

February 2023 – Notes from the ED



Twenty-eight days in February just seems that it's not enough. What an eventful month it has been!

### **The Alluring Beauty of Vietnam**

We were greatly honoured to have, alongside EuroCham Vietnam, been the first overseas delegation to be received by the Prime Minister of Vietnam, His Excellency Pham Minh Chinh and Chairman of the National Assembly, Vuong Dinh Hue, since Tet (and on Valentine's day at that!). Despite the chilly breeze in Hanoi in the third week of February, we felt the warm hospitality of the Vietnamese.

It was an extremely productive two and half day mission in Vietnam where we had eight excellent meetings with (on top of the meeting with the Prime Minister; and the National Assembly): Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Department of Vietnam Customs, State Bank of Vietnam, and Vietnam Administration of Tourism. It is evident from the various meetings that European businesses remain fully committed to investing in Vietnam and to finding avenues to strengthen the partnership. This is especially true in the domain of development of the green economy, matters of sustainability, decarbonisation, energy transition, amongst others. I hope that both EU-ABC and EuroCham members found it as informative and rewarding as us.

For those of you who have missed out on the Mission Trip in Vietnam in February, fret not! We have an exciting line-up in the year ahead with Mission Trips to Cambodia (April), Philippines (May), Indonesia (August), Malaysia (September), and Thailand (November). More information to come and registration will open soon! Keep an eye out for those.

### **Council Activities in February**



Though the Council was all hands on deck for the Vietnam Mission Trip, we also held our first Value of Diagnostics workshop for the year prior to the business Mission. This time highlighting the importance of screening for early detection of diseases, especially for cervical cancer and HIV in Viet Nam. We were honoured to have Ms Naomi Kitahara, representative from the UNFPA, provide us with the keynote address, delivering a memorable speech, to which I have the honour of hearing first-hand, and am now sharing with you "No



husband should lose a wife. No sibling should lose a sister. No parents should lose a daughter. And no child should lose a mother, just because of cervical cancer. We must create a “society for all ages” in which people everywhere are able to enjoy good health, security, and dignity in their own rights.” The Council will continue our diagnostics conversation in Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia for the rest of the year.

Back in Singapore, the Council, together with EuroCham Singapore, and the EU Delegation to Singapore was extremely delighted to welcome Deputy DG for Energy – Matthew Baldwin, to discuss issues on energy transition in ASEAN. Wrapping up February with a fruitful meeting with the ATIGA Technical Negotiation Committee discussing the upgrade of this key Agreement for trade in the region and the need to ensure that it will become a truly forward looking modern Agreement encompassing things like the circular economy and delivering on the removal of non-tariff barriers to trade. What better way to spend the weekend, especially if one’s passion is ASEAN?

While the Council has been busy, so have the EuroChams across the region. We congratulate EuroCham Vietnam on the conclusion of their Whitebook Launch on 16th February! We were honoured to have been invited to be a part of the event. We would also like to extend our felicitations to EuroCham Cambodia who had a successful inaugural Counter-Counterfeit & Illicit Trade Forum which involved representatives from both the public and private sector coming together to break down the issues of illicit trade in Cambodia.

### **What’s in Store in March**

It is going to be a busy time in March (then again, which month isn’t?) with the Council attending various meetings, including that on the ASEAN Single Window Steering Committee & ASW Workshop; the launch of our Energy Transition Paper in partnership with several of the EuroChams across ASEAN; ASEAN Finance Ministers & Central Bank Governors Meeting & EU-ABC Consultation Meeting in Bali. We are also excited to announce that we will soon be hosting our “conversations” series on the various sustainability linked initiatives coming out from Brussels. First up – EU CBAM Conversation and what it means for European businesses in ASEAN. Details to follow shortly.

Before I wrap up, the EU-ABC will be heading to Brunei Darussalam on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April to attend the Brunei Business Conference which will be held alongside Brunei’s hosting of the APEC Business Advisory Council Meeting (ABAC). We will be leading a small delegation this time and seats are on a first-come-first-served basis with members of the Council given priority. For those of you who are interested, please reach out to me for more details.

That’s it for February. Until the next notes from ED, a happy belated Valentine from my team to yours. Stay healthy, stay loving, stay safe.