Overview of ASEAN-Republic of Korea Dialogue Relations

Introduction

1. ASEAN and the Republic of Korea (ROK) initiated sectoral dialogue relations in November 1989. The ROK was accorded a full Dialogue Partner status by ASEAN at the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in July 1991 in Kuala Lumpur. The partnership was elevated to a Summit level in 1997 in Kuala Lumpur. The ROK acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2004.

2. The ASEAN-ROK relationship reached a new height with the signing of the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation Partnership at the 8th ASEAN-ROK Summit on 30 November 2004 in Vientiane, Lao PDR and the adoption of the ASEAN-ROK Plan of Action (POA) to implement the Joint Declaration at the 9th ASEAN-ROK Summit on 13 December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

3. The 13th ASEAN-ROK Summit in October 2010 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam agreed to elevate ASEAN-ROK dialogue relations from comprehensive cooperation to strategic partnership. The Leaders adopted the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity and its Plan of Action for the period of 2011-2015. The new Plan of Action for the period 2016-2020 was adopted in 2015.

4. The ROK established its Mission to ASEAN in Jakarta in September 2012 and appointed its first resident Ambassador to ASEAN in October 2012.


Political and Security Cooperation

6. ASEAN-ROK cooperation in the political and security fields has been strengthened through existing mechanisms such as the ASEAN-ROK Summit, Ministerial Meetings, ASEAN-ROK Dialogue and Senior Officials Meetings. The ROK has been actively engaging in ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the APT, the EAS, ARF, and ADMM Plus.

7. The ROK became a participant of the ARF since its inception in 1994 and plays an active role in its evolution since then. The ROK co-chaired the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS) with Indonesia and the United States for the period of 2012-2014. In 2018, the ROK will be completing its co-chairmanship for the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ARF ISM on DR) with Thailand and will co-chair the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ARF ISM on NPD) with Indonesia and Japan for the 2018-2020 cycle. The ROK is also an active
8. The ROK has taken an active role in the ADMM-Plus in fostering practical cooperation in its six priority areas, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), maritime security, military medicine, counter terrorism, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian mine action. The ROK co-chaired the ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations (EWG on PKO) with Cambodia for the period of 2014-2017 and is currently co-chairing the ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group on Maritime Security with Singapore for the period of 2017-2020.

9. The ASEAN-ROK Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism was signed by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and the ROK at the margins of the 38th AMM in July 2005 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The ASEAN-ROK Senior Officials’ Consultations on Transnational Crime (SOMTC+ROK Consultations) was held for the first time on 9 June 2006 in Bali, Indonesia. At the 9th SOMTC + ROK Consultation in June 2015 in Siem Reap, ASEAN and the ROK finalised an ASEAN-ROK Work Plan on the Cooperation on Combating and Preventing Transnational Crimes. At the 10th SOMTC+ROK on 25 May 2016, the two sides agreed to revise the said Work Plan taking into account the new ASEAN-ROK Plan of Action 2016-2020.

10. ASEAN and the ROK have commenced the anti-narcotics cooperation through the implementation of six projects on the Knowledge Transfer Programme on Narcotics Crime conducted from 2007 to 2013. At the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in December 2014 in Busan, the ROK, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in combatting transnational crimes such as illicit drugs.

**Economic Cooperation**

11. On trade and investment cooperation, the ROK remains an important partner to ASEAN. In 2017, the ROK was as the fifth largest trading partner of ASEAN with two-way trade reaching USD 152.5 billion, a significant increase of 22.8 per cent (year-on-year). ASEAN exports to Korea and ASEAN imports from Korea respectively increased by 20 per cent to USD 54.9 billion, and by 24.4 per cent to USD 97.7 billion. ASEAN’s trade deficit with Korea has continued to increase to reach USD 42.8 billion for the same period. Meanwhile, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow from ROK to ASEAN stood at USD 5.3 billion, making ROK as the ASEAN’s fifth largest source of FDI.

12. The Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK was signed in Kuala Lumpur on 13 December 2005. To achieve the objectives of the Framework Agreement, the ASEAN-Korea Trade in Goods (AKTIG) Agreement was signed on 24 August 2006 and took effect in 2007. Meanwhile, the ASEAN-ROK Trade in Services Agreement was signed on 21 November 2007 in Singapore and came into force on 1 May 2009 and the ASEAN-ROK Investment Agreement was signed on 2 June 2009 and took full effect on 1 September 2009. Subsequently, the ASEAN-ROK Free Trade Agreement (AKFTA) came into effect on 1 January 2010. At the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in December 2014, the
Leaders agreed to expand two-way trade volume to USD 200 billion by 2020, including through maximizing the utilisation of the AKFTA.

