



**THE SIXTH AEM-INDIA CONSULTATIONS  
28 August 2008, Singapore**

**JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

1. The Sixth Consultations between the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of India (6<sup>th</sup> AEM-India Consultations) was held in Singapore on 28 August 2008. The Consultations was co-chaired by H.E. Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry of Singapore and H.E. Kamal Nath, Minister of Commerce and Industry of India.
2. The annual consultations provided the opportunity for Ministers to exchange views on issues and developments affecting global and regional trade, particularly those that are significant to the bilateral trade between ASEAN and India.
3. The Ministers noted that, despite the challenges prevailing in global and regional trade, ASEAN-India bilateral trade continues to grow at impressive rates. From 2005-2007, trade in goods between ASEAN and India increased at an average annual rate of 28 percent. ASEAN exports to India during the same period grew at an annual rate of 31 percent on average, the fastest among ASEAN's exports to major trading partners. The share of ASEAN-India trade in relation to total ASEAN trade continued to increase and India remains ASEAN's seventh largest trading partner. On the investment side, in 2007, India's Foreign Direct Investment to ASEAN, valued at USD 641 million, was the highest ever recorded since 2000.
4. The Ministers announced the conclusion of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA) negotiations for trade-in-goods. The Ministers were pleased that,



despite the difficult issues in the negotiations, both sides were able to reach an agreement on the modality for tariff reduction and/or elimination, which is among the key elements that will facilitate the creation of an open market in a region comprising about 1.7 billion people and with a combined gross domestic product of approximately USD 2,381 billion as of 2007. The Ministers viewed that the AIFTA could be a major avenue in harnessing the region's vast economic potentials towards sustained progress and improved welfare not only for ASEAN and India but for the greater East Asian region as well.

5. The Ministers agreed that officials finalise the text of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement in time for signing during the ASEAN-India Summit in December 2008, together with the ASEAN-India Agreement on Dispute Settlement Mechanism. The Ministers agreed to target implementation of tariff reduction commitments starting 1 January 2009.

6. The Ministers also instructed officials to commence, as soon as possible, negotiations on trade in services and investment as a single undertaking, and to work towards the conclusion of substantive discussions on these two agreements by 2009 to bring about a complete ASEAN-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement.

7. The Ministers also took stock of the latest developments in the Doha Round and emphasised that a stronger multilateral trading system would benefit all Members, especially the developing countries. Since the Doha Round is a Development Round, the developing countries have a special stake in its successful conclusion. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to active and constructive engagement in the negotiations to bring about balanced and ambitious outcomes in all areas, especially in agriculture, NAMA and services.



8. The Ministers assured Lao PDR of their continued support in her accession to the WTO.

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### LIST OF MINISTERS

1. **H.E. Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng**, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam
2. **H.E. Cham Prasidh**, Senior Minister and Minister of Commerce, Cambodia
3. **H.E. Kamal Nath**, Minister of Commerce and Industry, India
4. **H.E. Mari Elka Pangestu**, Minister of Trade, Indonesia
5. **H.E. Nam Viyaketh**, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR
6. **H.E. Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin**, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia
7. **H.E. U Soe Tha**, Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar
8. **H.E. Peter B. Favila**, Secretary of Trade and Industry, the Philippines
9. **H.E. Lim Hng Kiang**, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore
10. **H.E. Pichet Tanchareon**, Deputy Minister of Commerce, Thailand  
(representing **H.E. Chaiya Sasomsub**, Minister of Commerce, Thailand)
11. **H.E. Nguyen Cam Tu**, Vice Minister, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam  
(representing **H.E. Vu Huy Hoang**, Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam)
12. **H.E. Surin Pitsuwan**, Secretary-General of ASEAN