

# **JOINT SUMMARY OF THE WORKING VISIT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**1-3 NOVEMBER 2023**

1. At the invitation of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN, paid a working visit to the UK on 1-3 November 2023. The visit reaffirmed ASEAN and the UK's growing partnership since the UK became an ASEAN Dialogue Partner in 2021. This partnership spans political-security, economic, socio-cultural and other priorities as outlined in the ASEAN-UK Plan of Action (2022-2026) and the ASEAN Community Vision. The visit also highlighted ASEAN-UK cooperation on all four priority areas of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: connectivity; maritime cooperation; economic cooperation; and issues core to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including education, health and climate.
2. The UK's Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN strengthens and deepens the longstanding relationships between the UK and the region. Throughout his visit, the UK reaffirmed to the Secretary-General its commitment to working with ASEAN partners in support of the region's peace, stability and economic growth, and its respect for ASEAN Centrality as the underlying principle for promoting cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and ASEAN-led mechanisms as platforms for cooperation.
3. The Secretary-General of ASEAN and Deputy Prime Minister of the UK, The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, discussed global challenges such as cyber security and highlighted a mutual ambition for further collaboration. The Secretary-General of ASEAN noted the UK's existing support for the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE) and the ASEAN-Japan Cyber Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC). The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the UK's continued focus on the establishment of programmes and initiatives that bring together the best of British and ASEAN expertise from our public and private sectors and wider societies.
4. The Secretary-General of ASEAN and Minister for the Indo-Pacific, The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, discussed the UK's support for maritime cooperation in Southeast Asia. They discussed the new ASEAN-UK Maritime Programme in support of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the ASEAN Maritime Outlook. This new capacity-building programme will boost regional resilience and support ASEAN Member States to respond to maritime

cooperation challenges. Minister Trevelyan raised the UK's strong interest in engaging with ASEAN's wider regional defence and security architecture, as demonstrated by its applications to join the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus.

5. The visit highlighted the deep economic ties between the UK and ASEAN, a trading relationship worth £47.5 billion. The Secretary-General of ASEAN engaged with senior UK business leaders, including at a UK-ASEAN Business Council (UKABC) roundtable, at a lunch for business and Parliamentarians hosted by The Rt Hon. the Lord Vaizey of Didcot, Chair of UKABC, at the House of Lords, and at a discussion with senior financial services leaders in the City of London. During the latter, the Secretary-General of ASEAN noted the proposal for an ASEAN-UK Collaboration on Financial Services, a package to be delivered through the private sector to strengthen ASEAN's regional market infrastructure, support ASEAN's financial literacy, and promote access to finance for ASEAN Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs).
6. The Secretary-General of ASEAN and Minister for International Trade Nigel Huddleston MP discussed how to further strengthen cooperation between ASEAN and the UK across shared priorities including bolstering supply chain resilience, enhancing financial services, promoting regulatory excellence, advancing digital transformation, fostering MSME development, and facilitating open trade. In particular, the Secretary-General of ASEAN expressed his appreciation for the UK's commitment of £25 million to the ASEAN-UK Economic Integration Programme. The Secretary-General of ASEAN highlighted that the programme will be central to the delivery of the Work Plan to Implement the ASEAN-UK Joint Ministerial Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation. They also highlighted the growth potential of ASEAN's digital economy and looked forward to stronger cooperation and collaboration under the Digital Innovation Partnership in support of the ongoing negotiations and future implementation of ASEAN's Digital Economy Framework Agreement.
7. Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care Will Quince MP and Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation George Freeman MP hosted an event for the Secretary-General of ASEAN celebrating the strength of ASEAN-UK- collaboration on health, and science and technology. Minister Quince and the Secretary-General of ASEAN discussed the proposed £25m ASEAN-UK Global Health Security Programme, which over five years will support ASEAN in improving capacity for the prevention, detection and response to health threats in Southeast Asia, contributing to improved regional and global health security.
8. The UK reaffirmed its commitment to working with ASEAN to deepen the collaborative links between the science and technology sectors of ASEAN and

the UK. The Secretary-General of ASEAN expressed the view that these links will support the future economy and address our shared and global challenges including climate change resilience and adaptation, health, energy transition and access, and disaster preparedness.

