

REMARKS BY H. E. DATO LIM JOCK HOI AT ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION AT THE ASEAN CENTRE IN MGIMO UNIVERSITY

Moscow, 4 February 2020

- ***Dr. Artem Malgin, Vice Rector of MGIMO University;***
- ***Dr. Victor Sumsky, Director of the ASEAN Centre in MGIMO University;***
- ***Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.***

On behalf of the ASEAN Secretariat, let me convey our appreciation to the ASEAN Centre at MGIMO University for organising this round-table discussion, and for the warm hospitality accorded to us all.

We in ASEAN place a high importance on our relations with our external partners, including Russia, and we work closely with all of them to ensure that the partnerships remain mutually beneficial, dynamic and adaptive to the evolving regional and global challenges.

This round-table discussion is very useful, not only to exchange views on the ongoing cooperation between ASEAN and Russia, but also in exploring ways on how to further deepen ASEAN-Russia strategic partnership.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ASEAN story is one of regional efforts to promote peace and stability, enhance our peoples' economic well-being and work together for regional development and progress. Since its establishment in 1967, ASEAN has matured as a regional organisation and has grown in stature as a region in both diplomatic and economic standing, but we acknowledge that we still have a long way to go, recognizing the diversity, different levels of economic and social development of the individual members of ASEAN, while we work towards building an ASEAN Community. What should not

be doubted is the political will and commitment of ASEAN Member States on the importance and relevance of this Community, individually to each member and collectively for our region.

Our partners, which have supported us through the years, recognise that ASEAN has been instrumental in promoting regional peace, prosperity, and stability in Southeast Asia and beyond. We appreciate that we continue to receive requests from a number of countries from different regions to establish some form of formal links with us.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As ASEAN is entering into the fifth year of its Community in 2020, we continue to reaffirm our commitment to continue deepening cooperation in addressing emerging global concerns, such as terrorism and violent extremism, transnational crime, and cyber threats, drugs trafficking, among others.

Despite challenges, economically, the region has become more empowered. Since 2010, the region has been growing by 5.4% annually on average, far above the global average. Despite continuing global uncertainties, the region's economy grew by 5.2% in 2018 to reach a combined GDP of US\$ 3.0 trillion, the fifth largest in the world. The region is currently also the fourth largest trading economy in the world for both merchandise and services trade, and the third largest FDI destination after the EU and the US, attracting USD 152.8 billion FDI inflows in 2018 after overtaking China in 2016.

Despite these achievements, the region too is facing the pressure from synchronized global downturn, and growth is estimated at a much more moderate level of just 4.4% in 2019, before picking up to 4.7% in 2020. ASEAN recognises the importance of keeping its market open and strengthening its external partnerships, while continuing to deepen its own integration efforts. Beyond market opening, work is now focused on enhancing trade and investment cooperation, financial integration,

connectivity including physical and digital connectivity, sectoral cooperation, and preparing for the fourth industrial revolution and a more sustainable future.

At the same time, ASEAN remains committed to supporting an open, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system, that is essential to promote the development of global and regional value chains.

Our partners and stakeholders continue to pay a close attention to ASEAN economic integration progress. Among the most closely followed development is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations, which remains a top priority of ASEAN external economic relations strategy. Negotiated between 10 ASEAN Member States and its 6 FTA Partners, RCEP will create one of the world's largest free trade area, covering half of the world's population, and contributing almost a third of global output, trade, and investment. We are pleased that after 7 years of negotiations (launched in 2012), we have concluded negotiations for all 20 RCEP Chapters at the 3rd RCEP Summit in November 2019. Efforts are now focused on the remaining work to complete market access negotiations, legal scrubbing exercise, while in parallel continue to find ways to resolve the outstanding issues, as we work towards the signing of the Agreement this year as mandated by Leaders. ASEAN is confident that RCEP will serve as a supporting pillar to a strong multilateral trading system, promote growth and development across the region, and positively contribute to the global economy

ASEAN is determined to pursue our Community building aspirations. We are clear of our plans as contained in our Community Vision 2025 and its Political Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural Blueprints. This year, under Viet Nam's chairmanship, ASEAN's work will be driven by the theme of 'Cohesive and Responsive', covering five thematic priorities, namely (i) contribution to maintaining regional peace, stability and security; (ii) promoting regional economic integration and connectivity, effective response to the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR); (iii) promoting ASEAN sense of community and identity; (iv) enhancing partnership for

peace and sustainable development; and (v) strengthening ASEAN's institutional capacity and efficiency.

