



PRESS RELEASE

MALAYSIA FINANCE MINISTER WELCOMES EUROPEAN DELEGATION TO MALAYSIA FOR FIRST TIME POST-PANDEMIC AT JOINT GALA DINNER

IN 45TH YEAR OF ASEAN-EU RELATIONS, EUROPEAN INDUSTRY STEPS UP ENGAGEMENT WITH MALAYSIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Kuala Lumpur – 9 June: The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) successfully wrapped up its first European trade and investment mission since the COVID-19 pandemic to Malaysia from 7 to 9 June, which culminated in a Joint Gala Dinner with EUROCHAM Malaysia. The Gala Dinner was attended by distinguished government officials and prominent business leaders from across Southeast Asia and Europe. At the centre of this pre-eminent line-up was Malaysia Minister of Finance His Excellency Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul bin Tengku Abdul Aziz.

Speaking during his keynote speech at the Gala Dinner, Tengku Zafrul reiterated Malaysia's commitment to ensure the rapid recovery of its economy, while strengthening the country's resilience to new challenges, through restoring business capabilities, maintaining Malaysia's competitiveness, and investing in future technologies, to name a few.

His Excellency also highlighted the significance of the relationship between Malaysia and the EU, and on a broader scale between ASEAN and the EU, which continues to be key to improving trade, investments, and business opportunities for all parties.

"Malaysia welcomes the European Commission's potential resumption of long-suspended negotiations of the Malaysia-EU Free Trade Agreement, and we look forward to further discussions on its possible resumption," said His Excellency.

His Excellency added: "I call on your support and camaraderie to work closely with Malaysia to further explore the full potential of Malaysia and the ASEAN region... Malaysia remains resolute in our commitment to ensure that Malaysia continues to be a business-friendly nation with greater certainty, accountability, efficiency, and transparency in our initiatives and policies."

The Gala Dinner was also attended by H.E. Michalis Rokas, EU Ambassador to Malaysia, H.E. Igor Driesmans, EU Ambassador to ASEAN, as well as Ambassadors from the EU and ASEAN to Malaysia. The event saw speeches and a fireside chat that discussed developments in the digital economy in Malaysia with Fabian Bigar, CEO of MYDigital.

EUROCHAM Malaysia's Chairman Mr Oliver Roche commented, "We are entirely grateful to all parties who worked together tirelessly to make this Delegation Visit and dinner event a possibility. The impact of COVID-19 on the EU business communities held a significant halt in the progress, especially with the FTA and FDIs in Malaysia. Through collaborations with a multitude of industry players. The private and government-affiliated organisation as well as the Malaysian Government in assisting us in moving forward with our undertakings."

Mr Oliver Roche added, "This collaboration with EU-ABC signifies our commitment to collaborating with industry players through EUROCHAM Malaysia to provide advocacy-related assistance to the EU business community, initiate further dialogues with the government and particularly advance discussions on the EU-Malaysia FTA. The Gala Night is the conclusion of a very fruitful collaboration with EU-ABC to this end."



The Gala Dinner also marked a new era of leadership for the EU-ASEAN Business Council. After six years helming the Council as Chairman, Donald Kanak has passed the baton on to Vice-Chairman Martin Hayes to lead the EU-ABC. Mr Kanak, who is also Chairman, Prudential Insurance Growth Markets and Chairman of Prudence Foundation, oversaw the expansion of the EU-ABC and was instrumental in raising the profile of the Council by leading the charge at key meetings across ASEAN. In particular, the EU-ABC has since established itself as a driving force for sustainable finance in Southeast Asia – a legacy Mr Kanak has left behind.

In his maiden speech as Chairman-Elect of the EU-ABC, Mr Hayes conveyed his ambition to lead the Council in its work across all streams, from trade facilitation and market access matters to sustainability and sustainable development, as well as on digital economy, health and life sciences, FMCG, and mobility.

“We will also continue our work on the ASEAN Economic Integration to increase trade, investment, and the ease of doing business, and raise our region’s profile as a united economic powerhouse. Let us strive towards greater heights and together, we shall contribute towards strengthening the ASEAN-EU relationship – not only for the benefit of European companies, but also for a sustainable and competitive ASEAN landscape for global business,” Mr Hayes added.

Mr Hayes, who has spent more than a decade as President of Bosch in Southeast Asia and is a founding member of the Council, has deep knowledge of the challenges experienced by European businesses operating in the ASEAN region, especially in today’s volatile environment.

“Thanks to the contributions of our Members and an outstanding team, over the past six years the EU-ABC has become a strong advocate for a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable ASEAN. I am confident that under Martin’s chairmanship, the Council will move from strength to strength,” said Mr Kanak.

The Gala Dinner was held at the back of a European business delegation to Malaysia, led by the EU-ABC from 7th to 9th June. This was the Council’s first physical Mission Trip in two years, following the COVID-19 global lockdowns. Delegates met with various Ministries, Government Agencies, and prominent figures in the country to discuss matters of mutual interest to increase investment in Malaysia and across ASEAN, and to ensure a swift and sustainable recover from the social, economic, and health damage caused by the pandemic.

The EU-ABC also held its Annual General Meeting, which saw the election of a new board and a discussion of the Council’s workplan for the future. The board is a mix of new and old faces and comprises:

- Martin Hayes, President SEA, Robert Bosch – Chairman-Elect
- Tassilo Brinzer, Chairman, EuroCham Cambodia – Board Member
- Jens Ruebbert, Managing Director, APAC, LBBW – Board Member
- Noel Clehane, Global Head of Regulatory & Public Policy Affairs, BNO Global – Board Member
- Sharon Toh, Head of ASEAN, SWIFT – Board Member
- Wichard Graf von Harrach, Vice President, EuroCham Indonesia – Board Member
- Daniel Pans, Board Member EuroCham Malaysia & CEO, DPO International – Board Member



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 formally recognised by the European Commission and accredited under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter as an entity associated with ASEAN.

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.

About EUROCHAM Malaysia

EUROCHAM Malaysia has been established since 1993 as chamber of chambers by several European Union (EU) bilateral chambers of commerce. It is the aim of the chamber to be the united voice of the EU business community in Malaysia as well as to facilitate trade and investment between Europe and Malaysia. With our goal to bolster business alliances for a prosperous EU-Malaysia partnership, we take pride in our diverse membership based on the EU bilateral chambers of commerce, associated chambers as well as direct corporate members from Europe and Malaysia.

With more than 1,600 companies in our wider network, EUROCHAM Malaysia offers one of the largest business platforms as chamber of chambers and through our valuable bilateral chambers to explore the Malaysian market or to discover the diversity of European economies. We bring businesses and communities together to create mutually beneficial opportunities in trade and investment.

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