

ASEAN CO-CHAIR'S PRESS STATEMENT

THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS-COOPERATION COUNCIL FOR THE ARAB STATES OF THE GULF FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

23 September 2026 | New York, the United States

1. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on 23 September 2026 in New York, the United States, on the sidelines of the 81st United Nations General Assembly High-Level Week. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore, and H.E. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers or representatives of ASEAN and the GCC Member States, the Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN, and the Secretary-General of the GCC.
2. The Meeting exchanged views on regional and international developments. The Meeting expressed serious concern over the rapidly evolving situation in the Middle East, particularly the renewed hostilities involving the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which pose a risk of further regional spill over. The Meeting expressed deep concern that these developments severely undermine the ongoing efforts of key mediators and diminish the prospects for a peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy. The Meeting called on all parties concerned to exercise utmost self-restraint and avoid any acts that may further aggravate the situation. The Meeting urged all parties to return to dialogue and diplomacy and redouble efforts in negotiations that will lead to the permanent end of the conflict and lasting peace and stability in the region. The Meeting underscored the importance of maintaining regional peace, stability and prosperity, upholding international law, and promoting genuine dialogue and diplomacy in addressing conflicts and tensions, including the need for a complete and immediate cessation of hostilities across all fronts in the Middle East. The Meeting further reaffirmed the obligations of all States to resolve their differences through peaceful means, and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in armed conflicts, and to ensure the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, the UN Charter, and relevant UNSC resolutions.
3. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining maritime safety and security, and upholding freedom of navigation in and overflight above straits used for international navigation, in accordance with international law, including the 1982

UNCLOS, and the relevant standards and recommended practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). In this regard, the Meeting called for the restoration of the safe, unimpeded, and continuous transit passage of vessels and aircraft in the Strait of Hormuz in line with the 1982 UNCLOS, as well as for all parties to ensure the safety of seafarers and ships in accordance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

4. The Meeting recalled the longstanding relationship between ASEAN and GCC countries and the positive contributions and progress of ASEAN-GCC relations since its inception in 1990. Noting ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future, the Meeting reiterated its commitment to further strengthen the partnership to contribute to the resilience and prosperity of both regions.
5. The Meeting encouraged consultations and the exploration of cooperation in specific areas of common interest to implement the four priority areas of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and economic and other possible areas of cooperation, where appropriate.
6. Guided by the ASEAN-GCC Framework of Cooperation (2024–2028) and the Joint Declaration on Economic Cooperation adopted at the Second ASEAN-GCC Summit on 27 May 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the Meeting welcomed the continued deepening of economic cooperation between ASEAN and the GCC. The Meeting noted the ongoing work to advance discussions on ASEAN's feasibility study for the ASEAN-GCC Free Trade Agreement, targeted for completion by end-2026. The Meeting further noted the ongoing development of a Work Programme to implement the Joint Declaration on Economic Cooperation through practical collaboration across its priority sectors, including trade and investment, digital economy and innovation, energy, food security and sustainability, financial services, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), transport, and tourism, and looked forward to its early finalisation and the commencement of practical activities thereafter. The Meeting looked forward to enhancing trade and investment flows, by providing an enabling and favourable environment and creating mutually beneficial opportunities for joint investments, including through the ASEAN-GCC FTA.
7. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the open, non-discriminatory, predictable, transparent, free, fair, inclusive, sustainable, and rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. The Meeting recognised the positive role that plurilateral initiatives play at the WTO, including the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs). The Meeting expressed concerns over the rising global trade tensions and increasing uncertainties in the international economic landscape. In this regard, the Meeting reaffirmed the

importance of strengthening economic cooperation between ASEAN and the GCC to navigate global economic challenges by engaging in constructive dialogue, open communication, and collaboration.

8. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening energy security and cooperation, including by enhancing the security, resilience, and diversification of regional energy supply; strengthening cooperation in oil and gas, including LNG; and advancing renewable and other clean energy sources and emerging low-carbon technologies, while advancing a sustainable, just, affordable, inclusive, and orderly energy transition. The Meeting underscored the importance of accelerating the transition towards sustainable, resilient, and low-carbon economies, strengthening regional market integration, and promoting sustainability and decarbonisation, while taking into account different national circumstances and priorities. The Meeting further welcomed concrete and practical activities to strengthen cooperation on energy security, including through enhanced regional petroleum security and emergency preparedness, as well as facilitating investment opportunities in sectors of high priority such as the ASEAN Power Grid (APG), including the expansion of cross-border and multilateral electricity trade and the development of priority interconnections.
9. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to promoting digital transformation and inclusivity and strengthening cooperation in the digital economy as a key driver of economic cooperation between ASEAN and the GCC. The Meeting looked forward to developing cooperation on artificial intelligence (AI), digital innovation, data governance, cross-border data flows, the Internet of Things (IoT), smart cities, and 5G networks, recognising their importance in fostering innovation, enhancing economic resilience, and driving sustainable growth in both regions.
10. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to diversifying supply chains and strengthening regional market integration to enhance economic resilience and deepen the ASEAN-GCC economic partnership. The Meeting further underscored the importance of enhanced public-private engagement and greater participation of MSMEs, including women and youth entrepreneurs, in strengthening resilient supply chains and supporting regional economic integration.
11. The Meeting acknowledged growing momentum in socio-cultural cooperation, with both sides exploring collaboration in education; sustainability and climate action; people-to-people exchanges; and disaster management and humanitarian assistance in support of the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2026-2030 and strengthening support for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), including through engagement with the GCC Emergency Management Center in the areas of risk assessment,

monitoring and early warning; prevention and mitigation; preparedness and response; resilient recovery; and global leadership.

12. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening transport interconnectivity and communications and establishing linkages to deepen the ASEAN-GCC economic partnership. The Meeting welcomed initiatives to enhance ASEAN-GCC connectivity through the sharing of best practices and co-creation of connectivity projects, including those under the six Strategic Areas of the ASEAN Connectivity Strategic Plan (ACSP), as well as the AOIP. The Meeting further welcomed the exchange of experience in the use of geographic information systems (GIS), intelligent transport systems (ITS), and artificial intelligence, and encouraged further discussions between ASEAN and the GCC Member States on the economic and social benefits of rail, road, and air connectivity within their respective regions.
13. The Meeting thanked the co-chairs Singapore and Bahrain for convening the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and looked forward to the Third ASEAN-GCC Summit to be held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2027.
