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JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BETWEEN DATO' SAIFUDDIN ABDULLAH, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF MALAYSIA AND STEF BLOK, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Stef Blok, undertook a Working Visit to Malaysia on 28 March 2019 for a Bilateral Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah.

2. The Ministers discussed issues of common interests covering bilateral, regional and global issues. They reaffirmed the excellent state of the bilateral relationship and expressed their will to further enhance cooperation.
3. Both Ministers agreed to further enhance the longstanding and close trade and investment relationship between the two countries. The Netherlands is the 3rd largest investor in Malaysia with more than 200 Dutch companies currently active in Malaysia. The Netherlands is the 12th largest export destination for Malaysia. In 2018, total trade between both countries was RM32.57 billion (USD 7.82 billion) of which exports from Malaysia to the Netherlands were valued at RM25.80 billion (USD 6.19 billion). Both countries form hubs in their region, respectively. Malaysia is the gateway to ASEAN and the Netherlands is the gateway to Europe. Both countries have a clear interest in a well functioning international trade system. In this context, Minister Blok stressed that it is in the economic interest of Malaysia and the Netherlands to resume the talks on an EU-Malaysia Free Trade Agreement.
4. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment and resolve to achieve truth, justice and accountability for the victims of flight MH17 and their next of kin. July 17th will mark five years since the downing of MH17, a tragedy which took the lives of 196 Dutch and 43 Malaysian nationals. The tragedy has brought Malaysia and the Netherlands even closer. The investigating authorities of Malaysia and the Netherlands will continue to cooperate in the Joint Investigation Team to establish the truth and to hold the perpetrators accountable. After the Bilateral Meeting, Minister Blok met with the Malaysian next of kin of the MH17 tragedy. The Malaysian Foreign Ministry was represented by Dato' Hj. Marzuki Hj. Yahya, Deputy Foreign Minister.
5. Minister Blok also took the opportunity to convey the appreciation of the Government of the Netherlands to Malaysia for its partnership and cooperation for the cause of protecting the Netherlands war graves in Malaysian waters. The Ministers concluded that Malaysia and the Netherlands will engage in an official diving expedition to investigate the condition of the sites. The next step would be to set up a joint management plan.

6. On the issue of Palm Oil, the Netherlands and Malaysia discussed the cooperation in the area of production and consumption of sustainable Palm Oil. The Netherlands is the largest importer of Malaysian Palm Oil in Europe. Minister Blok expressed his support for the Malaysian government's policies to improve sustainability of Palm Oil in every step of the value chain. On his part, Minister Saifuddin emphasized the importance of Palm Oil in Malaysia, particularly for the 650,000 smallholders involved in the industry.

7. Minister Blok expressed his support for the ambitions of the Malaysian government in the field of human rights, such as the accession to important human rights conventions and steps towards the abolition of the death penalty. Minister Blok expressed the Netherlands' sincere appreciation for Malaysia's accession to the Rome Statute earlier this month. As both state party and host country of the International Criminal Court, the Netherlands looks forward to working closely together with Malaysia on combating impunity of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

8. Recognizing the importance attached by the two countries in advancing international peace and security, both sides expressed their commitment to continue cooperation in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Both countries reaffirmed the significance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, and agreed to work closely towards a successful 2020 NPT Review Conference. Malaysia will Chair the upcoming Third Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference in 2019, whereas the Netherlands was Chair of the First Preparatory Committee in 2017.

Putrajaya, Malaysia
28 March 2019
