FACT SHEET

The European Union and the Association of South East Asian Nations: Towards an Ever Stronger Natural Partnership

The EU and ASEAN are the two most advanced regional integration initiatives in the world. They are longstanding, natural 'partners in integration', who share the same goals for their citizens: peace, prosperity and democracy. In recent years, the EU-ASEAN partnership has grown significantly and cooperation now spans a wide range of policy areas, including non-traditional security challenges, trade and investment opportunities, academic exchanges and research, environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

STRENGTHENING POLITICAL RELATIONS

The EU and ASEAN look forward to their 20th Ministerial meeting on 23 July 2014. During the last Ministerial meeting, in April 2012, EU and ASEAN Foreign Ministers upgraded the relationship by adopting the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership 2013-2017. This Plan of Action gave the relationship a more strategic focus, deepened political ties and expanded cooperation to new areas, including security-related matters. Three months after the adoption of the Plan, in July 2012, the EU acceded to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) which further strengthened political engagement with ASEAN and the wider region. EU and ASEAN Ministers met for the first time formally in 1978, making the EU ASEAN’s oldest dialogue partner.

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In recent years, there has been a significant increase in top-level visits back and forth, with HR/VP Catherine Ashton visiting the ASEAN region three times in 2013, including the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta in November. In February 2014, the first meeting between the ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and the EU's Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) was held in Brussels.

PARTNERS IN CONNECTIVITY AND INTEGRATION

Natural connectivity partners. As likeminded regional integration initiatives, the EU and ASEAN can learn a lot from each other. The EU has several decades of experience in deepening integration and interconnecting European citizens and businesses. In 2010 ASEAN leaders adopted the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, an ambitious integration agenda tailored to ASEAN's objective to achieve an Economic Community by the end of 2015. In February 2014, the members of ASEAN's Coordinating Committee on Connectivity paid a 5-day study visit to the EU to exchange experiences on the establishment of an internal market, the creation of transcontinental transport networks and much more.

The EU and ASEAN join forces to realise the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. The ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE) programme provides € 15 million towards technical assistance to facilitate the movement of goods and people. The programme also directly supports the improvement of the ASEAN Secretariat's institutional capacity with € 3 million. Other EU projects address the harmonisation of statistics or the enforcement of intellectual property rights.

Towards air transport agreement. Air traffic between the EU and ASEAN has been growing steadily in recent years and nearly doubled over the last 15 years to reach more than 10 million passengers in 2012. With a combined population of 1.1 billion, the EU-ASEAN air transport market is expected to grow 5% per year over the next 20 years. At the first EU-ASEAN Aviation Summit held in Singapore on 11-12 February 2014 EU and ASEAN decided to take aviation cooperation to a new level. The EU also supports ASEAN's endeavour to establish a single aviation market by 2015. The EU allocated € 5 million to help create a safe, secure and sustainable single aviation market in ASEAN, helping ASEAN to become a regional transport hub.

Bringing ASEAN students closer together. A total of €10 million is allocated for EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region (EU SHARE), a programme that supports the harmonisation of recognition systems between ASEAN universities. This will make it easier for students to transfer credits from one university to another and improve the comparability of degrees.
TRADE, TRADE, TRADE

The EU and ASEAN enjoy a strong trade relationship. Trade between our two regions is vibrant and has been growing further over the last decade. In 2012 its volume totalled €181.4 billion in goods alone. The EU is ASEAN's second largest trading partner worldwide and ASEAN ranks third in the list of the EU's trading partners.

The EU and ASEAN are steadily removing trade barriers. In September 2013, the EU and Singapore concluded a FTA and negotiations on similar deals with Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia are underway. These agreements are stepping stones on the way to a region-to-region FTA between the EU and ASEAN. FTAs allow both sides to strengthen their commercial ties, overcome hurdles still faced by companies and create jobs, thus bringing considerable benefits to their 1.1 billion citizens. To support the process, the EU has launched a programme to enhance ASEAN's FTA negotiation capacity.

The EU remains the biggest investor in ASEAN. The EU is the largest provider of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to ASEAN, accounting for almost one quarter (24%) of total FDI inflow. Several EU initiatives stimulate further investment. The Asia Investment Fund (AIF) currently provides €30 million to unlock high impact investments in areas such as energy, transport and SMEs. The EU is supporting the establishment of business centres in Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines, helping European business to find their way in South East Asia. A pilot project pilot 'EU business avenues in South East Asia' helps European Small and Medium Enterprises to understand the South East Asian market. In the same vein, Commission Vice President Tajani is leading Missions for Growth to the region, most recently in Myanmar (November 2013).

Institutionalising EU-ASEAN economic ties. ASEAN Economic Ministers and Commissioner De Gucht meet annually to discuss ways to further boost trade and investments. At the same time, entrepreneurs meet at an EU-ASEAN Business Summit to formulate policy recommendations.

SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Working together on regional security. As an active member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) the EU, together with ASEAN and other partners, addresses regional and international security issues of common concern. The EU and Myanmar co-chair the ARF Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy as well as the related Defence Officials Dialogue in 2013-2014. As part of this Co-Chairmanship, the EU organised in March 2014 an Orientation Course on the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) with a focus on EU-ASEAN relations, organised by the European Security and Defence College, open to all ARF Members.
In 2014, the EU partners with Brunei on preventive diplomacy and with the Philippines on Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risk mitigation. EU also co-chairing ARF Experts and Eminent Persons group together.

**The EU and ASEAN are stepping up engagement on non-traditional security issues.** Maritime security was high on the agenda during the EU-ASEAN High Level Dialogue on Maritime Cooperation in November 2013 in Jakarta. The EU also sponsors the CBRN Centre of Excellence in Southeast Asia that was officially opened in March 2013 and provides a platform for exchange on risk mitigation. The EU and ASEAN collaborate through border management and migration programmes and a Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime is envisaged for summer 2014. Cooperation on disaster management is also growing. The EU participated in the ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercise 2013 in Thailand, which looked at strengthening international cooperation and best practice in disaster response.

**The EU provides comprehensive humanitarian assistance to ASEAN countries.** Between 2007 and 2013, the ASEAN region received € 299 million worth of humanitarian aid from the EU. The Aid to Uprooted People Programme, for example, helps to improve the living conditions of displaced people and refugees and aims to facilitate their re-integration into their home country. The ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance, too, receives substantial support from the EU.

**The EU and ASEAN are working closely to promote human rights.** The pace of discussions and exchanges on human rights has increased markedly over the last two years. In February 2013, the ASEAN Committee on the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) visited Brussels; three months later EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, met with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in Jakarta. AICHR is expected to visit Brussels for the second time and a series of other EU-financed EU-ASEAN human rights events are being planned for the short to medium term.

**FINANCING ASEAN DEVELOPMENT**

**The EU is a major development partner of ASEAN and the biggest donor to the ASEAN Secretariat.** In the upcoming budget cycle (2014-2020), the EU will support the ASEAN integration and the Secretariat with € 170 million, more than double the amount under the previous cycle (close to € 70 million, 2007-2013). The new programme will focus on enhancing connectivity / trade, addressing disaster management / climate change and promoting dialogue across the board.

**The EU will spend close to € 3 billion in the next seven years in South East Asia.** In addition to the direct support to ASEAN integration, the EU supports bilaterally the development of several lower income South East Asian countries. Financing countries will go up from € 1.2 billion (2007-2013) to over 2 billion (2014-2020).
Adding up the many other thematic programmes, South East Asia will receive close to € 3 billion from the EU between 2014 and 2020.

**A special focus on the Mekong.** The countries in the Mekong are ASEAN's least developed members. EU will increase its financial support to Mekong countries from 607M€ (2007-2013) to 1705M€ (2014-2020) to help close the ASEAN development gap.

**A PEOPLES CENTERED PARTNERSHIP**

**Tourism between the EU and ASEAN is booming.** Every year, about 10 million people are travelling between the two regions. The number of EU visitors exceeded seven million in 2012 and is still growing. No other ASEAN partner is travelling that much to the region.

**Scholarships for ASEAN students.** More than 4,000 students and researchers from ASEAN countries come to study on EU scholarships in Europe every year. Around 250 ASEAN students receive funding under the EU Erasmus Mundus Partnership, while 25 other students from the region receive a Marie Curie Fellowship. On top of that, EU Member States offer a range of national funding schemes for ASEAN students. As of 2014, funding for student and scholar exchange continues under the Erasmus+ programme that funds Joint Master Degrees, capacity-building projects and initiatives to enhance international credit mobility.

**Sharing innovation and progress.** The EU encourages the exchange of knowledge between research institutions. Under the Framework Programme 7 (2007-2013) more than 212 ASEAN research organisations interacted with EU institutes and received € 27.4 million in funding with ASEAN countries contributing another € 12.2 million. The follow-up initiative Horizon 2020 foresees increased cooperation with ASEAN and identifies green technologies and food security as priority areas. The First ASEAN-EU Science, Innovation and Technology Days in Bangkok in January 2014 demonstrated, once more, the potential of EU-ASEAN collaboration in this field.

**CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT**

**EU support for sustainable economic growth.** The EU is promoting methods of production in the ASEAN region that protect the environment and biodiversity. The SWITCH Asia programme encourages eco-friendly production techniques in traditional regional industries such as batik handicraft, supporting both the local environment and people's health. Other initiatives focus on forest governance and sustainable timber production.

**The EU is helping ASEAN to adapt to the effects of climate change.** Nearly € 5 million of EU funds are going to the Mekong River Commission to contribute to efforts in responding to climate change challenges. The EU is also supporting climate change adaptation and reducing deforestation in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar (around €10 million).
On top of that, the EU and ASEAN maintain a regular policy dialogue on climate change. As one of the focal areas for EU ASEAN cooperation envisaged for the programming period 2014-2020, joint activities on climate change, in particular regarding mitigation through renewable energy, improved energy efficiency and disaster management, are set to expand in the years ahead.