Overview of ASEAN-Canada Dialogue Relations

1. The ASEAN-Canada dialogue relationship was established in February 1977 with the convening of the first formal meeting between the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs and the ASEAN Standing Committee. In 1981, the ASEAN-Canada Economic Cooperation Agreement (ACECA) was signed, laying the grounds for industrial, commercial, and technical cooperation between the two sides.

2. While the initial focus of the relationship was on development cooperation, it has now been expanded to cover a wide spectrum of areas under the three community pillars. Cooperation activities are undertaken through the framework of the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on the ASEAN-Canada Enhanced Partnership (2016-2020), building upon the achievements made in the implementation of the previous Plan of Action (2010-2015).

3. ASEAN and Canada convened a Commemorative Summit to mark the 40th anniversary of the dialogue relations on 14 November 2017 in Manila. It was the first Leaders’ meeting since the establishment of the partnership in 1977. Various celebratory activities were also held throughout 2017, including: (i) the issuance of commemorative statements by the Prime Minister of Canada on 3 February 2017 and ASEAN on 6 March 2017, (ii) the visit of the Secretary-General of ASEAN to Canada upon the invitation of Global Affairs Canada on 29-31 May 2017, and (iii) tree planting by the Committee of Permanent Representative to ASEAN (CPR) and Ambassador of Canada to ASEAN on 8 December 2017 at the ASEAN Secretariat, among others.

POLITICAL-SECURITY COOPERATION

4. Canada appointed its first Ambassador to ASEAN in 2009 and established a Mission to ASEAN in 2016, headed by its first dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN, H.E. H.E. Marie-Louise Hannan, who assumed the position in March 2016 and ended her tenure in September 2018. The current Ambassador of Canada to ASEAN is H.E. Diedrah Alison Kelly, who assumed the position in November 2018.


6. Political and security engagements between ASEAN and Canada continue to be strengthened on multiple fronts through Canada’s participation in various ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Plus Canada Senior Officials’ Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) Consultations.

7. Under the ambit of the ARF, Canada has actively participated in various activities focusing on confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy, counter-terrorism and other transnational crime, peacekeeping operations, non-proliferation and disarmament
as well as disaster relief. For the period of 2019-2021, Canada is co-chairing the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Response, together with Lao PDR and China.

8. Both sides’ commitment to combat transnational crimes and terrorism is also pursued through the SOMTC Plus Canada Consultations and the delivery of Canada’s multi-year concrete projects in all ASEAN Member States. To date, eight SOMTC Plus Canada Consultations have been convened, with the last meeting held in July 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, discussed the draft ASEAN-Canada Work Plan on Terrorism and Transnational Crime.

9. Canada remains committed to support ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture and has continuously expressed interest to join the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). Canada has applied for observer status in the ADMM-Plus Expert Working Groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief as well as Maritime Security. It has also indicated its interest to become a strategic partner of ASEAN and take part in the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

10. The Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, participated in the lunch hosted by the President of the Philippines, H.E. Rodrigo Duterte, Chairman of ASEAN 2017, in honor of the EAS Heads of State/Government and Guests of the Chair. He also took part in the ASEAN Leaders’ Working Lunch at the margins of the 33rd ASEAN Summit and related Summits in November 2018 in Singapore as Guest of the Chair.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

11. Economic engagement between ASEAN and Canada is guided by the Joint Declaration between ASEAN and Canada on Trade and Investment, which was signed on 2 October 2011. The first Work Plan for the period of 2012-2015 was adopted in August 2012 and its successor Work Plan for the period of 2016-2020 adopted in August 2015 is currently being implemented. In 2018, two-way merchandise trade between ASEAN and Canada stood at USD 18.75 billion\(^1\) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Canada to ASEAN reached almost US$ 9.5 billion.\(^2\)

12. ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and ASEAN Senior Economic Officials’ Meeting (SEOM) hold regular dialogue with Canada. The Canada-ASEAN Business Council (CABC), established at the First AEM-Canada Consultation on 31 August 2012 to promote business opportunities and build business network between the two sides, has now comprised of 50 companies conducting business in the region. The CABC conducted the 4th Canada-ASEAN Business Forum in March 2018 in Singapore and the “CABC Business Seminar” in March 2019 in Ottawa. The CABC has incorporated its first Canadian Office and established its Women’s Leadership Committee in April 2018. It has also released two studies in 2018 to support its advocacy agenda, namely, (i) Legal

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\(^1\) Joint Media Statement of the 8th AEM-Canada Consultations, held in September 2019.

\(^2\) Ibid.
Barriers to Doing Business in ASEAN and (ii) the Canada Advantage, which were presented to the 7th AEM-Canada Consultations in September 2018.

