

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

*Dear Members,*

May's highlight was our May 27-28 Board Meetings, where I was able to thank the Directors for the opportunity to lead USABC. Discussions focused on improving what we do already, including ensuring that business missions deliver value and that we maintain our solid financial footing. I also proposed to the Board a new emphasis on policy advocacy, which is an effort to shape the economic policies across ASEAN in areas that USABC member companies care about. We are doing policy advocacy with the Digital Economic Framework Agreement, scheduled for signing and implementation by year's end. And we are doing policy advocacy by working with the Government of the Philippines during its ASEAN Chairship year. If issue advocacy is like fixing a car, policy advocacy is being at the table to design a new, better car.



I also benefited from leading our May Business Missions to Singapore and Malaysia, with both governments coping well with energy and supply chain challenges, and welcoming continued USABC company activities. Now we will turn to followup from those missions.

And we were glad to host outgoing US Ambassadors to the Philippines, Lee Lipton; ASEAN, Y. Kevin Kim; and Vietnam, Jennifer Wicks. We told them that USABC greatly values its close working relationships with US embassies across the region.

*Best regards,*  
**Brian**

### **POLICY ADVOCACY EFFORT: ADVANCING THE USABC STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN AT THE ASEAN LEVEL**

Note that USABC has a priority effort this year to work with the Philippines Government, and our members, on key policy issues. You will have seen reporting on our five thematic roundtables during March and April in Manila, attracting over 300 Government officials from over 40 agencies, that led to the April 29 launch of the [Strategic Action Plan](#). Below is an update on our effort to go a step further, to get these policy proposals on the ASEAN agenda.

The 48th ASEAN Summit, held on 8 May 2026 in Cebu under the Philippines' Chairship theme "Navigating Our Future, Together," produced a Chair's Statement that validates the direction USABC outlined in its Strategic Action Plan (SAP), which was officially launched on April 29 and formally transmitted to the Philippine Government on May 6. Across all five pillars of sustainability and food security, healthcare, supply chains, digital economy and workforce development, and artificial intelligence, USABC's SAP initiatives track with the Leaders' commitments: on responsible AI deployment and the AI MSME Hub, on the imminent signing of the Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA), on Strategic Trade Management and supply chain resilience, on crisis-ready health systems, and on food security and regenerative agriculture. The Summit's endorsement of these priorities at the highest political level provides an opening for the Council's continued advocacy and efforts to follow through on the SAP.

- On **food security**: On May 18, USABC was invited by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger (IATF-ZH), the Philippine government's primary body for coordinating efforts to eliminate hunger and food insecurity, to identify implementation pathways for its initiatives.
- On **healthcare**: USABC has been invited to speak at the ASEAN High-Level Forum on Unlocking the Silver Economy on June 3, presenting preventive healthcare as a core tool for an aging-ready ASEAN economy.



- On **supply chains and logistics**: USABC has been selected for a grant from the Center for International Private Enterprise, a non-profit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, to pursue a dedicated Bureau of Customs and Bureau of Internal Revenue program on behalf of members, a mechanism already shortening resolution timelines.
- On **digital economy and artificial intelligence**: USABC participated in the Digital and AI Technical Working Group (TWG) at the 2nd ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) Retreat on May 11. ASEAN-BAC Philippines, the official private sector body of ASEAN and USABC's partner in developing the SAP, established the TWG to determine concrete actions to bring SAP initiatives to life.

As the Chairship year progresses, USABC is planning to convene an ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Dialogue timed around the ASEAN Summit in November to evaluate progress and chart the course forward. A review and update of the SAP is also being planned with the USABC Singapore Office this quarter, ahead of the close of the Philippines' Chairship year, to ensure a seamless transition to Singapore's 2027 Chairship.

## MAY EVENTS



**Board of Directors Engagements (pictured: Roundtable with Assistant Secretary of Commerce David Fogel)**

From May 27 to 28, the Board of Directors convened in Washington, D.C. for their semi-annual Board meeting and sideline engagements with key U.S. thought leaders. The Board engaged in closed-door discussions with Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service David Fogel; U.S. Ambassador-designate to ASEAN Y. Kevin Kim; and Lynn Kuok, Lee Kuan Yew Chair in Southeast Asian Studies at the Brookings Institution.

The Council also convened an exclusive lunch for the Board of Directors to discuss tangible pathways towards advancing American competitiveness in the region amidst recent geopolitical headwinds. The luncheon featured keynote remarks by Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs Caleb Orr and a fireside chat with Assistant Secretary of State Orr, S&P Vice Chairman Dr. Daniel Yergin, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy for Asia and the Americas Elizabeth Urbanas.



**2026 Singapore Business Mission**

From May 5 to 7, the Council held its 2026 Singapore Business Mission, convening a delegation of 21 U.S. companies for high-level engagements with the Singapore Government. The mission, held alongside the 60th anniversary of U.S.-Singapore bilateral ties, underscored the U.S. private sector's strong commitment to deepening trade, investment, and technology partnerships amid an evolving global landscape. The delegation conducted a total of 12 high-level meetings, including 9 engagements during the mission and 3 additional meetings with key agencies, covering areas such as the AI-driven economy and resilient, future-ready supply chains. The mission reinforced Singapore's role as a critical hub for innovation and regional growth and highlighted new opportunities to expand U.S.-Singapore cooperation as the country prepares for its 2027 ASEAN Chairship.



