

MEDIA RELEASE

ASEAN Conference 2025 Rallies Regional and Next-Gen Leaders to Strengthen Integration in a Multipolar World

Thursday, 3 July 2025 [Singapore]

1. The Singapore Business Federation (SBF), in partnership with UOB, Rajah & Tann Singapore, and RSM Singapore, successfully convened the **9th ASEAN Conference** from 2 to 3 July 2025. Held at the Resorts World Convention Centre in Singapore, this year's conference coincided with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025 milestone, serving as a vital and timely platform to reaffirm ASEAN's unity and enhance its competitiveness and resilience in an increasingly complex and multipolar global landscape.

2. Themed '**ASEAN Integration in a Multipolar World**,' the conference featured a series of high-level discussions examining how ASEAN can strengthen its relevance and cohesion amid rapidly shifting geopolitical and macroeconomic currents. The main conference opened with a **Ministerial Dialogue**, where **Mr Gan Kim Yong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore, Mr Liew Chin Tong, Deputy Minister for Investment, Trade and Industry, Malaysia, and Prof. Tirta Nugraha Mursitama, Deputy Minister for Investment Cooperation at Ministry of Investment and Downstream Industry, Indonesia**, emphasised the urgent need for ASEAN to seize opportunities for deeper collaboration, harness its strengths from a diverse populace and workforce, and build greater resilience to thrive as a leading force in global trade and investment.

3. A **business plenary session** explored the importance of developing adaptable strategies through partnerships, tapping on emerging industries, and navigating government policies. The discussion also highlighted the evolving role of ASEAN in the global economy and the critical contribution of Business Councils in fostering regional collaboration and inclusive economic growth. The panel featured:

- Mr Arthur Lang, Group Chief Financial Officer, Singtel
- Mr Christopher Ong, Managing Director, DHL Express Singapore
- Mr Frederick Chin, Head, Group Wholesale Banking and Markets, UOB
- Mr Jens Rubbert, Managing Director & Regional Head Asia Pacific, LBBW and Chairman, EU-ASEAN Business Council
- Ms Sapna Chadha, VP SEA & South Asia Frontier, Google and Nominations & Governance Committee Chair, US-ASEAN Business Council

Fostering Future Leadership and Regional Connectivity

4. Prior to the main conference, two key events on 2 July laid the groundwork for cross-sector dialogue and collaboration. The inaugural **ASEANext Forum** brought together over **120 young entrepreneurs and emerging leaders** from the ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Council and other regional networks across 16 countries. This dedicated platform for next-generation changemakers enabled vibrant exchange on unlocking ASEAN's trade potential and developing the geopolitical capabilities of future leaders. The forum also featured insights from pioneering members of Singapore's business community, offering mentorship and inspiration to ASEAN's rising leadership cohort.

5. Later that evening, the **ASEAN Night** networking dinner welcomed senior representatives from government, business, and diplomatic circles across the region. Designed as a pre-conference welcome event, the exclusive gathering facilitated meaningful connections and concluded with a fireside chat featuring **Tan Sri Nazir Razak**, Chair of ASEAN-Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) 2025. He shared his insights on ASEAN's growing influence in global trade, its commitment to deeper regional integration, and its leadership in addressing key challenges such as digital transformation and sustainability.

6. **Mr Kok Ping Soon, Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Business Federation**, said, "In an increasingly multipolar world marked by shifting power dynamics, protectionist policies, and global uncertainties, it's not business as usual and it behoves the ASEAN Economic Community to stay the course on deeper integration and collaboration. The ambitions set a decade ago in 2015—to build a competitive, resilient, and globally engaged ASEAN—remain as vital today as ever. To meet today's challenges and seize tomorrow's opportunities, ASEAN countries and businesses must come together with renewed urgency and the 9th ASEAN Conference is designed to encourage open dialogue and conversations on what the best path forward is. By leveraging our diverse strengths and deepening regional cooperation, we can strengthen our collective resilience, drive sustainable growth, and ensure ASEAN remains a key player in the global economy."

