

Competition & Antitrust and Trade

Joint Ministerial Statement on Ensuring Supply Chain Connectivity amidst COVID-19 Situation

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused repercussions across the globe, including in the area of international trade. One concern in this regard is the effect of potential trade disruptions.

On 6 April 2020, a Joint Ministerial Statement was issued by nine countries – Singapore, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Lao PDR, Myanmar, New Zealand and Uruguay ("**Participating Countries**"). The Participating Countries have declared their commitment to maintaining open and connected supply chains, and to working closely to identify and address trade disruptions with ramifications on the flow of necessities. This Joint Ministerial Statement demonstrates the Participating Countries' collective response to combat COVID-19 and its repercussions.

The Joint Ministerial Statement records the following commitments from the Participating Countries:

- (a) To ensure that trade lines remain open to facilitate the flow of goods, including essential supplies;
- (b) To refrain from imposing export controls or tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and to remove existing trade restrictive measures, on essential goods, especially medical supplies, at this time; and
- (c) To work with all like-minded countries to ensure that trade continues to flow unimpeded, and that critical infrastructure such as air and seaports remain open.

These commitments are important particularly given that no one can predict how long the COVID-19 crisis will last for. Even as we see changes likely to occur in the way we do business, supply chain connectivity is not an element that anyone can do without. Whilst we can transact goods through ecommerce, goods cannot move through technology alone. It needs a strong and effective supply chain. Given the spread of the Participating Countries, it provides a ray of hope.

For more articles and updates from our teams across the region on COVID-19 and related legal issues, please visit [Rajah & Tann Asia's COVID-19 Resource Centre](#).

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Contacts



Kala Anandarajah
Partner
Head, Competition & Antitrust
and Trade
Employment & Benefits

T +65 6232 0111

kala.anandarajah@rajahtann.com



Dominique Lombardi
Partner (Foreign Lawyer)
Deputy Head, Competition &
Antitrust and Trade

T +65 6232 0104

dominique.lombardi@rajahtann.com



Tanya Tang
Partner
(Chief Economic and Policy
Advisor)
Competition & Antitrust and
Trade

T +65 6232 0298

tanya.tang@rajahtann.com

For more information on legal issues arising in Singapore or any of the specific countries, please feel free to contact the relevant lawyers.

Please feel free to also contact Knowledge and Risk Management at eOASIS@rajahtann.com

Our Regional Contacts

RAJAH & TANN | *Singapore*

Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP

T +65 6535 3600
sg.rajahtannasia.com

CHRISTOPHER & LEE ONG | *Malaysia*

Christopher & Lee Ong

T +60 3 2273 1919
F +60 3 2273 8310
www.christopherleeong.com

R&T SOK & HENG | *Cambodia*

R&T Sok & Heng Law Office

T +855 23 963 112 / 113
F +855 23 963 116
kh.rajahtannasia.com

RAJAH & TANN | *Myanmar*

Rajah & Tann Myanmar Company Limited

T +95 1 9345 343 / +95 1 9345 346
F +95 1 9345 348
mm.rajahtannasia.com

RAJAH & TANN 立杰上海

SHANGHAI REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE | *China*

**Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP
Shanghai Representative Office**

T +86 21 6120 8818
F +86 21 6120 8820
cn.rajahtannasia.com

GATMAYTAN YAP PATACSIL

GUTIERREZ & PROTACIO (C&G LAW) | *Philippines*
Gatmaytan Yap Patacsil Gutierrez & Protacio (C&G Law)

T +632 8894 0377 to 79 / +632 8894 4931 to 32
F +632 8552 1977 to 78
www.cagatlaw.com

ASSEGAF HAMZAH & PARTNERS | *Indonesia*

Assegaf Hamzah & Partners

Jakarta Office

T +62 21 2555 7800
F +62 21 2555 7899

Surabaya Office

T +62 31 5116 4550
F +62 31 5116 4560
www.ahp.co.id

RAJAH & TANN | *Thailand*

R&T Asia (Thailand) Limited

T +66 2 656 1991
F +66 2 656 0833
th.rajahtannasia.com

RAJAH & TANN LCT LAWYERS | *Vietnam*

Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers

Ho Chi Minh City Office

T +84 28 3821 2382 / +84 28 3821 2673
F +84 28 3520 8206

RAJAH & TANN | *Lao PDR*

Rajah & Tann (Laos) Co., Ltd.

T +856 21 454 239
F +856 21 285 261
la.rajahtannasia.com

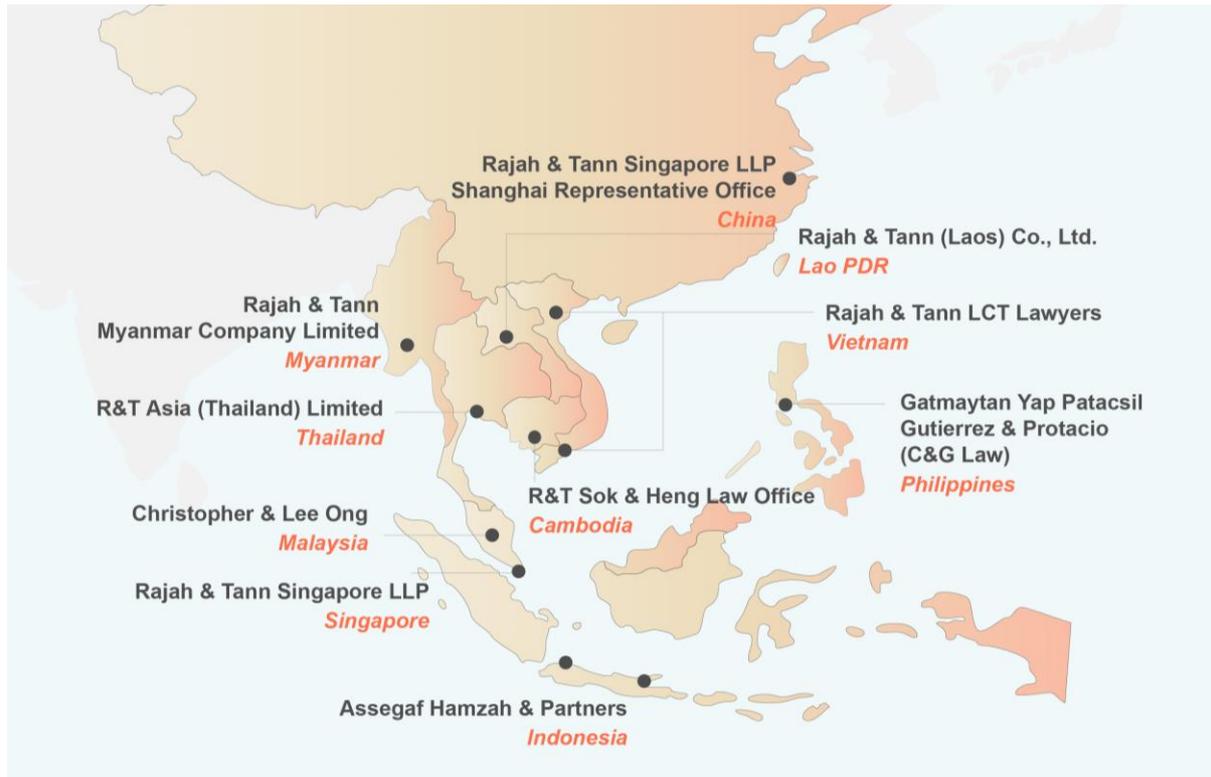
Hanoi Office

T +84 24 3267 6127
F +84 24 3267 6128
www.rajahtannlct.com

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