

Safeguarding Competition – A Post-Pandemic Response of ASEAN Competition Authorities

JAKARTA, 3 December 2021 – the 9th ASEAN Competition Conference (ACC) was held online from 1-2 December 2021 under the theme Safeguarding Competition – A Post Pandemic Response. Attended by competition experts, academicians and private sectors, from within and beyond ASEAN, the conference has become a regional platform to discuss developments as well as emerging issues on competition policy.

In his opening remarks, Nguyen Sinh Nhat Tan, Vice Minister of Industry and Trade, Viet Nam, noted that this year, the ACC is held to evaluate the impacts of the pandemic to competition enforcement agencies in each ASEAN Member State (AMS). Effective enforcement of competition and law will serve as the basis to create a healthy economy and ensuring a level playing field among businesses.

In his remarks, Dr. Guntur Syahputra Saragih, Vice Chair of Indonesia's Competition Commission emphasised the importance of maintaining a healthy level of competition in the region for ASEAN's economy to recover faster and better. He shared outcomes from an ICC survey in 2021 on ***the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic and Economic Recovery to Competition Policy and Law in ASEAN***. The results highlighted concerns on increasing digital economies and the implications to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), requiring governments to consider competition policy in the overall strategy in dealing with crises, and for ASEAN Member States to accelerate the level of cooperation and coordination among competition authorities.

On his part, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community Satvinder Singh, expressed that, "ASEAN is embarking on the second five-year phase of the AEC Blueprint 2025, that develops and put into practice policies for inclusive and sustainable development, as well as develop long term resilience, including taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the digital revolution."

He added that "ASEAN is embarking on a highly-anticipated priority economic deliverable under Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022, which is the launch of the negotiations for the *ASEAN Framework Agreement on Competition*. This agreement will facilitate cross-border cooperation and coordination on competition policy and law among ASEAN Member States."

The 9th ACC comprised of four panel discussions covering the following array of topics:

1. Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic to ASEAN Markets – A Review
2. Maintaining Business Compliance
3. Increasing Importance of Competition Policy for MSMEs in the Post-Pandemic Era
4. The Rapid Shift Towards the Digital Economy and the Risk to Competition Enforcement
5. Strengthening Cooperation in anticipation of future Crisis

The conference was co-organised by the Viet Nam Competition and Consumer Authority, the ASEAN Experts Group on Competition and ASEAN Secretariat. The 10th ACC is scheduled to be convened in 2023. A recording of the full conference can be accessed in the following links:

- Day 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icbcf7OQfGw&t=10103s>
- Day 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qyh_G4cpy5M