OVERVIEW

ASEAN-ITALY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

1. Italy was conferred the status of Development Partner of ASEAN at the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (AMM) on 9 September 2020 via videoconference.

2. The ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership was institutionalised through the convening of the First ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership Committee (AI-DPC) Meeting on 19 April 2021 via videoconference. The Meeting exchanged views on the potential areas of ASEAN-Italy cooperation, including projects/activities to support ASEAN’s priorities across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community and the implementation of ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. Furthermore, Italy announced its intention to contribute EUR 2.5 million to the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund to support ASEAN’s efforts in this regard.

A. Political-Security Cooperation


B. Economic Cooperation

4. ASEAN and Italy have enjoyed considerable trade and investment relations despite recent fluctuation. The total two-way trade between ASEAN and Italy increased by 6.3% from USD 21.59 billion in 2018 to USD 22.96 billion in 2019, with the trade balance is in favour of Italy. With a share of 0.8% of ASEAN’s total trade, in 2019 Italy was the 23rd largest trading partner of ASEAN.¹

5. In 2019, with a total value of USD 2 billion, ASEAN’s leading export products to Italy was electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof, sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers, parts and accessories of such articles. Italy’s top export products to ASEAN of the same year, was nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances and parts thereof, of which the total value amounted to USD 3.2 billion.²

6. Meanwhile, foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from Italy to ASEAN recorded a disinvestment of USD 731.47 million in 2019. The number of tourist arrivals from Italy to ASEAN has increased every year since 2011. In 2019 tourist

¹ ASEAN Statistics database as of May 2021
² Ibid.
arrivals amounted to 698,664, an increase of 1.8% compared to the 2018 figures at 686,517 visitors.³

7. In 2015, Italy established the ‘Italy-ASEAN Association’ (Associazione Italia-ASEAN) as a platform to provide greater awareness, particularly for Italian private sector and businesses, on trade and investment opportunities in ASEAN, as well as a platform for Italy to understand and work with ASEAN and its Member States. Since 2017, it convenes High-Level Dialogue on ASEAN-Italy Economic Relations annually to promote major business opportunities among ASEAN countries and Italy.

C. Socio-Cultural Cooperation

8. In the last few years, Italy has funded projects over EUR 3 million for scientific cooperation, scholarships and traineeships for ASEAN Member States. Italy has also committed financial support for archaeological cooperation in Indonesia, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Thailand. In supporting capacity building for officials of ASEAN Member States and ASEAN Secretariat, Italy has been providing several training courses on various topics, including disaster risk reduction and management, diplomacy, and environmental protection in peace operations. In March to April 2021, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in collaboration with the ASEAN Committee in Rome (ACR), the Italy-ASEAN Association, and other stakeholders, organised the 1st Youth Conference on ASEAN and Italy, which offered high-level trainings on diplomacy and international relations for young delegates from ASEAN and Italy virtually.

D. Development Cooperation

9. Thus far there has been minimal development cooperation between ASEAN and Italy at the regional level. However, Italy through its development agency--the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo/AICS), established in 2016, has been assisting several AMS, namely Myanmar, the Philippines, and Viet Nam, in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution, agriculture, as well as statistical capacity building. In November 2020, AICS’ office in Myanmar has been extended to cover cooperation activities in neighbouring Viet Nam, Lao PDR, and Cambodia.

10. In June 2020, Italy pledged to financial contribution to the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) to support the efforts to address landmines and explosive remnants of war in the ASEAN region.

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³ Ibid.