

OVERVIEW ASEAN-RUSSIA DIALOGUE RELATIONS

A. Introduction

1. ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership could be traced back to July 1991 when the then Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation attended the Opening Session of the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Kuala Lumpur as a guest of the Malaysian Government. Russia was subsequently elevated to a full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN at the 29th AMM in July 1996 in Jakarta.

2. The engagement between ASEAN and Russia at the highest level was marked by the First ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit held on 13 December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During the Summit, ASEAN and Russia signed the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government of the Member Countries of ASEAN and the Russian Federation on Progressive and Comprehensive Partnership. The Joint Declaration promotes and strengthens ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership in a wide range of areas encompassing political and security, economic and development cooperation. ASEAN and Russia also adopted the Comprehensive Programme of Action 2005-2015 to realise the goals and objectives set out in the Joint Declaration.

3. The Second ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit was convened on 30 November 2010 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam which, among others, reaffirmed their commitment to consolidate and further promote ASEAN-Russia progressive and comprehensive partnership towards enhancement of the relations to a higher plane, and to work closely together in the evolving regional architecture in the Asia-Pacific.

4. ASEAN and Russia marked the 20th anniversary of their dialogue relations in 2016 with a Commemorative Summit in May 2016 in Sochi, Russia, under the theme "Moving Towards a Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit". During the Summit, the Leaders adopted the Sochi Declaration, which charts out the future direction of the ASEAN-Russia relationship and cooperation. A number of commemorative activities were also carried out to signify the expanding and deepening of the dialogue partnership. As part of commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Relations, an ASEAN-Russia Eminent Persons Group (AREPG) was established to review ASEAN-Russia relations over the past years, explore ways to widen and deepen the existing cooperation between ASEAN and Russia, and make recommendations on the future direction of the ASEAN-Russia cooperation. The AREPG submitted its recommendations in the form of a report to the ASEAN-Russia Commemorative Summit in May 2016.

5. An important milestone in the ASEAN-Russia dialogue relations was marked by the convening of the Third ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit in November 2018 in Singapore, which, among others, adopted the Joint Statement of the 3rd ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Strategic Partnership and agreed to elevate ASEAN-Russia relations to a Strategic Partnership. The Summit also adopted Statement of ASEAN-the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Field of Security of and in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies, and witnessed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Eurasian Economic Commission on Economic Cooperation.

6. ASEAN-Russia cooperation is now being undertaken under the framework of the Comprehensive Programme of Actions (CPA) to Promote Cooperation between ASEAN and the Russian Federation 2016-2020, which was adopted by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and Russia on the occasion of the Commemorative Summit in May 2016 to succeed the CPA 2005-2015. The CPA (2016-2020) is aimed at promoting and enhancing ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Relations through assisting ASEAN in its efforts in regional economic integration and Community building. The CPA is also implemented, including through joint projects funded by the ASEAN-Russian Federation Dialogue Partnership Financial Fund (ARDPFF) established since 2007. In keeping up with the growing ASEAN-Russia cooperation, Russia has increased annual contribution from US\$ 500,000 up to US\$ 1.5 million to the ARDPFF.

7. Following the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter and based on the long-standing ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Relations, Russia has accredited its Ambassador to ASEAN since 2009. Russia also established its diplomatic Mission to ASEAN based in Jakarta, which was officially inaugurated on 9 August 2017 by Russian Foreign Minister, H.E. Sergey Lavrov. The first dedicated Ambassador of the Russian Federation to ASEAN, H.E. Alexander A. Ivanov, presented his Letter of Credence to Secretary-General of ASEAN in October 2017.

B. Political and Security Cooperation

8. ASEAN and Russia maintain good political and security cooperation relations. Russia acceded the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 29 November 2004, which reflects its strong commitment to promoting regional peace, stability and a significant contribution to the TAC as an important code of conduct governing inter-states relations.

9. ASEAN and Russia continue to deepen political and security cooperation through Russia's active participation in various ASEAN-led regional mechanisms and fora, including the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) Plus One with the Russian Federation, the ASEAN Plus Russia Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC + Russia) Consultation as well as the ASEAN-Russia Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG on CTTC). In 2017, the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) also held its first-ever coordination meeting with Russia, which marked the commencement of ASEAN-Russia cooperation in the field.

