

OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-AUSTRALIA COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

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. 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.
3. Another milestone 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. 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 (AOIP). The Third ASEAN-Australia Summit was held on 7 September 2023 in Jakarta, Indonesia, during which the Leaders adopted the ASEAN-Australia Joint Leaders' Statement on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises.
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.

5. Apart from the annual ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference Plus One (PMC+1) Session with Australia, the ASEAN-Australia Forum is held annually at the senior official/director-general level to exchange views on policy issues and review cooperation in all areas of interest. The ASEAN-Australia Joint Cooperation Committee (AA-JCC), consisting of members of the Committee of Permanent Representative to ASEAN (CPR) and their Australian counterparts, is held annually to oversee the implementation of cooperation programmes and activities, including those under the ASEAN-Australia Plan of Action. Following the establishment of the ASEAN-Australia CSP, the ASEAN-Australia JCC Working Group Meeting is held annually.

Political-Security Cooperation

6. 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, seventeen SOMTC + Australia Consultations have been held, most recently on 22 June 2023. In addition, ASEAN and Australia have so far convened two ASEAN – Australia Counter-Terrorism Dialogues, i.e. in July 2022 via videoconference and in May 2023 in Bali, Indonesia.

7. 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.

8. 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 the 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 in 2018.

9. 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

10. Australia remains an important trading partner of ASEAN. Based on ASEAN Secretariat figures, the total two-way trade between Australia and ASEAN reached USD 101,1 billion in 2022¹. Australia's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flow to ASEAN in 2022, according to ASEAN Secretariat data, accounted for US\$ 2.03 billion².

11. The Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) was signed by the Economic Ministers of ASEAN, Australia, and New Zealand on 27 February 2009. The first Protocol to Amend the AANZFTA covering Chapters in Trade in Goods and Rules of Origins was signed in August 2014. 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. Subsequently, the chapter-based negotiations of the AANZFTA upgrade was concluded at the 20th Meeting of the AANZFTA Joint Committee (FJC) on 14-17 February 2023 in Bandung, Indonesia. The commencement of the signing of the 2nd Protocol to Amend the AANZFTA was done on 22 August 2023 at the sideline of the 28th AEM-CER Consultation in Semarang, Indonesia by Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore along with Australia and New Zealand.

12. 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.

13. 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. The Agreement has now entered into force for all signatories.

14. At the 2nd ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit in November 2020, Australia announced an AUD 46 million to deliver the Regional Trade for Development (RT4D) initiative to support ASEAN's implementation of both AANZFTA and RCEP through the AANZFTA Implementation Support Program (AISP) and RCEP Implementation Support Program (RISP).

¹ ASEAN Trade Statistics Database (data as of December 2023)

² ASEAN FDI Database (data as of December 2023)

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

15. 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, including Australia's support to the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED).

16. Education, youth and people-to-people exchange is a flagship area of ASEAN-Australian cooperation. At the First Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit in 2021, Australia announced 100 Australia for ASEAN Scholarships to mark the establishment of the CSP. Over 70 of the 100 scholars commenced study in Australia in the 1st semester of 2023.

17. 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. Recently, Australia extended A\$ 5 million commitment to AHA Centre to provide humanitarian assistance to Myanmar.

Cross-Pillar Cooperation

18. In 2020, Australia announced the Partnerships for Infrastructure (P4I) initiative, which partners with ASEAN to improve the development of quality economic infrastructure consistent with MPAC 2025. P4I has supported a number of activities, including the ASEAN Energy Business Forum and the ASEAN Secretariat workshop on sustainable and equitable infrastructure outcomes. Furthermore, the ASEAN-Australia Smart Cities Trust Fund supports activities that enable cities to facilitate adaptation and adoption of digital solutions and governance systems.

19. Australia has continued to support the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) throughout the years. Under the IAI Work Plan IV (2021-2025), AADCP II supported a number of projects, including the project on "*Formulation of the Implementation Plan of the Framework for CLMV Development*", which assisted CLMV Senior Economic Officials Meeting (CLMV SEOM) in the implementation and monitoring of the Framework for CLMV Development by developing a clear, specific, measurable and achievable action plan covering the period of 2022-2030.

Development Cooperation

20. 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.

21. As a follow-up to the announcement made at the 1st Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit in 2021, ASEAN and Australia signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Australia for ASEAN Futures Initiative on 20 June 2022. The successor of the AADCPII, Aus4ASEAN Futures–Economic and Connectivity (ECON), has formally commenced implementation following the signing of the Cooperation Arrangement on 22 December 2022.

