



**JOINT STATEMENT
TWENTY FOURTH
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM–INDONESIA–MALAYSIA–PHILIPPINES
EAST ASEAN GROWTH AREA MINISTERIAL MEETING**

(24TH BIMP-EAGA MM)

**11 OCTOBER 2021
ZOOM PLATFORM**

1. We, the Ministers of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines met virtually on 11 October 2021 for the 24th BIMP-EAGA Ministerial Meeting. H.E Abdulgani Macatoman, of the Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines chaired the meeting.
2. We are deeply concerned with the protracted impact brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic as it continues to affect lives and livelihoods in the subregion. We meet in extraordinary times calling for robust cooperation in bouncing back stronger together. We reiterate our support for the BIMP-EAGA member countries' collective efforts to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. We reinforce our role as a building block of ASEAN as we take crucial steps in aligning BIMP-EAGA recovery and resilience measures with the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework's broad strategies.
3. We are encouraged that despite the COVID-19 crisis, our macroeconomic fundamentals remain robust. Although the BIMP-EAGA economy contracted by -3.5% in 2020 compared to 6.9% pre pandemic, our combined GDP is at US\$322.8 billion. The decline in our total trade in goods from US\$107.6 billion in 2019 to US\$95.3 billion in 2020 is acceptable given weaker demand. We noted increases in FDI from US\$9,724.7 million in 2019 to US\$12,793.9 million in 2020, and domestic investments from US\$6,985.03 in 2019 to US\$9,238.2 million in 2020, which can boost our economies to rebound. With tourism as the hardest hit sector, the decline rate for tourist arrivals is at -76.0%, and tourism receipts decreased significantly from US\$29.7 billion in 2019 to US\$6.2 billion in 2020.
4. We commit to fortify BIMP-EAGA cooperation in all sectors, build on significant achievements in connectivity, and strengthen economic corridors and special economic zones (SEZs) development to sustain trade and supply chains, attract quality investments, and promote inclusive growth in the new normal. We are reassured that the pandemic has not deterred the impressive pace of BIMP-EAGA integration with 27 (31%) out of the 88 Priority Infrastructure Projects (PIPs) completed, 8 (9%) projects completing phases, 10 (11%) nearing completion, and 43 (49%) in various stages of implementation.
5. We continue to be guided by the BIMP-EAGA Vision 2025 (BEV 2025) as we steer our path towards economic recovery and deliver our three main

outcomes of clean and green manufacturing; competitive and climate-resilient agro-industry and fisheries; and well-developed multi-country tourism destination. We acknowledge with great satisfaction the preliminary findings of the ongoing mid-term review of the BEV 2025 and look forward to its completion in 2022 during the 25th BIMP-EAGA Ministerial Meeting. We strongly support the refinements for BEV 2025 to ensure its continuing relevance, seize opportunities, address challenges, and respond to changes in the development landscape including managing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

6. We are grateful that, despite significant impediments brought about by the COVID-19 crisis, work in BIMP-EAGA cooperation has been sustained. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Senior Officials, BIMP-Facilitation Centre, National Secretariats, Clusters and Working Groups, BIMP-EAGA Business Council (BEBC), Asian Development Bank (ADB), local governments, ICT CEO Forum, private sectors, and development partners for working tirelessly to deliver priority programs and projects.
7. We reaffirm increased connectivity remains the cornerstone of our cooperation and quality infrastructure in the BIMP-EAGA economic corridors is crucial to pandemic recovery. The completion of 16 PIPs in 2020 and 2021 will lead to seamless movement of goods and people. In Brunei Darussalam, the Temburong Bridge (Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien Bridge), the longest bridge in Southeast Asia, reduces travel time and eliminates cumbersome checkpoint procedures. The Manado-Bitung Link (Toll Road) in Indonesia reduces travel, logistics and distribution costs from Bitung Port to the Special Bitung Economic Zone leading to greater efficiencies and competitiveness. In Malaysia, the LNG ISO Tank Export Facilities in Bintulu Port serves as the pioneering port in ASEAN exporting LNG as an alternative and renewable energy source. In the Philippines, the General Santos Astropolis Airport boosts domestic and international trade and tourism.
8. We commit to work towards tourism revival and support the essential steps to establish travel bubbles in the subregion. We direct the transport and tourism officials to work in tandem with the private sector in crafting cross-border mechanisms to implement travel bubbles that can help revive the transport and tourism industries, ensure health and safety protocols, and regain travelers' confidence. We hope the best practices in maritime safety amidst the pandemic will be widely disseminated so common standards can be implemented at the designated ports. In addition, we look forward to the completion of the BIMP-EAGA Tourism Recovery Framework aligned with the ASEAN Post Pandemic Recovery Plan.
9. We acknowledge the Bandar Seri Begawan Roadmap: An ASEAN Digital Transformation Agenda to Accelerate ASEAN's Economic Recovery and Digital Economy Integration to fast-track pandemic recovery and lay the groundwork for the fourth industrial revolution. Towards this end, we urge our officials to be guided by this Roadmap as we continue helping MSMEs in adopting digital technologies aligned with the Go Digital ASEAN project. We will also continue supporting startup ecosystem through the ICT CEO Forum Startupphub@BIMP-EAGA. We are also pleased that BIMP-EAGA startups will participate in the virtual ASEAN Startup Festival on 8 December 2021

