

Notes from the ED – June 2023

Sitting here in Singapore you would think it is August already with the regular rehearsals for National Day in full swing! But it is only the end of June, and whilst it feels like time is racing by, we are only half way through the year! Time to take stock on the 6 months that have passed, and to look ahead not only to the next 6 months, but also further forward to 2024!

So far this year we have not only undertaken highly successful business missions to both Vietnam and the Philippines, we have also published papers on [Insurance](#), [Healthcare](#) (2 papers), [Sustainable Finance](#), [Energy Transition](#), and [Illicit Trade](#). We have attended numerous ASEAN meetings, including the ASEAN Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee, and ASEAN Customs Directors-General Meeting, as well more working group meetings than I have space here to mention. We have also had engagement with a number of European Parliament delegations visiting the region, and undertaken engagement with European institutions in Brussels, all in the aim of continuing to press our members interests and promoting improved trade and investment relations between Europe and Southeast Asia.

June continued the trend of busy months for us. It kicked off with our annual consultation meeting with the ASEAN Directors-General of Customs where, in addition to the main plenary session with all of the customs authorities together, the EU-ABC Delegation also had bilateral meetings with the customs authorities from Indonesia, Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia as well as the World Customs Organisation. As the only private sector body to physically present at these meetings, our members had unique access to customs officials to raise areas of concerns and seek clarifications on policy and regulations. If you move goods around the region, you should have been there! {INSERT PHOTO}

The first week of June was actually quite crazy. In addition to the Customs meeting in Thailand, we ran three events, in three different countries, on one day!: a Value of Diagnostics Workshop in Jakarta (further promoting [our paper from last year](#)), did the launch event for our latest paper on illicit trade in ASEAN in Bangkok, and also business roundtable on the EU's Deforestation Directive with DG Environment.

Following on from that, we also took part in a Stakeholder Engagement on ASEAN's Carbon Neutrality Strategy at the ASEAN Secretariat and met with the European Parliament's International Trade Committee during their mission to Indonesia. {INSERT PHOTOS FROM BOTH}. We also met with a high-level delegation from Timor-Leste to explore areas where the Council can assist them on their integration into ASEAN. {INSERT PHOTO}.

The final week of June saw the Council back in Brussels where our intrepid Advocacy Director, Liyana Othman, joined our new Vice Chairman, Noel Clehane, in supporting the Philippines Trade & Industry Secretary, Alfredo Pascual, visit to Europe further pressing their case for the recommencement of FTA negotiations with the EU.

Looking ahead, whilst July is looking like a rare quiet month (famous last words!), we will be engaged in further consultation with the ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee, and I will be delivering a briefing to European Trade Counsellors in Jakarta. We will also be doing a [Value of Diagnostics workshop in Malaysia on 25th July](#), and I will be speaking at the [Asia Security Conference](#) in Singapore on 26 July on tackling illicit trade. But most of our work for July will be focused on the remainder of 2023. For that we have an exciting/exhausting (delete as applicable) schedule including a [business mission to Indonesia](#) (31 July to 3 August), a Health roadshow in Jakarta (31 July), our annual

consultation with the ASEAN Economic Ministers, and hopefully a consultation meeting with ASEAN Energy Ministers. And we fully expect more things to appear too for August.

After that we are off to [Malaysia for a business mission](#) from 11 to 13 September, Cambodia (24 to 26 October), Thailand (14 to 16 November), and then Brussels in the week beginning 10th December. With a host of ASEAN meetings and further advocacy papers in between those dates, your friendly neighbourhood Business Council never rests in serving the interests of its members. Talk about value for money!

Finally, because we are slightly insane, we are already beginning to plan for 2024. For this our members inputs are vital, so I ask them please to reach out to me or the team here for ideas so that we can plug them to our programme going forward.

In the meantime, for those escaping on holidays, I hope you enjoy yourself and come back fully recharged.