PRESS RELEASE

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**Final Preparations Ahead of the 55th AEM Meeting and Related Meetings, Indonesia Holds a Prep-SEOM Meeting**

**Semarang, 17 August 2023** – The Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia held the first day of the Preparatory Senior Economic Officials Meeting (Prep-SEOM) in Semarang, Central Java, Thursday (17/8). Prep-SEOM is the final stage to ensure readiness for the 55th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting (AEM Meeting) and Related Meetings.

Semarang is the host of the 55th AEM Meeting and Related Meetings on 17-22 August 2023. Starting with a two-day Prep-SEOM meeting, the series continues with a ministerial level meeting for four days from Saturday to Tuesday, 19-22 August 2023.

*"Semarang was chosen as the host because Indonesia wants to present a face that has a long history that is rich with socio-cultural developments and that is reflected in this city. As the capital city of Central Java Province, Semarang City has a long history rooted in ancestors from the Demak Kingdom. As an atlas city, Semarang used to be known as the gateway and trading center of Central Java. With a series of exquisite history and balanced with the readiness of a well-organized infrastructure, without a doubt, Semarang really deserves to be a place that we want to show to the world. Through Semarang, Indonesia wants to invite ASEAN countries and the world to show that ASEAN can still be a region that is growing dynamically and very well,"* said the Director General of International Trade Negotiations (*Perundingan Perdagangan Internasional*/PPI) of the Indonesian Ministry of Trade Djatmiko Bris Witjaksono in a media briefing on Thursday (17/8) .

*"We hope that the presence of hundreds of delegates from 23 countries, various international organizations and international business associations can boost the economy in Semarang City in particular and Indonesia in general,"* added Djatmiko.

Accompanying Djatmiko in the media briefing were Director of ASEAN Negotiations Dina Kurniasari, Director of Services Trade Negotiations Basaria Tiara Desika L. Gaol, Head of Public Relations Bureau Ani Mulyati, and Secretary of the Directorate General of PPI Ari Satria.

Dina chaired the first day of Prep-SEOM as an alternate SEOM Chair representing Djatmiko. Meanwhile, Assistant Deputy for Regional and Sub-Regional Cooperation of the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs Netty Muharni as alternate SEOM Lead Indonesia became the leader of the Indonesian Delegation.

The Prep-SEOM discussed the SEOM Chair's report to the ASEAN economic ministers for internal issues, especially the achievement of economic priorities during Indonesia's Chairmanship of ASEAN. Documents for the 37th ASEAN Free Trade Area Council (AFTA Council), the 26th ASEAN Investment Area Council (AIA Council), and the 55th AEM were also discussed. In addition, preparations for a meeting of ASEAN economic ministers with ASEAN dialogue partners including China, South Korea, Japan, India, Australia and New Zealand, as well as strategic partners, namely the United States, the European Union, Canada, Russia and the United Kingdom were discussed.

*"At this Prep-SEOM, several side events were reported to be held during the 55th AEM meeting series. Among them, the launch of the new ASEAN Tariff Search portal, the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the expansion of cooperation in special areas, the launch of the registration of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and the signing of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Second Amendment Protocol. There were also side events involving Indonesian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) units such as the SME Workshop Series, the physical launch of the ASEAN online shopping day, and the launch of the AEM Exhibition which was attended by small and medium enterprises (SMEs). We also feature sustainable oriented products and, of course, SMEs from Semarang and its surroundings*," said Djatmiko.

On the first day of Prep-SEOM, representatives of all ASEAN countries and representatives from Timor Leste were present as observer. Also present was Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Economic Community, Satvinder Singh.

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