9. The Secretary-General of ASEAN welcomed the first ASEAN-UK sectoral dialogue, the ASEAN-UK Dialogue on Science, Technology, and Innovation (AUKDSTI-1), held on 20 October 2023. He expressed satisfaction with the ongoing implementation of three key ASEAN-UK Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) collaborations: i) The ASEAN i-Teams Project in collaboration with the University of Cambridge, aimed at fostering a culture of technology commercialisation within the region; ii) the £1 million Research and Innovation for Development (RIDA) programme that will harness innovation to address Sustainable Development Goals and support low-income and vulnerable populations across ASEAN; iii) UK-ASEAN Regional Training on Engineering Biology. The first and second of these projects will be led locally or delivered in collaboration with Southeast Asian research institutes and will address critical issues related to health, climate resilience, energy transition, and agriculture. The third will enhance the understanding of engineering biology's role in responsible innovation, economic security, and resolution of global challenges among Southeast Asian government officials
10. The Secretary-General of ASEAN welcomed the establishment of the UK's International Science Partnerships Fund, which promises to bolster future ASEAN-UK STI initiatives for mutual benefit. He discussed future potential areas of ASEAN-UK STI cooperation including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and AI Safety, Biotechnology and Life Sciences, as well as Space Technology and Applications.
11. The Chief Executive of the British Council and Secretary-General of ASEAN discussed possibilities for cooperation. On the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), the UK announced a new package of support to further strengthen expert collaboration and knowledge exchange between the UK and ASEAN. Delivered through the British Council, this new programme will strengthen the capacity of ASEAN policymakers and practitioners in the cultural and creative industries.
12. The Secretary-General of ASEAN also met the UK's International Education Champion Sir Steve Smith and discussed opportunities for ASEAN-UK cooperation in education. The Secretary-General of ASEAN welcomed the UK's intention to launch a new ASEAN Chevening Scholarships Programme in 2024, as well as 10 new ASEAN-UK Scholarships for Women in STEM. His visit underlined the priority attached to education as a priority area for ASEAN-

UK cooperation, with the new ASEAN-UK ‘Strengthening the Advancement of Girls’ Education’ (SAGE) programme at its heart.

13. The Secretary-General of ASEAN and the UK agreed on the importance of connectivity to regional peace, stability and prosperity and to the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. He welcomed the UK’s support for the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 including training ASEAN officials under the ASEAN Sustainable Leadership in Infrastructure Programme, use of the British Investment Partnerships toolkit to support infrastructure projects across the region, and the assistance of the British Standards Institute in developing a Roadmap for ASEAN Standards Harmonisation to support SDGs Implementation. As part of the Green Grids Initiative (launched at COP26), the UK and ASEAN are exploring opportunities to work closely together including on technical analyses and financing options to accelerate investment into proposed ASEAN Power Grid interconnectors.
14. The Secretary-General of ASEAN also visited Battersea Power Station, a decommissioned power station transformed by Malaysian investors into a new shopping and leisure destination in London. British infrastructure experts Arup used this impressive example of UK–Southeast Asia collaboration to showcase the UK’s broader approach to large-scale sustainable infrastructure projects.
15. The Secretary-General of ASEAN’s visit showcased the growing breadth of the partnership between ASEAN and the UK and provided avenues to facilitate future cooperation. The Secretary-General expressed his support for building on these strong foundations through new initiatives to deepen and broaden our cooperation including the possibility of an ASEAN-UK Centre.
16. The Secretary-General of ASEAN expressed his appreciation to the Government of the UK, especially the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, for the kind hospitality and the excellent arrangements of the entire programme to ensure a productive and fruitful visit to further strengthen relations, cooperation and partnership between ASEAN and the UK.

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