10. The PMC Plus One Session with Russia on 6 August 2017 in Manila adopted three documents, aimed to further substantiate the ASEAN-Russia partnership. These documents are the Statement of ASEAN and Russia Ministers of Foreign Affairs on Joint Efforts to Counter International Terrorism, the Implementation Roadmap of the ASEAN-Russia Eminent Persons Group (AREPG) Report, and the Concept Note on the Network of ASEAN-Russia Think Tanks (NARTT). The NARTT was launched with the convening of its inaugural meeting in April 2018 in Moscow, Russia.

C. Economic Cooperation

11. ASEAN-Russia economic cooperation has been tightened through regular dialogue and engagement such as the Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM)-Russia Consultations and the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)-Russia Consultations. At the 6th AEM-Russia Consultations held on 11 September 2017, the Ministers endorsed the revised ASEAN-Russia Trade and Investment Cooperation Roadmap, along with its Post-2017 ASEAN-Russia Trade and Investment Cooperation Work Programme, which was built upon positive developments made under the Post-2015 Work Programme. The Post-2017 Work Programme covers, among others, regular dialogues as well as various projects in the spheres of technology, food and agriculture, transport, energy, tourism, and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and promoting business-to-business contacts.

12. The total trade between ASEAN and Russia experienced negative growth by 9.1% from US\$20 billion in 2018 to US\$ 18.2 billion in 2019¹. The foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from Russia to ASEAN also decreased from US\$ 55.81 million in 2018 to US\$ 45.17 million² in 2019.

13. Energy is viewed as a promising area for cooperation between ASEAN and Russia. Activities to establish international collaboration between scientists/experts from Russia and ASEAN Member States for joint initiatives in the field of renewable energy were successfully implemented in 2015/2016. Meanwhile, a new ASEAN-Russia Energy Cooperation Work Plan 2016-2020 was endorsed at the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Energy (SOME)-Russia Consultation held in July 2016 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The Work Plan is the successor of the first work plan adopted in 2010, and marks the willingness and readiness of ASEAN and Russia to deepen cooperation on energy, with a focus on oil and gas, the electric power sector, civilian nuclear energy, and promotion of renewable energy.

14. In the area of transport, the ASEAN-Russia Transport Ministers' Meeting in December 2016 adopted the Moscow Joint Declaration of the ASEAN-Russia Transport Minister's Meeting "Moving towards a Mutually Beneficial Transport Cooperation". With the important role of transport in economic, social and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, the Joint Declaration highlights joint effort for a cohesive and effective transport cooperation between both sides such as through improving coordination, promoting the use of Intelligent Transport Systems and Global Navigation Satellite Systems, exchange of information and best practices, training and active involvement of other concerned stakeholders.

15. In tourism, the number of visitor arrivals from Russia to ASEAN in 2018 was 2.5 million³, a slight increase compared to the 2017 figures at 2.3 million. ASEAN-Russia cooperation in tourism continues to be promoted through regular consultations. A number of projects on tourism promotion were also developed and successfully implemented, namely training courses on Russian language for ASEAN tour operators and a project to develop an ICT platform to provide travelers safety, among others.

¹ ASEAN Statistics Database as of August 2020.

² ditto

³ ditto

16. Following the approval of the ASEAN-Russia Agriculture & Food Security Cooperation Work Programme (2013-2015), the ASEAN-Russian Federation Senior Officials' Meetings on Agriculture (ARSOMA) was established as a body to promote and intensify cooperation in the agriculture and food security sector between ASEAN and Russia. The First ARSOMA held in April 2016 endorsed the new ASEAN-Russia Agriculture and Food Security Cooperation Work Programme 2016-2020. Five joint projects on greater sustainability and efficiency of agricultural systems have been proposed and implemented since August 2017.

17. ASEAN and Russia renewed and enhanced their cooperation in science and technology with the adoption of the ASEAN-Russia Plan of Action on Science, Technology and Innovation (ARPASTI) 2016-2025, which is aimed to enhance mobility of scientists and researchers, strengthen and develop joint R&D activities, increase translation of R&D to practice, and strengthen regional science, technology and innovation linkages. Under the POA, ASEAN and Russia have undertaken joint collaboration on industrial wastewater treatment and conducted capacity building workshops.

