

Co-Chairs' Statement of the 20th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting

23 July 2014, Brussels, Belgium

1. The 20th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, under the theme of “*Towards Strategic Partnership for Peace, Stability and Prosperity*”, was held on 23 July 2014. The Meeting was co-chaired by Her Excellency Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission and His Excellency Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, as Country Coordinator of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations. The Meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers from ASEAN and the EU Member States, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN.

2. The Ministers underlined the importance of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations, which have matured through 37 years of partnership. Ministers welcomed the progress of EU-ASEAN relations since the 19th ASEAN-EU Ministerial in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, in 2012. Looking forward, Ministers inter alia:

- agreed to step up cooperation to enhance connectivity between the two regions and support the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), building on the visit by the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Connectivity (ACCC) to Belgium and Luxembourg in February 2014;
- welcomed the EU commitment to more than double dedicated support for ASEAN's institution building and 2015 Community-building goals to 170M€ in the period 2014-2020. Overall EU aid to South East Asia, including through bilateral assistance, will increase from €2.2 billion (2007-2013) to close to €3 billion (2014-2020).
- agreed to enhance maritime security and safety cooperation, such as information sharing and capacity building, building on the High-level Dialogue on Maritime Co-operation which was held in November 2013 in Jakarta;
- agreed to work towards the upgrading of the partnership to a strategic one and tasked their senior officials to develop a roadmap for this goal.

3. The Ministers took stock of developments in both regions since their last meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, in April 2012. ASEAN congratulated the EU on its enlargement to include Croatia in July 2013 and on the progress achieved to consolidate economic growth. The EU welcomed the outcome of the 24th ASEAN Summit in May 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

4. The Ministers reviewed the progress of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations since the 19th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, on 26-27 April 2012. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress of ASEAN-EU cooperation, especially the implementation of the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to Strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013-2017), which aimed to give a more strategic focus to cooperation and dialogue. The Ministers welcomed the holding of the first meeting between the EU Committee of Permanent Representatives and the Committee of Permanent Representatives of ASEAN in February 2014. The Ministers noted the progress made on advancing negotiations, signature and entry into force of a number of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) within the EU and some ASEAN countries, which contributed to the growing EU – ASEAN ties.

5. The Ministers welcomed the ongoing process of democratic transition which is taking place in Myanmar since the 19th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting. Ministers will continue to encourage Myanmar to address remaining challenges, including those related to national peace, human rights and reconciliation.

6. The meeting took note of the briefing on the political situation in Thailand following the event of May 22, in particular of the intention of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) to return Thailand to full-fledged democracy under the 3-stage roadmap including the promotion of reconciliation and reform, free and fair elections within the set timeframe. The EU Ministers expressed the views that the EU, as a longstanding partner of Thailand and ASEAN, is concerned with the recent political developments in Thailand and, in noting the 3-stage roadmap, underlined the importance of an early return to constitutional democracy including holding credible elections in accordance with the will of the Thai people.

7. The EU reiterated its support for ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture in East Asia. The EU appreciated ASEAN's role as the driving force for, and its important contribution to, promoting dialogue and cooperation for peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Ministers commended the EU for its contribution to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and applauded the EU and Myanmar for the successful co-chairing of the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and the related Defence Officials Dialogue (2013-2014). ASEAN welcomed the interest of the EU in furthering engagement with the region through all ASEAN-led processes.

8. The Ministers agreed on the need to strengthen the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime by, among others, working towards a successful outcome of the 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and by promoting the entry into force and universalisation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The EU shared ASEAN's commitment in preserving the Southeast Asia region as free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and the ASEAN Charter. The Ministers encourage States parties to the Treaty to continue to engage nuclear weapons states to resolve comprehensively, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Treaty, outstanding issues, with a view to signing the protocol thereto and its related documents expeditiously.

