

**INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE
ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS AND THE
UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE ON THEIR CONSULTATIONS
(AEM-USTR)**

20 November 2002, Manila, Philippines

Press Statement

1. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the United States Trade Representative had an informal consultation on 20 November 2002 in Manila, Philippines.
2. The Ministers welcomed the Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative (EAI), an initiative announced by President George W. Bush to the ASEAN Leaders in Los Cabos, Mexico on 26 October 2002. The Ministers noted that the EAI signaled the importance that the United States places on enhancing trade ties to ASEAN. It also signifies the US commitment to ASEAN's economic growth and the promotion of investment into the region.
3. The EAI offers the prospect of bilateral FTAs between the United States and ASEAN countries that are committed to economic reforms and openness. The ultimate goal of the EAI is to create a network of bilateral FTAs that will link the ASEAN and U. S. economies more closely together. These FTAs, along the model of the Singapore-US FTA agreement, will be developed at a pace comfortable to the parties concerned. As part of the EAI, the United States would continue to support the three ASEAN members that do not yet belong to the World Trade Organization (WTO) – Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam – to complete their accessions successfully. The Ministers appreciated US efforts to work to provide normal trade relations (NTR) status to Lao PDR.
4. Highlighting the critical importance of regional integration and trade and investment liberalization to boosting trade and investment flows, the Ministers agreed to intensify their efforts to make progress under the work program agreed to at the last AEM-USTR meeting in Bangkok, Thailand in April, which the U. S. proposed to be included as part of the EAI. The Ministers discussed the specific work program proposed by the United States, which includes proposals for cooperative efforts on intellectual property rights, customs and trade facilitation, biotechnology, and standards. The Ministers noted that ASEAN would submit specific proposals for work to be undertaken in the areas of trade and investment facilitation, agriculture, human resource development (HRD) and capacity building, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and information and communications technology (ICT).
5. In response to President Bush's EAI, the Ministers tasked senior officials to meet over the next few months to consider development of an ASEAN-wide TIFA, which would include elements of the existing work program as well as other mutually agreed elements. They agreed to appoint an official in each country to lead this effort and to use the SEOM process to advance the TIFA work program. They encouraged private sector input in moving the TIFA process forward and in facilitating trade between ASEAN and the United States.
6. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of supporting an open, rules-based multilateral trading system under the WTO. Recognizing the significant contribution that the successful and timely conclusion of negotiations on the WTO Doha Development Agenda (DDA) will make to economic development and social advancement, Ministers reaffirmed

their full commitment to ensuring the successful completion of the DDA negotiations by 1 January 2005.

7. The Ministers called on all WTO members to intensify substantive discussions in Geneva on all elements of the DDA in an effort to keep the negotiations on track. The Ministers committed to working together to meet all DDA deadlines and schedules in the lead up to the 5th WTO Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico, on 10-14 September 2003. They agreed that addressing agricultural issues will be an important element on the road to Cancun.

8. The Ministers discussed the benefits of regular meetings and the importance of enhancing the channels of communication between AEM and the USTR. They welcomed the private sector's support of the EAI and encouraged its continued input to create additional business opportunities between ASEAN and the United States.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

- (i) H.E. Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib, Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Brunei Darussalam;
- (ii) H E. Mr. Cham Prasidh, Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
- (iii) Ms. Rifana Erni, Director-General, International Trade and Industry Cooperation, Minister of Industry and Trade, Indonesia;
- (iv) H.E. Mr.Soulivong Daravong, Minister of Industry and Handicrafts, Lao PDR;
- (v) Mr. Sidek Hasan, Deputy Secretary-General (Trade), Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
- (v) H.E. Mr. MAR Roxas, Secretary of Trade and Industry, the Philippines;
- (vi) H.E. Brigadier General (NS) George Yeo, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;
- (vii) H.E. Mr. Adisai Bodharamik , Minister of Commerce, Thailand;
- (viii) Ambassador Robert B. Zoellick , United States Trade Representative;
- (ix) H.E. Mr. Truong Dinh Tuyen, Minister of Trade, Viet Nam; and
- (x) H.E. Mr. Tran Duc Minh, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN.