OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-PACIFIC ALLIANCE RELATIONS

BACKGROUND

- The Pacific Alliance is a regional integration initiative comprised of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, established in April 2011 through the signing of the Lima Declaration. The Alliance’s main goal is to increase competitiveness by integrating economies and allow for the free flow of capital, goods, people and services among members, in addition to seeking expanded trade with Asia-Pacific countries.

- Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines are observer countries of the Pacific Alliance. Singapore is a candidate of the associate member of the Pacific Alliance, with the right to negotiate high-standard economic trade agreements with the Pacific Alliance as a bloc.

- As a bloc, the Pacific Alliance is the eighth economic power and the eight export force worldwide.¹ In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pacific Alliance represents 38% of the GDP, 50% of the total trade and attracts 45% of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

- The total two-way trade between ASEAN and the Pacific Alliance reached US$ 20.4 billion in 2020.² Preliminary data shows that inflow of FDI from the Pacific Alliance to ASEAN in 2019 accounted for US$ 5.35 million.³

Pacific Alliance’s Request for Formal Engagement with ASEAN

- The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, on behalf of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Pacific Alliance, wrote a letter on 19 May 2011 to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, proposing to convene an ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Foreign Ministers’ Meeting at the side-lines of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2011 to explore possible cooperation between ASEAN and the Pacific Alliance.

- On 24 May 2011, a delegation led by H.E. Mrs. Patti London, Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, paid a working visit to the ASEAN Secretariat to express the desire of the Foreign Ministers of the Pacific Alliance to meet and discuss how to forge ASEAN-Pacific Alliance relations.

¹ https://alianzapacifico.net/en/what-is-the-pacific-alliance/
² ASEAN Secretariat Trade Statistics Database as of 5 July 2021.
³ ASEAN Secretariat FDI Database as of 30 June 2021.
• At a bilateral meeting with H.E. Le Luong Minh, then Secretary-General of ASEAN at the sidelines of the 6th FEALAC Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Bali in June 2013, the Vice Foreign Minister of Peru, H.E. Fernando Rojas Samanez, sought ASEAN’s response to the Pacific Alliance’s request to forge relations with ASEAN.

• During the AMM Retreat in Hua Hin in August 2013, Thailand informed the Meeting that the Pacific Alliance had proposed to convene an Informal Foreign Ministers’ Meeting between ASEAN Troika and the Pacific Alliance at the sidelines of the 68th Session of the UNGA in September 2013. However, ASEAN did not receive any official request from the Pacific Alliance on this matter.

• On 15 July 2014, four Ambassadors of the member countries of the Pacific Alliance, namely Mexico, Chile, Colombia, and Peru, paid a courtesy call on then Secretary-General Le Luong Minh to brief on recent developments of the Pacific Alliance and proposed for ASEAN-Pacific Alliance cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, connectivity, education, scholarship and people-to-people exchanges. The Ambassadors stressed that it was time for the two organisations to embark on steps to formalise this potential relationship. They also had a meeting with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) on 18 August 2014 in Jakarta to present the aforementioned proposals.

ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Ministerial Meetings

• The Ministers of ASEAN and the Pacific Alliance met for the first time on 25 September 2014 at the sidelines of the 69th Session of the UNGA in New York, during which both sides agreed to explore cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

• Since then, six ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Ministerial Meetings have been convened at the sidelines of the UNGA.

The Meeting between the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) and the Group of External Relations of the Pacific Alliance (GER)

• The ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Framework for Cooperation stipulates that the CPR and GER of the Pacific Alliance, supported by the Ambassadors of the Pacific Alliance member countries to ASEAN, shall engage with each other at least once a year in Jakarta, unless otherwise mutually agreed, to assess the progress implementation of the Framework for Cooperation as well as identify possible new areas for future engagement.
To date, five meetings between the CPR and the GER of the Pacific Alliance have been held with four meetings were held in Jakarta and one meeting was held in Bangkok. On 29 September 2020, the CPR met virtually for the first time with the National Coordinators of the Pacific Alliance Member States to take stock of cooperation and discuss future areas of collaboration as well as to exchange views on efforts by both regions in addressing the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Framework for Cooperation and its Work Plan

The ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Framework for Cooperation was adopted at the 3rd ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Ministerial Meeting held on 24 September 2016. This Framework for Cooperation laid foundation for cooperation between the two sides in four priority areas, namely: (i) Economic Cooperation; (ii) Education and People-to-people Contacts; (iii) Science, Technology and Innovation; and (iv) Sustainable Development.

Significant progress has been made in the implementation of the ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Work Plan (2017-2020), which lists down the activities to implement the ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Framework for Cooperation, with 7 out of 12 action lines being addressed since its adoption in 2017. The Work Plan was adopted at the 3rd CPR-GER Meeting and noted by the 4th ASEAN-Pacific Alliance Ministerial Meeting in 2017. The timeline of the Work Plan was extended to December 2019 by the 4th CPR-GER Meeting held in August 2018. It was further extended to December 2020 by the 5th CPR-GER Meeting held on 16 August 2019.

The 2020 Interface between the CPR and the National Coordinators of the Pacific Alliance agreed to develop new Work Plan for the period of 2021-2023. The Work Plan is currently being negotiated by both sides.

Coordinatorship

The coordinatorship of ASEAN-Pacific Alliance relations is rotated alphabetically among ASEAN Member States on a one-year basis. Lao PDR is the country coordinator for ASEAN-Pacific Alliance relations for 2021. On the other hand, Colombia is the current President Pro-tempore of the Pacific Alliance.