

**Opening Remarks of H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi
Secretary-General of ASEAN
at the Roundtable on Promoting Intra-Regional FDI in ASEAN
at the Sidelines of
the Third Ministerial Conference on
Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration
in Asia and the Pacific**

*30 September 2022, 11.00-12.00, Bangkok, Thailand
(via Video Conference)*

Her Excellency Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP,

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. Greetings from the ASEAN Secretariat. I am pleased to have the opportunity to deliver some remarks at this *“Roundtable on Promoting Intra-Regional FDI in ASEAN”*. I believe this is a key platform to discuss how we can boost the quantity and quality of intra-regional investment in ASEAN, particularly FDI that can contribute to sustainable development and economic recovery in the region.
2. Two years since the outbreak of COVID-19, I am pleased to share that ASEAN is on track towards its post-pandemic recovery goals, thanks to the roll-out of vaccination programmes that have enabled the gradual re-opening of economies. Our businesses and consumers have shown great resilience to adapt and live with the pandemic, while our governments have been persistent in pursuing economic and structural reforms. ASEAN’s growth momentum is expected to continue through 2023, with ASEAN GDP growth forecasted at 5 and 5.2 per cent this and next year, respectively.
3. Moreover, total FDI inflows recovered to over 174 billion USD in 2021 from 122.4 billion USD in 2020, which could be explained by the robust expansion in the manufacturing and financial services sectors. Notably, intra-ASEAN FDI is among the most important sources of investment funds in the region as it helped cushion the downfall of the FDI during the peak of the pandemic, even increasing to almost 23 billion USD in 2020 from 21.7 billion USD in 2019.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

4. Whilst ASEAN is optimistic about its growth prospects, it also remains cautious of the uncertainties and challenges that we face. The risk of geopolitical conflict, rising inflation rates, supply chain disruptions, and new COVID-19 variants continue to loom large over global economic growth prospects. ASEAN Member States must therefore stay vigilant and sustain our collective efforts in pursuing the region's full recovery, and deepen cooperation to enhance the region's resilience towards those external shocks, including threats to financial stability from both within and outside the region.
5. In this context, the adoption of the *ASEAN Investment Facilitation Framework* by the ASEAN Ministers last year is a significant step in the right direction for ASEAN. The Framework re-affirms the strong commitment of ASEAN Member States to improve investment regimes, enhance the ease of doing business, and facilitate investments in the region.
6. I am pleased to inform you that among the investment reform and facilitation initiatives introduced by the ASEAN Member States recently, there has been an accelerated trend towards embracing digitalisation and sustainable development. On the whole, the adoption of digital technology greatly elevates investment and business administration efficiencies and improves the business environment around the region.
7. Meanwhile, the growing emphasis on sustainable development is also critical to ensuring the sustainability of life and economic development around the region and beyond, contributing to the 2030 United Nations' SDGs and the 2015 Paris Agreement mandates. For the last two years, ASEAN has taken many decisive and concrete steps to promote and attract more sustainable investments, particularly in transitioning to renewable energy, green infrastructure, and electric vehicles.
8. In 2021, ASEAN adopted the *Framework for Circular Economy* and is now preparing for the *ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutralisation* as the new blueprint to guide the transition to a greener economy. With respect to green financing,

ASEAN has also adopted *ASEAN Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance* to promote qualified and benchmark eligible green economic activities and investments.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

9. I encourage all of you to maximise this opportunity by engaging in a productive exchange of views, including where possible, looking into measures to promote intra-ASEAN investment flows and also to address those emerging and pressing issues, especially digitalisation and the need to meet sustainable development goals.

Thank you very much and I wish you all a successful Roundtable with fruitful outcomes.
