

## **Overview ASEAN-European Union Dialogue Relations**

1. The European Union (EU) became ASEAN's Dialogue Partner in 1977 and it was formally institutionalised following the signing of the ASEAN-EEC Cooperation Agreement on 7 March 1980. The adoption of the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership in 2007 was an important milestone in the dialogue relations. The dialogue relation has since grown with the adoption of the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to Strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013-2017) in 2012, which gave a more strategic focus to cooperation at regional cooperation in a wide range of areas - political/ security, economic/trade and socio-cultural.

2. The ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018-2022) was adopted in 2017 at the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC+1) session with the EU on 6 August 2017 in Manila, and its successor, the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership (2023-2027), was adopted at the PMC+1 session with the EU on 4 August 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. ASEAN and the EU commemorated the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Dialogue Relations in 2022. The ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit was held on 14 December 2022 in Brussels to mark this anniversary.

3. ASEAN continue to undertake its collective actions and coordinate policies in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic including coordination with its partners. An ASEAN-EU Ministerial Video Conference on COVID-19 was held on 20 March 2020, where both sides agreed to step up cooperation within ASEAN-led mechanisms as well as with external partners to address COVID-19 comprehensively and effectively, considering the different levels of development of health systems in the region. ASEAN also welcomed the EU's "Team Europe" package of over EUR 800 million to combat the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact on the region, as well as the additional support programme "South East Asia Health Pandemic Response and Preparedness" of EUR 20 million, implemented by the World Health Organization.

### **Political-Security Cooperation**

4. The EU continues to engage with ASEAN in the political-security pillar through their participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Post Ministerial Conferences, and through ASEAN-EU mechanisms such as the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) and the ASEAN-EU Senior Officials' Meeting. The EU also participates in the Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) Plus EU Consultation. To date, ten SOMTC+EU Consultations have been held, most recently via videoconference in July 2022. ASEAN and the EU also regularly

exchange best practices as part of the ASEAN-EU High-Level Dialogue on Maritime Security Cooperation (HLD-MS).

5. At the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) on 21 January 2019 in Brussels, the Ministers agreed in principle to upgrade EU-ASEAN relations to a Strategic Partnership, subject to details and timing to be worked out. Towards this end, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> AEMM on 1 December 2020, both sides agreed to elevate the ASEAN-EU Dialogue Partnership to a Strategic Partnership.

6. The EU acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 12 July 2012 in Phnom Penh during the sidelines of the 45<sup>th</sup> AMM/PMC/19<sup>th</sup> ARF, and it is the first regional organisation to TAC. The accession demonstrated the EU's commitment towards ASEAN and reflected as an important milestone in ASEAN-EU relations to promote peace, security and stability in the region. The appointment of its first dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN as well as the establishment of the Mission of EU to ASEAN in 2016 demonstrated the EU's commitment to deepening its engagement with ASEAN. Currently, there are 25 Ambassadors from the EU Member States that have been accredited to ASEAN.

### **Economic Cooperation**

7. The EU remains an important trading partner of ASEAN. According to ASEAN statistics, the total value of two-way merchandise trade between ASEAN and the EU reached USD 268.9 billion in 2021, which grew by 18.6 per cent, year-on-year, from 2020. The foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow from the EU to ASEAN increased by 42.9 per cent in 2021 on a year-on-year basis and amounted to USD 26.5 billion, placing the EU as ASEAN's second largest external source of FDI among all ASEAN's Dialogue Partners in that year.<sup>1</sup>

8. ASEAN and the EU continue to convene regular consultations between ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the EU Trade Commissioner as well as regular meetings of the ASEAN-EU Senior Economic Officials (SEOM-EU). Bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations and discussions between the individual ASEAN Member States and the EU are ongoing. The 18<sup>th</sup> AEM-EU Trade Commissioner Consultations, held on 18 September 2022 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, reaffirmed a future ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement as a common long-term objective. The meeting also decided to intensify engagement on trade and economic issues by pursuing other avenues in the short to medium term. In this regard, the Meeting notably tasked the Joint Working Group to explore sectoral cooperation, in particular

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<sup>1</sup> As noted by the 18<sup>th</sup> AEM – EU Trade Commissioner Consultation held on 18 September 2022 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

in areas such as digital economy, green technologies and green services and supply chain resilience.

9. Recognising the potential for comprehensive aviation cooperation on a region-to-region basis, the ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (ASEAN-EU CATA) was signed at the 28<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Transport Ministers' Meeting on 17 October 2022, in Bali, Indonesia. The ASEAN-EU CATA is the world's first bloc-to-bloc air transport agreement and reflects the latest policy thinking in air transport regulation. The agreement will provide greater opportunities for airlines of ASEAN and the EU to operate passenger and cargo services between and beyond both region, which will help bolster the recovery of air connectivity between the two regions following the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, at the 23<sup>rd</sup> AEMM, ASEAN and the EU also adopted the ASEAN-EU Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity.

### **Socio-Cultural Cooperation**

10. The EU continue to support ASEAN in promoting gender equality and women empowerment, protection of migrant workers and enhancing the quality of education through scholarships and support higher education through the EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (SHARE) programme. Furthermore, through the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI) facility, which was operationalised from September 2011 to Sept 2017, the EU has provided support in various sectors, such as education, science and technology, environment and disaster management. On disaster management. Following the signing of the financing agreement of the EU Support to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) in October 2018 in Brussels, the EU supports the strengthening of ASEAN's cooperation in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

11. The inaugural High-Level ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development: Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was convened on 17 November 2017 in Bangkok. The High-Level ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development is a platform to promote cooperation on the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development was held on 10 February 2020 in Brussels, Belgium on the sidelines of the ASEAN-EU SOM. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development was hosted by Thailand on 18 November 2021 via videoconference.

12. At the launch of the High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change in Bangkok on 8 July 2019, both sides reaffirmed the commitment to strengthen cooperation between ASEAN and the EU on shared regional and global challenges

related to the protection of the environment and climate change. The dialogue provided space for exchanges of best practices and lessons learned, assessing progress towards relevant environmental and climate goals, and designing enabling conditions at a regional scale. The 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-EU High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change took place on 6 October 2022.

### **ASEAN-EU Development Cooperation Programmes**

13. The EU supported ASEAN in the regional integration process, strengthening the capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat and enhancing ASEAN connectivity through various development cooperation programmes across the three pillars of ASEAN. ASEAN and the EU have concluded several Financing Agreements (FAs), namely the Sustainable Use of Peat Lands and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA), Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP), the ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE) Plus, and the Integrated Programme on Enhancing the Capacity of AHA Centre, ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanism (EU Support to AHA Centre), SMART Green ASEAN Cities, and the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Forest Law Enforcement and Governance and Trade (FLEGT) programmes.

14. The Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI) and the ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE Plus), which are follow-up programmes to the READI and ARISE with a combined budget of €61 million, were launched in 2018.

15. The EU has provided funding and technical assistance to support the following programmes/project over the past years: (i) Institutional Capacity Building for ASEAN Monitoring and Statistics (COMPASS) (2013-2018); (ii) the EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (EU SHARE) (2014-2019); (iii) ASEAN-EU Migration and Border Management Programme Phase II (2014-2018); (iv) ASEAN-EU Statistical Capacity Building Programme (2009-2012); (v) ASEAN Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (2009-2017); (vi) ASEAN Air Transport Integration Project (2010-2016); (vii) Enhancing ASEAN FTA Negotiating Capacity/Support to ASEAN-EU Negotiating Process (2011-2013); and (viii) the ASEAN Farmers' Organisations Support Programme (AFOSP) (2015-2020).

