The Territory Government will work to enhance its standing in the East ASEAN trade group BIMP-EAGA.

BIMP-EAGA is based on the eastern areas of Indonesia and Malaysia and the growth regions of the Philippines plus Brunei. The Territory currently has “observer status” within BIMP-EAGA.

But Chief Minister Clare Martin told the Sabah International Business Conference 2004 (SIBC 2004) in Kota Kinabalu that the Government had invited senior BIMP-EAGA officials to Darwin to discuss the prospect of furthering the Territory’s status.

The BIMP-EAGA officials will attend next month’s Territory Export Awards in Darwin.

“There is much in common among BIMP-EAGA members and we want to strengthen our links with the group for the mutual benefit of the Territory and the region,” she said.

“I believe the discussions in Darwin will find the participants talking about the things that bring them together.

“As a group we have many shared experiences.

“We live near one another but have suffered due to geographic isolation from our various national centres.

“We have developing infrastructure, relatively smaller and more dispersed populations, growing tourism markets and an abundance of natural resources, oil and gas in particular.

“We’re not talking about full-membership just yet, but given our geographic proximity and shared experiences it makes sense for the Territory to work toward enhancing its status within the group.”

Ms Martin said that the fact more than 30 Territory business leaders were attending this week’s SIBC (2004) and associated trade expo was proof of the Territory’s trade role within BIMP-EAGA.