Furthermore, countries should combat and eradicate the illicit trade of conventional arms and prevent their diversion to the illicit market to non-state actors. The Ministers further underlined the importance of conventional arms control and looked forward to the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty.

They welcomed the work of the EU-sponsored Southeast Asian Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Centre of Excellence, officially opened in Manila in March 2013, in assisting the development of national response plans and foster regional coordination.

9. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and to fostering preventive diplomacy. They supported the efforts by the UN Secretary General and the UN Group of Friends of Mediation and called for enhanced cooperation on mediation and preventive diplomacy in the ARF and elsewhere, including through a strengthened partnership in mediation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations.

10. The ASEAN Ministers appreciated EU's initiatives and active participation in the efforts to fostering the dialogue with ASEAN Member States on maritime issues. In this connection, the Ministers welcomed cooperation between ASEAN and the EU on maritime issues and noted the outcomes of the ASEAN-EU High-level Dialogue on Maritime Co-operation which was held on 18-19 November 2013 in Jakarta. It is expected that several possible areas of cooperation on maritime issues, including maritime surveillance, port security, counter-piracy, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and the joint and sustainable management of maritime resources, information sharing and capacity building, could be enhanced through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Plus One framework.

Ministers agreed that the effectiveness of the global fight against piracy and of the protection of sea lanes require full respect by all States of the relevant universally agreed principles of international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

11. The EU Ministers shared the serious concerns expressed by the ASEAN Ministers over the on-going developments in the South China Sea, which have increased tensions in the area, as reflected in the Statements of the 24th ASEAN Summit and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The Ministers underscored the importance of maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in the region and promoting maritime security and safety, freedom of navigation and over-flight, unimpeded commerce, the exercise of self-restraint, including the use or threat to use of force, and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the relevant standards and recommended practices by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

12. The EU Ministers noted that the ASEAN Ministers have called on all parties to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) to undertake full and effective implementation of the DOC and emphasized the need for expeditiously working towards an early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).

13. The Ministers agreed on the importance of continued cooperation to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law. They noted the progress made by the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) in the promotion and protection of human rights, and agreed to continue to cooperate in this area including through the exchange of good practices, information, dialogues, seminars and other capacity building initiatives. The EU invited AICHR for another visit to Europe. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of the Global Summit on ending sexual violence in conflict which took place in London in June 2014 and reiterated the importance of the UN Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

14. The Ministers noted the progress of the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations and discussions between individual ASEAN Member States and the EU. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation between the two regions, including the possibility of resuming negotiations of an ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement, upon realisation of the ASEAN Economic Community by the end of 2015. In this connection, the Ministers looked forward to the convening of the 13th Consultations between ASEAN Economic Ministers and EU Trade Commissioner expected to be held in August 2014 in Myanmar. The Ministers underscored the value of regional economic integration through greater two-way investment flows and emphasised the effective implementation of the Trade and Investment Work Programme for 2013-2014. Furthermore, the Ministers underlined the importance of market access, access to credit for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), infrastructure and youth employment.

15. The Ministers agreed to step up cooperation on Connectivity. They reaffirmed their support for the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) and to enhance connectivity between the two regions, particularly including in the area of physical infrastructure, communication systems and sophisticated technologies. In this connection, the Ministers noted with satisfaction the visit by the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Connectivity (ACCC) to Belgium and Luxembourg in February 2014 which aimed to explore ways to cooperate in this area. The EU looked forward to further the engagement with ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Connectivity (ACCC). The EU, including the European Investment Bank, and ASEAN agreed to explore financial support to the infrastructure connectivity inspired by the MPAC.

