

## **Overview of ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**

ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations commenced when H.E. Qian Qichen, the then Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, attended the opening session of the 24<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 1991 in Kuala Lumpur as a guest of the Malaysian Government in which he expressed China's keen interest to cooperate with ASEAN for mutual benefit. Subsequently, China was accorded full Dialogue Partner status at the 29<sup>th</sup> AMM in July 1996 in Jakarta.

2. The relationship between ASEAN and China was elevated to a higher plane with the signing of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity at the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in October 2003 in Bali, Indonesia. Since then ASEAN and China have completed three plans of action for the period of 2005-2010, 2011-2015, and 2016-2020. The new plan of action (2021-2025) was adopted in November 2020 by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and China. In addition, an Annex of the new plan of action was adopted in August 2022.

3. At the 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-China Summit to Commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership in 2018, the Leaders adopted the Strategic Partnership Vision 2030 that aims to further advance the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership and closer cooperation.

4. 2021 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, a Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on 7 June 2021 in Chongqing, China to commemorate the anniversary. A Special ASEAN-China Summit to commemorate the anniversary, which was held on 22 November 2021 via videoconference, adopted a commemorative joint statement in which ASEAN and China jointly announced the establishment of an ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The ASEAN PMC 10+1 Session with China held on 4 August 2022 in Phnom Penh adopted an Annex to the existing Plan of Action 2021-2025 to advance the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

5. The 26<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit held on 6 September 2023 adopted the Joint Statement on Mutually Beneficial Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

6. Other key milestones of the relations include: (i) launch of the ASEAN-China Centre in Beijing at the 14<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2011 in Bali; and (ii) China's appointment of its first resident Ambassador to ASEAN and establishment of the Mission of ASEAN to ASEAN in Jakarta in September 2012.

### **Political and Security Cooperation**

7. ASEAN and China continue to enhance political-security dialogue and cooperation through various ASEAN Plus One mechanisms including summit-level as well as ministerial and senior officials' level meetings. China also participates in broader ASEAN-led frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus

Three (APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus).

8. ASEAN and China sustained engagement to discuss political cooperation through the convening of the ASEAN-China Joint Cooperation Committee (ACJCC), the ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultation (ACSOC), and the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC)+1 Session with China

9. China was the first Dialogue Partner of ASEAN to accede to the TAC in October 2003. China's accession to the TAC has contributed to the stature of the TAC as the code of conduct for inter-state relations in the region. In commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China's accession to the TAC, the ASEAN PMC Plus One Session with China in July 2023 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Commemorating and Reflecting on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of China's Accession to the TAC.

10. China was the first Nuclear Weapon State (NWS) and has expressed its intention to accede to the Protocol to the SEANWFZ.

11. Amidst the outbreak of Corona Virus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), a Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers Meeting held on 20 February 2020 in Vientiane. The Meeting issued a Statement outlining measures to strengthen cooperation in fight against COVID-19. Further, the 24<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit held on 26 October 2021 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Cooperation in Support of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework.

12. ASEAN and China signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in November 2002 in Phnom Penh. ASEAN and China adopted the Guidelines to implement the DOC on 21 July 2011 in Bali, Indonesia. Further, the PMC Plus One Session with China held on 25 July 2016 in Vientiane endorsed the Joint Statement by Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States and China on the Full and Effective Implementation of the DOC which reflected its commitment to ensure the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety. At their meeting on 6 August 2017 in Manila, the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States and China adopted the framework of the Code of Conduct. At the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2017, ASEAN Member States and China officially announced the launch of the COC negotiations. The completion of the first reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) was announced in July 2019, while the completion of the second reading of the SDNT was announced in July 2023. The 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-China SOM on DOC on 26 October 2023 officially announced the commencement of the third reading of the SDNT.

13. In November 2022, the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit adopted the Joint statement on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the DOC. In July 2023, ASEAN Member States and China adopted the Guidelines for Accelerating the Early Conclusion of an Effective and Substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea at the PMC+1 Session with China. The Guidelines was further noted by the Leaders at the 26<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit.

14. The scope of ASEAN and China security cooperation encompasses a wide array of issues, ranging from defence, maritime security, counter-terrorism and transnational crime, drugs and cross-border activities, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as cyber security. Cooperation in these areas is carried out through several ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters (AMMD) and their subsidiary bodies.

