



**MINISTRY OF
INVESTMENT, TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

OPENING REMARKS

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MINISTER OF INVESTMENT, TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

**THE UK ACCESSION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE
AGREEMENT FOR TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (CPTPP)**

“COUNTDOWN TO ENTRY-INTO-FORCE”

3 DECEMBER 2024 (10.00 AM)

EQUATORIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR

Mr. David Wallace,

Acting High Commissioner of the UK to Malaysia

Dato' Omar Siddiq,

Deputy Chair of the British Malaysian Chambers of Commerce (BMCC)

Distinguished guests and esteemed panelists

Participants and delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

Selamat Pagi and Good Morning everyone!

1. Thank you to the British High Commission and the Acting High Commissioner for having me at this **launch ceremony** of the **UK's countdown** to its official entry into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (**CPTPP**).
2. Today's ceremony marks a **significant landmark** in the **Malaysia-UK bilateral trade relations**. At the recently concluded **8th CPTPP Commission Meeting** in Vancouver, Canada, all CPTPP Ministers unanimously welcomed and endorsed the **UK's impending entry** as a new Member of the CPTPP.
3. **Upon accession of the UK** into the CPTPP on **15 December 2024**, our bilateral trade relations will be exemplified into the **first comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** between **Malaysia** and the **UK**.
4. On that note, I am pleased to share that **Malaysia** was among the **earliest Members** of the CPTPP to **complete the necessary domestic ratification process** to accede to the UK Protocol of Accession.

5. The original Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (**TPPA**) which is now **renamed** as the **CPTPP**, stands as the most **vibrant, open and inclusive rules-based trade agreement** to date. Negotiated with several **innovative elements**, it is a **gold-standard agreement** and to date, remains **Malaysia's most ambitious FTA**.
6. Against the **backdrop of immense challenge** facing the **rules-based multilateral trading system**, arising from **protectionism** and uncertainty, the **UK's entry as a G7** member and leading advocate of the rules-based trading system **bring significant value to the CPTPP**.

ENHANCING MALAYSIA-UK BILATERAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT RELATIONS THROUGH CPTPP

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Malaysia and the UK can enhance bilateral trade and investments relations through the CPTPP in various key ways:
8. **Firstly**, based on a longstanding multifaceted relationship, deeply rooted in history, cultural ties, and shared values, the Malaysia-UK relationship has **evolved** into a **dynamic trading relationship** built on **mutual respect** and **cooperation**. The UK remains a **strategic trading partner** to Malaysia, with **total trade reaching RM14 billion (USD 3 billion) in the first ten months of 2024**.
9. Moving forward, with both countries in the CPTPP, **I am confident that these numbers will improve**, through increased Malaysian exports of, for example, sustainable palm oil, **aerospace parts; oil and gas; renewable energy; environmental products; electrical and electronics**; and **lifestyle products**, as well as British exporters of machinery; pharmaceuticals; chocolates and confectionaries; and high-tech goods. Furthermore, UK exporters can also leverage on the 16 FTAs the Malaysia has ratified, including the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** and many others.

10. On a separate but related matter, I am happy to share that **besides the CPTPP**, the Malaysia-UK Joint Committee on Bilateral Trade and Investment Cooperation (**JETCO**) (established in **2020**), **also** provides another **strategic platform** for both our countries. As both countries have agreed to **elevate the Joint Committee to a Ministerial-level forum**, we hope to convene the **first ministerial meeting** at the **earliest opportunity**. I am confident that this upgraded structure will further enhance our economic ties, to help ensure that both nations remain relevant and competitive on the global stage.
11. **Secondly, Malaysia's unique location in the heart of Southeast Asia makes us a prime investment destination for investors**, an ideal gateway between the East and West. **To that end**, investors can rely on the CPTPP's **robust Investment Chapter** which prioritizes **transparency, predictability, and protection**. They can also rely on Malaysia and the UK's investment guarantee agreement, ratified on 5 October 1988.
12. I am confident British investors appreciate not only our **political stability; clear, business-friendly policies; plus well-established digital and physical infrastructure; but also our strong rule of law, a much appreciated legacy of the British**. All these make for a **conducive landscape** for investors seeking to establish their **manufacturing or services hub in Asia**.
13. I am sure investors from the UK have been informed of Malaysia's **game-changing policies** over the past two years, which provide **clarity in the direction of key industries and sectors**. More importantly, these are also meant to fix structural weaknesses, while ensuring better cost-efficiency in doing business in Malaysia.
14. **Clear policies** – such as the **New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP) 2030**, the **National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR)**, the **National Semiconductor Strategy (NSS)** and **Green Investment**

