

OVERVIEW ASEAN-EUROPEAN UNION DIALOGUE RELATIONS

1. The European Union (EU) became ASEAN's Dialogue Partner in 1977 and it was formally institutionalised following the signing of the ASEAN-EEC Cooperation Agreement on 7 March 1980. The adoption of the Nuremberg Declaration on an EUASEAN Enhanced Partnership in 2007 was an important milestone in the dialogue relations. The dialogue relation has since grown with the adoption of the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to Strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013-2017) in 2012, which gave a more strategic focus to cooperation at regional cooperation in a wide range of areas - political/ security, economic/trade and sociocultural.

2. The ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018-2022) was adopted in 2017 at the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC+1) session with the EU on 6 August 2017 in Manila, in which the Meeting also adopted the Joint Statement on the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of ASEN-EU Dialogue Relations” and the “ASEAN-EU Statement on the Paris Agreement Reaffirming Commitment to Cooperation to Address the Shared Challenge of Climate Change”. Furthermore, 2017 was also milestone year for ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations, as both sides celebrated the 40th anniversary of the dialogue relations through a number of commemorative activities, which culminated in the convening of the ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit to mark the 40th anniversary of the dialogue relations held on 14 November 2017 in Manila.

3. ASEAN continue to undertake its collective actions and coordinate policies in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic including coordination with its partners. An ASEAN-EU Ministerial Video Conference on the COVID-19 was held on 20 March 2020, where both sides agreed to step up cooperation within ASEAN-led mechanisms as well as with external partners to address COVID-19 in a comprehensive and effective manner, taking into account the different levels of development of health systems in the region. ASEAN welcomed the EU's announcement of a “Team Europe” package of over €800 million on 21 July 2020, to support actions at country and regional level to address the immediate health crisis, strengthen health, water and sanitation systems, as well as mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in ASEAN.

Political-Security Cooperation

4. The EU continues to engage with ASEAN in the political-security pillar through their participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Post Ministerial Conferences, and through ASEAN-EU mechanism such as the ASEAN-EU Ministerial

Meeting (AEMM) and the ASEAN-EU Senior Officials' Meeting. The EU also participates in the Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) Plus EU Consultation. To date, nine SOMTC+EU Consultations have been held, most recently via videoconference in July 2021. ASEAN and the EU also regularly exchange best practices as part of the ASEAN-EU High Level Dialogue on Maritime Security Cooperation (HLD-MS).

5. At the 22nd ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) on 21 January 2019 in Brussels, the Ministers agreed in principle to upgrade EU-ASEAN relations to a Strategic Partnership, subject to details and timing to be worked out. Towards this end, at the 23rd AEMM on 1 December 2020, both sides agreed to elevate the ASEAN-EU Dialogue Partnership to a Strategic Partnership.

6. The EU acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on 12 July 2012 in Phnom Penh during the sidelines of the 45th AMM/PMC/19th ARF, and it is the first regional organisation to TAC. The accession demonstrated the EU's commitment towards ASEAN and reflected as an important milestone in ASEAN-EU relations to promote peace, security and stability in the region.

7. The appointment of its first dedicated Ambassador to ASEAN as well as the establishment of the Mission of EU to ASEAN in 2016 demonstrated the EU's commitment to deepen its engagement with ASEAN. Currently there are 25 Ambassadors from the EU Member States that have been accredited to ASEAN.

Economic Cooperation

8. The EU remains an important trading partner of ASEAN. Based on ASEAN statistics, the EU was ASEAN's third largest trading partner with a total two-way trade in 2020 reached to USD 258 billion and the third largest source of FDI among the Dialogue Partners in 2019 with a total inflow amounting to USD 17.5 billion.¹

9. ASEAN and the EU continue to convene regular consultations between ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the EU Trade Commissioner as well as regular meetings of the ASEAN-EU Senior Economic Officials (SEOM-EU). Bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations and discussions between individual ASEAN Member States and the EU are ongoing. The 16th AEM-EU Trade Commissioner Consultations in March 2018 further agreed on the need to exert stronger political will and commitment to pursue a future FTA and towards building closer understanding on the level of ambition under a future FTA. The 28th SEOM-EU Consultations was held in July 2020.

¹ Preliminary ASEAN trade statistics as of April 2021 and ASEAN FDI database as of June 2021.

10. Recognising the potential for comprehensive aviation cooperation on a region-to-region basis, ASEAN and the EU have concluded the negotiations on the ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (AE CATA) at the Extraordinary ASEAN-EU Senior Transport Officials Meeting held virtually on 2 June 2021. The AE CATA is the world's first bloc-to-bloc air transport agreement and will bolster connectivity and economic development among the 37 Member States of ASEAN and the EU. Additionally, at the 23rd AEMM, ASEAN and the EU had also adopted the ASEAN-EU Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

11. The EU continue to support ASEAN in promoting gender equality and women empowerment, protection of migrant workers and enhancing the quality of education through scholarships and the EU also support higher education through the EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (SHARE) programme. Furthermore, through the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI) facility, which operationalised from September 2011 to Sept 2017, the EU has provided support in various sectors, such as education, science and technology, environment and disaster management. On disaster management. Following the signing of the financing agreement of the EU Support to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) in October 2018 in Brussels, the EU supports the strengthening of ASEAN's cooperation in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

12. The inaugural High-Level ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development: Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals was convened on 17 November 2017 in Bangkok. The High-Level ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development is a platform to promote cooperation on the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Second ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development was held on 10 February 2020 in Brussels, Belgium at the sidelines of the ASEAN-EU SOM. The 3rd ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Sustainable Development is planned to be hosted by Thailand in 2021.

13. At the launch of the High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change in Bangkok 8 July 2019, both sides reaffirmed the commitment to strengthen cooperation between ASEAN and the EU on shared regional and global challenges related to protection of the environment and climate change. The dialogue provided space for exchanges of best practices and lessons learned, assessing progress towards relevant environmental and climate goals, and designing enabling conditions

at regional scale. The 2nd ASEAN-EU High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change took place on 27 November 2020.

ASEAN-EU Development Cooperation Programmes

14. The EU supported ASEAN in the regional integration process, strengthening the capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat and enhancing ASEAN connectivity through various development cooperation programmes across the three pillars of ASEAN. ASEAN and the EU have concluded several Financing Agreements (FAs), namely the Sustainable Use of Peat Lands and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA), Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP), the ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE) Plus, and the Integrated Programme on Enhancing the Capacity of AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanism (EU Support to AHA Centre).

15. The Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI) and the ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE Plus), which are follow up programmes to the READI and ARISE with a combined budget of €61 million, were launched in 2018.

16. The EU has provided funding and technical assistance to support the following programmes/project over the past years: (i) Institutional Capacity Building for ASEAN Monitoring and Statistics (COMPASS) (2013-2018); (ii) the EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (EU SHARE) (2014-2019); (iii) ASEAN-EU Migration and Border Management Programme Phase II (2014-2018); (iv) ASEAN-EU Statistical Capacity Building Programme (2009-2012); (v) ASEAN Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (2009-2017); (vi) ASEAN Air Transport Integration Project (2010-2016); and (vii) Enhancing ASEAN FTA Negotiating Capacity/Support to ASEAN-EU Negotiating Process (2011-2013).

