

## **Joint Press Statement from Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore Ministers**

### **BRUNEI DARUSSALAM, CHILE, NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE CONCLUDE NEGOTIATIONS ON A TRANS-PACIFIC STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

Brunei Darussalam Ambassador-at-Large Princess Masna, Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Ignacio Walker, New Zealand Minister for Trade Negotiations Hon Jim Sutton, and Singapore Minister for Trade and Industry Mr Lim Hng Kiang today announced the successful conclusion of negotiations for a Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (Trans-Pacific SEP).

Negotiations were first launched by the President of Chile and the Prime Ministers of Singapore and New Zealand in 2002 at the APEC Leaders Summit in Los Cabos (Mexico). The shared vision was to create a trade agreement, which would have the potential to grow into a larger strategic agreement for trade liberalisation within the Asia-Pacific region.

Progress has already been made on this front, as the Ministers from Chile, Singapore and New Zealand today formally accepted Brunei Darussalam as a founding member of the Agreement, on terms that allow Brunei Darussalam to progressively implement some of its commitments over the next two years.

The Trans-Pacific SEP will bring strategic benefits to all four partners, in effect building a bridge between Latin America, the Pacific and Asia. It will encourage Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Singapore and New Zealand to pool their expertise, ideas, technology and resources to improve their competitiveness on the global market. The Agreement will also help advance shared objectives in APEC and the WTO.

The Ministers also announced the conclusion of parallel negotiations on an Environment Cooperation Agreement and Labour Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding. Reflecting a shared desire to encourage and promote sound labour and environment practices, these agreements establish mechanisms for ongoing cooperation and dialogue on labour and environment issues.

The Ministers from all four countries commended the outcome of the negotiations, which delivers the following:

- A comprehensive agreement on trade in goods, whereby more than 90 percent of total trade among the four parties will be duty free on implementation;

- Trade facilitation aimed at reducing transaction costs relating to sanitary and phytosanitary measures, standards and conformance and customs procedures;
- A liberalising framework that will encourage trade in services among the countries;
- A commitment from the parties to ensure that companies from other Parties to the Trans-Pacific SEP are able to compete on an equal footing with domestic suppliers for government procurement contracts, above certain thresholds;
- Cooperation between the four parties on competition and intellectual property rights;
- The provision of a framework for collaboration in strategic areas such as innovation, research and development;

The Ministers will recommend the results of the negotiations to their respective governments for signature. The Trans-Pacific SEP (together with the parallel agreements on labour and environment) is expected to enter into force on 1 January 2006, subject to the completion of each party's respective domestic processes.