***2026 Malaysia Business Mission***

From May 12 to 14, the Council held its 2026 Malaysia Business Mission, convening a delegation of 22 leading U.S. companies for high-level engagements with the Malaysian Government. The delegation conducted a total of 18 meetings, including a key engagement with Prime Minister YAB Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, bringing together cabinet ministers overseeing investment, trade and industry, economy, and finance. Discussions with the Prime Minister and senior Government officials focused on shared priorities such as economic stability, trade predictability, digital innovation, and long-term bilateral cooperation. The mission highlighted the U.S. private sector's commitment to advancing digital transformation and promoting high-value, sustainable investment in Malaysia.

***Thai Delegation Engagements on the sidelines of SelectUSA***



***Luncheon in honor of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand, H.E. Suphajee Suthumpun***

On May 4, the Council hosted an Exclusive Luncheon with H.E. Suphajee Suthumpun, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand, on the margins of the 2026 SelectUSA Investment Summit in Washington, D.C. Marking the Deputy Prime Minister's first visit to the United States since assuming office following Thailand's 2026 General Election, the engagement highlighted her vision on Thailand's commercial priorities and policies—spanning trade, investment, and Thailand's role in the broader ASEAN economic agenda.



***(left to right) Maggie Hanson-Muse, Brian Whisler, H.E. Parnpree Bahiddha-nukara, Marty Sinthavanarong, Jaithai Upakarnitikaset***

Later on May 4, the Council and Baker McKenzie jointly hosted a networking reception to welcome the SelectUSA Thailand Delegation. The reception featured H.E. Parnpree Bahiddha-nukara, Chairman of the Advisory Board to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, alongside senior officials from Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Thai Chamber of Commerce, and the Board of Trade of Thailand, for an evening of dialogue on the U.S.-Thailand commercial relationship.

***Roundtable with The Honorable Lee Lipton, U.S. Ambassador-Designate to the Philippines***



***(left to right) John Goyer, Ambassador-Designate Lee Lipton, Amb. Brian McFeeters (ret).***

On May 21, the Council and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce jointly convened a roundtable with The Honorable Lee Lipton, U.S. Ambassador-designate to the Philippines, following his Senate confirmation. The roundtable offered a pivotal opportunity for U.S. private sector leaders to engage directly with Ambassador-designate Lipton ahead of his departure for Manila, with discussions centering on trade, investment, supply chains, and the private sector's role in advancing the U.S.-Philippines strategic and economic partnership.

***Roundtable with The Honorable Jennifer Wicks McNamara, U.S. Ambassador-Designate to Vietnam***



On May 29, the Council hosted a roundtable with The Honorable Jennifer Wicks McNamara, U.S. Ambassador-Designate to Vietnam, ahead of her planned early July travel to post. The roundtable featured remarks on the future of U.S.-Vietnam economic relations, the evolving business environment, and the role of U.S. businesses in advancing shared strategic and commercial priorities between the two countries.

***USABC Member Briefing: Trump-Xi Beijing Summit***

On May 19, the Council convened a member briefing at its Washington, D.C. office to assess the outcomes of President Trump's May 14-15 state visit to Beijing and the implications for U.S.-China relations, regional trade, and the business environment across Southeast Asia. The hybrid session featured Kirsten Asdal, Partner at Asdal Advisory Group and a leading China political risk advisor, and Richard Harper, Vice President of Government Affairs at the US-China Business Council, in a moderated discussion led by the Council's Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer Marc Mealy.



***Roundtable in Singapore with U.S. Departments of State and Commerce: SBO Russ Headlee and Acting A/S Bill Guidera***

On May 19, the Council's Singapore office convened a roundtable with senior visiting U.S. officials from the Departments of State and Commerce to discuss the latest developments in U.S. AI, as well as emerging tech policies and trade in ASEAN. The roundtable featured remarks from Senior Bureau Official Russ Headlee from the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, U.S. Department of State; and Acting Assistant Secretary for Industry and Analysis Bill Guidera, from the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.



***2026 Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) Briefing by Mr. Theodore Sutarto, Lead for Indonesia DEFA NC***

On April 30, the Council's Jakarta office convened a hybrid briefing session with the Indonesia DEFA Negotiating Committee (DEFA NC), featuring the Assistant Deputy for Digital Economy Development at the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. The briefing provided insights into the development of the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) and its relevance to Indonesia's broader digital transformation agenda, as well as key areas for deeper public-private collaboration. The briefing is part of the Council's in-country DEFA Briefing Series. Interested members are encouraged to reach out to Angga Antagia ([aaantagia@usasean.org](mailto:aaantagia@usasean.org)) and Bella Afifa ([safifa@usasean.org](mailto:safifa@usasean.org)) for participation opportunities.