7. **Mr Sam Cheong, Head of Group Foreign Direct Investment Advisory, UOB**, said, "In a rapidly-evolving multipolar world, ASEAN's strength lies in our unity and a shared purpose – to foster peace, prosperity and sustainable development for our people and economies. As geopolitical shifts reshape global trade and investment flows, ASEAN's collective vision of an inclusive, connected and resilient economic community is more relevant than ever. With our deep roots and extensive network across ASEAN, UOB is well-positioned to help businesses tap into this regional potential – by enabling cross-border capital flows, facilitating strategic partnerships and unlocking new growth opportunities, particularly intra-ASEAN trade. A united and integrated ASEAN front is not just timely; it is essential for safeguarding our relevance and ensuring long-term prosperity as the world continuously evolves."

8. **Mr Chia Kim Huat, Regional Head, Corporate and Transactional Group of Rajah and Tann Singapore**, said, "This year's conference holds particular importance as we take stock of the progress made under AEC 2025 and begin charting the course for AEC 2035 - amid ongoing global uncertainty and disruptions from tariffs. We're also proud to launch the inaugural ASEANext Forum, a new platform designed to foster networking, innovation, and partnerships among young business leaders who are shaping ASEAN's future."

9. **Mr Tay Woon Teck, Senior Advisor, RSM Singapore**, said, “In a fragmented and uncertain world, the ASEAN Conference is a vital platform for like-minded business leaders who champion inclusive, sustainable, and rules-based trade. Rooted in multilateral cooperation principles, the Conference underscores ASEAN’s commitment to advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by fostering peace, prosperity, and resilient economic growth. As a beacon of regional unity, the Conference demonstrates that cross-border collaboration can uplift entire communities and ensure a more equitable future for all who call ASEAN home.”

10. The conference also included a fireside chat featuring **Mr Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi**, Group Chief Executive Office, Frasers Property Limited as the **Special Guest Speaker**. During the fireside chat, he shared insights on the future of trade and investment in the region.

11. There were also regional tracks focusing on Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, which offered participants practical insights into specific market dynamics. Topics included Indonesia’s investment-led growth strategy under the new leadership, business and investment opportunities in Malaysia’s economic zones, and Vietnam’s strategic position in the regional economy. Notable speakers included Mr Nurul Ichwan, Deputy Minister for Investment Promotion, Indonesia, Indonesia and Vietnam Ambassadors and Malaysia High Commissioner to Singapore.

12. The event attracted more than 600 delegates, including policymakers, senior government officials, business leaders, and emerging changemakers from close to 20 countries across the region—affirming its position as a premier forum for advancing regional economic dialogue and partnership.

13. ASEAN Conference 2025 was supported by Enterprise Singapore, Economic Development Board; Founding Partners: UOB, RSM Singapore, and Rajah & Tann; Gold Partners: DHL Express Singapore and Singtel; Silver Partners: Adecco, CapitaLand, Deye, and GP Industries; Bronze Partner: Neo Group; alongside partners from the public and private sector.

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For media queries, please contact:

Benjamin Ng

Deputy Director, Marketing and Communications Division
Singapore Business Federation

E: benjamin.ng@sbf.org.sg

Zeno Group on behalf of Singapore Business Federation

E: sbf-aseanconf@zenogroup.com

About the ASEAN Conference

Launched in 2015, the ASEAN Conference is an annual signature event that brings together key decision makers from both the private and public sectors predominately in ASEAN to examine various business and investment-related topics with the vision to help the regional business communities tackle challenges, explore opportunities and concretise deals in ASEAN and beyond. Organised by Singapore Business Federation and jointly supported by United Overseas Bank, Rajah & Tann Asia and RSM Singapore as founding partners, the ASEAN Conference is a premium conference that features high-level speakers from Singapore and other ASEAN states to offer insights and contribute to the dynamic growth and development in ASEAN.

About Singapore Business Federation (新加坡工商联合总会)

Singapore Business Federation (SBF) is the apex business chamber with over 32,000 members across diverse industries. With a vision to advance Singapore towards a globally competitive and sustainable economy, SBF mobilises the business community to be future-ready and magnify transformation opportunities through policy advocacy, partnership platforms and capability programmes.

For more information, please visit: www.sbf.org.sg.