Strategy – are all aimed at attracting the right investments into the country, investments that will promote **sustainable, equitable and inclusive growth**. I am sure the UK share the same aspirations, and if your companies are equally aligned, then our door is always open for them to **invest in Malaysia** and **collaborate** with Malaysian firms.

15. **Third**, the **Malaysian** Government is serious on execution of its industrial and other structural reforms. Just to give you an idea of how serious we are, for the period **2021 – June 2024**, more than **80%** of approved manufacturing projects have **already been implemented**. This reflects the **Government's commitment to ease the investor's journey** and ensure that investments are implemented quickly, **while concurrently rolling out our initiatives on industrial talent and skills training**.
16. Investors can also draw comfort from the Government's strong conviction in fostering sufficient industrial talent, particularly in fields such as AI, robotics, the green economy, and 5G technology.

MALAYSIA'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF ASEAN 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. It would be remiss of me if I did not touch on Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2025. As the world continues to grapple with **geopolitical, supply chain and climate-related challenges**, it is extremely important for UK businesses to invest and collaborate with **neutral and non-aligned partners**. ASEAN's neutrality and centrality have brought about long-standing peace in the region.
18. As **ASEAN Chair** in **2025**, Malaysia strongly intends to **strengthen this centrality and neutrality, so that more investments and trade will flow into the region**. Indeed, Malaysia's **growing prestige as a leading economy in ASEAN and Asia**, and its recognised leadership

in ASEAN place us in good stead to **strengthen ASEAN's position in the eyes of the world.**

19. In a world that is increasingly polarized, Malaysia's ASEAN theme - "Inclusivity & Sustainability – underscores our intention to make ASEAN more people-centric, and better enabled for economic growth, and for building resilience.
20. On this, one **key similarity** between the UK and Malaysia, and indeed, ASEAN, is **how the SMEs** make up the **backbone** of our **economies**. SMEs serve as catalysts for driving innovation, employment and economic growth. Towards further enhancing **strategic cooperation among the CPTPP**, during the recent 8th Commission Meeting, **Malaysia proposed** that **Export Promotion Agencies** of all **CPTPP Members collaborate to increase SMEs' awareness on utilising and benefitting from the CPTPP**. I would like to propose that both our trade promotion agencies, **MATRADE** and the **UK Department of International Trade** collaborate on programmes to enhance **SME awareness** of the CPTPP.
21. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of ASEAN's SMEs have contributed to enhancing merchandise trade between ASEAN and the UK. Trade reached **USD35 billion in 2023**, while **FDI from UK to ASEAN** amounted to **USD 2.1 billion**. It is important for me to highlight that UK's significant support to the **ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)** specifically in the areas of high-level policy dialogue, supply chain resilience, digital innovation, Micro Small Medium Enterprises (MSME) development, public-private partnership, sustainable growth, infrastructure, education, and women's economic empowerment, are all recorded in the **ASEAN-UK Work Plan to Implement the Joint Ministerial Declaration for Future Economic Cooperation**.

22. As the Chair of the AEM in 2025, I will ensure **that the ASEAN-UK collaboration** will implement the ASEAN-UK Plan of Action.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

23. In closing, allow me to once again emphasise that I am confident **through the CPTPP, Malaysia and the UK will build a brighter, and more interconnected future.** Together, Malaysia and the UK can achieve greater heights. Let Malaysia be a **bridge that connects** us not just as trading partners, but also as friends, even as we strive for **shared prosperity for our people.**
24. I was made to understand that the **panel session will discuss how businesses from Malaysia and the UK can leverage the opportunities of the CPTPP Agreement.** On that note, I wish all panelists and speakers a productive, and all participants a fruitful session.

Thank you.