13. The Third Protocol to Amend the AKTIG Agreement was signed by all Parties on 22 November 2015, aiming at boosting bilateral trade through new commitments on customs procedures and trade facilitation and the inclusion of the Parties' line-by-line Tariff Reduction Schedules (TRS). The Third Protocol has entered into force for the ROK and all AMS, except Indonesia and Viet Nam, which are still undertaking their internal procedures for ratification.

14. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the ROK established a special fund called ASEAN-Korea Economic Cooperation (AKEC) Fund with initial contribution of US$531,915 in 2008 for the implementation of cooperation projects under the purview of the ASEAN-Korea Working Group on Economic Cooperation (AK-WGEC) established in 2006. Since 2011, Korea has annually contributed US$500,000 towards the AKEC Fund. As of 10 April 2018, 69 projects have been approved through AK-WGEC to support the implementation of the AKFTA.

15. On transport cooperation, the ASEAN-ROK Transport Cooperation Roadmap was endorsed at the 2\textsuperscript{nd} ASEAN-ROK Transport Ministers (ATM+ROK) Meeting on 12 November 2010 in Brunei Darussalam to set out the potential projects and activities of cooperation to be undertaken for both sides. The Roadmap was revised and adopted at the 5\textsuperscript{th} ATM+ROK Meeting on 28 November 2014 in Mandalay, Myanmar. For the period of 2018-2020, projects and activities of cooperation under the Roadmap will be conducted in the areas of, among others, professional capacity building program, masterplan, infrastructure feasibility study and project. ASEAN and the ROK are also committed to further enhancing air transport connectivity between the two sides. At the 19\textsuperscript{th} ASEAN-ROK Summit in November 2017 in Manila, the Leaders looked forward to the convening of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Meeting of the ASEAN-ROK Working Group on Regional Air Services Arrangements (AKWG RASA) in 2018, for the conclusion of a more liberal and mutually beneficial air services agreement.

16. On information and communication technology (ICT) cooperation, the 17\textsuperscript{th} ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Senior Officials Meeting and Related Meeting held on 1 December 2017 in Siem Reap, Cambodia endorsed the 2018 ASEAN-Korea ICT Work plan to further extend cooperation with the aim of fostering innovation, developing digital skills, establishing IT centre as well as enhancing information security.

17. The ASEAN-Korea Centre (AKC) was established in 13 March 2009 in Seoul, the ROK. The Centre plays a pivotal role to increase the volume of trade, accelerate investment flow, invigorate tourism, and enrich cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the ROK.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

18. ASEAN and the ROK put an emphasis on people to people exchange with a view to deepen friendship and understanding among their people. Various projects and
activities have been undertaken to increase people to people exchanges between the two sides including annual programmes such as the ASEAN-ROK Media People Exchanges Programme and the ASEAN-ROK Film Leaders Incubator (FLY), both of which have been implemented since 2012.

19. In the area of youth, ASEAN and the ROK have conducted seven recurring projects since 1998 including ASEAN-Korea Youth Exchange and Cultural Community Building Programme; ASEAN-Korea Frontiers Forum; ASEAN-Korea Youth Square; ASEAN-Korea Forum and Advanced Seminar; ASEAN-Korea Future-oriented Cooperation Project: Youth Exchange Programme; ASEAN-KOREA Youth Taekwondo Cultural Exchange Camp; and Korea-ASEAN Cooperation Project on Education and Exchange Program for Young Scholars in Women’s Studies. These projects are intended to provide multi-cultural experience and to deepen partnership between ASEAN and Korea.

20. Cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK in education is also progressing well. The ROK has convened seven Training Projects for ASEAN children’s librarians since 2010. This Training Project is aimed at developing children’s library service and enhancing professionalism of children’s librarians in ASEAN Member States. The ROK has also provided funding for ASEAN-ROK Scholarship for Korean Studies Programme coordinated by the ASEAN University Network (AUN). The progress on the establishment of the ASEAN-ROK Cyber University carried out by AUN and Seoul Cyber University is also going well. CLMV countries and the ROK have agreed in principle that the e-learning centers will be established in the following institutions: Institute Technology of Cambodia (ITC); National University of Laos (NUOL); University Technology (UT) in Myanmar and Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST) in Viet Nam.

21. Cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK on culture has been promoted including through various activities during the ASEAN-ROK Culture Exchange Year in 2017. The ASEAN Culture House, which was established in Busan, the ROK on 1 September 2017, is the first of its kind among ASEAN’s dialogue partnerships and serves as a venue to further promote mutual understanding between the peoples of ASEAN and the ROK.

22. ASEAN and the ROK have implemented a number of cooperative projects in the areas of social welfare and development with the focus on children, women, older people, people with disabilities and migrant workers.

23. On forest cooperation, the Agreement between ASEAN and the ROK on Forest Cooperation (AFoCo) was signed and entered into force on 5 August 2012 for 2 years, and subsequently was extended in August 2014 for another two years, until August 2016. Projects and activities are on-going under this Agreement. Meanwhile, the Agreement on the Establishment of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFCoO), which was adopted in September 2015, entered into force on 27 April 2018 upon five ratifications by the ROK, Bhutan, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Timor Leste.
24. On environment cooperation, ASEAN-ROK cooperation to address the issue of land and forest degradation has been strengthened through a flagship project on Restoration of Degraded Forest Ecosystem in the Southeast Asian Tropical Regions (AKECOP). Phases I to VIII of the AKECOP project were completed from 2000 to 2016 and it is now in Phase IX. AKECOP received the ROK’s support through the ASEAN-ROK Special Cooperation Fund.

25. In the area of disaster management, ASEAN and the ROK launched the ASEAN Science-Based Disaster Management Platform (ASDMP) and Research Roadmap on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) at the APEC Climate Center (APCC) - ASEAN Disaster Management Final Regional Symposium held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 4 December 2017. The ASEAN Science-Based Disaster Management Web Platform serves as a tool to bridge the gaps between scientists and policymakers and allows them to collect scientific technology and research information related to disaster management, making it easier for policy research and policy development for disaster management and risk reduction in ASEAN.

Connectivity and Narrowing Development Gap

26. ASEAN and the ROK have developed a platform of cooperation on connectivity through the meetings between the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and the ROK’s Task Force on ASEAN Connectivity. At the 2nd ACCC + ROK Meeting on 23 October 2014, both sides agreed to undertake internal consultations on potential flagship projects to be selected for implementation consideration. Areas of cooperation include construction of two missing links on the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link, regional inland waterways, and ASEAN-ROK air services agreements. At the 3rd Meeting of ACCC and the ROK Task Force on ASEAN Connectivity held in July 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia, the ROK expressed its interest to prioritise Initiative 14 (Establish new vocational training programmes and common qualifications across AMS, in accordance with national circumstances of each AMS) as part of their support for the implementation of the MPAC 2025.

27. The ROK has been supporting ASEAN efforts in narrowing the development gap through the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) projects. The ROK had contributed USD 5 million to support five IAI projects between 2003 and 2007, which were undertaken by KOICA. The ROK’s supports also include sharing its experiences in economic and social development by dispatching volunteers under its World Friends Korea initiative. The ROK has also expressed its continued support for the implementation of the IAI Work Plan III and other sub-regional economic cooperation frameworks, including the Mekong-ROK Plan of Action (2017-2020) adopted at the Seventh Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on 1 September 2017, in Busan, the ROK.

The ROK’s Support to Development Cooperation

28. The ROK Government launched the ASEAN-ROK Special Cooperation Fund (SCF) in 1990 with an aim to enhance people-to-people exchanges between the two
sides. In 1996, the ASEAN-ROK Future-Oriented Cooperation Project Fund (FOCF) was also launched in order to implement cooperation projects in the fields of human resource development, science and technology, governance, culture and sports, and others. The volume of the annual fund of SCF and FOCF has been gradually increased to USD 5 million in 2010 and USD 7 million in 2015. In 2017, ASEAN and the ROK agreed to merge the SCF and FOCF into ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) to provide funding for the implementation of cooperation projects initiated by AMS and the ROK under the programme-based approach of the New ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Framework. For 2017-2020, the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Framework focuses on three focal areas: (i) education, (ii) environment, and (iii) culture.

29. The ASEAN-ROK Programme Management Team (AKPMT) was established in December 2016 to work for the effective utilization, management and execution of AKCF funded projects.