Joint Media Statement of the Third ASEAN Telecommunications & IT Ministers (TELMIN)

"ICT Ministers Advance Efforts to Build a Secure Cyberspace and Promote Trade in Telecommunications Equipment"

1.   In a concerted ASEAN-wide effort to respond robustly to recent widespread cyber threats and viruses, the ASEAN[1] ICT Ministers at the conclusion of the Third Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting (3rd ASEAN TELMIN)[2] in Singapore today, committed to initiatives to enhance regional cooperation in cybersecurity.

2.   The ASEAN Ministers also endorsed initiatives to advance ICT market integration and trade facilitation, promote universal access to ICT infrastructure and services, and develop ICT skills and competencies. Encapsulated in the Singapore Declaration – the meeting's action agenda, these initiatives will contribute to realising an integrated ASEAN Economic Community – a concept which Mr. Goh Chok Tong, Prime Minister of Singapore has called for continued efforts from ASEAN at the opening of the 3rd TELMIN.

A. ICT: Building A Connected And Vibrant ASEAN Economic Community

3.   The Ministers strongly endorsed key initiatives in the following areas:

I.   Enhancing Cybersecurity

4.   Reflecting on the importance of combating threats to cybersecurity in a robust and coordinated manner, ASEAN countries will take concrete steps in creating a more secure cyberspace and ICT by developing and operationalising national Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTS) by 2005. All member countries will also, by 2004, have in place a common framework for sharing cybersecurity threat and vulnerability assessment information. Cybersecurity expertise and information will be shared among member countries to help develop cybersecurity policies and exchange real-time information on cybersecurity issues.

II.   Promoting ICT Market Integration

5.   Recognising that ICT trade and investment facilitation is fundamental to creating an integrated ASEAN Economic Community, countries will expedite implementation of Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA) on conformity assessment for telecommunication equipment, and by 2005, to implement Phase 1 MRA. Such harmonised standards for telecommunication equipment testing will lessen time to market and lower business costs, help create a common market for ICT goods and services. Strengthening the general agreement, negotiations for bilateral MRAs between the Republic of Indonesia and Singapore and between Brunei Darussalam and Singapore will also be launched. These may then serve as pathfinders for the region.

6.   Committing to promote and facilitate e-commerce and trade in ICT, the Ministers also endorsed plans to create a Trade and Investment Database and a Handbook, with information on policy and regulatory practices of all ASEAN countries, to facilitate investment into ASEAN, by 2004 and 2005 respectively.

III.   Bridging the Digital Divide

7.   Acknowledging the need to continue to narrow the digital divide, countries will share best

practices in the rolling out of network and services, including the use of Universal Service Obligation (USO) schemes and promotion of ICT usage. Ministers launched ASEANconnect[3], which is a publicly accessible digital divide database to house key data statistics and measurement indicators, analysis of initiatives to bridge the digital divide and other relevant information. It is envisaged that ASEANconnect will enable decision makers to use information in planning more effective implementation of projects towards bridging the digital divide with ASEAN. Ministers also urged ASEAN to consider project partnerships with dialogue partners and other international organisations.

IV.   Building ICT Capacity & Capabilities

8.   Appreciating the role that highly-skilled and well-trained professional human capital plays in the growth of ASEAN's information economy, Ministers endorsed the need for cross-certification among various high-quality ICT courses and certification programmes available in today in member countries. Countries will promote networking of and collaboration between ICT skills competency centres in the region, and establish a regional mechanism for promotion of cross-certification of ICT programmes by 2004.

B. Strengthening ICT Commitments, Widening Linkages

9.   ASEAN Ministers endorsed the strengthening of the ASEAN Secretariat's ICT capabilities with the aim of ultimately creating an ASEAN ICT Centre to manage and administer the ASEAN ICT Work Programme. Ministers also recognised the need for a dedicated fast-track funding mechanism to accelerate the implementation of this programme.

10.   Ministers also had the opportunity to engage ICT industry leaders through the Industry Update[4].To further enhance business input into the TELMIN process, the Ministers also agreed to the formation of an e-ASEAN Business Council. To comprise of CEO level ICT industry representatives, the Council will provide advice and feedback to TELMIN on ICT industry development, policy and regulatory issues, and serve as a platform for Industry networking and establish linkages with regional and global business forums.

11.   Ministers welcome consultations by the Senior Officials with dialogue partners[5] and encourage continued collaboration on areas of mutual interest.

12.   Leveraging on the opportunity to showcase ASEAN as a progressive forward-looking region, united and committed, with clear emphasis on ICT development, ASEAN will be submitting a High-Level Joint Statement at the upcoming World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

13.   Ministers expressed their desire to continue enhancing ties with relevant constituents, including youth and women, whose feedback and input can contribute to more innovative implementation of the ASEAN ICT work agenda.

Notes to Editors:

[1]   The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) consists of Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, Republic of Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Union of Myanmar, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Singapore, Kingdom of Thailand, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

[2]   The first and second ASEAN TELMIN meetings were held in Kuala Lumpur (2001) and Manila (2002) respectively. ASEAN TELMIN provides ministerial policy direction for ASEAN cooperation in information and communication technology (ICT).

3   ASEANconnect is at www.aseanconnect.gov.my

4   The Industry Update saw participation from industry leaders, including Mr Michio Naruto, Regional Co-Chair of the Global Business Dialogue (GBDe), Mr Lee Kwok Cheong, CEO of National Computer Systems, Mr Carlos Fernandez, CEO of Perceptive I, Dr Nongluck Phinainitisart, President of Shin Satellite Public Company Limited, Mr Lee Hsien Yang, President & CEO of Singapore Telecoms Pte Ltd, Dato' Baharum Salleh, CEO of TM Net Sdn Bhd, with Mr Seah Chin Siong, Managing Partner of Accenture as moderator for the session.

5   ASEAN's dialogue partners refer to China, Japan, Korea, and India. This is the first time Telecommunications and IT Senior Officials from ASEAN are engaging in such wide ranging consultations with these partners to foster closer relations and explore possible areas of cooperation.