

OVERVIEW OF ASEAN-REPUBLIC OF KOREA COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

1. ASEAN and the Republic of Korea (ROK) initiated sectoral dialogue relations in November 1989. The ROK was accorded a full Dialogue Partner status by ASEAN at the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in July 1991 in Kuala Lumpur. The partnership was elevated to a Summit level in 1997 in Kuala Lumpur. The ROK acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2004.
2. The ASEAN-ROK relationship reached a new height with the signing of the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation Partnership at the 8th ASEAN-ROK Summit on 30 November 2004 in Vientiane, Lao PDR and the adoption of the ASEAN-ROK Plan of Action (POA) to implement the Joint Declaration at the 9th ASEAN-ROK Summit on 13 December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
3. The ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit to mark the 20th Anniversary of the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations convened in Jeju in 2009 was a testimony to the robust and vibrant relations between both sides. At the Commemorative Summit, the Leaders adopted the Joint Statement to reinforce political and security cooperation, strengthen economic and development cooperation, promote social-cultural exchanges and reaffirm the determination to join efforts in dealing with the global challenges.
4. The 13th ASEAN-ROK Summit in October 2010 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam agreed to elevate ASEAN-ROK dialogue relations from comprehensive cooperation to strategic partnership. The Leaders adopted the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity and its Plan of Action for the period of 2011-2015. The Plan of Action for the period 2016-2020 was adopted in 2015.
5. The ROK established its Mission to ASEAN in Jakarta in September 2012 and appointed its first resident Ambassador to ASEAN in October 2012.
6. In 2014, ASEAN and the ROK celebrated the 25th Year of ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations with a Commemorative Summit held on 11-12 December 2014 in Busan. The Commemorative Summit adopted the Joint Statement on the 25th Anniversary of the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations: Our Future Vision of ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership, "Building Trust, Bringing Happiness" renewing the commitments to bring the ASEAN-ROK relations to new heights.
7. In 2019, ASEAN and the ROK celebrated the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations with a Commemorative Summit held in Busan, the ROK on 25-26 November 2019. The Commemorative Summit adopted the ASEAN-ROK Joint Vision Statement for Peace, Prosperity and Partnership to set out strategic framework to advance ASEAN-ROK relations in the coming years.

8. In 2021, both sides adopted the Joint Statement on Enhancing ASEAN-ROK cooperation for People, Peace and Prosperity at the 22nd ASEAN-ROK Summit to promote practical cooperation, including enhancing synergy between the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and the ROK's New Southern Policy Plus for the regional recovery.

9. At the 23rd ASEAN-ROK Summit in November 2022, the ROK announced its Indo-Pacific Strategy, in which it envisions the Indo-Pacific as region of peace, freedom and prosperity. The ROK's Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative (KASI) is a key part of the ROK's Indo-Pacific Strategy, aiming at strengthening ASEAN-ROK relations. To implement the KASI, the ROK identified priority areas of cooperation, which are consolidated into eight core lines of effort aligned with the three key visions of ROK's Indo-Pacific Strategy.

10. At the 24th ASEAN-ROK Summit in September 2023, both sides adopted the Joint Statement on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) to promote cooperation in the key areas of the AOIP.

11. At the 25th ASEAN-ROK Summit to Commemorate the 35th Anniversary of Dialogue Relations in October 2024, both sides agreed to establish an ASEAN-ROK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) that is substantive, meaningful, and mutually beneficial.

Political and Security Cooperation

12. ASEAN-ROK cooperation in the political and security fields has been strengthened through existing mechanisms such as the ASEAN-ROK Summit, Ministerial Meetings, and Senior Officials Meetings. The ROK has been actively engaging in ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM- Plus), and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

13. The ROK has taken an active role in the ADMM-Plus in fostering practical cooperation in its seven priority areas, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), maritime security, military medicine, counter terrorism, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian mine action and cyber security.

