

2023 JOINT STATEMENT OF THE SEVENTEENTH ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING ON TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Adopted in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia on 21 August 2023

1. The Seventeenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (17th AMMTC) was convened in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia on 21 August 2023. The Meeting was preceded by the Preparatory ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) for the 17th AMMTC on 20 August 2023. The Meeting was chaired by Indonesia, under the theme of “ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth”.
2. We exchanged views and reaffirmed our resolve to implement the ASEAN Plan of Action (PoA) in Combating Transnational Crime (2016-2025). We were pleased to note the progress of implementation of the SOMTC Work Programme (2022-2024) to implement this PoA and looked forward to the robust and full implementation of its ten components.
3. We noted the outcomes and progress of meetings under the purview of the AMMTC, including the 23rd SOMTC and Its Related Meetings, held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on 20-23 June 2023 and the 26th ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of Ministries of Foreign Affairs Meeting (DGICM) and Its Related Meetings, held in Phuket, Thailand on 8-10 August 2023.
4. We welcomed the successful convening and outcomes of the inaugural meetings of the SOMTC Working Group on General Transnational Crime Matters (WG on GTCM), held in Jakarta, Indonesia and via videoconference on 20 March 2023 as well as the Heads of Specialist Unit (HSU) on People Smuggling, held on 29 May 2023 via videoconference under the ambit of the DGICM.
5. We welcomed the adoption of the Guidelines on the Implementation of the Work Programmes/Plans under SOMTC at the 23rd SOMTC to support the effective implementation of all work programmes and plans under SOMTC. We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia in leading the development of this Guidelines.
6. We adopted the Guiding Criteria and Modalities in Engaging External Parties for the AMMTC and Its Subsidiary Mechanisms and the Updated Guidelines on Inviting External Parties’ Participation in the Open Sessions of the AMMTC and Its Subsidiary Mechanisms as its Annex, which would streamline and enhance our engagements with external partners. We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia in leading the development of these Guidelines.
7. Pursuant to the decision of the ASEAN Leaders at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in 2022, which agreed, in principle, to admit Timor-Leste to be the 11th member of ASEAN, grant an observer status to Timor-Leste, and allow its participation in all ASEAN meetings, we welcomed the first participation of Timor-Leste in the AMMTC series. In line with this development, we adopted the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste in the AMMTC and Its Subsidiary Mechanisms to enable closer engagement with Timor-Leste. We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia in leading the development of this Guidelines.
8. We adopted the Concept Note on the Review of Priority Areas and Optimisation of SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherds Role to lay the foundation to ensure our continued relevance and adaptability in responding to the evolving trends and emerging challenges of transnational crime. We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia in leading the development of this Concept Note.

9. We recognised the importance and merit of consistency in the naming of SOMTC and the DGICM in official documents as the subsidiary mechanisms under the AMMTC framework. In this regard, we adopted the Concept Note on Updating Annex I of the ASEAN Charter on the Nomenclature of SOMTC to Read as "ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime" and the Concept Note on Updating Annex I of the ASEAN Charter on the Nomenclature of the DGICM to Read as "ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of Ministries of Foreign Affairs Meeting (DGICM)". We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia and Thailand, as the respective Chairs of SOMTC and the DGICM, in leading the development of the Concept Notes. We looked forward to the updates of Annex I of the ASEAN Charter.
10. We adopted the Labuan Bajo Declaration on Advancing Law Enforcement Cooperation in Combating Transnational Crime as a commitment to accelerate and enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement in handling transnational crime cases in ASEAN. We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia, as the AMMTC Chair, in leading the development of the Declaration.
11. We emphasised the principles of the ASEAN Charter, in particular the respect for, promotion and protection of human rights and acknowledged the rights of victims and witnesses. In this regard, we adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation in Protecting and Assisting Witnesses and Victims of Transnational Crime as a commitment to the protection and provision of assistance to witnesses and victims. We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia, as the AMMTC Chair, in leading the development of the Declaration.
12. Cognisant of the need for an early warning system to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, and building upon the recommendation from the Report of the Regional Assessment on the Current State of Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) Capability for Preventing and Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism within ASEAN Member States, conducted under SOMTC from November 2022 – May 2023, we adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Developing Regional Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) Capability to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (PCRVE). We commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia, as the AMMTC Chair and the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd for terrorism priority area, in leading the development of this Declaration.
13. We recognised the pervasive threat of arms smuggling in ASEAN and the challenges in preventing and curbing cross-border illicit trade and smuggling of firearms and its ammunition. In this regard, we adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Combating Arms Smuggling as a commitment to intensify cooperation in addressing these growing challenges. We commended the efforts undertaken by Cambodia, as the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd for arms smuggling priority area, in leading the development of this Declaration.
14. We also commended the efforts undertaken by Indonesia, as the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd for terrorism priority area, in leading the development of the ASEAN Handbook on "Promising Practices on Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Prison Inmates related to Terrorism and Violent Extremism". We looked forward to its utilisation, to provide decisionmakers with useful guidance for creating and implementing an effective rehabilitation and reintegration programme based on the knowledge collated from relevant experts in this field.

15. We recalled the successful implementation of the Bohol Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Work Plan (2017-2020) and the adoption of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Persons Caused by the Abuse of Technology at the 42nd ASEAN Summit. We reaffirmed our strong commitment to the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) and underscored the importance of continuing crosssectoral cooperation to respond to the multi-dimensional challenges of TIP in the region. In this regard, we adopted the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against TIP (2023-2028) and looked forward to future achievements and effective implementation of the Work Plan by SOMTC and nine other relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies. We commended the leadership of the Philippines, as the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd for TIP priority area, in leading the cross-sectoral consultation to develop the Work Plan.
16. We recognised the ongoing efforts to advance cross-pillar and cross-sectoral coordination in ASEAN, and commended the valuable contributions of SOMTC and the DGICM in various initiatives led by other sectors. We looked forward to the continued active roles of SOMTC and the DGICM in leading as well as supporting various cross-sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation.
17. We reaffirmed our commitment to strengthen collaboration with ASEAN Dialogue Partners and other relevant external parties to address transnational crime and enhance border security. We welcomed the adoption of six SOMTC Work Plans on Cooperation to Combat Transnational Crime, namely with the Plus Three countries (2024-2027), China (2024-2027), India (2023-2027), Japan (2023-2027), New Zealand (2023-2025) and the United States (2023-2026). Under the ambit of the DGICM, we also welcomed the adoption of the first DGICM + 3 Work Programme (2023-2024) and looked forward to the adoption of the renewed 2023-2024 ASEAN-Australia Programme of Work. We looked forward to the full and effective implementation of the newly adopted as well as on-going Work Plans/Programmes with the Dialogue Partners.
18. We welcomed the Lao People's Democratic Republic as the incoming Chair of the AMMTC and looked forward to the convening of the 24th SOMTC and the 18th AMMTC, along with all related meetings in 2024. We also welcomed Viet Nam as the incoming Chair of the DGICM and looked forward to the convening of the 27th DGICM and Its Related Meetings in 2024.
19. We expressed our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, especially the Indonesian National Police, for the warm hospitality accorded to us and our respective delegations, including the excellent arrangements of the 17th AMMTC and Its Related Meetings. The Meeting was held in the traditional ASEAN spirit of solidarity and cordiality