



ASEAN Business Advisory Council

PRESS RELEASE

ASEAN BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL AND JOINT BUSINESS COUNCILS CALL FOR ASEAN HIGH LEVEL SPECIAL COMMISSION TO BETTER CO-ORDINATE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND POST-PANDEMIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACROSS SOUTH EAST ASIA

- Calls for the establishment of a High-Level Special Commission to ensure better collaboration and cohesiveness across the region both in dealing with the current pandemic, and also to ensure that ASEAN comes out stronger, more integrated and globally competitive from this pandemic
- Formation of support to be given from a Special Business Advisory Board, to ensure private sector involvement and support
- Focus on Priority sectors: travel, essential goods and related supply chains, medical services, digital tools

Jakarta – 20 May 2020: The ASEAN Business Advisory Council, the Apex Private Sector Organisation for ASEAN, together with its Joint Business Council partners and other partner organisations, today published a nine-point Joint Statement calling for more cohesive and responsive collective action by the ASEAN member states in their fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and in the development of a post-pandemic economic recovery for the ASEAN region.

Speaking about the Joint Statement, ASEAN BAC Chairman, Dr Doan Duy Khuong said: “These are extraordinary and unprecedented times which we believe calls for urgent, extraordinary and unprecedented action from ASEAN. The time for ASEAN to prove its collective strength to mitigate the worst impacts of the on-going pandemic and ensure the long-term prosperity and wellness of its people through fast action is now”.

Dr Doan Duy Khuong added: “The pandemic continues to exact a huge toll on the region. Not just on those who have unfortunately suffered directly from COVID-19, but on all the communities, employees, and businesses throughout ASEAN. However, the pandemic also presents an opportunity to ASEAN to demonstrate that its ten-member states can work cohesively and responsively together both to effectively contain the spread of the virus and to aim for the best possible post-pandemic economic recovery and thus ensuring that ASEAN can be greater than the sum of its constituent parts. But to do that, the normal ASEAN way of working will not suffice which is why we are proposing this bold and innovative Special Commission today. No one country can overcome this pandemic alone. Bold and decisive steps are needed if ASEAN is to make the best possible economic recovery and remain a beacon for global trade”.

The Joint Statement notes that “for post-pandemic economic recovery, it is even more important that the region work as one”, going to point out that “Economic recovery will not be quick and simple, but there will be significant opportunities for ASEAN to take advantage of the expected rapid recalibration of supply chains globally, and position itself as a destination of choice in global markets for the production of goods and the provision of services to support manufacturing. Investment funds will be scarce going forward, and so ASEAN will need to demonstrate that it is truly open for business, has competitive advantages, and has the right policies in place to help businesses grow, export, and develop skills. In this area the Special Commission should be considering making sweeping advances



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on the AEC immediately, removing non-tariff barriers to trade and investment restrictions, and cutting bureaucracy”.

The Joint Statement is supported by the Australia-ASEAN Business Council, AustCham ASEAN, ASEAN-New Zealand Business Council, Canada-ASEAN Business Council, EU-ASEAN Business Council, UK-ASEAN Business Council and the US-ASEAN Business Council.

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About the ASEAN Business Advisory Council:

The ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) was established by the ASEAN Heads of State and Government (HOSGs) at the 7th ASEAN Summit in November 2001 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. Launched in April 2003, ASEAN-BAC was set up with the mandate to provide private sector feedback and guidance to boost ASEAN’s efforts towards economic integration. Aside from providing private sector feedback on the implementation of ASEAN economic cooperation, the Council also identifies priority areas for consideration of the ASEAN Leaders. Accordingly, ASEAN-BAC’s activities are primarily focused on reviewing and identifying issues to facilitate and promote economic cooperation and integration.

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