

Co-Chairs' Statement
23rd ASEAN-Australia Forum
Singapore, 19 March 2010

1. The 23rd ASEAN-Australia Forum was held in Singapore, on 19 March 2010, with the participation of representatives from Australia, ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat.
2. The Forum was co-chaired by Mr Peter Ho, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, and Ms Gillian Bird, Ambassador to ASEAN and Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia.
3. The Forum acknowledged and reaffirmed the long-standing partnership between ASEAN and Australia, and their common interest in tackling the multi-faceted challenges facing the region, including natural disasters, infectious diseases, traditional and non-traditional security threats. In this regard, the Forum welcomed progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action for the ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Partnership and identified several focus areas for deepening cooperation under the Plan of Action, including climate change mitigation, education, energy diversification, transport, trade and investment facilitation, networking for the business sector, and support for ASEAN's efforts to narrow the development gap. The Forum agreed to follow up on such cooperation through the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN in Jakarta.
4. The Forum welcomed the entry into force of the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia and New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA). The Forum recognised that the AANZFTA was the first comprehensive FTA between ASEAN and a Dialogue Partner that was concluded in a single undertaking, covering key sectors such as trade in goods, services, investment, electronic commerce and intellectual property. It acknowledged the importance of the AANZFTA in facilitating continued liberalisation and the flow of trade and investment in the region, and agreed to enhance outreach efforts to raise awareness of such benefits.
5. ASEAN expressed appreciation for the contributions of Australia through the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Program Phase II (AADCP II) in supporting ASEAN's economic integration agenda. The Forum expressed satisfaction with the smooth transition of the Joint Planning and Review Committee of the AADCP II from the ASEAN Directors-General to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) in Jakarta, and welcomed the mechanisms put in place to make the AADCP II more responsive to the evolving needs of ASEAN.
6. The Forum agreed that the ASEAN Connectivity Initiative would benefit the region as a whole, in terms of enhancing its physical connectivity and enhancing ASEAN's integration efforts. In seeking to enhance linkages between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners, this initiative could help deepen trade, investments and

people-to-people flows between ASEAN and Australia. ASEAN and Australia agreed to explore areas of further collaboration within the Connectivity Initiative, noting the work already being undertaken by Australia to enhance connectivity in the region.

7. The Forum underscored the importance of further strengthening the East Asia Summit (EAS) process, and committed to work closely in strengthening sectoral cooperation, inter alia, in the areas of finance, trade finance, education, environment, disaster management and pandemic preparedness. The Forum welcomed Australia's hosting of the 2nd EAS Workshop on Trade Finance on 13-14 May 2010 in Sydney, and also looks forward to Australia's proposals on EAS cooperation in disaster management.
8. The Forum had a constructive discussion on regional developments, including the evolving regional architecture and proposals, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and the Asia Pacific community (APc). ASEAN noted Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's view expressed in December 2009 that ASEAN should remain at the core of any regional construct, that could include a possible APc. ASEAN also recalled the decision of the January 2010 ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Danang, Vietnam, that any new proposal on the regional architecture should be based on the central role of ASEAN, and build upon and strengthen existing ASEAN-based structures.
9. The Forum also recognised the constructive role played by ASEAN in driving the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to strengthen regional peace and stability through dialogue, consultation and cooperation. The Forum highlighted the importance for the ARF to promote concrete cooperation and begin its transition to preventive diplomacy. This would help it maintain its role as the premier regional security forum. Australia also appreciated the contribution of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) to the regional security architecture, and expressed its support for the emerging "ADMM-Plus" concept.
10. The Forum discussed various international and regional issues of common interest and developments in the Asia-Pacific region, covering counter-terrorism, the environment, climate change and cooperative mechanisms for combating transnational crime, including drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and people smuggling.
11. The Forum agreed that the 24th ASEAN-Australia Forum would be held in Australia in the second half of 2011.
