

## **OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-UNITED STATES DIALOGUE RELATIONS**

1. Since its establishment in 1977, the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations has evolved from exchange of views on political and security issues to a wide range of cooperation areas across the three Community pillars.
2. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-U.S. Summit in November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, the Leaders announced the elevation of the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations to a strategic level. The goals and vision of this Strategic Partnership are being realised through the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership for the period of 2016 to 2020. Following the elevation of the dialogue relations, the U.S. hosted the ASEAN-U.S. Special Leaders' Summit on 15-16 February 2016 in Sunnylands, California, U.S.A.
3. The 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-U.S. Summit was held on 13 November 2017 in Manila to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations. A number of activities have been held throughout the year to commemorate this auspicious occasion, including the visit of the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence to the ASEAN Secretariat on 20 April 2017.

### **POLITICAL-SECURITY COOPERATION**

4. The U.S. continues to engage with ASEAN in the political-security pillar through their active participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). Areas of mutual interest include maritime security, cyber security, and combatting transnational crime, including terrorism and trafficking in persons (TIP), among others.
5. Cooperation in combatting transnational crime and other non-traditional security issues has been strengthened through the U.S.' engagement with the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). So far, ten Consultations SOMTC+U.S. Consultations have been held.
6. The U.S. acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in July 2009 at the ASEAN PMC+1 Session with the U.S. in Phuket, Thailand, and was among the first Dialogue Partners to appoint its dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN and establish a Mission to ASEAN in early 2010.

### **ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

7. The U.S. remains an important trading partner of ASEAN. Preliminary data shows that the ASEAN-U.S. total two-way trade in 2017 reached US\$233.1 billion, making it the third largest trading partner of ASEAN among Dialogue

Partners.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. is ASEAN's fourth largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) among Dialogue Partners in 2017 with a total inflow amounting to US\$5.4 billion (preliminary data).<sup>2</sup> In 2016, FDI inflow from the U.S. to ASEAN was US\$18.8 billion, making it ASEAN's second largest source of FDI among Dialogue Partners.

8. The ASEAN Economic Ministers-U.S. Trade Representative (AEM-USTR) Consultations and ASEAN Senior Economic Officials-Assistant USTR (SEOM-AUSTR) Consultations are held annually to promote trade and investment flows between both sides as well as exchange views on a range of economic issues.
9. The ASEAN-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) and the Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) Initiatives have served as a key mechanism to strengthen ASEAN-U.S. economic ties. Within these frameworks, ASEAN and the U.S. have strengthened cooperation in trade facilitation, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) development and the harmonisation of standards and conformance, among others.
10. ASEAN and the U.S. are working to solidify institutional links between ASEAN sectoral bodies under the AEC pillar and the U.S. counterparts through new Dialogues on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Aviation. The U.S. has also committed to support ASEAN Member States in improving the skills of their workforce and enhancing their economic competitiveness through initiatives in education and training, SME development, youth entrepreneurship, and women empowerment.
11. The ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies meet every year with the U.S. Treasury Deputy to exchange views on global and regional macroeconomic policies and outlooks. This consultation mechanism aims at improving mutual understanding and ensuring policy complementarities to maintain resilience and growth for both sides.
12. At the ASEAN-U.S. Special Leaders' Summit, the U.S. announced two initiatives, namely the U.S.-ASEAN Connect and the U.S. Trade Workshop. The U.S.-ASEAN Connect Centres in Jakarta, Bangkok and Singapore have supported the U.S.' economic engagement in the region in connecting entrepreneurs, investors and businesses from both regions.
13. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Roadshow to the U.S., which was started in 2013, has played an important role in creating partnership opportunities for ASEAN and U.S. businesses. During the Third AEM Roadshow on 17-18 February 2016, the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council (US-ABC) held a Conference to exchange views on the business opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> ASEAN Trade Database as of 25 May 2018

<sup>2</sup> ASEAN FDI Database as of 25 May 2018

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL COOPERATION**

14. The U.S. is working with ASEAN on a number of areas, including disaster management, promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, as well as education and youth.
15. ASEAN has benefited from various education and youth development initiatives supported by the U.S., including the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars Initiative, the Young Southeast Asia Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) and the Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training (COMET), among others.

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

- Two five-year U.S. development programmes were launched in December 2013, namely the ASEAN Connectivity through Trade and Investment (ACTI) and the ASEAN-U.S. Partnership for Good Governance, Equitable and Sustainable Development and Security (ASEAN-U.S. PROGRESS). The ACTI focuses on assisting ASEAN's regional and national economic-related agencies in the following areas: i) ASEAN Single Window; ii) Trade and Investment Facilitation; iii) SMEs Development; iv) ASEAN Modernised Power; and v) ICT For Development Enhancement. The PROGRESS aims at assisting ASEAN under Good Governance and Political-Security Cooperation; Human Development; and ASEAN Institutional/Cross-Sectoral Capacity Building. Noting that the aforementioned development programmes will come to an end in 2018, the U.S. is currently working on two successor programmes.

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