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Bridging Regions: ASEAN-GCC Round Table Highlights Strategic Cooperation in a Changing Global Order

8 July 2025 | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC), in collaboration with the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia, convened a high-level **Round Table Discussion (RTD)** on *"ASEAN-GCC Interactions in a Changing Global Order: Bridging Regions – Opportunities and Challenges"* on **Tuesday, 8 July 2025** at the **IAIS Hall, Kuala Lumpur**.

Amidst rapid global transformation, the event provided a timely platform for strategic dialogue between two influential regional blocs: the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** and the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**. As Malaysia assumes the ASEAN Chairmanship for 2025, the discussion underscored the country's longstanding commitment to regional diplomacy and multilateral cooperation.

The round table gathered leading scholars, policymakers, and diplomatic voices from across ASEAN and the Gulf region. Opening remarks were delivered by **Dr. Muslim Imran**, Director of AMEC, and **Dr. Maszlee Malik**, Chairperson of IAIS Malaysia. The keynote address, titled *"The ASEAN-GCC Nexus"*, was delivered by **Tan Sri Dr. Syed Hamid Albar**, Honorary Advisor of AMEC. **YB Tuan Liew Chin Tong**, Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry, officiated the session with remarks emphasizing the importance of deepening interregional economic ties.

The RTD featured five expert presentations exploring the multifaceted nature of ASEAN-GCC cooperation:

- **Ms. Maryam Ismail** (ISIS Malaysia) offered insights into cross-cultural understanding and human connectivity.
- **Ms. Nabila Natasha Osman** (AMEC Fellow) presented a case study on **Singapore-Qatar relations**.

- **Mr. Samer Allawi** (Al Jazeera International) discussed media, narratives, and regional perception.
- **Ms. Masni Muhammad** (Malaysian Investment Development Authority, MIDA) addressed investment trends and development opportunities in ASEAN-GCC interactions.

With a shared emphasis on economic cooperation, cultural diplomacy, and strategic coordination, the RTD aimed to:

- Identify sectoral synergies in trade, energy, digital transformation, and the halal economy;
- Promote educational, cultural, and religious exchange to foster mutual trust and social cohesion;
- Explore joint strategies for navigating multipolar geopolitical realities.

Closing remarks were given by **Dr. Ahmad Badri bin Abdullah**, Deputy CEO of IAIS Malaysia, followed by a summary and acknowledgements by **Muath Seyam**, Director of the RTD from AMEC.

As global power centers continue to shift, ASEAN and the GCC are well-positioned to lead inclusive and balanced regional partnerships. The discussion affirmed a growing consensus: interregional engagement is no longer optional—it is essential.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue (AMEC)

wa.me/601156514089 | [✉ admin@amecrd.com](mailto:admin@amecrd.com) | [🌐 https://amecrd.com/](https://amecrd.com/)