hosted by Brunei Darussalam aiming to expand and establish SMEs network and learn best practices from other regions.

10. We believe that sustainable access to energy resources is crucial to post pandemic recovery and welcome the completion of the enclave interconnections in North Kalimantan in Indonesia, for the Tidang Pale-Malinau Segment of the Tanjung Redep-Malinau Transmission and the Mindanao Transmission Backbone Upgrading in the Philippines. We acknowledge signing of the Sabah-Sarawak Power Interconnection Power Exchange Agreement between SESCO, a subsidiary of Sarawak Energy Bhd, and Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd marking a historic milestone to actualise the Borneo Grid which is a crucial foundation to the wider ASEAN Power Grid. We also appreciate the workshop on Indonesia's experience in biofuel implementation held on 8 September 2021 as other member countries learned best practices in renewable energy and cooperation for biofuel implementation across BIMP-EAGA countries
11. We strongly support opening borders to sustain trade and keep supply chains open in a safe manner. To strengthen cooperation in monitoring and inspection in the subregion's quarantine systems and enhance protection from pests and diseases, we acknowledge the One Borneo Quarantine Initiative and expect signing of the Letter of Intent in 2022. Attracting quality investment is crucial in ensuring viable trade and investment in the new normal. We look forward to the completion of the Study on Collaborative Approach to SEZs Development and Cooperation in BIMP-EAGA to guide us in strengthening the strategic relevance of SEZs and identifying joint actions to develop production networks.
12. We are mindful that agri-industry and fisheries development are essential to poverty reduction especially in the wake of the pandemic. We pledge to accelerate cooperation in the agriculture sector by integrating the subregional value-chain approach in priority commodities at the project level. We urge our agriculture and fisheries agencies to provide support in increasing productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of smallholder farms and fisheries as well as promote high-value food industries. We welcome the coconut industry business matching between Mindanao and North Sulawesi.
13. We strongly believe green recovery initiatives will help us achieve a more sustainable and resilient subregion. We are pleased that General Santos City will soon complete its Green City Action Plan which has identified a pipeline of green investments. We direct our relevant agencies at the national and local levels to provide support in the implementation of the BIMP-EAGA Green Cities Initiative. We are proud that the cities of Tomohon, Indonesia, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, and General Santos City, Philippines were selected as participating cities in the ASEAN Sustainable Urban Strategy framework. We welcome initiatives with local communities to adopt and replicate best practices on sustainable ecotourism, agriculture, and fisheries in BIMP-EAGA to foster environmental protection across borders.

