

## **OVERVIEW**

### **ASEAN-UNITED KINGDOM DIALOGUE RELATIONS**

1. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) was conferred the status of Dialogue Partner of ASEAN at the 54<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) held on 2 August 2021 via videoconference. The conferment ceremony was held via videoconference on 5 August 2021. Long before the conferment of this formal partnership, the UK had forged long-standing relations with ASEAN through its previous membership of the European Union.
2. The First ASEAN-UK Joint Cooperation Committee (AUK-JCC) Meeting was held on 24 June 2022, in which the Terms of Reference of the ASEAN-UK Joint Cooperation Committee was adopted.
3. The Plan of Action (POA) to Implement the ASEAN-UK Dialogue Partnership (2022-2026), was developed and adopted at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with the UK in Phnom Penh on 4 August 2022. The POA serves as a practical guide to further substantiate the partnership with a focus on areas of mutual interest and benefit. The Third AUK-JCC Meeting and the Third ASEAN-UK Senior Officials Meeting (AUKSOM), held on 7 and 20 March 2024 respectively, noted the progress of implementation of the ASEAN-UK POA (2022-2026), as well as possible future cooperation activities in the areas of common interests and concerns.
4. The UK appointed its first Ambassador to ASEAN in 2009 and subsequently appointed a dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN in November 2019. The current UK Ambassador to ASEAN, H.E. Sarah Tiffin, presented her Letter of Credence to the Secretary-General of ASEAN on 3 April 2023. The UK Mission to ASEAN was officially inaugurated in February 2020 in Jakarta by the UK's Minister for Asia and the Pacific. The UK has established diplomatic relations with all ASEAN Member States (AMS) and has Embassies and High Commissions in all ten AMS.

### **Political Security Cooperation**

5. The UK acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 12 July 2012 at the sidelines of the 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The UK's accession to the TAC underscored the importance of the TAC as a code of conduct governing interstate relations in the region, as well as the UK's strong commitment to promoting regional peace and security.

6. There have been frequent exchanges of high-level visits of the UK Government representatives to ASEAN Member States and ASEAN Secretariat from 2018 to 2023, such as the ASEAN-UK Open-Ended Troika Meetings held virtually in 2020 and 2021 respectively, visit by The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss, the UK's then Secretary for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs to the ASEAN Secretariat on 11 November 2021, as well as SG Dr. Kao's meeting at the sideline of the 56<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in July 2023 with The Rt Hon James Cleverly, the UK's then Secretary for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.

7. At the invitation of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, SG Dr. Kao paid a working visit to the UK on 1-3 November 2023. The visit reaffirmed ASEAN and the UK's growing partnership since the latter became ASEAN Dialogue Partner in 2021. 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.

8. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM) Retreat on 22 November 2022 in Siem Reap, Cambodia agreed to admit the UK as an observer in the activities of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWGs) on Peacekeeping Operations and Military Medicine in the final year of the 2021-2023 cycle.

### **Economic Cooperation**

9. The total merchandise trade between ASEAN and the UK, based on preliminary ASEAN data for 2023, reached USD 35.50 billion, while total Foreign Direct Investment inflows from the UK amounted to USD 2.16 billion<sup>1</sup>. This placed the UK as ASEAN's eighth largest trading partner and eighth largest source of FDI among ASEAN Dialogue Partners in 2023. Tourist arrivals from the UK to ASEAN increased significantly from 61,538 in 2021 to 1.22 million in 2022.

10. The UK-ASEAN Business Council (UKABC) was launched in 2011 to promote trade and investment between ASEAN and the UK. The establishment of the UKABC provides a venue for the UK's businesses to explore, develop and deepen their business in ASEAN. The Council, based in London, works in partnership with the British Chambers of Commerce across the ASEAN region to provide support for the UK's business interests in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on ASEAN Statistics preliminary data as of 31 May 2024.

11. An ASEAN Economic Ministers' Troika Open-ended Dialogue with the UK Trade Minister was held on 26 August 2020, which reaffirmed commitment for ASEAN-UK continued cooperation to recover from COVID-19 pandemic by working together to sustain and deepen the close ASEAN-UK economic ties, mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19, strengthen economic resilience, and pursue sustainable economic growth that keeps markets open and transparent.