14. The ASEAN-ROK Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism was signed by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and the ROK at the margins of the 38th AMM in July 2005 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The ASEAN-ROK Senior Officials' Consultations on Transnational Crime (SOMTC+ROK Consultations) was held for the first time on 9 June 2006 in Bali, Indonesia, and the inaugural ASEAN Plus Republic of Korea Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC + ROK) Consultation was convened on 28 November 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. The ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matter (ASOD) – ROK Coordination Meeting was first held in 2011.

15. The ROK has been supporting the work of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in the promotion of human rights in the areas of implementation of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially

Women and Children (ACTIP) and management of environmental impact assessment from a human right-based approach.

16. The ROK also supported ASEAN's effort in peace and reconciliation through ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN IPR).

Economic Cooperation

17. On trade and investment cooperation, the ROK remains an important partner to ASEAN. According to ASEAN statistics in 2024, two-way trade between ASEAN and the ROK reached USD 208.11 billion, an increase of 5.7 per cent from 2023.¹ Meanwhile, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow from the ROK to ASEAN amounted to USD 7.6 billion, increasing 103.5 per cent year-on-year from 2023. The ROK was ASEAN's fifth largest trading partner and ASEAN's seventh largest source of FDI among ASEAN external partners.²

18. The ASEAN Member States and the ROK signed the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation in 13 December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur. The ASEAN-ROK Trade in Goods (AKTIG) Agreement was signed on 24 August 2006 and took effect in June 2007. Following the Trade in Goods Agreement, the ASEAN-ROK Trade in Services Agreement was signed on 21 November 2007 and came into force on 1 May 2009. The ASEAN-ROK Investment Agreement was signed on 2 June 2009 and took effect on 1 September 2009. Subsequently, the ASEAN-ROK Free Trade Agreement (AKFTA) came into effect on 1 January 2010. The Third Protocol to Amend the AKTIG Agreement was signed by all Parties on 22 November 2015 and has been fully implemented by all Parties following its entry into force for Viet Nam on 28 November 2023.

19. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the ROK established a special fund called ASEAN-ROK Economic Cooperation (AKEC) Fund in 2008 for the implementation of cooperation projects under the purview of the ASEAN-ROK Working Group on Economic Cooperation (AK-WGEC) established in 2006.

20. The Dialogue between the ASEAN Secretary-General and the Association of ASEAN Korean Chambers (AAKC) was established and held for the first time on 24 November 2019 in Busan. This is a channel for both sides to exchange views on ways to enhance the business and investment environment in ASEAN.

21. ASEAN-ROK's cooperation in transport has been conducted through the implementation of the ASEAN-ROK Transport Cooperation Roadmaps. The Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation for Smart Mobility between ASEAN and the ROK was adopted at the 14th ASEAN-ROK Transport Ministers Meeting in 2023 in Lao PDR.

¹ ASEAN Statistics, preliminary IMTS data as of 13 March 2025.

² ASEAN Statistics, preliminary FDI data as of 8 June 2025.

22. On information and communication technology (ICT) cooperation, ASEAN and the ROK implement annual ASEAN-ROK Digital Work Plan, which promotes cooperation in cybersecurity, innovation, human resource development and connectivity enhancement.

23. The ASEAN-Korea Centre (AKC) was established on 13 March 2009 in Seoul, the ROK. The Centre plays a pivotal role to increase the volume of trade, accelerate investment flow, invigorate tourism, and enrich cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the ROK. Since 2013, the AKC regularly organises the ASEAN Connectivity Forum in Seoul, the ROK to keep the ROK business communities abreast of the connectivity-related infrastructure projects in the 10 ASEAN Member States, thus contributing to connected and integrated ASEAN as well as mutually beneficial partnership between ASEAN and the ROK.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

24. ASEAN and the ROK put an emphasis on people-to-people and youth exchanges with a view to deepen friendship and understanding among their people. Various projects and activities have been undertaken to increase people-to-people exchanges and to deepen partnership between ASEAN and the ROK including annual programmes such as the ASEAN-ROK Film Leaders Incubator (FLY); ASEAN-Korea Frontiers Forum; ASEAN-Korea Forum and Advanced Seminar; ASEAN-Korea Youth Network Workshop; and Youth Camp for ASEAN & Friends' Engagement (YCAFE).

