. The Meeting welcomed the endorsement of the APT Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025 by the ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY+3) and looked forward to its adoption by the ASEAN Plus Three Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY+3). The Work Plan consists of five (5) priority areas: (i) Research and policy dialogue on the impact of the 4IR and COVID-19 pandemic/other emergencies on youth with a view to exchanging lessons learned and best practices; (ii) Youth exchange programmes, cultural/educational fora and competitions for deeper mutual understanding and forging a sense of commonality; (iii) Promotion of the spirit of youth volunteerism to inculcate a stronger ASEAN Plus Three community spirit among ASEAN Plus Three youths by involving them in community development projects; (iv) Engagement of youth in mutually beneficial programmes to support youth's health and wellbeing, including mental health; and (v) Skills development training and leadership programme for youth in the context of 4IR.
25. The Meeting commended the work of the APT Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM+3) in implementing the 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 Meeting noted with appreciation the progress made under the ACCSM+3 Work Plan 2021-2025 which would further promote good governance and support the agility and resilience of ASEAN's civil service amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting also welcomed the initiatives supported by the APT Cooperation Fund that sought to strengthen the overall capabilities of the ASEAN Civil Services, including the ongoing Baseline Study on Governance Systems among APT Countries and the adoption of the ASEAN Guidelines on Public Service Delivery. The Meeting also welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters Framework of Strategic Partnerships to guide Member States in building partnerships with other ASEAN sectoral bodies and external parties, including APT countries, in promoting good governance principles, agile civil service in the digital era, and other areas of mutual interest pertaining to civil service matters.

26. The Meeting noted the strengthening of APT cooperation in the labour sector through the adoption of the first APT Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM+3) Work Plan 2021-2025 by the APT Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM+3) on 28 October 2020 that commits to promote 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 Meeting noted with appreciation the progress made under the 5-year priorities of the APT cooperation on labour for the period of 2021-2025 to support the attainment of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. The Meeting noted the successful convening of the 18th ASEAN-Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies hosted by Japan on 30 October 2020 and the 2020 ASEAN+3 HRD Forum on Skills Development and Employment during COVID19: Reforms and Technology hosted by the Republic of Korea (ROK) on 17-18 November 2020. The Meeting supported the implementation of initiatives in the Roadmap of ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work and welcomed the collaboration with the APT countries.
27. The Meeting welcomed the decision of the 8th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) and the 9th Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in November 2020 on the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management's (ACDM) engagement with China and Japan to establish the respective ACDM and AMMDM Plus mechanisms on disaster management. The Meeting also noted ongoing discussions to establish ACDM and AMMDM mechanism with the ROK. The Meeting encouraged the enhancement of regional cooperation on disaster management and emergency response by promoting cooperation on policy dialogue, knowledge and experience exchanges and training to effectively promote disaster management and reduce disaster risks and losses in the region. The Meeting supported the Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility (SEADRIF) in strengthening the financial resilience of ASEAN member countries against disaster risks.
28. The Meeting 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, it welcomed the convening of the 18th EAF, hosted by Viet Nam on 10 December 2020 under the theme "Strengthening the APT Cooperation for Economic and Financial Resilience in the Face of Emerging Challenges", which discussed ways to strengthen regional capacities in response to external economic and financial shocks, and restoring the momentum for regional economic integration and sustainable growth in East Asia, and agreed to submit its Summary Report to the 24th APT Summit for notation. The Meeting also looked forward to the convening of the 19th EAF under the theme "Working Towards an Inclusive and Resilient Recovery from COVID-19 in East Asia", to be hosted by the ROK in November 2021.
29. The Meeting also recognised the important contributions of the Network of East Asia Think-Tanks (NEAT) towards APT cooperation and welcomed the outcomes of the 32nd NEAT Country Coordinators Meeting (CCM) held in November 2020, NEAT Working Group Meeting on "East Asian Cooperation on Enhancing Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Connectivity beyond COVID-19" held in November 2020, 33rd NEAT CCM held in April 2021, NEAT Working Group Meeting on "Climate Change and East Asian Sustainable Development" held in June 2021, NEAT Working Group Meeting on "APT Cooperation on MSMEs: Accelerating Digital Adoption to Thrive in the New Normal" held in July 2021, NEAT Working Group Meeting on "ASEAN Plus Three and COVID-19 Pandemic: Countries' Responses and Regional Cooperation" held in July 2021, and NEAT Working Group Meeting on "East Asia Cooperation and Human Security in the Post-COVID-19 Era" held in July 2021. The Meeting looked forward to the successful convening of the 34th NEAT CCM and 18th Annual Conference to be held in September 2021.

30. The Meeting underscored the importance of forging closer cooperation in other areas such as science, technology and innovation, tourism, energy security, and minerals. In addition, the Meeting 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 as well as possible collaboration in promoting sustainable development in all dimensions such as through measures to promote the transition towards a green and circular economy.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Developments in Myanmar

31. The Meeting discussed the recent developments in Myanmar and expressed concern over the situation in the country, including reports of fatalities and violence. The Meeting also heard calls for the release of political detainees including foreigners. The Meeting welcomed Myanmar's commitment to the Five-Point Consensus adopted at the ASEAN Leaders Meeting on 24 April 2021 and acceptance for the timely and complete implementation of the Five-Point Consensus namely, the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and for all parties to exercise utmost restraint; constructive dialogue among all parties concerned to commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people; a Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair to facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary-General of ASEAN; ASEAN to provide humanitarian assistance through the ASEAN Secretary-General and assisted by the AHA Centre; and the Special Envoy and delegation to visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned. The Meeting welcomed the appointment of the Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam to be the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar. The Meeting noted the continued support from ASEAN's external partners for ASEAN's efforts in the swift and complete implementation of the "Five-Point Consensus", with immediate attention given towards the provision of humanitarian assistance.
- Korean Peninsula
32. The Meeting reaffirmed its support for diplomacy and dialogue in achieving complete denuclearisation and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. The Meeting recognized the efforts made by all parties concerned for the resumption of dialogue. The Meeting also welcomed the restoration of inter-Korean communication lines, and noted that it will contribute to further improving and developing the inter-Korean relations. The Meeting urged all parties concerned to continue working together constructively towards realising lasting peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula, including through the full and expeditious implementation of the 2018 Panmunjom Declaration and Pyongyang Joint Declaration between the ROK and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the Singapore Joint Statement by the U.S and the DPRK's Leaders. The Meeting underscored the significance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and welcomed the ROK's efforts to advance inter-Korean dialogue, engagement, and cooperation to restore the virtuous cycle where inter-Korean relations and U.S.-DPRK relations advance in a mutually reinforcing manner. The Meeting reiterated the 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 Meeting stressed the need to promote a conducive atmosphere to peaceful dialogue among the concerned parties, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The Meeting noted views expressed by some Ministers on the importance of addressing the humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

OTHER MATTERS

33. The Meeting discussed the preparations for the 24th APT Summit to be held in October 2021 via videoconference.