

OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-CHINA DIALOGUE RELATIONS

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 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) 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 29th 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 7th 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 fourth plan of action (2021- 2025) was adopted in November 2020 and is currently being implemented.

3. At the 21st ASEAN-China Summit to Commemorate the 15th 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 30th 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 held on 22 November 2021 adopted a commemorative joint statement in which ASEAN and China jointly announced the establishment of an ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). 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 CSP.

5. The 26th 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 14th ASEAN-China Summit in November 2011 in Bali; (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.; and (iii) signing of the ASEAN-China Technical Cooperation Agreement in September 2023.

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. In commemorating the 20th 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 20th 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 24th 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. The framework for the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea was adopted by the Foreign Ministers Meeting of ASEAN Member States and China in August 2017. At the 20th ASEAN-China Summit in November 2017, the Leaders agreed to officially announced negotiations on the text of the COC. The completion of the first reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) was announced in July 2019, while the second reading of the SDNT was concluded in July 2023. The 21st ASEAN-China SOM on DOC on 26 October 2023 officially announced the commencement of the third reading of the SDNT. The Third Reading of the SDNT was concluded in November 2024 in Vientiane

13. ASEAN and China security cooperation 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.

14. China has taken an active role in the ADMM-Plus in fostering practical cooperation. China co-chaired ADMM-Plus Expert Working Group on Counter Terrorism for the 2017-2020 cycle and the ADMM-Plus Experts Working Group on Humanitarian Mine Action with Cambodia for the 2021-2023 cycle. Currently, China is co-chairing the ADMM-Plus Experts Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations with Brunei Darussalam for the 2024-2027 cycle.

15. ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Joint Statement on Strengthening Humanitarian Mine Action Cooperation was adopted by the ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting in July 2024, which reiterated ASEAN and China's mutual commitment in addressing the regional challenges posed by landmines, unexploded ordnance, and other explosive remnants of war.

16. ASEAN and China signed a Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues in 2002. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues was signed in 2004 and renewed in 2009 for a 5-year period. The succeeding MoU, covering the period of 2017-2023, was signed in September 2017.

Economic Cooperation

17. China has remained the largest trading partner of ASEAN for 15 consecutive years since 2009 and ASEAN has also become China's largest trading partner for the last four years since 2020. Bilateral trade between ASEAN and China in 2023 was USD 696.71 billion, which is more than double the bilateral trade of USD 319.4 billion in 2012. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from China to ASEAN amounted to USD 17.6 billion in 2023.¹

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.

19. 2021 marked 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 25th ASEAN-China Summit. The substantial conclusion of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) 3.0 upgrade negotiations was announced at the 27th ASEAN-China Summit in October 2024. The ACFTA 3.0 will introduce commitments and deepen cooperation in new areas, including the Digital Economy, Green Economy, Supply Chain Connectivity, Competition and Consumer Protection, and MSMEs.

20. China is a participating country of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement which was signed at the 4th 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

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

subregional cooperation of ASEAN and China. The 20th CAEXPO was held on 24-28 September 2024 in Nanning, China.

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 20th ASEAN-China Summit in November 2017. Further, at the 22nd ASEAN-China Summit held on 3 November 2019 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Synergising the MPAC 2025 and the BRI.

23. 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 20th 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.

24. 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 21st 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.

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. In November 2022, the 25th ASEAN-China Summit adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Food Security Cooperation. 2023 is designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Agricultural Development and Food Security Cooperation. The 26th ASEAN-China Summit 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. In 2024, the 27th ASEAN-China Summit adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Promoting the Development of Smart 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 13th 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 in 2021 and the Action Plan on Implementing the ASEAN-China Partnership on Digital Economy Cooperation (2021-2025) was adopted in January 2022. To further strengthen the ASEAN-China partnership in the digital sector, the ADGMIN-China held on 2 February 2024 signed the Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and China on Co-operation in Communications and Digital Technology 2024-2029 and adopted the ASEAN-China 2024 Digital Work Plan. Subsequently, the 27th ASEAN-China Summit held in Lao PDR in October 2024, the Leaders adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Facilitating Cooperation in Building a Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Ecosystem.

30. ASEAN and China also continue to forge cooperation in developing smart cities. The 22nd 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 21st 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.

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. 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.

36. 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. 2024 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Tourism Cooperation to deepen cultural connections and promote greater interaction among the peoples. The 27th ASEAN-China Summit adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Deepening People-to-People Exchanges Cooperation and agreed to continue the ASEAN-China Year of People-to-People Exchanges in 2025.

37. In the education sector, the China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week (CAECW) has been held annually since 2008 in Guiyang, China. The 2024 CAECW was held on 21-24 August 2024 in Guiyang, China, with the theme of “*Strengthening Educational Cooperation and People-to-People Exchanges for a Brighter Shared Future*”. 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 projects for the period of 2019-2023 and 2023-2028 are still on-going.

38. 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 15th Conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) in March 2021.

39. 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.

40. 2021 and 2022 were 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 24th ASEAN-China Summit in October 2021 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Strengthening Cooperation in Green and Sustainable Development. Further, the 25th ASEAN-China Summit in November 2022 adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Strengthening Common and Sustainable Development.

41. ASEAN and China continue to organise exchange visits for media personnel. 2019 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Media Exchanges (YOME). Several activities were 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 22nd ASEAN-China Summit in November 2019. As part of the celebration of the 30th 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.

42. 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 17th ASEAN-China Forum on Social Development and Poverty Reduction was held on 27 June 2023 in Beihai, China.

43. ASEAN and China also continue to enhance cooperation in disaster management. The inaugural Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) Plus China was held on 10 June 2021 followed by the First ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) Plus China on 14 October 2021. 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 mobilisation for collaborative initiatives in disaster management over the next 5 years.

Development Cooperation

44. 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.

45. 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.