This year, ASEAN is also conducting an important undertaking, the Mid-Term Review of the ASEAN Community 2025, which would include a review of implementation of its three Community Blueprints as well as an assessment of the changing landscape that affects ASEAN integration efforts. The review exercise is important not only to track the progress made to date, but also to identify gaps and challenges and recommend improvements, taking into consideration relevant new or emerging issues and trends for the region. We have also reviewed and reworked our ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan, which contains targets to be realised by 2025, as well as our Initiative for ASEAN Integration, which would help us narrow the development gap within ASEAN. It is hoped that by 2025, we can achieve a more integrated ASEAN, along the political security, economic, and socio-cultural domains.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN-Russia relations and cooperation have progressed steadily over the past 24 years along a broad spectrum of issues including, among others, political-security issues, non-traditional issues, economics, science and technology, education, disaster management, and culture.

In 2016, ASEAN and Russia commemorated the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN-Russian Federation Dialogue Partnership through the convening of Sochi Summit during which the Leaders adopted Sochi Declaration which charted out the future direction of the partnership to move towards a strategic partnership for mutual benefit. Year 2018 marked another important milestone in the ASEAN-Russia dialogue relations. During the third ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit in November 2018 in Singapore, the Leaders agreed to elevate ASEAN-Russia relations to a Strategic Partnership and adopted the Joint Statement of 3rd ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Strategic Partnership

Guided by the current ASEAN-Russia five-year road map (2016-2020), we hope to further enhance ASEAN-Russia cooperation across the three pillars of ASEAN community, and to continue this endeavour through the next phase of the current roadmap.

ASEAN and Russia are also committed to strengthen our economic links. Russia has grown to be an important trading partner for ASEAN. The total trade between ASEAN and Russia increased by 19.5% per cent year on year to stand at USD 20 billion in 2018, placing Russia as ASEAN's 9th largest trade partner among Dialogue and FTA Partners. ASEAN exports to Russia increased by 1.6% per cent year on year to reach USD 6.0 billion in 2018 and imports from Russia increased by 29.1 per cent year on year to reach 14.0 billion in 2018, respectively, over the same period. Russia's foreign direct investment flows into ASEAN registered at USD 55.7 million in 2018, making Russia the 10th largest investor among ASEAN Dialogue and FTA Partners. Russia also continued to provide support to ASEAN in enhancing their capacity building and promoting trade and investment between ASEAN and Russia through the implementation of activities set out in the Post-2017 ASEAN-Russia Trade and Investment Work Programme.

It is worth noting that our partnership goes beyond bilateral relations. Russia continues to be part of the various regional mechanisms centered on ASEAN, including the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum. We appreciate Russia's support for the ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture. We encourage Russia to continue its active role in these ASEAN-led mechanisms to further contribute to the promotion of peace, stability and security in the region.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

ASEAN-Russia cooperation have also been further expanded through the framework of ASEAN-EAEU relations and the relations between ASEAN and SCO Secretariats.

On ASEAN-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) relations, I am pleased to note that good progress has been made following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ASEAN and the EEC on Economic Cooperation during the Third ASEAN-Russia Summit in November 2018 in Singapore. The Programme of Cooperation (PoC) between ASEAN and EEC, which serves as a work plan to implement the elements under the MoU, has been endorsed during the Eighth ASEAN Economic Ministers-Russia Consultations in September 2019 in Bangkok. Currently, the ASEAN Secretariat and the EEC are working closely to carry out the activities listed under the PoC to implement the MoU on Economic Cooperation for year 2019-2020. As part of the implementation of the Programme, I am pleased to note the successful convening of the Seminar on Regional Economic Integration in ASEAN and Eurasian Economic Union in December 2019 in Moscow, which contributed to an enhanced understanding of the integration process in ASEAN and the discussions on exploring possible format of future economic and trade cooperation activities between ASEAN and EAEU.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

With the notable progress of ASEAN-Russia dialogue relations, there remain tremendous opportunities for closer collaboration to further strengthen and deepen ASEAN-Russia strategic partnership.

We look forward to the fruitful discussions in this round-table that could generate suggestions and ideas for stronger ASEAN-Russia Strategic Partnership.

Thank you.