15. China has taken an active role in the ADMM-Plus in fostering practical cooperation in all seven priority areas, namely humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), maritime security, military medicine, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian mine action, and cybersecurity. China co-chaired ADMM-Plus Expert Working Group on Counter Terrorism for the 2017-2020 cycle and currently China is co-chairing the ADMM-Plus Experts Working Group on Humanitarian Mine Action with Cambodia for the 2021-2023 cycle.

16. Annual consultations are held between ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and China and between the ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and China to promote their cooperation in combating transnational crimes and other non-traditional security issues. An MOU between ASEAN and China on cooperation in the field of non-traditional security issues was signed in 2004 and renewed in 2009. The succeeding MOU, covering the period of 2017-2023, was signed at the Fifth AMMTC+China Consultation on 21 September 2017 in Manila.

17. In combatting illicit drug trafficking, ASEAN and China cooperate under the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD)+China Consultation since 2012. The 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Coordination Meeting held in Ha Noi in 2018 adopted the Terms of Reference of ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD). The Sixth ASOD+China Consultation held on 30 August 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia deliberated on the draft Technical Guidelines on the Utilisation of China's Contribution to ACCORD Fund. The Technical Guidelines was adopted ad referendum on 20 October 2020.

### **Economic Cooperation**

18. ASEAN and China signed the ACFTA in 2002 and was realised in January 2010. The two sides agreed to upgrade the ACFTA with the signing of the ACFTA Upgrade Protocol on 21 November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur. The Protocol entered into force on 1 July 2016. The establishment of the ACFTA has strengthened ASEAN and China's economic relations. China has retained its position as ASEAN's largest trading partner since 2009 and ASEAN has become China's largest trading partner for three consecutive years since 2020. According to ASEAN's statistics, in 2022, trade volume between ASEAN and China reached a new record of USD 722 billion, making China ASEAN's largest trading partner for 14 consecutive years; foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from China to ASEAN amounted to USD 15.5 billion in 2022, and equivalent

to 6.9 percent of total FDI flows to ASEAN.

19. 2021 was a milestone year for ASEAN-China economic relations as it marks the 10th anniversary of the full establishment of ASEAN-China FTA (ACFTA). The Leaders of ASEAN and China welcomed the official launch of negotiations for the upgrade of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) at the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit. The Fifth Round of ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) 3.0 Upgrade Negotiations on 29 January - 2 February 2024, Hangzhou, China.

20. China is a participating country of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement which was signed at the 4<sup>th</sup> RCEP Summit on 5 November 2020.

21. An annual expo to expand trade and investment cooperation between ASEAN and China has been held since 2004, namely the China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO). The expo aims to promote trade in goods, investment cooperation, advanced technology transfer, trade-in services, city-to-city exchanges, industrial connection and subregional cooperation of ASEAN and China. The 20<sup>th</sup> CAEXPO was held on 16-19 September 2023 in Nanning, China, under the theme, "Work Together for a Harmonious Home and a Shared Future"

22. ASEAN and China have agreed to synergise common priorities in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). A Joint Statement on Further Deepening the Cooperation on Infrastructure Connectivity between ASEAN and China was issued by the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2017. Further, at the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-China Summit held on 3 November 2019 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Synergising the MPAC 2025 and the BRI.

23. 2018 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Innovation to explore and enhance cooperation in new areas under the 4.0. Industrial Revolution. A Joint Statement on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation was adopted by the 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2018. 2020 was designated as the Year of ASEAN-China Digital Economy Cooperation. A number of activities were conducted under the theme of the year and the Initiative on Building ASEAN-China Partnership on Digital Economy was adopted.

24. Cooperation in tourism is growing. 2017 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Tourism Cooperation to boost tourists and people-to-people exchanges between the two sides. A Joint Statement on Tourism Cooperation was issued by the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2017 to further strengthen cooperation in this area, including the agreement to establish a high-level cooperation mechanism between relevant tourism authorities, to be convened on a regular basis.

25. ASEAN-China cooperation in agriculture focuses on enhancing cooperation in human resource development through a series of training courses on agricultural technologies to help train agricultural technicians and officials of ASEAN Member States. The cooperation was guided by the MOU between the ASEAN Secretariat and

the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China on Agricultural Cooperation, which was signed in 2007 for 5-year period. Upon its conclusion, the MOU was renewed twice, on 27 September 2013 and 2 October 2018. The latter covers the period of 2018-2023. In November 2022, the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Food Security Cooperation. Further, 2023 is designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Agricultural Development and Food Security Cooperation to boost the cooperation in the aforementioned areas between the two sides. At the 26<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit, ASEAN and China adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Deepening Agricultural Cooperation and welcomed the ASEAN-China Action Plan on Green Agricultural Development to support the implementation of the ASEAN Regional Guidelines on Sustainable Agriculture.

