OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-AUSTRALIA DIALOGUE RELATIONS

1. Australia became ASEAN’s first Dialogue Partner in 1974 and the relations have since evolved to cover a wide range of cooperation across the three ASEAN Community pillars. At the ASEAN-Australia Commemorative Summit to mark the 40th Anniversary of the partnership between ASEAN and Australia, held in November 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, the Leaders announced the elevation of the ASEAN-Australia dialogue relations to a strategic level. In recognition of the Strategic Partnership, the First ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit was held on 7 September 2016 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

2. The ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, including two side events, namely the Business Summit and ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Conference, was held on 17-18 March 2018 in Sydney, Australia. At the Special Summit, the Leaders adopted the Joint Statement of the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit: The Sydney Declaration and announced a package of initiatives across the three pillars to strengthen cooperation between the two sides. In the same year, the ASEAN-Australia Informal Breakfast Summit was held on 14 November 2018 in Singapore, in which Australia announced three new initiatives, namely the Southeast Asia Economic Governance and Infrastructure Initiative, Greater Mekong Water Resource Programme and increased cooperation in maritime issues.

3. The Second ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit was held on 14 November 2020 via videoconference. During the Summit, the Leaders agreed to the annualisation of the ASEAN-Australia Summit starting from 2021. Another milestone achievement was made during the First Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit held on 27 October 2021, in which the Leaders agreed to establish a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) between ASEAN and Australia. After two years of online Summits, the Second Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit was held in Phnom Penh on 12 November 2022, during which the Leaders adopted the Joint Statement of the Second Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

4. Current cooperation between ASEAN and Australia is guided by the ASEAN-Australia Plan of Action (2020-2024), which was adopted at the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC+1) session with Australia on 1 August 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. As a follow-up to the establishment of the CSP between ASEAN and Australia, Annex A – ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of the ASEAN-Australia Plan of Action (2020-2024) was adopted at the PMC+1 Session with Australia on 4 August 2022 in Phnom Penh. The Annex will serve as a roadmap to substantiate the CSP in the years to come.

Political-Security Cooperation

5. Australia continues to engage ASEAN in the political-security pillar through their active participation in the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum
(ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), and the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC). Australia also has a regular consultation with the Senior Officials’ Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). To date, sixteen SOMTC + Australia Consultations have been held, most recently via videoconference in July 2022. In addition, ASEAN and Australia also convened the 1st ASEAN – Australia Counter-Terrorism Dialogue on 8 July 2022 via videoconference.

6. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, high-level engagements between ASEAN and Australia continue to take place. The Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, visited the ASEAN Secretariat on 6 June 2022 and met with the then Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi. During this visit, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, also had a meeting with the CPR. Previously, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women of Australia, Senator the Hon Marise Payne visited the ASEAN Secretariat on 9 September 2021 and 10 November 2021.

7. Combatting trafficking in persons is a key area of collaboration between ASEAN and Australia with the implementation of the Australia-Asia Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP) from 2013 to 2018, which was followed by a new AUD 80 million ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking program beginning in 2019. On counter-terrorism, the ASEAN-Australia Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism was signed in July 2006 in Kuala Lumpur and the renewed Declaration was adopted by the Leaders at the First ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit. Furthermore, an ASEAN-Australia MoU on Counter Terrorism was also signed during the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit.

8. In December 2005, Australia acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), which underscored Australia’s strong commitment to promoting regional peace and security. The Australian Mission to ASEAN was established in 2013, demonstrating Australia’s commitment to strengthening ASEAN-Australia dialogue relations.

**Economic Cooperation**

9. Australia remains an important trading partner of ASEAN. The total two-way trade between ASEAN and Australia increased by 26.4 percent in 2021, from US$75.56 billion in 2020 to USD 95.51 billion in 2021, based on Australia’s data. While Australia’s Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flow to ASEAN in 2021 accounted for US$20.57 billion.¹

10. The Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) was signed by the Economic Ministers of ASEAN, Australia, and

¹ As noted by the 27th AEM-Closer Economic Relations (CER) Consultations held on 18 September 2022 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.
New Zealand on 27 February 2009. At the sidelines of the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit, Leaders from ASEAN, Australia, and New Zealand announced the substantial conclusion of the negotiations upgrading the AANZFTA. The upgraded AANZFTA will open up new opportunities as Parties to the Agreement have ensured it remains high quality, responsive towards emerging challenges, takes into account modern trade practices, and remains commercially meaningful to business in the region.

11. The AANZFTA Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP) was established in 2010 and has contributed to enhancing the capacity of ASEAN Member States’ institutions in implementing the AANZFTA. At the 27th AEM-CER Consultations, ASEAN Ministers appreciated the continuous contribution from Australia and New Zealand to support economic cooperation under the AANZFTA and welcomed the AANZFTA Implementation Support (AIS) programme as the succeeding economic cooperation programme for the AANZFTA starting 1 July 2022.

12. Australia is one of the five Dialogue Partners of ASEAN that signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) on 15 November 2020. Its ratification of the agreement together with New Zealand in October 2021 triggered the entry into force of the Agreement on 1 January 2022.

**Socio-Cultural Cooperation**

13. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation to combat the spread of COVID-19 has intensified. The Special ASEAN-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on COVID-19 and the ASEAN-Australia Health Experts Meeting was held on 30 June 2020 and 29 July 2020 respectively. A number of initiatives have been announced and are being implemented to support ASEAN’s efforts in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

14. Education, youth and people-to-people exchange is a flagship area of ASEAN-Australian cooperation. Since the beginning of 2020, Australia offered 1,118 Australia Awards to citizens of ASEAN Member States to study and undertake professional development in Australia. At the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, Australia also announced new education initiatives, including the Australia Awards ASEAN scholarships and a New Colombo Plan ASEAN Fellowship.

15. Australia is supporting regional cooperation on migration governance which supports activities under the ACMW Work Plan 2016-2020 through the Tripartite Action to Enhance the Contribution of Labour Migration to Growth and Development in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (TRIANGLE in ASEAN) from 2016-2025. On disaster management, Australia has been a key partner in providing technical assistance to ASEAN on disaster management. Australia continues to provide support to the AHA Centre’s capacity to respond to regional crises. Australia
has announced a further funding for the AHA Centre to support a new phase of work on human-induced crisis in the region during the Second ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit in November 2020. Recently, Australia extended A$ 5 million commitment to AHA Centre to provide humanitarian assistance to Myanmar.

Development Cooperation

16. The ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation focuses on economic areas and social development was established in 1974 through the ASEAN-Australia Economic Cooperation Programme (AAECP) and was followed by the AADCP (2002-2008). The AADCP II was then extended to 2015 and further extended to December 2022. The AADCP II continues to support the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community blueprint, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the IAI Workplan III in promoting and implementing people-oriented and people-centered projects. It also supports the ASEAN Secretariat to better perform its mandate in facilitating integration across the three Community pillars. During the Second ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit, Australia also announced a range of initiatives, including on the areas of quality infrastructure development, marine resource development, digital technologies, Mekong programme and emerging security needs.

17. As a follow-up to the announcement made at the First ASEAN-Australia Summit, ASEAN and Australia signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Australia for ASEAN Futures Initiative on 20 June 2022.