



**Hon Tim Groser**  
Minister of Trade



**Hon Craig Emerson**  
Minister for Trade

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Malaysia will tomorrow (25 June) host the inaugural Integration Partnership Forum of ASEAN nations, Australia and New Zealand to discuss the benefits of regional economic integration and trade deals.

Drawing on the example of close commercial ties between Australia and New Zealand, ASEAN countries will consider ways to strengthen their economic ties as they build a single ASEAN Economic Community.

The Forum, being held in Kuala Lumpur, was initially proposed by New Zealand Prime Minister John Key in discussions with ASEAN leaders last October. The idea was further developed by Prime Minister Key and Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard in February this year.

The new Forum will share the Trans-Tasman experience of Closer Economic Relations (CER) with senior ASEAN officials responsible for ASEAN regional integration. Australian and New Zealand experts at the forum will include senior figures from government, business and academia.

“CER has certainly been a Trans-Tasman success story, and this Forum offers a valuable opportunity for New Zealand and Australia to share their experience with the countries of ASEAN,” Tim Groser, the New Zealand Trade Minister, said.

“The building of a stronger and more prosperous ASEAN – a market of around 600 million people - will enable member nations to better take advantage of regional and global economic opportunities,” he said.

“New Zealand and Australia have sought to broaden and deepen their economic links for more than 30 years,” Mr Groser said.

“We have faced challenges along the way, but we have also had huge success.”

Since CER was launched in 1983, total two-way trade in goods and services between Australia and New Zealand has grown at an average annual rate of 7.8 per cent. In the same period, total two-way investment has grown at an average annual rate of 15.9 per cent.

“ASEAN countries are likewise looking to create an ambitious economic community, and are facing some of the same challenges,” Mr Groser said.

Australian Trade Minister Craig Emerson said regional economic integration was fundamental to fostering opportunities for business and the wider population.

“Businesses need easier, more predictable and more internationally competitive economic environments,” Dr Emerson said.

“Closer economic integration helps drive trade and investment while spreading the benefits more rapidly to the broader community.”

“A strong and dynamic integrated ASEAN region is good for Australia and New Zealand as well as for ASEAN,” Dr Emerson said.

Mr Groser noted that the forum initiative complemented the landmark ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA), which entered into force in 2010.

“AANZFTA sent the message that Australia, New Zealand and ASEAN members believe that regional economic integration is the best way to drive economic growth,” Mr Groser said.

“This latest initiative takes that commitment and extends it further.”

The Integration Partnership Forum will involve four seminars over the next two years. These would allow relevant experts to delve deeper into commercial regulatory issues of interest to ASEAN.

**Contacts: Fleur Thompson (for Tim Groser) +64 4 817 6947 or +64 21 243 9825  
Mark Mulligan (for Craig Emerson) +61 2 6277 7420 or +61(0) 413250632**