25. On education, a flagship project entitled "Higher Education for ASEAN Talents: Scholarship Opportunity for ASEAN faculty Members in the ROK" has been implemented since 2020 to provide faculty members from ASEAN Member States who already hold a master's degree with the opportunity to obtain a doctoral degree in the ROK thereby contributing towards improving the competitiveness of the ASEAN higher education sector and fostering closer ties between ASEAN and the ROK.

26. Cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK on culture has been promoted including through various activities during the ASEAN-ROK Culture Exchange Year in 2017. The ASEAN Culture House (ACH), which was established in Busan, the ROK, on 1 September 2017, is the first of its kind among ASEAN's dialogue partners and serves as a venue to further promote mutual understanding between the peoples of ASEAN and the ROK. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the ASEAN Cultural Center in Bangkok and the ACH was signed in 2019 to promote cooperation between the two centers in facilitating mutual understanding and cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the ROK.

27. ASEAN and the ROK continue to enhance health cooperation through the ASEAN-ROK Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD) and ASEAN-ROK Health Ministers Meeting which were first held in October 2021 and May 2022 respectively.

28. On forest cooperation, the Agreement on the Establishment of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) entered into force on 27 April 2018. ASEAN-ROK High Level Meeting on Forestry 2019 was held on 31 October 2019 in Seoul and adopted the Declaration on Forest Cooperation for Peace and Prosperity.

29. On environment and climate change area, the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change has been held annually since 2021. The cooperation has been strengthened with two ongoing flagship projects in the area of clean air and solid waste management, namely “Clean Air for Sustainable ASEAN (CASA)” and “Advancing ASEAN-Korean cooperation in Integrated Municipal Solid Waste Management (IMSWM) for Environmentally Sustainable Cities”. In September 2023, the ROK launched the Partnership for ASEAN-ROK Methane Action (PARMA), a regional initiative to scale methane reduction efforts.

30. In the area of disaster management, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) and the National Fire Agency of the ROK signed a Memorandum of Intent (MOI) by ad-referendum in November 2019 to strengthen cooperation and to seek areas for further collaboration in the field of disaster management. The ROK also supports humanitarian assistance in Myanmar through AHA Centre.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

31. ASEAN and the ROK have developed a platform of cooperation on connectivity through the meetings between the ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and the ROK’s Task Force on ASEAN Connectivity.

32. The ROK supports ASEAN efforts in narrowing the development gap through the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) projects. The ROK also supports sub-regional economic cooperation frameworks, including the Mekong-ROK Cooperation and BIMP-EAGA-ROK Cooperation.

34. The 1st ASEAN-ROK Infrastructure Ministerial Meeting was held on 17 September 2018 in Seoul. ASEAN-ROK Cooperation on smart cities has been promoted with the first ASEAN-ROK Ministerial Meeting on Smart City held on 25 November 2019, in Busan.

The ROK’s Support to Development Cooperation

35. The ROK Government launched the ASEAN-ROK Special Cooperation Fund (SCF) in 1990 with an aim to enhance people-to-people exchanges between the two sides. In 1996, the ASEAN-ROK Future-Oriented Cooperation Project Fund (FOCF) was also launched in order to implement cooperation projects in the fields of human resource development, science and technology, governance, culture and sports, and others. The SCF and the FOCF were merged into the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) in 2019 to provide funding for the implementation of cooperation projects initiated by ASEAN Member States and the ROK under the programme-based approach.

37. The ASEAN-ROK Programme Management Team (AKPMT) was established in December 2016 to work for the effective utilization, management and execution of AKCF funded projects.

