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## **EU-ABC newsletter interview**

Johan de Villiers, Managing Director, ABB in Singapore and South-east Asia

### **Q1. Could you share with us what motivated ABB to join the EU-ABC?**

ABB has been active in the region for over 50 years – contributing to the growth and development of all the countries in South-east Asia.

The EU-ABC gives European companies such as ours a unique platform for dialogue with national governments and regional organisations on many issues relevant for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and investment in the South-east Asia region.

Across South-east Asia we see governments having to deal with rapid urbanization, energy transition and industrial transformation. Technology will be a key enabler and we advocate for that with governments. From energy-efficient technologies for smart buildings to those that provide clean electrical transportation, from enabling a secure power grid to improving leakage performance in the water networks, ABB is keen to share ideas to support the region's development together with other European companies.

We also see a great opportunity to work with like-minded companies to further raise levels of safety, integrity and good business practice to world-class standards across all of the South-east Asian countries, thus enabling real sustainable economic growth.

The EU-ABC also provides a strong platform for developing new partnerships.

### **Q2. Moving on to your day job, what does an average day look like for the Regional Head of ABB?**

In South-east Asia there is no such thing as an average day in the office!

Naturally, my priorities are our customers in the region, and I spend most of my time interacting with them and developing our relationships and business. I also engage our global businesses on projects, initiatives and issues to drive sustainable growth here.

Another good portion of my time is spent building teams and growing leadership – in a fast-developing region like South-east Asia we need to ensure that our people are equipped and ready and engaged.

I aim to learn something new every day, and I intentionally spend some time reading to keep apace of developments.

### **Q4. Looking at ASEAN, where does ABB see the major opportunities and what are the more exciting projects?**

With the energy and industrial revolutions in full swing, we see immense opportunities in utilities, transport, infrastructure and industries, across all South-east Asian countries.

McKinsey estimates that from 2016 through 2030, the world needs to invest about 3.8 percent of GDP, or an average of \$3.3 trillion a year, in economic infrastructure just to support

expected rates of growth. Emerging economies including South-east Asia account for some 60 percent of that need. However current under-investment could hamper this growth and we need to find ways to accelerate infrastructure development.

China's Belt and Road initiative is one program that could help with this. We are just at the beginning of the multi-decade initiative, but I believe that the initiative has the potential to bring in the right type and level of investments in the near term and will include many opportunities for agile European companies with a strong presence in South-east Asia.

Energy is another exciting opportunity. As its economy triples and population swells, South-east Asia's energy demands are expected to grow by almost two-thirds by 2040. The region needs to transition its energy infrastructure into a more diverse, efficient, sustainable and integrated system that is increasingly reliant on cleaner energy sources such as solar, wind and geothermal.

When it comes to transportation there are many mega opportunities in airports, ports, and road, as well as the logistics industry. EV charging is a really exciting area for us – ABB is the world's largest supplier of EV fast charging infrastructure. We are working on a project with Volvo Buses together with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore to provide Heavy Vehicle Chargers (HVC) for two autonomous electric buses, starting operations in 2019. You'll also be seeing our DC fast chargers on the streets of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.

But to me the most exciting opportunity of all lies in digitalisation. It will be a major growth industry in itself that will drive future economic growth and employment in South-east Asia. It also has the potential to unlock significant productivity and efficiency gains and include millions in financial services, education and healthcare. We already see unprecedented growth in data centres and the potential benefits of advanced automation and AI for the South-east Asia manufacturing industry are enormous, optimizing processes, automating assembly lines, minimizing waste, speeding up delivery time, and enhancing customer experience.

**Q5. What is one thing you make time for daily in your personal life?**

My faith is important to me and I make time to be quiet as part of my daily routine. I exercise daily, mostly by finding time to cycle and time with my family is also key - we try to have dinner together as often as possible, without screens and devices.

**Q6. Lastly, which CSR programme at ABB are you the most engaged or involved with?**

I believe that CSR is actually an integral part of our day-to-day business and not a disconnected activity – most of our technologies are built to bring power and productivity for a better world.

Education, inspiring a passion for engineering and technology in young people and access to electricity are all topics close to my heart, and we have a number of projects and initiatives running across the region.