

OVERVIEW

ASEAN-UNITED KINGDOM DIALOGUE RELATIONS

1. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) was conferred the status of Dialogue Partner of ASEAN at the 54th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) held on 2 August 2021 via videoconference. The conferment ceremony was held via videoconference on 5 August 2021. Long before the conferment of this formal partnership, the UK had forged long-standing relations with ASEAN through its previous membership of the European Union.
2. The First ASEAN-UK Joint Cooperation Committee (AUK-JCC) Meeting was held on 24 June 2022, in which the Terms of Reference of the ASEAN-UK Joint Cooperation Committee was adopted.
3. The UK appointed its first Ambassador to ASEAN in 2009. The current UK Ambassador to ASEAN is H.E. Sarah Tiffin, who presented her Letter of Credence to the Secretary-General of ASEAN on 3 April 2023. The UK Mission to ASEAN was officially launched in January 2020 in Jakarta by the UK's Minister for Asia and the Pacific.
4. The UK has established diplomatic relations with all ASEAN Member States, and has Embassies and High Commissions in all ten ASEAN Member States.
5. The Plan of Action (POA) to Implement the ASEAN-UK Dialogue Partnership (2022-2026), was developed and adopted at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with the UK in Phnom Penh on 4 August 2022. The POA 2022-2026 serves as a practical guide to further substantiate the partnership with a focus on areas of mutual interest and benefit.

A. Political-Security Cooperation

6. The UK acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 12 July 2012 at the sidelines of the 45th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The UK's accession to the TAC underscored the importance of the TAC as a code of conduct governing inter-state relations in the region, as well as the UK's strong commitment to promoting regional peace and security.
7. There have been frequent exchanges of high-level visits of the UK Government representatives to ASEAN Member States and ASEAN Secretariat as well as high-level virtual meetings from 2018 to 2021, including two ASEAN-UK Open-Ended Troika Meetings held virtually in 2020 and 2021 and visit by The Rt Hon Liz Truss, the UK's then Secretary for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs to the ASEAN Secretariat on 11 November 2021.

8. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM) Retreat on 22 November 2022 in Siem Reap, Cambodia agreed to admit the UK, along with Canada and France, as observers in the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWGs) activities. This arrangement starts to be implemented in 2023.

B. Economic Cooperation

9. The total two-way trade between ASEAN and the UK showed increasing trends since 2016, with the highest record of two-way trade reached in 2019 at USD 35.74 billion. However, from 2020 to 2021 it saw a decrease due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The two-way trade saw a slight increase again from USD 31.66 billion in 2021 to USD 34.33 billion in 2022. Meanwhile, UK's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the post-pandemic recorded a significant increase from USD -2.96 billion in 2021 to USD 9.92 billion in 2022. In the meantime, the number of tourist arrivals from the UK to ASEAN showed a positive trend since 2016 before experiencing a decline in 2020 as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, tourist arrivals amounted to 0.68 million, a steep 78% decrease compared to the previous year's figure at 3.11 million. In 2022, the number of tourist arrivals has slowly increased to 1.22 million.¹

10. The UK-ASEAN Business Council (UK-ABC) was launched in 2011 to promote trade and investment between ASEAN and the UK. The establishment of the UK-ABC provides a venue for the UK's businesses to explore, develop and deepen their business in ASEAN. The Council, based in London, works in partnership with the British Chambers of Commerce across the ASEAN region to provide support for the UK's business interests in the region.

11. An ASEAN Economic Ministers' Troika Open-ended Dialogue with UK Trade Minister was held on 26 August 2020, which reaffirmed commitment for ASEAN-UK continued cooperation to recover from COVID-19 pandemic by working together to sustain and deepen the close ASEAN-UK economic ties, mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19, strengthen economic resilience, and pursue sustainable economic growth that keeps markets open and transparent.

