

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 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. The Plan of Action to implement the Joint Vision

Statement for the period 2021-2025 was adopted in 2020.

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 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.

10. 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. The Plan of Action to implement the CSP for the period 2026-2030 was adopted in 2025.

Political and Security Cooperation

11. ASEAN-ROK cooperation in the political and security fields is 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).

12. The ROK plays 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. In addition, the ROK supports capacity building through ADMM-approved initiatives such as the ASEAN-ROK Defense Industry Cooperation Conference, which will be held in 2026 and the ASEAN-ROK Maritime Exercise (ARMX), which will be conducted in 2027.

13. The ROK has been an active ARF participant since its inception and has co-chaired numerous ARF meetings and activities in all areas of cooperation. The ROK co-sponsored the 2019 *Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda at the ARF* and the 2021 *Joint Statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at the ARF*.

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. Building on this commitment, cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK in addressing transnational crime has been manifested under the frameworks of the ASEAN Plus ROK Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC + ROK) and the ASEAN Plus ROK Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC + ROK) Consultations, which have been convened annually since 2019

and 2006, respectively. To guide ASEAN-ROK practical cooperation under these mechanisms, the SOMTC + ROK Work Plan on Cooperation to Combat Transnational Crime (2026-2028) was adopted in September 2025.

15. ASEAN also engages the ROK in its efforts to combat illicit drugs through the ASEAN Plus ROK Senior Officials Meeting on Drug Matters (ASOD + ROK) Consultation that was first convened in 2011, in conjunction with the 32nd ASOD and Its Related Meetings, and has since been convened regularly.

16. 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.

17. The ROK also supports ASEAN's effort in peace and reconciliation through ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN IPR). Likewise, the ROK has made contribution to humanitarian mine action in ASEAN through their support for the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC).

Economic Cooperation

18. On trade and investment cooperation, the ROK remains an important partner to ASEAN. According to ASEAN statistics in 2024, two-way merchandise trade between ASEAN and the ROK reached USD 208.29 billion, an increase of 5.8 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

19. 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 Area (AKFTA) came into effect on 1 January 2010. The implementation of the AKFTA is overseen by the AKFTA Implementing Committee and its subsidiary bodies. At the 26th ASEAN-ROK Summit in October 2025, the Leaders agreed to commence the AKFTA Upgrade Negotiations early 2026, upon the completion of respective domestic procedures.

20. A dedicated fund called ASEAN-ROK Economic Cooperation (AKEC) Fund was established by ROK (under the authority of the then Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

¹ ASEAN Statistics, preliminary IMTS data as of 15 September 2025.

² ASEAN Statistics, preliminary FDI data as of 1 July 2025.

of the ROK) in 2008 for the implementation of cooperation projects under the purview of the ASEAN-ROK Working Group on Economic Cooperation (AK-WGEC) set up in 2006. ROK committed to make annual contribution to the AKEC Fund (up to USD 500,000 annually).

21. ASEAN and ROK also enhance economic cooperation through the regular meetings of the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) – ROK Consultation and the ASEAN Senior Economic Officials (SEOM) – ROK Consultation.

22. Policy dialogue and information exchanges on digital sector is enhanced through the ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting with the ROK (ADGMIN + ROK) and other relevant mechanisms. Cooperation on digital transformation is carried out through the implementation of the ASEAN-ROK Digital Work Plans and projects under the Korea-ASEAN Digital Innovation Flagship (KADIF) Initiative.

23. On science, technology and innovation (STI), both sides are implementing the ASEAN-ROK STI Workplan 2025–2027 in support of the ASEAN Plan of Action on STI (APASTI) 2026–2035, including through projects under KADIF.

24. ASEAN and the ROK promotes policy dialogue and knowledge exchanges in transport and logistics cooperation through the ASEAN-ROK Transport Ministers Meeting (ATM+ROK) and ASEAN-ROK Senior Transport Officials Meeting (STOM+ROK). 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.

25. ASEAN and the ROK have strengthened cooperation in intellectual property (IP) through the ASEAN-ROK Heads of Intellectual Property Offices (IPOs) Meeting, first convened in March 2018. This platform facilitates regular policy dialogue, capacity-building, and collaborative initiatives aimed at advancing a more effective and innovation-driven IP ecosystem across the region.

26. 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.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

27. 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 implemented 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); the ASEAN-Korea Music (ROUND) Festival, the ASEAN-Korea Frontiers Forum; the ASEAN-Korea Forum and Advanced Seminar; the ASEAN-Korea Youth Network Workshop; and the Youth Camp for ASEAN & Friends' Engagement (YCAFE). A key policy initiative supported by the ASEAN-ROK

Cooperation Fund (AKCF) is the Comprehensive Review of the ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts 2016-2025 and Development of a New Work Plan for Culture and Arts 2026-2035.

28. 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.

29. Cooperation between ASEAN and the ROK on culture has been promoted, including through the Working Committee for the ASEAN-ROK Cultural Heritage Cooperation, which was first convened in 2022 under the auspices of the Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts (SOMCA). 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.

30. ASEAN and the ROK 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.

31. On environment and climate change, the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change has been held annually since 2021. Cooperation is 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.

32. ASEAN and the ROK enhance cooperation in disaster management under the framework of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management Plus ROK (AMMDM+ROK) established in October 2022 as well as the Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) Plus the ROK established in October 2021. 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

33. 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, the annual ACCC Consultation with Dialogue Partners and Other External Partners on Connectivity, and ASEAN Connectivity Symposium. In addition, the AKC has regularly organised the ASEAN Connectivity Forum in Seoul, the ROK since 2013 to keep the ROK business communities abreast of the connectivity-related infrastructure projects in the ASEAN Member States.

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, and through the implementation of ASEAN Smart City Professional Programme (ASPP), which provides short-term training and master's degree on data-driven smart city planning to government officials and professionals in ASEAN Member States since 2023.

35. ASEAN and the ROK strengthen cooperation in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector through the ASEAN-ROK TVET Mobility Programme, which supported intra-ASEAN TVET mobility and enhanced people-to-people exchanges and collaboration between ASEAN Member States and with the ROK.

36. The ROK supports ASEAN's efforts in narrowing the development gap within the region through the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plans. The ROK also supports sub-regional development cooperation, including through the Mekong-ROK Cooperation and BIMP-EAGA-ROK Cooperation frameworks.

The ROK's Support to Development Cooperation

37. 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 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.

38. 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.

