

OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-UNITED STATES DIALOGUE RELATIONS

1. Since its establishment in 1977, the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations has evolved from exchange of views on political and security issues to a wide range of cooperation areas across the three Community pillars.
2. At the 3rd ASEAN-U.S. Summit in November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, the Leaders announced the elevation of the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations to a strategic level. The goals and vision of this Strategic Partnership are being realised through the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership for the period of 2016 to 2020. Following the elevation of the dialogue relations, the U.S. hosted the ASEAN-U.S. Special Leaders' Summit on 15-16 February 2016 in Sunnylands, California, U.S.A.
3. The 5th ASEAN-U.S. Summit was held on 13 November 2017 in Manila to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations. A number of activities have been held throughout the year to commemorate this auspicious occasion, including the visit of the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence to the ASEAN Secretariat on 20 April 2017.
4. The latest iteration of high-level engagement between the two sides was through the convening of the 7th ASEAN-U.S. Summit on 4 November 2019 in Bangkok/Nonthaburi, Thailand. At the occasion, the Leaders welcomed the announcement of the new "U.S.-ASEAN Innovation Circle" initiative and noted the importance of the Better Utilisation of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act to support infrastructure projects in the region.

POLITICAL-SECURITY COOPERATION

5. The U.S. continues to engage with ASEAN in the political-security pillar through their active participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). Areas of mutual interest include maritime security, cyber security, and combatting transnational crime, including terrorism and trafficking in persons (TIP), among others. Most recent initiatives on this front include the first ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise, held on 2 – 6 September 2019 in international waters of Southeast Asia, as well as the Inaugural ASEAN-U.S. Cyber Policy Dialogue, which was held in Singapore on 3 October 2019.
6. Cooperation in combatting transnational crime and other non-traditional security issues has been strengthened through the U.S.' engagement with the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). To date, twelve Consultations SOMTC+U.S. Consultations have been held, with the last meeting held in July 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw adopted the SOMTC-U.S. Work Plan for Transnational Crime (2019-2021).

7. The U.S. acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in July 2009 at the ASEAN PMC+1 Session with the U.S. in Phuket, Thailand, and was among the first Dialogue Partners to appoint its dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN and establish a Mission to ASEAN in 2010.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

8. The U.S. remains an important trading partner of ASEAN with the total two-way trade in 2018 reaching US\$ 260.6 billion¹, making it the fourth largest trading partner of ASEAN among Dialogue Partners. The U.S. is ASEAN's fourth largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2018 with a total inflow amounting to US\$8.1 billion².
9. The ASEAN Economic Ministers-U.S. Trade Representative (AEM-USTR) Consultations and ASEAN Senior Economic Officials-Assistant USTR (SEOM-AUSTR) Consultations are held annually to promote trade and investment flows between both sides as well as exchange views on a range of economic issues.
10. The ASEAN-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) and the Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) Initiatives have served as a key mechanism to strengthen ASEAN-U.S. economic ties. Within these frameworks, ASEAN and the U.S. have strengthened cooperation in trade facilitation, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) development and the harmonisation of standards and conformance, among others.
11. ASEAN and the U.S. are working to solidify institutional links between ASEAN sectoral bodies under the AEC pillar and the U.S. counterparts through new Dialogues on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Aviation. The U.S. has also committed to support ASEAN Member States in improving the skills of their workforce and enhancing their economic competitiveness through initiatives in education and training, SME development, youth entrepreneurship, and women empowerment.
12. The ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies meet every year with the U.S. Treasury Deputy to exchange views on global and regional macroeconomic policies and outlooks. This consultation mechanism aims at improving mutual understanding and ensuring policy complementarities to maintain resilience and growth for both sides.
13. At the ASEAN-U.S. Special Leaders' Summit, the U.S. announced two initiatives, namely the U.S.-ASEAN Connect and the U.S. Trade Workshop. The U.S.-ASEAN Connect Centres in Jakarta, Bangkok and Singapore have supported the U.S.' economic engagement in the region in connecting entrepreneurs, investors

¹ Chairman's Statement of the 7th ASEAN-U.S. Summit

² *ibid*

and businesses from both regions. Under this program, the U.S.-ASEAN Internship Programme was launched in 2018 to provide opportunities for ASEAN students to gain work experience in U.S. companies based in ASEAN Member States.

14. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Roadshow to the U.S., which was started in 2013, has played an important role in creating partnership opportunities for ASEAN and U.S. businesses. During the Third AEM Roadshow on 17-18 February 2016, the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council (US-ABC) held a Conference to exchange views on the business opportunities.

SOCIO-CULTURAL COOPERATION

15. ASEAN and the U.S. are working on a number of areas, including disaster management, promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, as well as education and youth.
16. ASEAN has benefited from various education and youth development initiatives supported by the U.S., including the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars Initiative, the Young Southeast Asia Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) and the Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training (COMET), among others.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

- Currently, the U.S. development assistance is channeled through two five-year programmes, namely (i) Inclusive Growth in ASEAN through Innovation, Trade and E-Commerce (**IGNITE**), and (ii) ASEAN-U.S. Partnership for Regional Optimization within the Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (**PROSPECT**). IGNITE aims to promote a well-integrated and inclusive ASEAN Economic Community through enhancing the trading relationship between ASEAN and the U.S., while PROSPECT aims to support ASEAN's objective of building a more inclusive, rules-based, and prosperous Southeast Asia through increasing ASEAN's capacity to resolve regional and global challenges and advance an effective, rules-based architecture for cooperation among governments in the region to uphold human dignity and the rule of law.

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