

**PRESS RELEASE: EU ASEAN BUSINESS COUNCIL SEEKS EASING OF CUSTOMS PROCEDURES IN ASEAN**

**MEETS ASEAN CUSTOMS DIRECTORS-GENERALS**

- The EU-ASEAN Business Council met ASEAN Directors-General of Customs at the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Directors-General of Customs at Langkawi, Malaysia on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018. The EU-ABC presented a number of key recommendations aimed at easing Customs procedures and facilitating trade across ASEAN, including the increased use of technology.
- The EU-ABC also presented the latest customs and trade facilitation publication: *Trade Facilitation in ASEAN: Path to Growth and Prosperity*. The measures, if adopted by ASEAN, would help facilitate the “competitive, efficient and seamless movement of goods” - a key objective of the AEC Blueprint 2025.
- ASEAN remains an important region for European businesses with Europe still the lead source of FDI funds into ASEAN and Europe remaining ASEAN’s second largest trading partner.
- The EU-ASEAN Business Council, as the voice of European business in the region, looks forward to continuing to work together with all of the ASEAN Member States and in particular to working closely with various ASEAN groups tasked at implementing the AEC including various sub-groups of Customs.

Commenting on the EU-ABC’s recommendations which were presented to the ASEAN Directors-General of Customs, Head of Delegation and EU-ABC Treasurer, Mr Carsten Hess, said:

“As the largest source of foreign direct investment in ASEAN and the region’s second largest trading partner, the European business community is committed to supporting ASEAN with its economic integration agenda. The recommendations presented today relating to modernising customs procedures, simplifying procedures for low value shipments, illicit trade issues and the ASEAN Customs Transit System provide workable solutions towards achieving a key goal in the AEC Blueprint 2025 - the free movement of goods. We believe that facilitating the seamless movement of goods in the region would greatly support the development of MSMEs and businesses involved in e-Commerce, especially in this digital age with disruptive technologies that are continuously evolving.”

Commenting further, Mr Carsten Hess said: “We had extensive bilateral discussions with several of the ASEAN Customs authorities, particularly on the important role that technology will play going forward to both facilitate trade and enhance risk management for Customs using automated clearance procedures. In the nearer future making increased use of Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain technologies will provide Customs with the necessary tools to both enable the easier of flow of e-Commerce and help them ensure that public health and safety concerns are met. It should also enable Customs to increase revenues through smarter duty and tax collection.”

Speaking about the short-term and medium-term recommendations contained in the EU-ABC paper, *Trade Facilitation in ASEAN: Path to Growth and Prosperity*, EU-ABC Executive Director, Mr Chris Humphrey, said:

“We are encouraged by the active engagement we had with the ASEAN Customs DGs as we work collaboratively together towards improving and modernising Customs procedures across ASEAN, combatting illicit trade and achieving the AEC objectives as soon as possible. The suggested measures aim to boost intra-ASEAN trade while at the same time protecting customs revenues, achieving the overall reduction of cost in trade and continue attracting FDI into the region for greater growth and prosperity and we look forward to engaging with various Customs working groups across the region as suggested by the Chairman of the ASEAN Customs DGs meeting”

**END**

## Notes to editors:

### 1. EU ASEAN Trade and Investment Relationship

The commercial, trade and investment relationship between the European Union and ASEAN is strong and growing. The EU is the largest economy in the world, and is ASEAN's largest source of foreign direct investment. The EU is also ASEAN's second largest trading partner, after China.

### 2. About the EU-ASEAN Business Council

The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) is the primary voice for European business within the ASEAN region. It is recognised by the European Commission and accredited as an Entity Associated with ASEAN under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter.

Independent of both bodies, the Council has been established to help promote the interests of European businesses operating within ASEAN and to advocate for changes in policies and regulations which would help promote trade and investment between Europe and the ASEAN region. As such, the Council works on a sectorial and cross-industry basis to help improve the investment and trading conditions for European Businesses in the ASEAN region through influencing policy and decision makers throughout the region and in the EU, as well as acting as a platform for the exchange of information and ideas amongst its members and regional players within the ASEAN region.

The EU-ABC's membership consists of large European Multi-national Corporations and the nine European Chambers of Commerce from around South East Asia. As such, the EU-ABC represents a diverse range of European industries cutting across almost every commercial sphere from car manufacturing through to financial services and including Fast Moving Consumer Goods and high-end electronics and communications. Our members all have a vested interest in enhancing trade, commerce and investment between Europe and ASEAN.

The Executive Director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council is Mr Chris Humphrey, and its Chairman is Mr Donald Kanak. The Council is led by an elected Board consisting of corporate leaders representing a range of important industry sectors and representatives of the European Chambers of Commerce.

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