OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-UNITED STATES COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

1. Since its establishment in 1977, the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations has evolved from exchange of views on political and security issues to a wide range of cooperation areas across the three Community pillars.

2. At the 3rd ASEAN-U.S. Summit in November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, the Leaders announced the elevation of the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations to a strategic level. The goals and vision of this Strategic Partnership are being realised through the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership for the period of 2016 to 2020. Following the elevation of the dialogue relations, the U.S. hosted the ASEAN-U.S. Special Leaders’ Summit on 15-16 February 2016 in Sunnylands, California, U.S.A.

3. The 5th ASEAN-U.S. Summit was held on 13 November 2017 in Manila to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the ASEAN-U.S. dialogue relations. A number of activities have been held throughout the year to commemorate this auspicious occasion, including the visit of U.S. Vice President Mike Pence to the ASEAN Secretariat on 20 April 2017.

4. The ASEAN-U.S. Special Summit to commemorate the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue Relations was held on 12-13 May 2022 in Washington DC. The Leaders adopted the Joint Vision Statement, which reflects the breadth and depth of ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership.

5. At the 10th ASEAN-U.S. Summit on 12 November 2022, which was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the Leaders agreed to establish the ASEAN-U.S. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) and issued the ASEAN-U.S. Leaders Statement on the Establishment of the ASEAN-U.S. CSP.

POLITICAL-SECURITY COOPERATION

6. The U.S. continues to engage with ASEAN in the political-security pillar through their active participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). Areas of mutual interest include maritime security, cyber security, and combatting transnational crime, including terrorism and trafficking in persons (TIP), among others. Initiatives on this front include the first ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise, held on 2 – 6 September 2019 in international waters of Southeast Asia, the third iteration of the Cyber Policy Dialogue held on 1 February 2023, following previous iterations of the Dialogue held in 2019 and 2021, as well as the Tabletop Exercise on Response Capabilities to CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and
nuclear) Incidents on 13-15 June 2022 (co-chaired with the Republic of Korea and the Philippines).

7. Cooperation in combatting transnational crime and other non-traditional security issues has been strengthened through the U.S.’ engagement with the ASEAN Senior Officials’ Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). To date, fourteen SOMTC+U.S. Consultations have been held, where the last meeting was held virtually in July 2022.

8. The U.S. acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in July 2009 at the ASEAN PMC+1 Session with the U.S. in Phuket, Thailand, and was among the first Dialogue Partners to appoint its dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN and establish a Mission to ASEAN in 2010.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

9. The U.S. remains an important trading partner of ASEAN with the total two-way trade in 2022 reaching US$ 420.4 billion\(^1\), making it the second largest trading partner of ASEAN among Dialogue Partners. The U.S. is ASEAN’s largest external source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2022 with a total inflow amounting to US$ 36.5 billion\(^2\).

10. The ASEAN Economic Ministers-U.S. Trade Representative (AEM-USTR) Consultations and ASEAN Senior Economic Officials-Assistant USTR (SEOMAUSTR) Consultations are held annually to promote trade and investment flow between both sides as well as exchange views on a range of economic issues.

11. Both sides continue to intensify trade and investment ties between the two regions, including through the implementation of the 2022-2023 ASEAN-U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA) and the Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) Work Plan, as endorsed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers and the U.S. Trade Representative Consultations (AEM-USTR Consultations) in September 2022. Within these frameworks, ASEAN and the U.S. have strengthened cooperation in trade facilitation, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) development and the harmonisation of standards and conformance, among others.

12. ASEAN and the U.S. are working to solidify institutional links between ASEAN sectoral bodies under the AEC pillar and the U.S. counterparts through new Dialogues on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Aviation. The U.S. has also committed to supporting ASEAN Member States in improving the skills of their workforce.

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\(^1\) ASEAN Secretariat Trade Statistics database (preliminary data as of 31 May 2023)
\(^2\) ASEAN Secretariat FDI database (preliminary data as of 20 June 2023).
and enhancing their economic competitiveness through initiatives in education and training, SME development, youth entrepreneurship, and women empowerment.

13. The ASEAN Finance and Central Bank Deputies meet every year with the U.S. Treasury Deputy to exchange views on global and regional macroeconomic policies and outlooks. This consultation mechanism aims at improving mutual understanding and ensuring policy complementarities to maintain resilience and growth for both sides.

14. At the ASEAN-U.S. Special Leaders’ Summit, the U.S. announced two initiatives, namely the U.S.-ASEAN Connect and the U.S. Trade Workshop. The U.S.-ASEAN Connect Centres in Jakarta, Bangkok and Singapore have supported the U.S.’ economic engagement in the region in connecting entrepreneurs, investors and businesses from both regions. Under this program, the U.S.-ASEAN Internship Programme was launched in 2018 to provide opportunities for ASEAN students to gain work experience in U.S. companies based in ASEAN Member States.

15. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Roadshow to the U.S., which was started in 2013, has played an important role in creating partnership opportunities for ASEAN and U.S. businesses. During the Third AEM Roadshow on 17-18 February 2016, the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council (US-ABC) held a Conference to exchange views on the business opportunities.

SOCIO-CULTURAL COOPERATION

16. ASEAN and the U.S. are working on a number of areas, including disaster management, promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, as well as education and youth.

17. The U.S. continues to contribute towards human development in the region as well as in enhancing people-to-people connectivity through initiatives such as the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI); the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholar; the U.S.-Science Prize for Women; as well as the ASEAN Youth Volunteer Program and Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training (COMET), among others.

18. The U.S. also continues to support the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in the region, including support for the ASEAN Regional Study on WPS, which was launched on International Women’s Day on 8 March 2021.

19. In addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN and the U.S. have stepped up their collaboration on this front through a series of high-level engagements and initiatives. This includes: (i) the U.S.’ pledge of USD 500,000 towards the COVID-19 ASEAN Response
Fund, and its commitment to support the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF); (ii) the launch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Regional Office in Ha Noi, Viet Nam in August 2021; and (iii) the U.S.’ pledge of over USD 194 million in COVID-19 related assistance to the region, as well as an ASEAN – U.S. Special Session Heath Ministerial Meeting which was convened on 15 May 2022 in Bali, Indonesia.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

20. Since September 2018, the U.S. through its IGNITE and PROSPECT have been supporting the realisation of goals under the three ASEAN Community Pillars, following the completion of the five-year ASEAN-U.S. Partnership for Good Governance, Equitable and Sustainable Development and Security (PROGRESS) and the ASEAN Connectivity through Trade and Investment (ACTI) programmes in 2018. The two follow-up programmes are expected to be completed in August 2023.

21. IGNITE aims to promote a well-integrated and inclusive ASEAN Economic Community by enhancing the trading relationship between ASEAN and the U.S., while PROSPECT aims to support ASEAN’s objective of building a more inclusive, rules-based, and prosperous Southeast Asia through increasing ASEAN’s capacity to resolve regional and global challenges and advance an effective, rules-based architecture for cooperation among governments in the region to uphold human dignity and the rule of law.

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