

## ASEAN LEADERS' STATEMENT ON RESPONDING TO GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND TRADE UNCERTAINTIES

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**KUALA LUMPUR, May 27 (Bernama)** -- We, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), gather in Kuala Lumpur on the occasion of the 46th ASEAN Summit on 26 May 2025, amidst rising global trade tensions and growing uncertainty in the international economic landscape. We note the continued rise in unilateral actions relating to tariffs and other trade and investment restrictions and the growing risk of global fragmentation. We stress our strongest resolve to stand together as ASEAN in safeguarding the region's economic stability, resilience, and long-term growth trajectory.

ASEAN underscores that unilateral and retaliatory trade actions are counterproductive and risk exacerbating global economic fragmentation, especially when these actions create indirect impacts on ASEAN. We instruct relevant officials to monitor the potential risk of trade diversion and engage with partners through established platforms for constructive solution. We also remain committed to a peaceful and constructive resolution with our partners through consultative dialogue, mutual respect, and adherence to international law, in line with the fundamental principles under the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. To this end, we reaffirm ASEAN's commitment towards regional unity, economic stability and practical cooperation in navigating external challenges.

We recognise that business certainty and resilient supply chains are crucial for global economic stability and recovery. ASEAN, thus, is committed to maintaining open and secure trade flows, as well as working with partners to strengthen supply chain resilience and promote sustainable development.

In light of these recent developments, we reaffirm our shared resolve to:

- a. Strengthen ASEAN's resilience by further deepening internal trade and investment. This includes accelerating priority initiatives, such as integration by accelerating priority initiatives, including the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) and the upgrade of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA). We are confident that these efforts will reinforce regional integration, boost business certainty and competitiveness, and ensure ASEAN remains cohesive, agile and responsive to emerging challenges.
- b. Leverage, modernise, and upgrade ASEAN Plus One Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) in mitigating the risk of global trade uncertainties and supply chain disruptions while ensuring they remain modern, comprehensive, inclusive, whilst, in parallel, strengthen and boost intra-ASEAN trade and investment, and responsive to 21st-century economic realities.

ASEAN is also committed to intensify ASEAN's economic engagements by deepening cooperation with external partners and expanding engagement with new and emerging partners, including region-to-region linkages such as with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Together, these efforts will reinforce ASEAN's resilience, expand and enhance economic opportunities, and secure its position as a dynamic and forward-looking hub of global trade and investment.

c. Enhance ASEAN's internal coordination, making full use of existing cross-sectoral mechanisms and the newly established ASEAN Geoeconomic Task Force. To this end, we task relevant ministers to monitor the current global economic challenges and to coordinate as appropriate for a strategic and coherent ASEAN response.

d. Undertake timely and targeted domestic measures to mitigate the impact of high tariffs, including safeguards to support the region's industries and workers more broadly, especially those who are vulnerable to trade disruptions. At the same time, we will work collectively to ensure that ASEAN is well prepared to embrace future, transformative change that drives innovation, foster resilience and enhance regional competitiveness. In doing so, we are determined to ensure that no one is left behind in our journey towards a more inclusive, sustainable, and digitally empowered ASEAN.

We reaffirm ASEAN's unwavering commitment to upholding the multilateral trading system. ASEAN underscores the importance of predictable, transparent, inclusive, free, fair, sustainable and rules-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. We are ready to engage constructively with WTO Members to advance necessary reforms and ensure that the global trading system remains predictable, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and capable of addressing contemporary challenges.

As the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025 enters its final phase, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to delivering and advancing a bold and forward-looking ASEAN Community Vision 2045. In this pivotal moment, we are determined to leverage the full benefit of our economic integration to reinforce regional resilience and act collectively in the face of external disruptions, including unilateral trade measures that threaten the integrity and stability of the global trading system. ASEAN stands ready to lead with unity, ambition, and firm belief in rules-based multilateral trading system.

We reaffirm the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) as a vital instrument and primary framework that guides ASEAN's engagement of all its partners, anchored in the principles of ASEAN-centred, openness, inclusivity, transparency, resilience, and rules-based order regional architecture that upholds international law.

As we approach the 60th anniversary of ASEAN in 2027, we reaffirm ASEAN unity and Centrality as key to regional peace, stability, and prosperity. Amidst global challenges, ASEAN remains committed to being a reliable economic partner to all, and will continue to advance our regional economic integration, strengthen and expand our existing economic partnerships, as well as seek out opportunities for economic cooperation with new partners, anchored in mutual respect, shared values, and a common goal of peace and prosperity. We stand ready to work constructively with all partners to advance and support a resilient, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system for the benefit of our peoples and economies.

**ADOPTED** at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, this Twenty Sixth Day of May in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Five, in a single original copy in the English language.

**SOURCE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

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