

JOINT SUMMARY OF WORKING VISIT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN TO THE UNITED STATES

10-13 June 2024

The United States (U.S.) Department of State, with assistance provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, was pleased to facilitate the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn's working visit to Washington, D.C. During this inaugural official visit, the Secretary-General engaged with a broad range of stakeholders, including cabinet-level U.S. government officials, Members of Congress, private sector leaders, academics, think tanks experts, and the media. His trip took stock of the robust implementation of the ASEAN U.S. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) announced by President Biden and ASEAN Leaders in November 2022, demonstrating the depth and breadth of the ASEAN-U.S. partnership. As ASEAN and the U.S. intend to develop a new ASEAN-U.S. Plan of Action (2026 - 2030) that will guide both sides in realizing the full potential of the CSP in the next five years, the visit also explored new areas of partnership between ASEAN and the U.S. The visit noted progress in the following areas of the ASEAN-U.S. CSP:

POLITICAL-SECURITY COOPERATION

During the Secretary-General of ASEAN's meeting with the Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, the Deputy Secretary reaffirmed the U.S.' support for ASEAN centrality and the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). Throughout the working visit, the U.S. conveyed to the Secretary-General of ASEAN its commitment to continue its constructive role in promoting dialogue for regional peace, stability, and prosperity through its participation in various ASEAN-led mechanisms and fora, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) as well as the ASEAN Plus U.S. Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC + U.S.) Consultation.

Maritime Security – The Secretary-General of ASEAN and the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, Admiral Linda Fagan discussed areas of maritime cooperation to support a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific, including possible cooperation in line with the AOIP and the ASEAN-U.S. CSP. Admiral Fagan applauded ASEAN's commitment to safety, security, and stewardship at sea. The U.S. expressed its keen interest to work with the ASEAN Coast Guard Forum. ASEAN and the U.S. will work to promote the sustainable development of maritime resources, focusing on and expanding efforts to protect marine environments, develop maritime law enforcement partnerships, and combat marine pollution. The U.S. conveyed the critical importance of freedom of navigation, overflight, and other lawful uses of the seas as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.

Implementation of the ASEAN-U.S. Leaders' Statement on Cooperation on the AOIP
- In view of implementing the Leaders' Statement, the Secretary-General of ASEAN

encouraged the advancement of cooperation to support implementation of the AOIP in pursuit of an open, transparent, inclusive, regional architecture with ASEAN at the core.

Cognizant of the relevant fundamental principles shared between the AOIP and the U.S.' Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), the Secretary-General of ASEAN encouraged the U.S. to work with ASEAN to implement concrete projects and activities in priority areas of the AOIP, namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs), as well as economic and other areas of cooperation.

ECONOMIC AND CONNECTIVITY COOPERATION

Commercial Engagement – In a meeting between the Secretary-General of ASEAN and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, both sides acknowledged the robust and growing economic relations between ASEAN Member States and the U.S. The U.S. is ASEAN's largest source of foreign direct investment and second-largest trading partner. ASEAN is also poised to invest more in the U.S., with a record-breaking delegation of Southeast Asian investors and government officials expected to attend the 10th SelectUSA Investment Summit in late June.

The U.S. reaffirmed its commitment to robust economic cooperation with ASEAN. The Department of Commerce and ASEAN plan to explore new ways to foster the ASEAN-U.S. partnership to create more resilient supply chains, strengthen digital connectivity between ASEAN and the U.S., and support ASEAN's journey towards decarbonization, as part of our effort to drive sustainable economic growth in ASEAN through high-level standards initiatives. They also plan to continue to support ASEAN through the capacity building that the U.S. is providing to the negotiations of the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement.

Transportation – In a meeting with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, the Secretary-General of ASEAN commended the progress made in the U.S.-ASEAN Transportation Dialogue Partnership, including the U.S.-ASEAN Electric Vehicle Initiative, container shipping improvement, and cross-border transport efficiency enhancement. They exchanged views on U.S.-ASEAN-Smart Cities Partnership, with smart sustainable transport as one of its pillars.

