

MEDIA RELEASE

4 July 2012

3rd ASEAN COMPETITION CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON REGIONAL COMPETITION COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION AS KEY TO ENHANCING ASEAN'S ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

1. The Competition Commission of Singapore (CCS) is proud to host the 3rd ASEAN Competition Conference (ACC), a key platform for strategic discussions and networking among government authorities in ASEAN countries responsible for administering national competition policy and law. On 4 and 5 July, some 200 delegates including senior government officials from ASEAN countries and other established jurisdictions, industry leaders, academics, and competition practitioners will convene in Singapore for the conference.

2. Focusing on the theme “Moving Towards Regional Integration of Competition Policy and Law”, the objective of this ACC is to examine the benefits, approaches and challenges in fostering greater regional cooperation and integration of competition policy and law among the ASEAN member states. This focus is timely in view of ASEAN's vision of establishing the ASEAN Economic Community with a single market and production base by 2015.

3. Mr Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry, made the opening address highlighting that “competition policy and law will become increasingly important in underpinning economic growth and integration in ASEAN” and that “a strong competition regime enhances efficient market conduct and promotes overall productivity and competitiveness of markets in the region.”

4. Mr Lim also shared his views on 3 core principles fundamental for a successful competition regime. First, a competition regime should have a robust and relevant body of laws and regulations aligned with international best practices. Second, enforcement and advocacy should go hand-in-hand to ensure a proactive and business-friendly approach in implementing the law. Third, decisions of competition authorities must be subject to reasonable appeal procedures to provide parties adequate recourse.

5. Mr Lim also pointed out that while it is crucial for ASEAN countries to put in place respective national competition regimes, “a systematic set of competition rules

at the regional level is equally important to oversee increasingly complex and cross-border business activities, and provide effective protection against possible restrictive anti-competitive business practices of transnational business entities.”

6. Mr Lim urged ASEAN member states “to harmonise or at least rationalise the competition laws of each member state as far as possible”. This will not only enhance intra-ASEAN trade and investment, but also improve ASEAN’s competitiveness in the global market. Inconsistent competition rules among countries can increase uncertainties and impose additional transaction and compliance costs for regional businesses.

7. In the path towards greater integration, Mr Lim suggested to draw on the experiences of regional blocs, like that of the European Competition Network and ASEAN’s dialogue partners. One way is to consider adopting a ‘network model’, incorporating agreements of mutual assistance, enforcement cooperation, information-sharing, capacity-building and networking among the competition agencies.

8. CCS’s Assistant Chief Executive, Mr Toh Han Li, highlighted some of the challenges going forward but is optimistic: “ASEAN member states are at different stages of competition law development. There are differences in legal systems, policy frameworks and institutions across ASEAN member states. Notwithstanding these differences at the national level, we can find ways to overcome this, to converge and cooperate at the ASEAN level by looking at success stories from other regional models. Further, platforms such as the ACC play an integral role in moving the conversation forward”.

9. ASEAN member states take turns to host ACC each year and CCS is hosting it for the first time. The issues above will be explored through various sessions involving panels of senior government officials, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and competition practitioners, who will discuss possible approaches and initiatives going forward.

10. CCS warmly welcomes all delegates to Singapore and looks forward to a fruitful time at ACC.



For media clarifications, please contact:

Ms Grace Suen
Assistant Director, Communications
Competition Commission of Singapore
Email: grace_suen@ccs.gov.sg
DID: 6325 8216 / HP: 98358601

About The Competition Commission of Singapore (CCS)

CCS is a statutory board established under the Competition Act (Chapter 50B) on 1 January 2005 to administer and enforce the Act. It comes under the purview of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Act empowers CCS to investigate alleged anti-competitive activities, determine if such activities infringe the Act and impose suitable remedies, directions and financial penalties.

For more information, please visit www.ccs.gov.sg.