16. ASEAN Ministers expressed appreciation for the EU's funding of the ongoing EU-ASEAN Air Transport Integration Project (AATIP), which supports the development of institutional capacity and frameworks within ASEAN to achieve a safe, secure and sustainable single aviation market. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of the EU-ASEAN Aviation Summit (EAAS) held in Singapore in February 2014 to strengthen ASEAN-EU co-operation on civil aviation and to promote air travel between the two regions. The Ministers also welcomed the Joint Declaration on EU-ASEAN Aviation Co-operation adopted at the EAAS. The ASEAN Ministers further supported the statement by the European Commission Vice-President and Transport Commissioner at the EAAS that the European Commission would seek authorisation from the Council of the EU to start negotiations on an EU-ASEAN comprehensive air transport agreement. The Ministers welcomed the establishment of an ASEAN-EU Aviation Working Group which will discuss and monitor progress in the entire range of areas of co-operation in aviation and looked forward to the convening of the Working Group soon.

17. The Ministers noted progress in ASEAN-EU cooperation in the field of science and technology. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the success of ASEAN-EU Year of Science, Technology and Innovation in 2012 and the ASEAN-EU Science, Technology and Innovation Days 2014 on 21-23 January 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand and looked forward to intensifying cooperation in this area of mutual interest, including the transfer of technology programmes.

18. The Ministers underlined the important role that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), including microenterprises, contributed to regional economic growth, employment generation and poverty elimination. In this regard, the Ministers stressed the support for further cooperation between ASEAN and the EU in SMEs development to enable SMEs to play a more active role in the global economy, including through sharing of best practices and experience in SMEs development, transfer of technology, access to finance and markets, and capacity building activities.

19. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a stable, balanced, transparent and rules-based multilateral trading system and to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2013, Bali, Indonesia on trade facilitation, agriculture and development issues, and the agreement to work towards the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round. In particular, the Ministers acknowledged the value of the swift and ambitious implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, which would advance initiatives being undertaken in the region to simplify customs procedures, ease the flow of goods across borders and provide certainty for businesses. The Ministers committed to the expeditious implementation of the Agreement, including to the timely adoption of the protocol and for relevant Members to submit their Category A notifications to the WTO as soon as possible, so that it can be annexed to the Agreement by 31 July 2014.

20. The EU welcomed the adoption of the Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC) by the ASEAN Leaders at the 23rd ASEAN Summit in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, in 2013.

21. On climate change, the Ministers reaffirmed the commitment to develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) applicable to all Parties and expressed their determination to adopt the said document at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21), which will be held in December 2015 in Paris, France. Both parties agreed to put forward contributions well in advance of the Paris Conference. The IPCC 5th Assessment Report highlighted the need for action and how it could be delivered. The Ministers noted that the Climate Summit convened by the UN Secretary General on 23 September 2014 offers an opportunity to build the political momentum towards the new agreement in 2015. They also encouraged effective implementation of the ASEAN Action Plan on Joint Response to Climate Change, with particular attention to vulnerable groups in adaptation efforts.

22. For the longer term, the Ministers also agreed to adopt a cautious approach in dealing with engineering technologies with potential impact on natural processes and geological stability, to mitigate greenhouse gas emission. Such technologies include ocean fertilisation and carbon capture and sequestration in seabed geological formation.

23. The Ministers supported the inclusive and transparent approach of the post-2015 Development agenda formulation process. They welcomed the proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals and the recommendations of the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development agenda. The Ministers emphasised that the objectives of the new universal framework should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development. The Ministers also supported a post-2015 agenda that is universal, people-oriented and people-centred, with balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development namely, economic, social and environment. The Ministers emphasised the need for concrete implementation of the post-2015 agenda, with roles and responsibilities for all, including sound and coherent policies at all levels: trade-related issues; finance; science, technology and innovation (STI); migration; multi-stakeholder partnerships; and monitoring and accountability. The Ministers acknowledged the critical importance of peaceful and inclusive societies, good governance, rule of law, effective and capable institutions both as important development goals in themselves and as important enablers for development. The post-2015 agenda should be global in aspiration and coverage and universally applicable, while being based on national ownership and taking into account different national contexts, capacities and levels of development and respecting national priorities and capabilities. The Ministers emphasised the need for all partners to reinforce their efforts through global partnership and through adequate means of implementation to achieve the existing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

24. The Ministers welcomed the resumption of the EU-ASEAN Senior Officials' consultations on Transnational Crime, which took place in June 2014 in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to intensify EU-ASEAN cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organised crime, notably illicit drug production, trafficking and use; trafficking in human beings; cybercrime; as well as in the mitigation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks. To support this work, they also noted the possible development of an Action Plan on Transnational Crime. The Ministers agreed to enhance the exchange of experiences and information, capacity building and enhanced cooperation in this area.

25. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to enhance ASEAN-EU cooperation in the area of emergency response in disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), including through exchange of knowledge and best practices, and capacity building. They welcomed the Post Haiyan Tacloban Declaration adopted in the ASEM Manila Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management held on 4-6 June 2014 as a template on best practices in DRRM.

26. The Ministers also supported inter-regional cooperation in DRMM and stressed the importance of coordination and coherence among regional and sub-regional mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, mitigation and management. The Ministers welcomed EU's and its Member States' continued assistance to ASEAN through the development of a monitoring and evaluation system for the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). The Ministers recognised the importance of ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercises (Philippines 2009, Indonesia 2011 and Thailand 2013) and welcomed DIREX 2015.

27. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate closely on key environmental issues of common concern, including on the conservation of biological diversity, trafficking in wildlife, timber and other wood products. They recalled the importance of fully implementing the relevant Resolutions and Decisions under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

28. The Ministers welcomed the progress in the negotiations on the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreements between the EU and several ASEAN countries to prevent illegal logging, which should be dealt in a comprehensive manner and cover all of the territories at national level to ensure the FLEGT-VPA's credibility and integrity.

29. The Ministers stressed the importance of sustainable development, namely the crucial link between sustainable use and management of water resources and environmental protection that implies the integration of the three dimensions of development: economic, social and environmental sustainability.

They also recognised the importance of effective development, management and sustainability of water resources. In this context, the Ministers noted the contributions of current Mekong sub-regional cooperation frameworks to the developments of countries in the region. The Ministers welcomed the sharing of experiences regarding the development and sustainable utilization of water resources and other trans-boundary water issues between the countries in the Danube and Mekong river regions.

ASEAN Ministers welcomed the significant increase of EU financial support to Mekong countries from 607M€(2007-2013) to 1705M€(2014-2020) to help close the ASEAN development gap including by maximising synergies with the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI).

30. ASEAN Ministers expressed their appreciation for the EU's commitment to more than double dedicated support for ASEAN's institution building and 2015 Community-building goals to 170M€in the period 2014-2020. This support will be focused on (i) connectivity, through sustainable and inclusive economic integration and trade; (ii) climate change, environment and disaster management; (iii) comprehensive dialogue facility. ASEAN also appreciated the ongoing EU support to ASEAN, for supporting ASEAN Connectivity, for strengthening the capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat and for narrowing the intra ASEAN development gap.

31. The Ministers had in-depth discussions and exchange of views on international and regional issues of common concern, including the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East Peace Process, Syria, Iran, the situation in North Africa and the problem of piracy off Somalia and the Gulf of Guinea.

32. The Ministers noted the issuance of the United Nations Security Council Press Statement on Middle East on 12 July 2014 and expressed their serious concern over the risk of the escalation of conflict in Gaza, which had resulted in the loss of hundreds of civilian lives. The Ministers called for the de-escalation of the conflict, restoration of peace and immediate ceasefire between the concerned parties. They further called for respect of international humanitarian law including the protection of civilians and the provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance. The Ministers urged the international community to act swiftly and decisively to end the current crisis through dialogue and negotiation. They underlined the urgent need for all parties to work towards a resumption of the diplomatic process and to pursue a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

33. The Ministers issued a Joint Statement on the tragic downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17.

34. The Ministers agreed that the 21st ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting would be held in ASEAN in 2016.