Energy - U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm and the Secretary-General of ASEAN discussed the substantial expansion in clean energy cooperation between the U.S. and ASEAN over the last three years through robust partnerships, including the new ASEAN Climate Solutions Hub. The Secretary-General of ASEAN highlighted U.S. support for the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation, including the ASEAN Power Grid as a signature area of ASEAN-U.S. cooperation that will enable cross-border clean energy power trade to drive sustainable development in the region. Secretary Granholm also noted that the U.S. looks forward to participating in the Fourth ASEAN-U.S. Energy Ministerial Meeting in Lao PDR later this year.

Cyber and Digital Technology Cooperation – When meeting the U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology Anne Neuberger, the Secretary-General of ASEAN welcomed the opportunity to discuss ways to enhance ASEAN and U.S. cybersecurity cooperation activities to ensure a stable and secure cyberspace. They discussed potential opportunities to strengthen the cyber capacity of ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat and entities associated with ASEAN. They also emphasized their shared view that data integrity is an increasingly critical issue impacting national security and economic growth and will seek to improve the security, interoperability, and reliability of digital and communications systems across the region. Both sides underscored the necessity to undertake a comprehensive approach with the participation of multiple stakeholders, especially the business community, to address emerging challenges in the cyber environment.

In multiple meetings, the Secretary-General of ASEAN and U.S. officials highlighted the importance of intensifying proposed activities under the ASEAN-U.S. Digital Work Plan to promote the safe, reliable, and secure development and deployment of digital technologies and cooperation to counter cybercrimes and online scams.

Private Sector Engagement – Recognizing the U.S. as the number one source of foreign direct investment for ASEAN, the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) reiterated its commitment to continue its robust and effective participation in ASEAN-U.S. sectoral engagements, including by sending business delegations to the ASEAN Economic Ministers, ASEAN-U.S. Digital Ministers, the ASEAN Finance Ministers, and Central Bank Governors meetings, and other sectoral bodies of ASEAN. The Secretary-General of ASEAN welcomed the active role of the USABC in fostering public-private partnerships with an extensive network of multiple stakeholders to enhance regional supply chain resilience, realize ASEAN's digital potential, and accelerate ASEAN's inclusive green transition and expand internship opportunities for ASEAN youth.

SOCIO-CULTURAL COOPERATION

Cultural Preservation – During a meeting at the State Department, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Elizabeth Allen and the Secretary-General of ASEAN discussed opportunities for U.S.-ASEAN cultural heritage protection, preservation, and promotion. The Secretary-General of ASEAN also suggested future collaboration with the U.S. to support small- and medium-sized cultural enterprises (SMCEs) in areas like capacity building and knowledge exchange, especially for the cultural and creative industries.

Cultural Diplomacy – The Secretary-General of ASEAN and Under Secretary Allen noted the ASEAN-U.S. Center's potential for promoting cultural diplomacy and strengthening people-to-people linkages, particularly among young people. The Center, which opened in December 2023, aims to promote ASEAN-U.S. cooperation among the various stakeholders from both sides.

Education Exchange – In his meeting with Under Secretary Allen, the Secretary-General of ASEAN thanked the U.S. for doubling the number of academic and professional fellowships available through the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative and doubling the participation of ASEAN students in the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholar Program. Under Secretary Allen and the Secretary-General of ASEAN also discussed identifying new opportunities for collaboration on educational exchange programs and internship.

Health – Following the ASEAN-U.S. Special Session Health Ministerial in May 2022, the Secretary-General met with Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Andrea Palm, who reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to further enhance U.S.-ASEAN cooperation in health, including strengthening health data and information, and identifying cooperation on emerging issues. The endorsement of the ASEAN-U.S. Health Cooperation Work Plan in August 2024 will support health systems strengthening and capacity building for public health emergencies and the operationalization of health initiatives, including the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System (APHECS), ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) and One Health Initiatives.

