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. Following the adoption of the Joint Declaration on the ASEAN-Canada Enhanced Partnership at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference Plus One (PMC+1) Session with Canada in July 2009, ASEAN and Canada have completed their plans of action for the periods of 2010-2015 and 2016-2020. The new Plan of Action (2021-2025) was adopted at the ASEAN PMC+1 Session with Canada held on 10 September 2020 and is currently being implemented.

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. 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 (2019-2022), which was subsequently adopted ad referendum by SOMTC and Canada in December 2019. Canada has also supported the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR), including through the convening of a four-part Online Discussion Series, entitled “the Essence of Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN” held in August 2020.

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 for 2020-2023 cycle. 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 ASEAN-Canada Joint Declaration on Trade and Investment (JDTI), which was signed on 2 October 2011. The first Work Plan for the period of 2012-2015 was adopted in August 2012, and the second Work Plan for the period of 2016-2020 was adopted in August 2015. With a view to further enhance economic ties, the third Work Plan for the period of 2021-2025 was endorsed by the 9th ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)-Canada Consultations on 29 August 2020. In 2019, two-way merchandise trade between ASEAN and Canada stood at US$ 17.1 billion1 and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Canada to ASEAN reached US$ 3.16 billion2.

1 ASEAN Trade Statistics Database as of 31 December 2020
2 ASEAN FDI Database as of 31 October 2020
12. The AEM and ASEAN Senior Economic Officials’ Meeting (SEOM) hold regular dialogue with Canada. The Canada-ASEAN Business Council (CABC), established at the 1st 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 “CABC Business Seminar” in March 2019 in Ottawa and the 5th Canada-ASEAN Business Forum on 9 September 2019 in Bangkok. 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 Barriers to Doing Business in ASEAN and (ii) the Canada Advantage, which were presented to the 7th AEM-Canada Consultations in September 2018. This year, the CABC will focus on advocating the ASEAN-Canada FTA, including by conducting a joint research on the FTA with C.D. Howe Institute, which is currently on-going.

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”. The 4th TPD was held from 8-12 June 2020 under the theme of “New Issues under Free Trade Agreements”, focusing on new FTA areas for ASEAN, aiming to support ASEAN officials in preparing concrete recommendations on the way forward.

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.
The 9th AEM-Canada Consultation, held on 29 August 2020, tasked their officials to develop a reference paper on a possible FTA for Economic Ministers’ further consideration at their next meeting in 2021.

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 the area of promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, Canada is supporting the development of the new Work Plans (2021-2025) of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) as well as the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW). Towards this end, it also launched the Regional Project under the theme “Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN on 24 February 2021.

19. 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.

20. 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 second year of implementation, the SEED programme has
provided 214 scholarships to ASEAN students to study or undertake research in Canada starting from September 2018. In December 2020, Canada officially launched the programme’s student component for 2021-2022, providing 125 scholarships to ASEAN students.

21. Through the Integrated Disaster Risk Management Fund worth CAD 10 million, Canada continues to support ASEAN in implementing the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) 2020-2025 Work Programme, which was adopted by the 8th AMMDM Meeting in November 2020.

22. In addressing the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), Canada’s contribution to ASEAN’s initiatives has been coursed through its ongoing Mitigation of Biological Threats Phase 2 (2019-2022) as well as the provision of personal protective equipment to ASEAN in June 2020, amounted to CAN$ 4.5 million.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

23. 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, “Sustain and Strengthen Biosafety and Biosecurity in CLMV Countries”, and “Workshop on ASEAN SME Policy Index”, 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. On 12 December 2019 the Mission of Canada to ASEAN presented the art work gift (musk ox culture) to the Secretary-General of ASEAN to be displayed at the ASEC’s Gallery.

24. At the ASEAN PMC+1 Session with Canada on 10 September 2020, Canada announced its new funding for ASEAN, amounting to CAN$ 9.1 million, which focused on regional priorities including strengthening democratic reforms; enhancing border security; countering migrant smuggling; and cybersecurity.