

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. 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.
2. 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.
3. The ASEAN-Australia Special Summit held on 17-18 March 2018 in Sydney, Australia, 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.
4. The First Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit held on 27 October 2021, 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.
5. ASEAN and Australia commemorated the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations in Melbourne in March 2024, during which the Leaders adopted two important documents, namely the Vision Statement – Partners for Peace and Prosperity and the Melbourne Declaration – A Partnership for the Future.
6. Current cooperation between ASEAN and Australia is guided by the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2025-2029), which was adopted at the Post Ministerial Conference (PMC+1) Session with Australia on 26 July 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Plan of Action serves as a roadmap for ASEAN-Australia CSP in the years to come.

7. Apart from the annual PMC+1 Session with Australia, the ASEAN-Australia Forum is held annually to exchange views on policy issues and review cooperation in all areas of interest. The ASEAN-Australia Joint Cooperation Committee 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 Joint Cooperation Committee Working Group Meeting is held annually since 2022.

Political-Security Cooperation

8. 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).

9. ASEAN and Australia have convened regular ASEAN Plus Australia Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC + Australia) Consultation since 2010 to exchange information and knowledge on transnational crime issues. The implementation of activities under this mechanism is guided by the SOMTC-Australia Work Plan on Cooperation to Combat Transnational Crime (2022-2025), which covers four priority areas, namely terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons (TIP) and cybercrime. As part of Australia's commitment to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ASEAN and the Government of Australia on Cooperation to Counter International Terrorism (2018), the ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism (CT) Dialogue was established as a working group-level mechanism under the SOMTC + Australia Consultation framework, with its inaugural meeting held virtually in 2022.

10. ASEAN-Australia cooperation on immigration and border management is manifested under the ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of Ministries of Foreign Affairs Meeting Plus Australia (DGICM + Australia) Consultation framework, which has been held regularly since 2005.

11. ASEAN and Australia also agreed to establish the ASEAN Plus Australia Senior Officials' Meeting on Drug Matters (ASOD + Australia) Consultation in 2022.

12. Under the ASEAN-Australia Political Security Partnership (APSP), Australia continues to support ASEAN's priorities on traditional and non-traditional security issues, such as combatting transnational crime, terrorism and violent extremism, TIP, people smuggling, illicit drugs, malicious cyber-incidents and cybercrime, money laundering, non-proliferation and disarmament, maritime security, as well as border management.

13. ASEAN and Australia are also cooperating on promotion and protection of human rights. Regular meetings have been held between the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) since 2019 in support of the implementation of the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025.

Economic Cooperation

14. Australia remains an important trading partner of ASEAN. Based on ASEAN Secretariat figures, the total two-way trade between Australia and ASEAN reached USD 94.4 billion in 2023¹. Australia's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flow to ASEAN in 2023, according to ASEAN Secretariat data, accounted for USD 1.6 billion².

15. 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. The Second Protocol to Amend the AANZFTA was signed by all Parties in 2024. AANZFTA Parties are now working towards bringing the Second Protocol towards entry into force.

16. 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 welcomed the AANZFTA Implementation Support (AIS) programme as the succeeding economic cooperation programme for the AANZFTA starting 1 July 2022.

17. 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.

18. At the Second 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).

19. Following the adoption of the ASEAN-Australia Joint Leaders' Statement on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises at the Third ASEAN-Australia Summit in September 2023, Australia has provided AUD 3.2 million for the ASEAN-Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (ASEAN-CGIAR) Innovate for Food Regional Program which will enhance research and innovation for food security. Under the Meryl Williams Fellowships, Australia will build the capacity of and meaningful participation of women in ASEAN in the field of agricultural science to enhance food security.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

20. Australia worked closely with ASEAN to address COVID-19 pandemic including through the convening the Special ASEAN-Australia Foreign Ministers'

¹ ASEAN Trade Statistics Database (data as of July 2024)

² ASEAN Statistics Database (data as of July 2024)

Meeting on COVID-19 and the ASEAN-Australia Health Experts Meeting 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) sites in Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

21. 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. Additional 75 new Aus4ASEAN Scholarship as well as over 55 new Aus4ASEAN Fellowships was announced at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations in March 2024.

22. Through the Tripartite Action to Enhance the Contribution of Labour Migration to Growth and Development in ASEAN (TRIANGLE in ASEAN) programme, Australia supports the implementation of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of Rights and Migrant Workers. TRIANGLE also contributes to the development of the ASEAN Declaration and its Guidelines on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations, the ASEAN Declaration and its Guidelines on the Placement and Protection of Migrant Fishers, Vientiane Declaration on Skills Mobility, Recognition, and Development for Migrant Workers and its Checklist, as well as workshops and compilation of good practices on employers' education programmes on fair recruitment and decent employment of migrant workers.

23. On disaster management and humanitarian assistance, Australia has been a key partner in providing technical assistance to ASEAN on disaster management. Australia continues to enhance ASEAN's capacity to assess and monitor risks, prevent and mitigate, and respond to and recover from disasters, including through cooperation with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre).

Cross-Pillar Cooperation

24. Australia continues to support ASEAN's integration and Community-building efforts, through enhancing cooperation on connectivity and narrowing the development gap, which includes the support for the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV (2021-2025) and the development of its successor document.

25. Australia supports the implementation of the AOIP through concrete cooperation in the four areas identified in the AOIP including maritime cooperation, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and economic and other possible areas of cooperation.

26. Australia also contributes to the region's inclusive growth and equitable, sustainable development by promoting sub-regional development, including through

effective implementation of the AUD 222.5 million second phase of the Mekong-Australia Partnership program.

Development Cooperation

27. 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.

28. As a follow-up to the announcement made at the First 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.

29. On 28 November 2023, ASEAN approved the extended Design of Aus4ASEAN Futures Initiative which aims to support the breadth of ASEAN's objectives, harness new opportunities, respond to emerging challenges, and assist with navigating growing regional complexity. The Aus4ASEAN Futures is expected to deliver AUD 204 million over ten years providing support to all three ASEAN Communities.

30. As one of the initiatives announced by Australia at the Special Summit to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations in March 2024, the ASEAN-Australia Centre (AAC) commenced operations on 1 July 2024 to support the implementation of ASEAN-Australia CSP by deepening economic linkages, education engagements, cultural and community connections between ASEAN and Australia.