12. The ASEAN Economic Ministers convened its first formal Consultation with the UK (1<sup>st</sup> AEM-UK Consultation) on 15 September 2021 via videoconference, during which both sides expressed commitment to grow bilateral trade even further, and recognised that an open, free, inclusive, transparent, rules-based, and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system is fundamental to a resilient, inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 pandemic. As an outcome, the meeting endorsed the *Joint Ministerial Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and the UK*, which highlights shared commitment in developing ASEAN-UK economic relations in a number of priority areas, including economic recovery from COVID-19 pandemic; ASEAN-UK supply chains and maintaining open markets; regulatory excellence; digital innovation; financial services; sustainable growth; infrastructure; skills and education; micro, small, and medium enterprises development; women's economic empowerment; and public-private sector partnership. The *ASEAN-UK Work Plan to Implement the Joint Ministerial Declaration on Future Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and the UK*, which guides ASEAN-UK economic relations through sector-specific cooperation programmes, was endorsed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> AEM-UK Consultation on 10 November 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

### **Socio-Cultural Cooperation**

13. Since before the conferment of ASEAN Dialogue Partnership to the UK, there had been extensive socio-cultural cooperation between the UK and ASEAN Member States. The Chevening Scholarship Programme, an international scholarship funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, fully funds approximately 200 students a year from ASEAN Member States to study for post-graduate degrees in the UK. As part of the *ASEAN-UK Supporting the Advancement of Girls Education (SAGE) Programme*, the UK launched the ASEAN-UK SAGE Women in STEM Scholarship on 11 February 2024.

14. The British Council, a British organisation specialising in international cultural and educational opportunities, has also been contributing to education reform and development across Southeast Asia, having trained over 30,000 English teachers over the past five years. It also teaches English to over 6 million learners, both face-to-face and online, across all ten ASEAN Member States. The British Council led a consortium to deliver "European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE)",

a grant-funded programme to support the ASEAN Secretariat and regional stakeholders to enable greater harmonisation and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education.

15. At the Open-Ended Troika Meeting between ASEAN Foreign Ministers and the Foreign Secretary of the UK on COVID-19 on 30 September 2020 via videoconference, the UK announced that it had refocused GBP 50 million of UK funding within ASEAN specifically to tackle the COVID-19, which included: (i) its contribution of GBP 1,030,000 to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund; (ii) its contribution of GBP 0.5 million to the ASEAN Secretariat to provide technical support to ASEAN on policies to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19 through the “Accelerated C-19 Economic Support (ACES)” Project, and GBP 0.2 million to continue cooperation with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) through technical assistance in 2021.

16. The UK attended the Pledging Conference on the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar on 18 August 2021 and pledged USD 100,000 worth of technical assistance to the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar.

### **Development Cooperation**

17. During the then Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dato Lim Jock Hoi’s visit to the UK in January 2019, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific at the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced the launch of two programmes that would deliver a total of GBP 34 million (USD 43 million) in funding to support low carbon transitions and economic reform in the ASEAN region, namely “*ASEAN-UK Low Carbon Energy Programme*” and “*ASEAN Economic Reform Programme*”. The former is a four-year programme to support ASEAN’s efforts to shift towards low carbon energy, which will provide policy support, capacity building and technical assistance to facilitate green finance flows, while the latter is a four-year programme of capacity building and technical assistance to support ASEAN and its Member States’ efforts to improve business environment and develop financial markets.

18. The UK announced its financial support of GBP 110 million to the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance (ACGF) Facility for clean and resilient infrastructure in Southeast Asia at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, UK on 2 November 2021. The Facility is aimed to support the ACGF’s initiatives in supporting governments in Southeast Asia to prepare and finance infrastructure projects that promote environmental sustainability and contribute to climate change goals.

19. The ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference with the UK convened held in July 2023 in Jakarta noted the five new flagship multiyear development programmes the UK would launch as part of the implementation of the POA, worth GBP 113 million in total, namely: (i) *Supporting the Advancement of Girls Education (SAGE)*; (ii) *ASEAN-UK Economic Integration Programme (EIP)*; (iii) *ASEAN-UK Green Transition Fund (GTF)*; (iv) *ASEAN-UK Health Security Partnership (HSP)*; and (v) *ASEAN-UK Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Programme*.

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