

OVERVIEW

ASEAN-SWITZERLAND SECTORAL DIALOGUE RELATIONS

1. Switzerland was conferred the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN at the 49th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) on 24 July 2016 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Prior to the conferment of this formal partnership, ASEAN and Switzerland had long forged partnership through a number of cooperative activities.
2. The ASEAN-Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Relations was institutionalised through the convening of the First ASEAN-Switzerland Joint Sectoral Cooperation (AS-JSCC) Meeting on 28 November 2016 at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta. The Meeting exchanged views on the priority areas of ASEAN-Switzerland cooperation, including projects/activities to support the realisation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 goals, capacity-building programmes and human resource development, particularly vocational training and collaboration to promote sustainable development in the region.
3. Pursuant to the outcome of the 1st AS-JSCC, the List of Priorities for Cooperation for 2017-2018 was developed, which covers areas for cooperation such as peace and reconciliation, human rights, good governance, micro, small, and medium enterprises development, food security, social forestry and climate change, agriculture, vocational education and training, and humanitarian assistance on disaster management.
4. A longer-term document, the ASEAN-Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Partnerships: Practical Cooperation Areas (PCA) 2017-2021 was also developed and adopted at the 2nd AS-JSCC Meeting in December 2017. The list of Priorities 2017-2018 and the PCA 2017-2021 would serve as a guide to further substantiate the partnership with a focus on practical areas of mutual interest and benefit.
5. Switzerland appointed its first Ambassador to ASEAN since September 2009. The current Ambassador of Switzerland to ASEAN is H.E. Kurt Kunz.

A. Political-Security Cooperation

6. Switzerland supported activities and work plans of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) activities by organising workshop, seminar, consultation, training, and high-level dialogue.
7. Three Trilateral Meetings between the Chair of ASEAN, the ASEAN Secretariat and Switzerland have been convened at the sidelines of ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meetings (AMM) since 2017, which provide an avenue to review the ASEAN-Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue relations and shaping its future direction, and to exchange views on issues of common interest.

B. Economic Cooperation

8. ASEAN and Switzerland have enjoyed considerable trade and investment relations despite recent fluctuation. The total two-way trade declined slightly from US\$ 26.79 billion in 2018 to US\$ 25.10 billion in 2019.¹ Meanwhile, foreign direct investment (FDI) flows from Switzerland to ASEAN experienced significant growth from US\$ 0.71 billion in 2018 to US\$ 3.53 billion in 2019.² In tourism, the number of tourist arrivals from Switzerland to ASEAN has increased every year since 2012. In 2019, the number of tourist arrival was decreased slightly from 477,287 in 2018 to 498,901.³

9. From 2011 to 2019, Switzerland partnered ASEAN in strengthening the ASEAN Social Forestry Network (ASFN) to address interlinked issues of food security, poverty and climate change through the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC). This programme, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), was aimed at assisting ASEAN in adapting to and mitigating climate change through socially and environmentally responsible forest management and protection. In collaboration with ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat and supporting partner organisations, the ASFCC has successfully been completed, with a closing event organised in February 2020 at the ASEAN Secretariat.

10. On 10 November 2020, an ASEAN Economic Ministers Troika Open-Ended Dialogue with Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research of Switzerland, H.E. Guy Parmelin, was held via videoconference, where both sides recognised the potential of ASEAN-Switzerland closer economic cooperation, among other in the areas of economic recovery plan for post COVID-19; development of MSMEs, digital economy and innovation; tourism; connectivity; manufacturing of medical equipment and other health related product; and peer exchange on technical questions.

C. Socio-Cultural Cooperation

11. In the area of humanitarian assistance and disaster management, Switzerland has provided support to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) and the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX). Switzerland was also committed to contributing to a multi-year project from 2018 to 2020 to substantially support the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), where Switzerland has contributed up to US\$ 12 million. The Memorandum of Intent between the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) and the Swiss Confederation was signed on 1 August

¹ ASEAN Statistics Database as of May 2021

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

2019, reflecting Switzerland's commitment to further support the strengthening of capacity and role of the AHA Centre as the main coordinating agency for disaster management in the region.

12. In response to the several major natural disasters in Southeast Asia in 2018, Switzerland provided humanitarian assistance and emergency response amounting to around CHF 3 million. Significant contribution to humanitarian assistance to ASEAN was also made by Switzerland in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, Typhoon Haiyan and Typhoon Phanfone in 2004, 2013 and 2020 respectively.

13. Switzerland and ASEAN also promote cooperation in vocational education and training through consultation, capacity building, broader cooperation and partnership. A capacity building Programme on TVET, the ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative (ASTI), 2021-2024, is being developed with a focus on CLM countries. Both sides are exploring practical cooperation in the areas of (i) women empowerment, gender equality and the rights of welfare of children, the elderly and migrant workers, (ii) public health, (iii) connectivity, (iv) narrowing the development gap and Initiative for ASEAN Integration (v) sustainable development, and (vi) tourism.

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