***Roundtable with the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) New York***



On May 14, the Council welcomed the new Director of the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) NY, Suthashini Supramaniam, in Washington, D.C. Ms. Sutha shared that the Malaysian Government has implemented a new, outcome-based incentive program for foreign direct investors, the [New Incentive Framework \(NIF\)](#), in the manufacturing sector and will soon launch an NIF for the services sector later this year. The development of the NIF is a key element of the Government of Malaysia's New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP) 2030.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### ***June 2 - 3: 2026 Business Mission to the 35th ASEAN Directors-General of Customs Meeting***

From June 2 to 3, the Council will convene an in-person Business Mission in conjunction with the 35th ASEAN Directors-General of Customs Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The mission will convene U.S. industry leaders and key ASEAN customs authorities to advance shared priorities. The Mission will provide participants with targeted opportunities to advance customs modernization and digitalization initiatives, promote regulatory alignment and trade facilitation best practices, and strengthen public-private partnerships to support a more connected, secure, and resilient regional trading environment. For more information, please contact Handy Santoso ([hsantoso@usasean.org](mailto:hsantoso@usasean.org)) or Cath Salazar ([csalazar@usasean.org](mailto:csalazar@usasean.org)).

### ***June 5: ASEAN SME Program 2026: Workshop Series in Bali, Indonesia***

On June 5, the USABC Institute (USABCI), with support from Apple and PepsiCo Indonesia, will host a workshop titled "Innovate to Scale: Driving the Growth of Indonesian SMEs through Digital Innovation," convening government and private sector stakeholders to exchange insights, best practices, and innovative solutions on digital transformation and sustainable SME development.

### ***June 10 - 11: 2026 Food & Agriculture Industry Mission to Indonesia***

From June 10 to 11, the Council will organize the 2026 Food & Agriculture Industry Mission to Indonesia, under the theme of "Advancing U.S.-Indonesia Agri-Food Partnership: Growth, Investment, and Resilience," with the aim to strengthen a mutually beneficial partnership supporting Indonesia's food security and agricultural competitiveness while expanding market access, investment opportunities, and business certainty for U.S. companies. Participants will have the opportunity to exchange insights, explore areas for collaboration, and discuss emerging priorities and market opportunities with senior government officials, industry leaders, and subject matter experts shaping the future of Indonesia's food and agriculture landscape. For more information, please contact Angga Antagia ([aantagia@usasean.org](mailto:aantagia@usasean.org)).

### ***July/August (TBC): ASEAN Ambassadors Tour***

Later this summer, the Council will host its annual ASEAN Ambassadors' Tour, bringing together the Ambassadors of the eleven ASEAN member states for a week-long program across two U.S. cities (to be determined based on member interest). The Tour offers a unique opportunity for Ambassadors to engage directly with your organization, learn about your operations and priorities in the region, and build lasting relationships with U.S. business leaders. In addition to member meetings, the program typically includes engagements with civil society organizations, universities, and senior government officials, including mayors and governors. Members interested in hosting a delegation meeting are encouraged to indicate their interest. Sponsorship opportunities are available, and we would be happy to share our sponsorship packet upon request. For more information, please contact Hai Pham ([hpham@usasean.org](mailto:hpham@usasean.org)) or Andrew Koch ([akoch@usasean.org](mailto:akoch@usasean.org)).



## **MEDIA INTERVIEWS**

- [WATCH: USABC's Amb. Brian McFeeters on the ASEAN workforce & digital agenda | ANC \(ABS-CBN News Channel\)](#)
- [ASEAN's Strategy Amidst Global Trade Tensions | The Nation \(Bernama\)](#)
- [Vietnam Economic Times- Issue 455 + 456](#)

## **COUNCIL IN THE NEWS**

- [US, ASEAN biz groups unveil proposed action plan for PH chairship \(Philippine News Agency\)](#)
- [Chairman of the Advisory Board to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs meets and builds networks with U.S. stakeholders in Washington, D.C. \(MFA Thailand\)](#)
- [Four decades of attracting FDI and opportunities in the new era. \(Vietnam.VN\)](#)
- [Thai companies attend US investment summit \(Bangkok Post\)](#)
- [USABC urges stronger alliance amid supply chain risks \(Manila Standard\)](#)
- [Parnpree leads Thai business team to SelectUSA 2026 \(The Nation Thailand\)](#)
- [PM Anwar Receives Courtesy Visit From US-ASEAN Business Council Delegation \(Bernama\)](#)
- [Anwar reaffirms Malaysia's commitment to boosting US-Asean investment ties \(New Straits Times\)](#)
- [USABC backs Philippine ASEAN chair agenda \(Daily Tribune\)](#)
- [Rep. Bera Applauds House Foreign Affairs Committee's Unanimous Passage of Bipartisan DOMINANCE Act \(Rep. Bera's website\)](#)
- [Reps. Kim, Bera DOMINANCE Act Passes House Foreign Affairs Committee \(Rep. Young Kim's Webpage\)](#)