



ASEAN Business Advisory Council



Press Release

ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN BAC) Dialogue with the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)

at the 27th AEM Retreat

2 March 2021, 10.30 – 12.00 (GMT+8)

(Media Release)

ASEAN Economic Ministers and ASEAN BAC to Push for Effective Regional Health Response as Prerequisite to Solid Economic Recovery



ASEAN Economic Ministers at the AEM - ASEAN Business Advisory Council Consultation on 2nd March 2021 at the 27th AEM Retreat.

On 2nd March 2021, the ASEAN Economic Ministers held its consultation with the ASEAN Business Advisory Council during its 27th AEM Retreat via video conferencing. The AEM



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was spearheaded by the Brunei Chair, The Honorable Dato Seri Setia Dr Awang Haji Mohd Amin Liew Abdullah, expressed his full support towards ASEAN BAC. ASEAN as a region needs to succeed with its health response to the COVID-19 pandemic in order for the ASEAN Economic Recovery Framework and consequent Action Plan to be successfully accomplished.

The AEM are in accordance with the key recommendations for ASEAN to leverage on its collective strength to go for joint purchase and access to the vaccines which will be funded by the ASEAN Pandemic Recovery Fund. This is to ensure equitable and swift distribution of the vaccines across member states. This will instill trust and confidence in the movement of goods, services and, above all, natural persons across the region. Over and above the immediate access to vaccines, the harmonization of testing and contact tracing standards and also, removing barriers for easier access to pharmaceutical and medical devices should be put in place in the soonest possible time. These measures will help revive most affected sectors such as travel, tourism and hospitality

The AEM determined to endorse the ASEAN Senior Official Meetings and the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies to engage and process ASEAN BAC's health response recommendations.

Capacitating the ASEAN Workforce and Creating Jobs through H.I.R.E.D. Legacy Project

The AEM commended the ASEAN BAC 2021 Chairmanship's theme "Recover. Stronger. Together. Sama-Sama" as presented by Chair The Honorable Yanty Rahman. The theme is highly inspiring and most relevant at this most trying time of having to save lives and livelihoods. Translating the theme into action, Chair Yanty presented on her chairmanship's legacy project entitled Harnessing Impact with Resilient Employability Digitally (H.I.R.E.D), which aims to put together an ecosystem that will address the skills and knowledge gaps in ASEAN. The acceleration of digital transformation under the new normality has given ASEAN an advantage to provide more precise skills for its workforce in preparation of post-pandemic recovery with strong support and cooperation from the private business sector. In response, the AEM has given its commitment to provide strong support and collaboration to the H.I.R.E.D. legacy project.

Trade Facilitation Front: More Effective Action on NTMs and NTBs

ASEAN BAC emphasized its full support to the Brunei Chairmanship's first of ten priority economic deliverables (or PEDs) of streamlining assessment of NTMs and NTBs which continue to proliferate in number and complexity that stymies growth of intra-ASEAN



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trade. The AEM concurred with the ASEAN BAC's recommendations of ensuring private sector consultation and inputs in the launch of the NTM Toolkit, setting up of the NTM Independent Panel of Experts. In addition, the AEM also agreed to increase the annual target of number of actual cases processed and resolved by the Coordinating Committee on ATIGA for 2021 and to initiate, through the ASEAN Secretariat, the consultations on NTMs and NTBs in the Agri Food, Automotive and Healthcare Sectors. The AEM agreed to task the concerned ASEAN Bodies to closely consult and engage with ASEAN BAC for this purpose.

Other ASEAN BAC Legacy Projects: Continuing to Enhance Connectivity and Empower MSMEs

The AEM conveyed its appreciation on the status given by ASEAN BAC on continuing Legacy Projects: Digital Startups Towards ASEAN Resilience and Sustainability (Vietnam), Digital Trade Connect (Thailand), SmartGrowth Connect (Singapore), ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network (AMEN), Laos Logistics Link (Laos). The AEM encouraged the Council to pursue and sustain the projects which impacts on enhancing people and business connectivity especially the MSMEs to ensure inclusive and resilient growth for ASEAN.

Other Challenges

The AEM conveyed its appreciation to Myanmar ASEAN BAC for the update on the current status of the business environment in Myanmar. The AEM was pleased to hear of the opinion and sentiment presented by Myanmar that private business would like to ensure that all international and domestic contracts and agreements will continue to be honored, among others, and that normalcy be restored and implementation of economic recovery plans be in effect soonest. ASEAN BAC in return was appreciative of the response from the Myanmar Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations His Excellency, Aung Naing Oo, who assured that the current administration is a short-term arrangement where business and reforms will continue to operate and be pursued until elections can be held shortly.

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