

OVERVIEW

ASEAN-SWITZERLAND SECTORAL DIALOGUE RELATIONS

1. Switzerland was conferred the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN at the 49th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 24 July 2016 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Prior to the conferment of this formal partnership, ASEAN and Switzerland had long forged relationship through a number of cooperative activities.

2. The ASEAN-Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Relations was institutionalised through the convening of the First ASEAN-Switzerland Joint Sectoral Cooperation (AS-JSCC) Meeting on 28 November 2016 at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta. The Meeting exchanged views on the priority areas of ASEAN-Switzerland cooperation, including projects/activities to support the realisation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 goals, capacity-building programmes and human resource development, particularly vocational training and collaboration to promote sustainable development in the region.

3. Pursuant to the outcome of the 1st AS-JSCC, the List of Priorities for Cooperation for 2017-2018 was developed, which covers areas for cooperation such as peace and reconciliation, human rights, good governance, micro, small, and medium enterprises development, food security, social forestry and climate change, agriculture, vocational education and training, and humanitarian assistance on disaster management. A longer-term document, the ASEAN-Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Partnerships: Practical Cooperation Areas (PCA) 2017-2021 was also developed and adopted at the 2nd AS-JSCC Meeting in December 2017. The list of Priorities 2017-2018 and the PCA 2017-2021 would serve as a guide to further substantiate the partnership with a focus on practical areas of mutual interest and benefit.

4. Switzerland appointed its first Ambassador to ASEAN since September 2009.

A. Political-Security Cooperation

5. Switzerland supported activities and work plans of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. In 2017, it contributed to the convening the Symposium on Exploring Convergence between International Humanitarian Law, Humanitarian Principles, Religious Norms and Customary Practices in ASEAN to address Humanitarian and Protection Challenges in ASEAN in Manila, the Philippines.

B. Economic Cooperation

6. ASEAN and Switzerland have enjoyed good trade and investment relations. In 2017, the total two-way trade between ASEAN and Switzerland increased from US\$27.58 billion in 2016 to US\$30.69 billion. ASEAN's exports to Switzerland decreased from US\$12.36 billion in 2016 to US\$9.73 billion in 2017, and imports from Switzerland grew from US\$15.23 billion in 2016 to US\$20.97 billion in 2017. Meanwhile, foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from Switzerland to ASEAN increased from US\$2.33 billion in 2016 to US\$2.56 million in 2017¹.

7. In tourism, the number of tourist arrivals from Switzerland to ASEAN has increased every year since 2012. In 2016 the number of tourist arrival was 523.459², an increase by 7.2% from 2015.

C. Socio-Cultural Cooperation

8. Since 2011, Switzerland has partnered ASEAN in strengthening the ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN) to address interlinked issues of food security, poverty and climate change through the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC). This programme, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), is aimed at assisting ASEAN in adapting to and mitigating climate change through socially and environmentally responsible forest management and protection. In collaboration with ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat and supporting partner organisations, the ASFCC successfully completed its Phase I (2011-2013) and Phase II (2014-2016) activities, and entered into Phase III (2017-2020).

9. In the area of humanitarian assistance and disaster management, Switzerland has provided support to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) and the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX). Switzerland was also committed to contributing to a multi-year project from 2018 to 2020 to substantially support the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). Significant contribution to humanitarian assistance to ASEAN was made by Switzerland in the aftermath of Tsunami and Typhoon Haiyan in 2004 and 2013, respectively.

10. Switzerland and ASEAN also promote cooperation in vocational education and training through consultation, capacity building, broader cooperation and partnership. Both sides are exploring practical cooperation in the areas of (i) women empowerment, gender equality and the rights of welfare of children, the elderly and migrant workers, (ii) public health, (iii) connectivity, (iv) narrowing the development gap and Initiative for ASEAN Integration (v) sustainable development, (vi) economic cooperation, and (vii) tourism.

¹ Source: ASEAN Statistics Database as of July 2018.

² Ibid