



## **Chairman's Statement of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with the European Union**

*12 September 2020, Viet Nam*

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1. The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with the European Union (EU) was held via video conference on 12 September 2020. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore, and H.E. Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.
2. ASEAN and the EU reviewed their relations over the past year and reiterated their commitment to further strengthening their partnership and cooperation through effective implementation of the ASEAN-EU Plans of Action and existing frameworks.
3. The Meeting welcomed the growing dialogue and engagement between ASEAN and the EU, and the interest of the EU in furthering engagement with the region through ASEAN-led processes and mechanisms. The Meeting welcomed the successful convening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) in January 2019 in Brussels, at which both sides reaffirmed the shared values and common interests that underpin our longstanding partnership. The Meeting noted that ASEAN-EU ties continue to expand across ASEAN's Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural pillars. The Meeting recalled that at 22<sup>nd</sup> AEMM, the Ministers agreed in principle to upgrade ASEAN-EU relations to a Strategic Partnership. In this regard, the Ministers looked forward to further discussions on the formalisation of the strategic partnership. The Meeting also took note of the proposed convening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting scheduled later this year. The Meeting also looked forward to the 23<sup>rd</sup> AEMM scheduled to take place later this year.
4. The Meeting reiterated support for the priorities of ASEAN this year in advancing a "Cohesive and Responsive" ASEAN under Viet Nam's Chairmanship and welcomed the *ASEAN Leaders' Vision Statement on a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN: Rising Above Challenges and Sustaining Growth*, adopted at the 36<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit on 26 June 2020. The Meeting underlined the need to strengthen regional solidarity and maintain ASEAN Centrality to respond effectively to current and future challenges as well as harness opportunities including those brought about by the digital transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

5. The Meeting recognised the unprecedented challenges posed by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the region and the world and underscored the importance of enhanced international collaboration in addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies. The Meeting recognised that COVID-19 represents a defining crisis that poses an unprecedented threat to economic growth and social development. The Meeting encouraged further strengthening of ASEAN-EU cooperation in capacity building on public health emergency preparedness and response, and greater public-private cooperation to promote research and development on the disease. Welcoming the successful convening of the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Video Conference on COVID-19 in March 2020, the Meeting welcomed the active engagement of ASEAN's partners and stakeholders, including the EU, in ASEAN's pandemic response and recovery efforts, such as the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, the Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. The Meeting noted the EU's announcement of a "Team Europe" package of over €800 million to support actions at country and regional level to address the immediate health crisis, strengthen health, water and sanitation systems, as well as mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in ASEAN. The Meeting also highlighted in particular the need for joint collaboration on ensuring the development of vaccines and anti-viral medicine that are affordable and accessible to all. This involves maintaining resilient, and connected supply chains and supporting a sustained economic recovery of the region.
6. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as the key code of conduct governing inter-State relations in the region, underscored its relevance to the wider region as well as recognised its contribution to promoting regional peace, stability and security.
7. The Meeting underscored the importance of maintaining ASEAN Centrality and unity in the evolving regional architecture and reiterated its commitment to supporting an ASEAN-centred regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based, built upon ASEAN-led mechanisms, strengthening the efficiency of and complementarities between the ASEAN-led mechanisms. The Meetings reiterated the importance of multilateralism, regionalism and international law in contributing to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity. The meeting reaffirmed the importance of continuing building strategic trust and mutual confidence among countries through continued dialogue, win-win cooperation and practical confidence building measures to create a peaceful environment conducive for sustainable growth. ASEAN reaffirmed the importance of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and encouraged the EU to support and undertake cooperation with ASEAN, in accordance with the principles contained in the AOIP, in the key areas identified in the AOIP, namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, economic and other possible areas of cooperation, through practical projects to promote mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual benefit through ASEAN-led mechanisms, thereby contributing to peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

8. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the comprehensive and multifaceted nature of the ASEAN-EU partnership, spanning maritime security cooperation, combatting transnational crime, terrorism, and violent extremism, smart cities, climate change, environmental issues, sustainable development, disaster management, and education. The Meeting encouraged the implementation of the ASEAN-EU Statement on Cybersecurity Cooperation which was adopted last year to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful information and communication technology (ICT) environment and to tackle issues related to cybersecurity, including in combating cybercrime. The Meeting also appreciated the EU's active contributions within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) including through its participation in a number of ARF activities, such as co-chairing the ARF Intersessional Meetings (ISMs) on Maritime Security and on Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime. The Meeting also took note of the EU's interest in further engaging the ADMM-Plus.
9. The EU condemned the August terrorist attacks in Jolo and expressed its solidarity with the Philippines in standing united against the scourge of terrorism. Recalling Germany's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2019, the Meeting also welcomed ASEAN's recognition of France and Italy as Development Partners and to the deepening of the ASEAN-EU relationship.
10. The Meeting underscored the strong economic linkages that underpin ASEAN-EU ties and underlined the importance of enhancing regional integration and economic cooperation, including on standard, quality and conformity assessment, MSMEs, and science and technology through the ASEAN-EU Trade and Investment Work Programme, and looked forward to the continued implementation of the Work Programme for 2020-2021. Notwithstanding that the EU has consistently featured among ASEAN's top trade partners and sources of investment, the Meeting encouraged both sides to explore ways to strengthen economic cooperation, including by redoubling efforts to develop a framework setting out the parameters for a future ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement. The Meeting further encouraged efforts to strengthen economic cooperation through supporting the growth and recovery of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, foster further exchanges on policy and regulatory frameworks on the digital economy, and encourage deeper public-private engagements, including through the EU-ASEAN Business Council and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council. The Meeting welcomed the signing of bilateral Free Trade Agreement between EU and certain ASEAN Member State as building blocks towards future region to region FTA.
11. The Meeting recognised that connectivity remains integral to the ASEAN-EU relationship and appreciated efforts to explore synergies between the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and Connecting Europe and Asia: The EU Strategy. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the successful convening of the ASEAN-EU Connectivity Seminar in June 2020, and the EU's proposal for an ASEAN-EU Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity to be adopted during the 23<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting at the end of the year. The Meeting underlined the need to strengthen cooperation on civil aviation and enhance air connectivity between ASEAN and the EU, and further encouraged the expeditious conclusion of the ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport

Agreement (CATA). The Meeting also looked forward to the official launch of the 'ASEAN Customs and Transit System' (ACTS) to facilitate cross-border land transport, benefitting businesses operating in the region.

12. The Meeting welcomed the enhanced dialogue and cooperation between ASEAN and the EU on the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, including through establishing the ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development and the ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed the EU's new initiatives to contribute to the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility and partner with the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue in the area of sustainable consumption and production, as announced at the 2nd ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development on 10 February 2020 in Brussels. The Meeting also looked forward to the Green Smart ASEAN Cities programme by the EU. The Meeting further looked forward to the next ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development and welcomed the EU's support for sustainable development cooperation in ASEAN, notably in the areas of economic and trade connectivity, biodiversity conservation, climate change, disaster management, research and education and gender equality. The meeting welcomed the close cooperation on environmental issues, such as through the Sustainable Use of Peatland and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA) programme, and the ASEAN-EU Partnership in Circular Economy. The meeting also reaffirms the commitments to address the issue pertaining to sustainable food production, resilient agricultural practices, sustainable production of vegetable oil and environmental protection is pertinent to the attainment of SDGs. We reaffirm our support to address the issue in a holistic, transparent and non-discriminatory manner including establishing a dialogue with relevant parties to support the attainment of SDGs. On the issue of palm oil, the Meeting acknowledged the ongoing efforts to establish a working group on palm oil involving the EU and relevant ASEAN Member States, as a platform for constructive discussions.
13. The Meeting appreciated the EU's continued support and contribution towards ASEAN Community building and regional integration through various development cooperation programmes across the three ASEAN Community pillars, including the ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE) Plus, the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI), EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (EU SHARE), and Integrated Programme in Enhancing the Capacity of AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanisms (EU SAHA).
14. The Meeting discussed the situation in the South China Sea, during which serious concerns were expressed by some Ministers over recent developments in the South China Sea, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region. They reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. They further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international

law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. They emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the DOC that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.

15. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea. They further underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. The Meeting encouraged the substantive negotiations towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, within a mutually-agreed timeline. The Ministers stressed the importance of undertaking confidence building and preventive measures to enhance, among others, trust and confidence amongst parties. They reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS which serves as the basis for determining legitimate interests of littoral states and sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.
  
16. The Meeting looked forward to the expeditious conclusion of the upgrade of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue Partnership to a Strategic Partnership, and to continuing discussions on strengthening the ASEAN-EU partnership at the 23<sup>rd</sup> AEMM to be hosted by Singapore later this year.

