

OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-GCC RELATIONS

1. The first formal contact between ASEAN and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) took place in 1990 when the Foreign Minister of Oman, in his capacity as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the GCC, expressed GCC's desire to establish formal relations with ASEAN.
2. In the same year, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers met with their counterparts from the GCC for the first time at the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. Both sides agreed to meet annually in New York and encouraged the Secretariats of ASEAN in Jakarta and the GCC in Riyadh to develop cooperation.
3. In April 2007, the then Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Ong Keng Yong, made an official visit to the GCC Secretariat and met with his GCC counterpart, H.E. Abdulrahman H Al Attiyah. Both sides agreed to prepare a document to formalise the relations between the two organisations.
4. At the ASEAN-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting at the sidelines of the UNGA in September 2007, the Ministers agreed to hold a fully-constituted ASEAN-GCC Ministerial Meeting to provide an impetus for strengthening ASEAN-GCC relations. As a result, the First ASEAN-GCC Ministerial Meeting was convened in June 2009 in Manama, Bahrain, which adopted the ASEAN-GCC Joint Vision, in which both sides agreed to undertake a study and make recommendations on the future of ASEAN-GCC relations in (i) a free trade area, (ii) economic cooperation and development, and (iii) culture, education and information. The Ministers also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the ASEAN Secretariat and the GCC Secretariat.
5. Pursuant to the outcome of the First ASEAN-GCC Ministerial Meeting, an ASEAN-GCC Two-Year Action Plan (2010-2012) was developed to intensify cooperation between ASEAN and GCC and, subsequently, adopted at the Second ASEAN-GCC Ministerial Meeting in June 2010 in Singapore.
6. In following up to the outcome of the Second ASEAN-GCC Ministerial Meeting, four ASEAN-GCC joint working-level meetings had been convened, namely: (a) ASEAN-GCC Consultative Meeting on Education in November 2010 in Bangkok; (b) ASEAN-GCC Working Group Meeting on Food Security and Agricultural Investment in May 2011 in Doha; (c) ASEAN-GCC Tourism Consultation in June 2011 in Luang Prabang; and (d) ASEAN-GCC Senior Economic Officials Meeting in July 2011 in Salalah, Oman.

7. Recognising the growing importance of the relations between the two regions, five GCC Member States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) have accredited their respective Ambassadors to ASEAN. ASEAN has also established its Committees in all the capitals of the GCC Member States.

8. As a follow-up to the outcome of the Third ASEAN-GCC Ministerial Meeting held in November 2013 in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, the First ASEAN-GCC Workshop was held in June 2014 in Singapore with the aim to discuss ways and means to give momentum ASEAN-GCC relations. Attended by Government officials, researchers, businesses and representatives from the Member States of ASEAN and GCC, the workshop also focused the discussions on concrete steps and measures to move forward and to further promote the ASEAN-GCC relations and revitalise cooperation between the two regions.

9. ASEAN and GCC are currently working to further strengthen their cooperation through developing an ASEAN-GCC Framework of Cooperation for the period of the next five years and convening of the fourth ASEAN-GCC Ministerial Meeting.

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