OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-PAKISTAN SECTORAL DIALOGUE COOPERATION

A. Introduction

1. Pakistan was accorded the sectoral dialogue status of ASEAN at the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 23 July 1993.

2. The inaugural meeting to establish the ASEAN-Pakistan Sectoral Dialogue Relations was held on 5-7 November 1997 in Islamabad. The inaugural meeting agreed that ASEAN-Pakistan Sectoral Dialogue would initially cover cooperation in trade, industry, investment, environment, science and technology, drugs and narcotics, tourism and human resources development.

3. The ASEAN-Pakistan Sectoral Dialogue Relations was institutionalised through the convening of the First Meeting of the ASEAN-Pakistan Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee (APJSCC) on 5 February 1999 in Bali. Thus far, the APJSCC has met six times. The second and third Meetings were held on 28 February–1 March 2001 and 5-6 June 2006 in Islamabad, while the fourth, fifth and sixth Meetings were convened on 3 June 2008, 31 May 2011, and 2 November 2017 at the ASEAN Secretariat.

4. As a follow up to 6th APJSCC Meeting, in July 2020 both sides adopted the updated Terms of Reference of the AP-JSCC to be in line with the current developments on both sides; and the ASEAN-Pakistan Sectoral Dialogue Partnership: Practical Cooperation Areas for 2019-2021, which serves as a practical guidance further substantiate the cooperation between both sides.

B. Cooperation

5. Pakistan acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia on 2 July 2004 in Jakarta. On the same day Pakistan was also admitted as the 24th participant of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

6. ASEAN and Pakistan signed the Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism at the sidelines of the 12th ARF on 29 July 2005 in Vientiane.

7. In trade, ASEAN and Pakistan have undertaken a Joint Feasibility Study for an ASEAN-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to enhance and expand the overall ASEAN-Pakistan economic engagement. The Joint Feasibility Study was done by researchers of both sides: the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) and the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER). At the 41st AEM held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 13-14 August 2009, the Ministers noted the completion of the Joint Study on the Feasibility of the ASEAN-Pakistan Free Trade Area and agreed to defer consideration of the recommendations contained in the study. At the 43rd AEM held on 10-11 August 2011 in Manado, Indonesia, the Economic Ministers agreed to apply a moratorium on the proposal of Pakistan for an ASEAN-Pakistan FTA.
8. Foreign Direct Investment from Pakistan to ASEAN increased significantly from US$ 11.59 million in 2018 to US$ 21.34 million in 2019. Meanwhile, the total two-way trade between ASEAN and Pakistan experienced negative growth by 13.6% from US$ 8.16 billion in 2018 to US$ 7.05 billion in 2019. ¹

9. In tourism, the number of tourist arrivals from Pakistan to ASEAN in 2019 was 233,289 people, an increase by 11.5% from 2018’s figure which stood at 209,191 people.²

10. On other areas of cooperation, ASEAN and Pakistan have undertaken cooperation in trade, industry and investment, science and technology, drugs and narcotics, environment, tourism, and human resources development.

11. On human resources development, Pakistan offers annual 10 fully-funded scholarships in information technology, banking, engineering and medicine for students from ASEAN Member States. Pakistan has also offered scholarships in an English Language Training Programme for CLMV countries.

12. A number of cooperation projects have been carried out with funding support from the ASEAN-Pakistan Cooperation Fund including the First Meeting of ASEAN-Pakistan Business Council and ASEAN-Pakistan Trade Facilitation Workshop, both held back-to-back on 21-22 February 2000 in Karachi, the Workshop on Industrial and Composite Design Applications on 29-31 October 2002 in Islamabad, the Multimedia Training and Resources Development on 20 November-2 December 2006 in Islamabad, the ASEAN-Pakistan Workshop on Geo-informatics on 10-12 September 2007 in Islamabad, the 1st ASEAN-Pakistan Conference on Materials Science (APCOMS) on 15-16 December 2008 in Islamabad, the Pakistan-ASEAN Workshop on Halal Food Production Technology and Certification System on 11-12 March 2009 in Karachi; the ASEAN-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Joint Feasibility Study which was finalised in 2009, the ASEAN-Pakistan Photo Exhibition on 8-16 March 2011, the 2nd APCOMS on 26-28 April 2011 and the 3rd APCOMS on 25-27 November 2014.

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¹ Based on ASEAN Statistics Database as of May 2021.
² Ibid.