D. Socio-Cultural Cooperation

18. Socio-cultural cooperation also has seen significant progress ASEAN and Russia signed the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation in 2010, which is aimed at promoting and developing cooperation and exchanges in the fields of music, theatre, archives, libraries, museums, cultural heritage, dance, visual arts, film, copyright, folk-crafts, decorative and applied arts, circus and other artistic forms. The designation of 2016 as the ASEAN-Russia Year of Culture resulted in the implementation of series of activities, including the ASEAN-Russia Culture Ministers' Meeting convened on 19 May 2016 and the 1st ASEAN-Russia Culture Festival on 19-20 May 2016 held both in Sochi, and the ASEAN-Russia Youth Symphony Orchestra held in Vientiane in April 2017 and in Singapore in October 2019, respectively. At the 2016 ASEAN-Russia Culture Ministers Meeting, the Ministers agreed to further promote cultural exchanges in music, theatre, archives, libraries, museums, cultural heritage, dance, visual arts, film, copyright, folk-crafts, decorative and applied arts, circus and other artistic forms. In conjunction with the Meeting, Sergey Kovalchuk's Photo Exhibition on ASEAN and the ASEAN-Russia Culture Festival was also organised.

19. In the health sector, Russia has initiated a series of short-term courses for 100 specialists from ASEAN Member States on the topics of molecular genetic methods in ensuring biological safety as well as sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population in the Asia-Pacific region. Further, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN-Russia convened Special ASEAN-Russia Foreign Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19 on 17 June 2020. The Ministerial Meeting issued a Statement which highlighted the importance of ASEAN Russia Strategic Partnership and ASEAN led mechanism in addressing the pandemic and its impact, joint effort in enhancing regional public health capacity, information exchange and collaboration among experts, COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, regional reserve of medical supplies, and the utilization of ARDPFF for improving capacity of public health emergencies.

20. Efforts have also been made to promote cooperation in education. The 1st ASEAN-Russia University Forum held in September 2016 in Vladivostok, Russia, was

aimed at strengthening and diversifying ASEAN-Russia cooperation in the field of science and education as well as creating preconditions for strengthening productive relations between the universities and university-based research institutions of ASEAN and Russia. Following its precedent, the 2nd ASEAN-Russia University Forum was also organised September 2017 in Vladivostok.

21. The ASEAN-Russia Forum on Education was convened on 21-22 October 2019 at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University) in Moscow. Attending the Forum were senior officials and representatives from the ASEAN Senior Officials on Education (SOM-ED) and entities associated with ASEAN. The Forum highlighted the importance of deepening their cooperation in education, particularly in fields such as student mobility and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The 12th SOM-ED held in December 2017 endorsed the establishment of the ASEAN-Russia Working Group on Education (ARWGE) and the development of the ASEAN-Russia Plan of Action on Education. The inaugural meeting of the ARWGE was convened back-to-back with the 13th SOM-ED and related meetings on 28 October – 1 November 2018.

22. To further promote people-to-people contact, facilitate studies and provide information on ASEAN and Russia, as well as promoting trade, tourism, and awareness, the MOU on the Establishment of the ASEAN Centre in Moscow was signed in July 2009. The Centre, located at the Moscow State University of International Relations (MGIMO), was officially launched in June 2010. The ASEAN Centre at the MGIMO has also undertaken promotional activities in developing people-to-people ties, academic, youth and cultural exchanges.

23. An important initiative to forge people-to-people contact between ASEAN and Russia was the 1st ASEAN-Russia Youth Summit held in May 2013 in Moscow, Russia. Since then, four (4) more batches of the ASEAN Youth Summit have been organised. The 4th ASEAN-Russia Youth Summit held on 24-27 October 2016 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, signed the Siem Reap Declaration by the youth delegates, encompassing an agreement to institutionalise the ASEAN-Russia Youth Summit as a permanent platform of education, cultural and sports exchange between the youth of ASEAN and Russia. The National Youth Commission (NYC) of the Philippines, in collaboration with the Russian Federation and ASEAN Secretariat, convened the 5th ASEAN-Russia Youth Summit: Enhancing People-to-People Connectivity between ASEAN and Russia on 27-29 November 2019 in Manila, Philippines.