13. The 1st AEM Roadshow to Canada was held in June 2014, during which ASEAN delegates learned from Canada’s achievements, experiences and expertise in a wide range of areas, including in energy, transportation, finance, public-private partnership (PPP) and promotion of innovation. The 5th AEM-Canada Consultation in August 2016 established an annual ASEAN-Canada Trade Policy Dialogue (TPD) that aims to cover trade policy areas of mutual interest. The inaugural TPD was held in July 2017 in Cebu, the Philippines, with a focus on comparative policies and support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The 2nd ASEAN-Canada TPD was held in July 2018 in Singapore, focusing on Canada’s experience in negotiating Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union. The 3rd TPD was held on 12 July 2019 in Solo, Indonesia, under the theme of “Intellectual Property and Supporting Innovation through Trade”.

14. ASEAN and Canada are currently examining the potential benefits of establishing an ASEAN-Canada FTA. A Joint Feasibility Study for an ASEAN-Canada FTA, which was jointly conducted by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) (on behalf of ASEAN) and Global Affairs Canada, had been completed in mid-2018. The study showed potential gains for ASEAN and Canada from an FTA, with positive impact on trade and investment flows. In addition, the outcomes of the first set of exploratory discussions for a possible ASEAN-Canada FTA, covering the areas of trade in goods, investments and services, was noted by the 7th AEM-Canada Consultations in September 2018.

15. The 8th AEM-Canada Consultations held on 10 September 2019 in Bangkok welcomed the conclusion of the second exploratory discussion for possible ASEAN-Canada FTA, which was held in April 2019 in Vientiane. The Ministers also tasked officials to exchange views on the next steps towards the possibility of an ASEAN-Canada FTA at the next SEOM-Canada Consultations in 2020, with a view of presenting recommendation to the Ministers at the next AEM-Canada Consultations.

16. ASEAN and Canada are stepping up cooperation in the areas of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), connectivity and narrowing the development gap within ASEAN including through (i) Canada-Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Project on ASEAN MSMEs (COPAS) amounting to CAD 11.9 million to enable MSMEs development in ASEAN and (ii) the ASEAN Infrastructure Centre of Excellence who works closely with public private partnership centres and infrastructure agencies of ASEAN Member States in promoting regional connectivity and integration. With the support of Canada, report on ASEAN SME Policy Index 2018 was launched at the sidelines of the 50th AEM in September 2018 in Singapore, which maps and benchmarks SME development policies across ASEAN and provides a set of policy recommendations based on good practice experience in the region as well as in OECD countries with an aim to support the MSME development in ASEAN.
SOCIO-CULTURAL COOPERATION

17. Cooperation between ASEAN and Canada in the socio-cultural front remains a priority. Canada has supported ASEAN’s efforts in building a people-oriented, people-centered Community through its various capacity building and development programmes.

18. In partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Canada provides CAD 5.5 million to support ASEAN’s regional efforts in strengthening policies to protect migrant workers, particularly women, through “Promoting and Protecting the Rights of ASEAN Migrant Workers Programme Phase 2 (TRIANGLE in ASEAN)” initiative for the period of 2016-2020. In October 2018, Canada launched a remittance portal “SaverAsia.com” under the TRIANGLE initiative to serve as a useful resource for migrant workers in accessing real-time costs of wire transfers.

19. Canada also continues to support the development of human capital in Southeast Asia especially through the five-year $10 million ASEAN Scholarships and Educational Exchanges for Development (SEED) programme which was launched in August 2017. In its first year of implementation, the SEED programme offered 80 scholarships to ASEAN students to study or undertake research in Canada starting from September 2018. Currently, 147 students from ASEAN Member States are undertaking their academic programmes under this initiative.³ On bilateral basis, the number of ASEAN students studying in Canada has more than doubled since 2015. There were a total of 23,195 ASEAN students studying in Canada in 2017.

20. Through the Integrated Disaster Risk Management Fund worth CAD 10 million, Canada supports the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) 2016-2020 Work Programme. Canada has also extended their support to enhance the region’s efforts in advancing early recovery initiatives. Canada has also committed to support the upcoming review of the current ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (ADDMER) Work Programme and the development of its new five-year work plan (2021-2025).

21. Cooperation between ASEAN and Canada continues to contribute to the overall development goals of ASEAN in all three pillars as well as supported ASEAN’s efforts in narrowing the development gap. Canada has supported the implementation of the IAI Work Plan III through the project on Strengthening Bio Threat Surveillance in CLMV Countries Phase V among others. In addition, Canada continues to support the strengthening of the ASEAN Secretariat’s (ASEC) capacity through various capacity building courses for ASEC’s staff including Gender-Based Analysis Training series launched on 18 March 2019.

³ Chairman’s Statement of the ASEAN PMC+1 Session with Canada, held in July 2019.