



**JOINT STATEMENT
THIRTEENTH
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM–INDONESIA–MALAYSIA–PHILIPPINES
EAST ASEAN GROWTH AREA SUMMIT
(13TH BIMP-EAGA SUMMIT)
23 JUNE 2019
BANGKOK, THAILAND**

1. We, the Leaders of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have gathered in Bangkok, Thailand on 23 June 2019 for the 13th BIMP-EAGA Summit. We have engaged in fruitful deliberations to reaffirm the aspirations of the BIMP-EAGA founding fathers.
2. As we celebrate the milestone occasion of BIMP-EAGA's 25th Anniversary, we take pride on our subregion's transformation, which has resulted in significant gains. In 2017, we experienced impressive economic expansion, with BIMP-EAGA's GDP reaching US\$287.3 billion. Our annual GDP growth was 5.7%, signaling a very positive progress for our subregion. Total merchandise trade surged by 21.5% amounting to US\$102.7 billion. Tourism remains vibrant with total tourist arrivals growing at an average rate of 6.6%, reaching 88.2 million in 2017. The subregion also continues to be an attractive investment hub, with over US\$20 billion mobilized from both foreign and domestic investment.
3. We acknowledge that BIMP-EAGA's success has been achieved through firm commitment, solidified historical, economic and cultural ties, and a shared vision. BIMP-EAGA is widely recognized for serving as a test-bed for ASEAN agreements, and its achievements affirm what can be accomplished with genuine goodwill, trust and cooperation among countries. As we enter a new era of cooperation, we endeavor to build on the success of the past 25 years, and consider the way forward for the subregion becoming more resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and economically competitive. We reiterate the long-term directions set out in the BIMP-EAGA Vision 2025 (BEV 2025), which we endorsed at the previous Summit in 2017. BEV 2025 identifies strategic priorities for the subregion to effectively address connectivity gaps; support the growth of the agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing sectors by harnessing natural and human capital; and deepen economic cooperation. We will continue to work together in implementing BEV 2025, and ensuring that development results and benefits are achieved.
4. We appreciate the remarkable efforts of our Ministers, senior officials, and all stakeholders in translating BEV 2025 into a pipeline of 69 Priority Infrastructure Projects (PIPs), with an estimated value of US\$22.7 billion, in accordance with our directive to generate a portfolio of second-generation projects. We are greatly pleased that in just two years of its implementation, 16 out of the 69 PIPs (23%) have been completed with an estimated value of US\$1.2 billion, 15% are nearing completion and 62% are in various stages of implementation. We urge our national and local agencies to work towards more expeditious and successful implementation of the PIPs and sector cooperative undertakings set forth in BEV 2025 for the benefit of the people of BIMP-EAGA.

5. We commit to transform BIMP-EAGA transport networks into economic corridors. We strongly support area-based cooperation in priority points along the economic corridors, which offers the greatest potential for attracting trade, tourism and investment, and which will yield long-term social, environmental and economic benefits. We encourage officials to identify investment needs and opportunities in these areas based on inputs from state and local governments, the private sector, and local communities to ensure maximum impacts.

6. We recognize that quality, seamless, multi-modal infrastructure are essential to the facilitation of trade, movement of people, and the provision of basic services. We are greatly pleased with the substantial improvement and expansion of the multi-modal transport network in our subregion. Roads have been built and upgraded including the Pontianak to Entikong Link, Tanjung Selor to Sabah Border Road, Balai Karangan Entikong Road, and Balikpapan to Samarinda toll road, providing improved access to markets and services for people in rural areas. The development and upgrade of Makassar Port and Buliluyan Port have contributed to increased maritime connectivity. The upgrade of the Brunei International Airport, and the completion of the Puerto Princesa Airport and the Entikong International Freight Terminal, have improved access to tourist destinations and increased the movement of cargo. New air services—including Pontianak-Kuching, Bandar Seri Begawan-Kuching, Kota Kinabalu-Bandar Seri Begawan, and the sustained route of Tawau-Tarakan are expected to boost arrivals in major tourism destinations. There are currently numerous proposals being discussed to establish new air routes.

7. We firmly believe that traditional trade links, which continue to thrive and serve as a main driver of our cooperation, are vital in promoting livelihoods and commercial exchanges in our subregion. We welcome the on-going efforts to strengthen existing traditional barter trade in the BIMP-EAGA subregion. The signing of the ASEAN Memorandum of Understanding on the Improvement of Safety Standards and Inspection for Non-Convention Ships within ASEAN Member States, as well as the adoption of the Guidelines for Safety Standards for Non-Convention Ships on 9 November 2018 will facilitate and promote cross-border maritime safety, expand maritime trade, and improve the sustainability of barter trade.

8. We have likewise made important achievements in other areas of physical connectivity. In the energy sector, we are strengthening national power generation and transmission capacities, guided by various feasibility studies, which serve as important foundations for cross-border electricity exchanges. The Sarawak-West Kalimantan interconnection project, which benefits 8,000 households, has solidified the long-term relationship between the Borneo states, and has paved the way towards realizing the ASEAN Power Grid. We are broadening cooperation in renewable energy, which can benefit lagging coverage areas. In the ICT sector, we have added hardware infrastructure, and are in the advance stages of completing the private-sector-led BIMP-EAGA Submarine and Terrestrial Cable System. We are seizing opportunities for digital transformation by encouraging innovations, entrepreneurship, and the bridging of digital divides with initiatives led by the ICT CEO Forum. We welcome initiatives to establish e-commerce platforms for micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) to take advantage of lowering transaction costs and expanding markets.