Environment and Climate Cooperation – During a meeting with Principal Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Sue Biniarz, the Secretary-General of ASEAN praised ongoing partnerships on environmental and climate cooperation. She also suggested further collaboration, especially in the areas of identifying and addressing technology and innovation needs; promoting technical exchanges and opportunities; and mobilizing climate finance. The Secretary-General of ASEAN looked forward to the continued implementation of the ASEAN-U.S. Environment and Climate Work Plan, which will accelerate mutual priorities on climate change mitigation and adaptation, innovation, climate finance, and biodiversity conservation.

Disability Rights and Inclusion – Building upon the progress made through the inaugural ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in October 2023, the Secretary-General of ASEAN and U.S. Special Advisor on International Disability Rights, Sara Minkara, discussed further opportunities to partner together to advance disability inclusion and the human rights of persons with disabilities across Southeast Asia, including by promoting equal opportunities and fostering a more accessible region for persons with disabilities, as well as implementing the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and aligning with the 2030 Agenda's SDG 10 on reducing inequalities.

Human Resources Development – During a meeting with Under Secretary Allen, the Secretary-General of ASEAN encouraged collaboration on human resources development initiatives, focusing on innovation, inclusive skills development, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) opportunities.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE TIES

U.S.-ASEAN Center Inaugural Lecture – The Secretary-General of ASEAN launched the U.S.-ASEAN Center Speakers Series as its inaugural speaker at the U.S.-ASEAN Center in Washington, D.C. His remarks focused on “The ASEAN-U.S. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Partners for Peace, Prosperity, and People.” Recognizing the immense contribution of ASEAN’s external partners, including the U.S., in supporting ASEAN community building efforts and in the maintenance of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region, the Secretary-General of ASEAN encouraged both sides to intensify collaboration across the spectrum of the ASEAN Community pillars. The Center plans to host regular similar events featuring prominent figures and experts, including from the ASEAN Committee in Washington D.C., to speak on various aspects of the ASEAN-U.S. relationship.

Congressional Engagement – Pursuant to deepening ties between ASEAN and the U.S., the Secretary-General of ASEAN engaged in a series of meetings with Congressional members. The Secretary-General of ASEAN welcomed Congressional support in advancing a substantive, meaningful, and mutually beneficial CSP by enabling relevant legislation and provision of funding to support ASEAN-U.S. cooperation.

Think Tank Roundtable – The Secretary-General of ASEAN was the main speaker in a roundtable discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies on “ASEAN: A Force for Good for Peace and Prosperity in the Region.” He emphasized that ASEAN has always worked for peace, which is a foundation of prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN promotes peace among the ASEAN Member States and with its external partners through the Plus One modality and through the various ASEAN-led mechanisms including the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM)-Plus.

University Leaders Dinner – During a dinner with leaders from diverse higher education institutions in the U.S., the Secretary-General of ASEAN discussed expanding educational partnerships and exchange opportunities between U.S. and ASEAN institutions.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

USAID Cooperation – The meeting between the Secretary-General of ASEAN and USAID Administrator Samantha Power noted with satisfaction the extension of the Regional Development Cooperation Agreement (RDCA) from 2025 to 2029 to support ASEAN’s priorities for the post-2025 period and accommodate the new initiatives. Highlighting the successful conclusion of the three ASEAN-USAID Projects earlier this year in Jakarta and their immense contribution to ASEAN community building efforts, the meeting underscored the expansion of USAID’s support to ASEAN over the next five years, which will further strengthen ASEAN’s capacity to advance economic growth, trade, good governance, resilience, and stability in the region. Administrator Power and the Secretary-General of ASEAN discussed the opportunity to partner to reduce the negative impacts of lead exposure.

