

## OVERVIEW

### ASEAN-ITALY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

1. Italy was conferred the status of Development Partner of ASEAN at the 53<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) on 9 September 2020 via videoconference.

2. The ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership was institutionalised through the convening of the 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership Committee (AI-DPC) Meeting on 19 April 2021 via videoconference. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> AI-DPC held on 10 June 2022, both sides adopted the ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership Practical Cooperation Areas (PCA) (2022-2026), which serves as an overall framework and guide for practical cooperation between ASEAN and Italy.

3. To date, four AI-DPC Meetings have taken place, with the last meeting held on 28 November 2024 at the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat, whereby both sides exchanged views on the potential areas of ASEAN-Italy cooperation e.g. projects/activities to support ASEAN's priorities across the ASEAN Community pillars.

#### A. Political-Security Cooperation

4. Italy appointed its first accredited Ambassador to ASEAN in June 2009. H.E. Benedetto Latteri, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to ASEAN, who presented his Letter of Credence to H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, the then Secretary-General of ASEAN on 2 November 2020 and subsequently completed his tenure in December 2024.

5. Italy has organised several capacity-building initiatives on the prevention of transnational organised crime as well as the protection of civilians in the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping missions in 2020, 2021 and 2022, respectively. Italy's Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) organised an activity on the law of the sea and anti-piracy in 2022, of which the invitation was also extended to the ASEAN Member States.

6. Further, Italy has contributed EUR 100,000 to the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) under the "Strengthen Gender Equality and Empowerment in Mine Action in the Mine/Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)- affected ASEAN Member States" initiative.

7. Italy is currently working with the ASEAN Secretariat and project proponents to develop and implement several project proposals in the areas of field peace operations, cybercrime, as well as integrity and anti-corruption, among others.

## B. Economic Cooperation

8. Based on the ASEAN Statistics' Database, the total two-way trade between ASEAN and Italy reached US\$27.09 billion in 2023, reflecting a decrease of 4.32 % compared to US\$28.31 billion in 2022<sup>1</sup>. The FDI flows from Italy to ASEAN accounted for US\$ -126.83 million in 2023, a significant decrease of 214.2% from US\$ -111.08 million in 2022<sup>2</sup>.

9. On visitor arrivals, after experiencing a sharp decrease in 2021, with only 2.9 million visitors, the region bounced back and observed a significant increase in international visitor arrivals in 2022, with a total of 43.6 million international visitors. This upward trend continued in 2023, with a total of 101.9 million international visitors. The number of visitor arrivals from Italy to ASEAN also increased significantly from 228,053 in 2022 to 528,486 in 2023.<sup>3</sup>

10. In 2015, Italy established the 'Italy-ASEAN Association' (*Associazione Italia-ASEAN*) as a platform to provide greater awareness, particularly for Italian private sector and businesses, on trade and investment opportunities in ASEAN, as well as a platform for Italy to understand and work with ASEAN and its Member States. Since its inception in 2017, eight High-Level Dialogue on ASEAN-Italy Economic Relations have taken place, with the last Dialogue held in November 2024 in Manila, the Philippines. The annual Dialogue serves as the platform to promote major business opportunities among ASEAN Member States and Italy.

11. Since October 2023, the Italian Development Bank (Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, CDP) has been a regional partner of the ASEAN Access, providing information, connects and facilitates businesses, especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the region to enter international markets.

12. Italy is currently working with the ASEAN Secretariat to develop and implement several project proposals in the areas of space technology, aquaculture, fishing gear, renewable energy, eco-tourism and Nature-based Solution (NbS), sustainable coastal and maritime development, and sustainable agriculture, among others.

## C. Socio-Cultural Cooperation

13. In the last few years, Italy has funded projects over EUR 3 million for scientific cooperation, scholarships and traineeships for the ASEAN Member States. Italy has also committed financial support for archaeological cooperation in Indonesia, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Thailand. In supporting capacity building for officials of the

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary ASEAN Statistics as of 31 December 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Based on ASEAN Statistics data as of 29 November 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Based on ASEAN Statistics data as of 3 July 2024.

ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat, Italy has been providing training courses on various topics, including disaster risk reduction and management, diplomacy, environmental protection in peace operations as well as protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

14. In March to April 2021, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, together with the ASEAN Committee in Rome, the Italy-ASEAN Association and other stakeholders, organised the 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Conference on ASEAN and Italy, which offered high-level training on diplomacy and international relations for young delegates from both sides virtually. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Conference was organised on 29 May 2023, with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, ASEAN, Global Action and partners. The Conference provided an avenue for the youth delegates to exchange views on the future of ASEAN-Italy cooperation.

15. The implementation of a project titled “Italy-ASEAN Virtual Learning Centre on Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development”, which aimed to create the “Italy-ASEAN Virtual Learning Centre (VLC) on Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development”, has been completed. The final event of the project took place on 11-12 January 2024 in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

#### **D. Development Cooperation**

16. Italy through the AICS, established in 2016, has been assisting several ASEAN Member States, namely Myanmar, the Philippines, and Viet Nam, in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution, agriculture, as well as statistical capacity building.

17. At the moment, AICS is working closely with the Italian project proponents as well as the ASEAN Secretariat to put forward several project proposals for ASEAN’s consideration, including on Ecotourism and Nature-based Solution; GeoLab ASEAN; and Strengthening Food Systems in Southeast Asian Agricultural Sectors. To ensure the effective implementation, coordination of projects and initiatives, a representative from AICS has been stationed in Indonesia since May 2024.

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