14. We will strive to develop competitive human capital and support vibrant creative industries. To help the BIMP-EAGA work force adapt to market demands and the crisis, we will focus on reskilling and upskilling of technical, vocational education and training and higher education. To celebrate the richness of our culture and reinforce our solidarity, we are inspired by the virtual conduct of cultural events such as the Kumpulan BIMP-EAGA Connections held on 28 September 2021; and the Webinar on People and The Mountain on 6 October 2021. We look forward to upcoming virtual events namely, National Cultural Week: The Brilliance of Nusantara on 19 – 26 November 2021 hosted by Indonesia; and the 3rd Budayaw Festival and BIMP-EAGA Entrepreneurship Camp both to be hosted by Brunei Darussalam in December 2021.
15. We express appreciation to the private sector through the BIMP-EAGA Business Council (BEBC) for their concerted efforts in assisting the subregion's economic recovery. We encourage the private sector to sustain efforts and continue steps towards business continuity especially in cross-border economic activities. We also commend the private sector for organizing the BIMP-EAGA Business Forum held on 31 July 2021 and the BIMP-EAGA Energy Online Conference and Exhibition on 23 – 24 August 2021 which led to the establishment of business network and potential investment opportunities.
16. We recognize the need for more effective and efficient coordination, implementation, and monitoring of existing and new BIMP-EAGA initiatives through a fully functional central secretariat. We remain committed to strengthen the institutional capacity of the BIMP-EAGA Facilitation Centre and emphasize the need to expedite its legalisation. We also reaffirm our commitment to improve our respective in-country coordination as we strive to bolster the institutional structures and mechanisms at the subregional level.
17. We greatly appreciate ADB's steadfast commitment as our Regional Development Advisor and thank ADB for promptly helping the subregion, especially the poor and vulnerable, in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. ADB has a wide range of technical assistance, projects, and knowledge initiatives supporting COVID-19 response, economic recovery and resilience; enhancing connectivity with transport and energy projects in the BIMP-EAGA economic corridors; conducting analytical work on border areas and SEZs development; promoting green recovery through the BIMP-EAGA Green Cities Initiative; supporting tourism revival aligned with ASEAN plans; protecting marine ecosystems; and enhancing capacities of BIMP-EAGA government officials. We also thank ADB for helping BIMP-EAGA government officials and the private sector explore measures that can help economies "bounce back" from the pandemic and accelerate revival through the Policy Actions for COVID-19 Economic Recovery (PACER) Dialogues. ADB's assistance in the conduct of the mid-term review of BEV 2025 will help the subregion improve implementation in the remaining years of BEV 2025 and manage the impact of COVID-19 to collectively build back better.
18. We encourage greater cooperation with ASEAN given BIMP-EAGA's strategic role as a building block to ASEAN integration and community building. We encourage greater synergy and improved coordination between

ASEAN Secretariat and BIMP-EAGA institutional bodies. We look forward to implementation of key actions to enhance strategic, sector and institutional linkages between and among ASEAN, BIMP-EAGA and other subregions.

19. We noted with satisfaction the encouraging progress in BIMP-EAGA's relations with our Development Partners and agreed to further enhance and strengthen our partnerships and cooperation through the existing frameworks. We look forward to the conduct of the Webinar on Boosting Trade and Economic Ties in the Post Pandemic Era to be organized jointly by BIMP-EAGA and The People's Republic of China in December 2021, and the BIMP-EAGA Webinar Series to be organized jointly by BIMP-EAGA and ASEAN Japan Center in November 2021. We welcome the strong interest of Republic of Korea to engage with BIMP-EAGA and we look forward to formalise this engagement.
20. We express our gratitude to the Government of Republic of the Philippines for the excellent meeting arrangements.

List of Signing Ministers

1. H.E Dato Seri Paduka Dr. Awang Haji Abdul Manaf bin Haji Metussin, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy (Economy), Brunei Darussalam
2. H.E Dr. Edi Prio Pambudi, Acting Deputy Minister for International Economic Cooperation, Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs
3. H.E Dato' Sri Mustapa Bin Mohamed, Minister in Prime Minister's Department (Economy), Malaysia
4. H.E Abdulgani Macatoman, Undersecretary/Deputy Minister for Special Concerns and Trade Promotions, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippines

List of State/Provincial Ministers

1. Hon. Datuk Amar Haji Awang Tengah bin Ali Hassan, Deputy Chief Minister, Sarawak, Malaysia
2. Hon. Datuk Seri Jalaluddin bin Alias, Deputy Federal Territory Minister, Malaysia
3. Hon. Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Pandikar Amin Haji Mulia, Special Envoy BIMP-EAGA Sabah, Malaysia