26. Cooperation in quality inspection is pursued under two MOUs on Strengthening Sanitary and Phytosanitary Cooperation (SPS) and Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment (TBT) between ASEAN and China were signed on 20 November 2007 and 24 October 2009, respectively. To implement the MOUs, ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine on SPS and TBT was established and held alternately every year.

27. On customs, the cooperation is pursued under the frameworks of ASEAN-China Customs Directors-General Consultation, and ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Cooperation, through the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Strengthening SPS Cooperation.

28. ASEAN and China continue to strengthen cooperation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ASEAN and China in November 2013 signed an MOU on cooperation in ICT, which covers the areas such as promoting industry, human resources and infrastructure development, as well as cooperation in new technologies and information exchange. The 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting with China (TELMIN+China) held on 6 December 2018 in Bali, Indonesia extended the MOU to further strengthening the cooperation within the framework of the MOU.

29. 2020 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Digital Economy Cooperation, and the Initiative on Building ASEAN-China Partnership on Digital Economy was endorsed by the ASEAN Digital Ministers in November 2020. To maintain this momentum of cooperation, the ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting with China (ADGMIN+China), was established with the first meeting held on 22 January 2021. Further, the Second ADGMIN-China was held on 28 January 2022 adopted the Action Plan on Implementing the ASEAN-China Partnership on Digital Economy Cooperation (2021-2025). At the Third ADGMIN-China held on 2 February 2024 the Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and China on Co-operation in Communications and Digital Technology 2024-2029 was signed to further strengthen

the ASEAN-China partnership in the digital sector. The meeting also adopted the ASEAN-China 2024 Digital Work Plan, and agreed to jointly develop the China-ASEAN Initiative on Facilitating Cooperation in Building a Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Ecosystem and submit it to the 27<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit when appropriate.

30. ASEAN and China also continue to forge cooperation in developing smart cities. The 22<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2019 adopted the ASEAN-China Leader's Statement on Smart City Cooperation Initiative and appreciated China's continued interest in advancing innovation-driven development in ASEAN cities.

31. On transport cooperation, ASEAN and China signed an MOU on Transport Cooperation in November 2004 in Vientiane. The MOU aims to promote medium and long-term cooperation. ASEAN and China signed two agreements on transport, namely i) ASEAN-China Maritime Transport Agreement (AC-MTA) signed on 2 November 2007 and ii) ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement (AC-ATA) signed on 12 November 2010. ASEAN and China are working towards the full liberalisation of the ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement (AC-ATA).

32. Cooperation on science, technology and innovation was highlighted with the designation of 2012 as the ASEAN-China Year of Cooperation in Science and Technology. A series of activities were implemented to mark the year, including among others the ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation and launching of the ASEAN-China Science and Technology Partnership (STEP) Programme. The China-ASEAN Technology Transfer Center has contributed to facilitating information sharing, resource matchmaking and other related services to encourage collaboration between Chinese and ASEAN enterprises and science parks.

33. 2018 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Innovation (YOI). A Joint Statement on ASEAN-China Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation was issued at the 21<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2018. The ASEAN-China Plan of Action for A Closer Partnership of Science, Technology and Innovation for the Future (2021-2025) (ACPASTI) was endorsed by the Special Session of ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation (ACMMSTI) held on 14 December 2021. The 26<sup>th</sup> ASEAN China Summit noted that ASEAN and China had agreed to continue building closer cooperation in STI through mechanisms such as the ASEAN-China Joint Science Technology Committee and welcomed the Joint Initiative on Advancing the ASEAN-China Science, Technology, and Innovation Enhancing Program.

### **Socio-Cultural Cooperation**

34. ASEAN and China cooperate in a variety of areas, including public health, science and technology, education, culture, labour and social security, environment, media, youth, social development, poverty reduction, and disaster management.

35. In health sector, the Ministers on Health of ASEAN and China signed an MOU on Health Cooperation at the Fourth ASEAN-China Health Ministers Meeting (AC-

HMM) on 6 July 2012 in Phuket, Thailand. To operationalise the MOU, yearly priorities of collaboration are agreed by ASEAN and China through the ASEAN China Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (AC-SOMHD) and the ASEAN China Health Ministers Meeting.

36. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN and China sustain their commitment to addressing public health emergency threats jointly. Exchanges of the ASEAN-China Vaccine Friend have been held three times. The "ASEAN-China Vaccine Friend", was established to strengthen ASEAN-China cooperation in information sharing, research and development, and production and application of vaccines. Through the ASEAN-China Public Health Cooperation Initiative: Program on Public Health Emergency Preparedness Capacity (PROMPT), ASEAN and China collaborate to enhance institutional capacity building to better cope with challenges from future public health emergencies, and promote health for all.

37. ASEAN and China always attach great importance to people-to-people exchanges, especially in the sectors of youth, culture, education. Both sides celebrated 2014 as the ASEAN-China Cultural Exchange Year, 2016 as the ASEAN-China Educational Exchange Year, 2017 as the ASEAN-China Year of Tourism Cooperation and 2019 as ASEAN-China Year of Media Exchanges. At the 26<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit, ASEAN welcomed China's proposal for designating 2024 as ASEAN-China Year of People-to-People Exchange to deepen cultural connections and promote greater interaction among the peoples, which play a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and friendship.

38. In the education sector, the China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week (CAECW) has been held annually since 2008 in Guiyang, China. The 2023 CAECW was held on 29 August – 2 September 2023 in Guiyang, China, with the theme of "New Vision for Education Cooperation – Shared Prosperity of the Belt and Road". The ASEAN China-Young Leaders Scholarship (ACYLS) programme, was launched at the sidelines of the PMC 10+1 Session with China on 30 August 2019 in Bangkok. The scholarship project for 2019-2023 is still on-going while the next phase of the project (2023-2027) have been approved and is in the process of implementation.

39. Cooperation in culture is pursued through the implementation of Plans of Action on ASEAN-China Cultural Cooperation. The year 2014 was designated as the ASEAN-China Cultural Exchange Year with various activities undertaken in ASEAN Member States and China. At the Fourth AMCA+China in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in October 2018 the Ministers adopted the ASEAN-China Work Plan on Cooperation in Culture and Arts 2019-2021. The revised work covering the period of 2018-2024 was endorsed by 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) in March 2021.

40. Cooperation in environment is guided by the ASEAN-China Environmental Protection Cooperation Strategy papers. Implementation of activities under the action plans of the Cooperation Strategy is coordinated with the China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Centre (CAEC), which was established in Beijing on 17 March 2010 and

officially inaugurated on 24 May 2011. The first and second Cooperation Strategy papers covered the period 2009-2015 and 2016-2020, respectively. The Framework ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025) was adopted by the ASEAN Ministers on Environment and China in February 2021.

41. 2021 and 2022 are designated as the ASEAN-China Years of Sustainable Development Cooperation with an opening ceremony held in Beijing. An ASEAN-China cooperation symposium was held on 17 September 2021 with the theme of advancing ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for sustainable development in the new normal. The 24<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in October 2021 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Strengthening Cooperation in Green and Sustainable Development. Further, the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2022 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Strengthening Common and Sustainable Development.

42. ASEAN and China continue to organise exchange visits for media personnel. 2019 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Media Exchanges (YOME). A number of activities was implemented by relevant ministries and institutions in ASEAN and China to commemorate YOME. A Joint Statement on Strengthening Media Exchanges and Cooperation between ASEAN and China was adopted at the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in November 2019. As part of the celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, an ASEAN-China Short Video Contest was held to strengthen media role to promote people-to-people exchanges. Since then the Short Video Contest has been held annually.

43. Cooperation on rural development and poverty eradication is continued to be strengthened particularly through the ASEAN-China Forum on Social Development and Poverty Reduction. Sixteen such forums have been held thus far. The 17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Forum on Social Development and Poverty Reduction was held on 27 June 2023 in Beihei, China.

44. ASEAN and China also enhance cooperation in disaster management. The inaugural Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) Plus China was held on 10 June 2021 via videoconference followed by the First ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) Plus China on 14 October 2021, also via videoconference. The AMMDM Plus China adopted the ASEAN-China Work Plan on Disaster Management 2021-2025 under the strategic directions set by the AADMER Work Programme 2021 – 2025, which outlines ASEAN-China priorities for cooperation and resource mobilization for collaborative initiatives in disaster management over the next 5 years.

### **Development Cooperation**

45. China contributes annually to the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund (ACCF) to support the implementation of ASEAN-China cooperation projects. In 2019, China increased its annual contribution to USD 10 million. Since then China has contributed USD 10 million in each year.



46. An ACCF Project Management Team (AMT) has been established in Jakarta to enhance the utilization of the ACCF. The AMT assists in planning, design, management, implementation and programming of ACCF funded programmes/projects. The first phase of the AMT has been closed and the second phase is now on-going.

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