9. We commend the implementation of trade and promotional activities within and outside of the subregion, which are significantly expanding opportunities for MSMEs' market expansion and business development. We are delighted with ongoing efforts to upgrade border crossing facilities and streamline rules, regulations and procedures that contribute to the ease of doing business, and the seamless movement of people and goods in BIMP-EAGA. All of these efforts have led to a more viable and conducive investment environment that is helping the growth of MSMEs.

10. We continue to seize opportunities to leverage the subregion's greatest competitive advantage, its agriculture/agribusiness and fisheries, in our quest to make BIMP-EAGA the food basket of ASEAN, and the rest of the world. Towards this end, we welcome efforts by the private sector and local stakeholders to boost the subregion's production capacity by undertaking joint projects to consolidate the production of agri-fishery products. We urge our agriculture and fisheries agencies to support productivity improvements among smallholder farms in order to achieve sustainable, competitive and climate resilient agro-industries and fisheries, and to integrate the subregional value-chain approach in priority commodities. We are pleased with the completion of the Palm Oil Industrial Cluster in Lahad Datu, which will boost downstream palm oil activities.

11. We remain committed to jointly developing and marketing BIMP-EAGA as a single ecotourism destination. Tourism is a key job creator in BIMP-EAGA, and brings huge benefits to local communities. We are encouraged by the development of community-based ecotourism destinations, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and national parks, which promote livelihoods and increase incomes of the poor. We task all concerned agencies to support coordinated approaches to tourism development, and to promote pro-poor and environment-friendly tourism. We also welcome convergence initiatives between tourism and transport industry players, which are helping to ensure the growth and sustainability of intra-EAGA air services.

12. We recognize the need to address urbanization challenges and promote sustainable development in the subregion. The completion of Green City Action Plans (GCAPs) for the cities of Kendari and Kota Kinabalu solidifies our commitment to the Green Cities Initiative (GCI). We look forward to the implementation of priority green projects identified in the GCAPs. We urge our relevant agencies at the national and local levels to actively participate in the GCI. We welcome the launching of the Case Studies on Sustainable Ecotourism, Agriculture, and Fishing in BIMP-EAGA to further strengthen efforts for environmental protection, and expect that best practices will be disseminated and adopted as collaborative projects in the agriculture, tourism and environment clusters. We also encourage multi-sector cooperation to promote green economy in our subregion.

13. We acknowledge BIMP-EAGA's cultural diversity, rich heritage, and the strong affinity among its people and communities. We commend the organization of cultural festivals and friendship games, and the production of education materials, which help deepen our shared values towards one community. We affirm that human resource development (HRD) is at the core of our agenda. Given the subregion's large labor force, we welcome partnerships between and among Higher Education Institutions, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Institutions, and industries, which are geared towards upgrading skills and promoting exchanges. We look forward to the implementation of HRD initiatives in student, faculty, and professional exchanges, industry immersions and internships, and the sharing of best practices.

14. We reiterate that the benefits of BIMP-EAGA cooperation can only be maximized and made sustainable if dynamic institutional arrangements are in place. We commend the active private sector engagement demonstrated by the BIMP-EAGA Business Council (BEBC) and other private sector entities in promoting trade, investment, tourism, and other areas of socioeconomic development. We encourage BEBC to increase its membership by including MSMEs and other industry players. We will promote greater participation by state and local governments in BIMP-EAGA area-based cooperation through the revival of the Local Government Forum. We recognize the vital role of the BIMP-Facilitation Center in fulfilling its subregional coordination role, and reaffirm our commitment to strengthening its capacity.

15. We recognize ADB for being BIMP-EAGA's committed regional development advisor. We note ADB's support for enhanced economic development and inclusiveness in the subregion through a wide range of project finance, technical assistance, and knowledge support in transport, power, tourism, environment, trade facilitation, economic corridors, green cities and border area development. We thank ADB for its support in building the capacity of government officials, enhancing project management systems, and deepening links with ASEAN. We request ADB to continue and expand its support for BIMP-EAGA cooperation.

16. We appreciate the ASEAN Secretariat's cooperation in aligning BIMP-EAGA priorities with the ASEAN Economic Community 2025. We urge the ASEAN Secretariat to deepen its partnership with and support to the subregion. BIMP-EAGA will continue its proactive role as a building block for ASEAN integration by operationalizing ASEAN frameworks and initiatives.

17. We commend the BIMP-EAGA and China Ministers for their successful inaugural meeting, which agreed on nine (9) priority areas of cooperation, namely connectivity; agriculture, fishery processing and food industry; tourism and socio-cultural exchanges; trade and investment; digital economy; poverty alleviation and inclusive development; HRD; environment; and power and energy. We are pleased to note that BIMP-EAGA and China officials are finalizing a Plan of Action for BIMP-EAGA and China Cooperation for adoption at the 2nd BIMP-EAGA and China Ministerial Meeting in November 2019.

18. We also note the progress of BIMP-EAGA's relations with Northern Territory of Australia (NT). We look forward to more collaborative activities in cruise tourism, sharing of best practices on sustainable management of heritage sites, development of cattle industry, upgrading of skills among the subregion's labor force, and sports and cultural programs, under the BIMP-EAGA and NT Plan of Action.

19. We express our gratitude to the Kingdom of Thailand for the warm hospitality it has extended as host, and to the Government of Brunei Darussalam for the excellent Summit arrangements. Looking ahead and building on the great strides made over the past 25 years between and among Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, we commit ourselves to strengthening our ties for common prosperity, and to achieving a caring and sharing community.

Bangkok, Thailand
23 June, 2019

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