12. The ASEAN Economic Ministers convened its first formal meeting Consultation with the UK (1st AEM-UK Consultation) on 15 September 2021 via videoconference, during which both sides expressed its commitment to grow bilateral trade even further, and recognised that an open, free, inclusive, transparent, rules-based, and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system is fundamental to a resilient, inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 pandemic. As an outcome, the meeting endorsed the Joint Ministerial Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and the UK, which highlights shared commitment in developing ASEAN-UK economic relations in a number of priority areas, including economic recovery from COVID-19 pandemic; ASEAN-UK supply chains and maintaining open

¹ ASEAN Statistics Database as of June 2023

markets; regulatory excellence; digital innovation; financial services; sustainable growth; infrastructure; skills and education; micro, small, and medium enterprises development; women's economic empowerment; and public-private sector partnership. The ASEAN-UK Work Plan to Implement the Joint Ministerial Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and the UK, which would guide ASEAN-UK economic relations through sector-specific cooperation programmes, was endorsed at the 2nd AEM-UK Consultation on 10 November 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

C. Socio-Cultural Cooperation

13. Since before the conferment of ASEAN Dialogue Partnership to the UK, there had been extensive socio-cultural cooperation between the UK and countries in the ASEAN region. The Chevening Scholarship Programme, an international scholarship funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, fully funds approximately 200 students a year from ASEAN Member States to study for post-graduate degrees in the UK. The British Council, a British organisation specialising in international cultural and educational opportunities, has also been contributing to education reform and development across Southeast Asia, having trained over 30,000 English teachers over the past five years. It also teaches English to over 6 million learners, both face-to-face and online, across all ten ASEAN Member States. The British Council has led a consortium to deliver "*European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE)*", a grant-funded programme to support the ASEAN Secretariat and regional stakeholders to enable greater harmonisation and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education.

14. At the Open-Ended Troika Meeting between ASEAN Foreign Ministers and the Foreign Secretary of the UK on COVID-19 on 30 September 2020 via videoconference, the UK announced that it has refocused GBP 50 million of UK funding within ASEAN specifically to tackle the COVID-19, which includes: (i) its intention to contribute up to GBP 1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund; (ii) its contribution of GBP 0.5 million to the ASEAN Secretariat to provide technical support to ASEAN on policies to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19 through the "*Accelerated C-19 Economic Support (ACES)*" Project, and GBP 0.2 million to continue cooperation with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) through technical assistance in 2021.

15. The UK attended the Pledging Conference on the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar on 18 August 2021, and has pledged USD 100,000 worth of technical assistance to the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar.

D. Development Cooperation

16. The UK established a South East Asia Prosperity Fund Programme in 2015 which aims to create conditions for global growth by supporting economic development and poverty reduction in middle-income countries, and improving conditions for international business. The Programme has supported over 125

policy projects in the region (at a value of GBP 5.4 million) with projects in all ASEAN Member States except Brunei Darussalam, providing technical assistance, building capacity, encouraging stakeholders' discussions, and sharing the UK's experience.

17. During the Secretary-General of ASEAN's visit to the UK in January 2019, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific at the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced the launch of two programmes that would deliver a total of GBP 34 million (USD 43 million) in funding to support low carbon transitions and economic reform in the ASEAN region, namely "*ASEAN-UK Low Carbon Energy Programme*" and "*ASEAN Economic Reform Programme*". The former is a four-year programme to support ASEAN's efforts to shift towards low carbon energy, which will provide policy support, capacity building and technical assistance to facilitate green finance flows, while the latter is a four-year programme of capacity building and technical assistance to support ASEAN and its Member States' efforts to improve business environment and develop financial markets.

18. The UK announced its financial support of GBP 110 million to the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance (ACGF) Facility for clean and resilient infrastructure in Southeast Asia at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, UK on 2 November 2021. The Facility is aimed to support the ACGF's initiatives in supporting governments in Southeast Asia to prepare and finance infrastructure projects that promote environmental sustainability and contribute to climate change goals.

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