



# EU-ASEAN STRATEGIC THINKERS FORUM

## 28 February 2018, Brussels

**EU-ASEAN: Old friends, new challenges**  
**Building a reinvigorated partnership**

**09.00-09.30: Coffee and registration of participants**

**09.30-10.00: Opening Plenary Session**

**Christian Leffler**, Deputy Secretary General, Economic and Global Issues at the European External Action Service (EEAS) (tbc)

**Apichart Chinwanno**, Former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand (2015-2016)

**10.00-11.00**

**Session 1: EU-ASEAN security cooperation in turbulent times**

**Moderated by Shada Islam, Director for Europe & Geopolitics at Friends of Europe**

ASEAN and the EU are successful “peace projects” which have ensured regional peace and stability since their creation. Today, both are adjusting and adapting to rapid geopolitical transformations, prompted largely by uncertainties over the future direction of US policy and the emergence of a more pro-active, self-confident and assertive China. ASEAN, standing at the centre of regional security arrangements for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific, has to deal with growing US-China rivalries, most notably in the South China Sea, and America’s wariness towards China’s flagship Belt and Road Initiative. The region is also the stage for competition between China and Japan as well as China and India while North Korea’s nuclear programme and the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar continue to cast a shadow over the region. Deteriorating human rights in Vietnam, the Philippines and Cambodia are a cause for concern. Meanwhile, the EU is responding to new and unexpected volatility in transatlantic relations as well as Brexit,



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relations with Russia and Turkey, continued violence in the Middle East and efforts to deal with an ongoing refugee crisis. Recent European moves to establish Permanent Structured Cooperation on defence and security (PESCO) have enhanced Europe's global security profile.

The changed geopolitical context has ushered in a new era of EU-ASEAN exchanges on security issues, including maritime security, piracy, cybersecurity, preventive diplomacy and mediation as well as crisis management and disaster relief. EU Council President Donald Tusk was invited as guest of the chair to the East Asia Summit last year although the EU's quest for permanent membership of the grouping remains on the table.

- What are the differences between EU's and ASEAN perspective on security issues?
- What are ASEAN and the EU's shared security interests and concerns in a changing regional and global environment?
- Which areas and sectors are best suited to increase increased EU-ASEAN security cooperation?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership of the East Asia Summit?
- What lessons can ASEAN and the EU learn from each other in terms of countering radicalisation, counter-terrorism, cyber security and tackling hybrid threats?

**Kick-starters include:**

- **Bill Hayton**, Associate Fellow at Chatham House
- **Tang Siew Mun**, Head of the ASEAN Studies Centre at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore
- **Jose Tavares**, Director General for ASEAN at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia



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**11.00-11.30: Coffee Break**

**11.30-12.30**

**Session 2: Trade, Business and Connectivity**

**Moderated by Suthad Setboonsarng, Member of the Board of the Bank of Thailand**

ASEAN's economic performance puts it among the world's rising economic stars with a population of 622 million; ASEAN is also the world's third largest market, just behind the EU which is the world's largest market and a leading global trader and investor. Not surprisingly, economics and trade are the most potent drivers of EU- ASEAN cooperation. ASEAN is the EU's third trading partner and the EU is ASEAN's second, with annual bilateral trade in goods worth more than €200bn. The EU is the first provider of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the ASEAN region. Both ASEAN and the EU have been shaken by US President Donald Trump's tough stance against global trade liberalisation, fearing this may lead to damaging worldwide trade wars and increased protectionism. America's decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal is of special concern to ASEAN since several of its members are part of the agreement. But even as the US turns inwards, threatening new quotas and tariffs on imports and investments, the rest of the world is moving quickly to conclude negotiations on long-standing trade deals and to clinch new pacts to further liberalise bilateral and region-to-region trade flows. Several trade agreements have been signed or are being negotiated between the EU and members of ASEAN, with officials saying a region-to-region EU-ASEAN free trade agreement is also on the cards. The EU is also supporting the ASEAN Masterplan for Connectivity. Meanwhile, countries in the Asia-Pacific are forging closer trade links, whether through efforts to pursue the TPP without the US, negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) or stronger ties between ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand. However, public opinion in both Europe and Asia has still to be convinced of the advantages of free trade deals as populists play on fears over jobs and wage stagnation. There is concern in both ASEAN and the EU about the impact of the digital revolution on jobs.

- How quickly will negotiations start on an EU-ASEAN free trade agreement and what are the advantages – and disadvantages – of such a deal?



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- What are the expectations from private sector in ASEAN and the EU on the FTA?
- How realistic are Asian plans to move forward with the TPP without the participation of the US and can the deal be extended to include China?
- Is there any real value in the ASEAN-centric RCEP and its incremental approach to trade liberalisation?
- What is the trade and connectivity impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative and is it an alternative to TPP?
- What are the prospect and economic impact of ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement?
- How can a sceptical and largely anti-globalisation public opinion in both Europe and Asia be convinced of the positive outcomes of trade liberalisation?

**Kick-starters include: Keo Chhea**, Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Cambodia

- **Iana Dreyer**, Founder & Editor of Borderlex- **Farizal Razalli**, Head of Program for Strategy at the National University of Malaysia Department of History, Politics & Strategy

**12.30-14.00: Lunch**

**14.00-15.00**

**Session 3: Enhanced people-to-people contacts for a better EU-ASEAN ties**

**Moderated by Fraser CAMERON, Director of the EU-Asia Centre**

ASEAN and the EU face a shared challenge of connecting with citizens and especially young people. In his book, the "ASEAN Miracle", veteran Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani underlines that in order for ASEAN to survive, thrive and stay relevant in the long term, the "people of ASEAN need to feel a greater sense of ownership". The EU is struggling with a similar quest to engage more actively with the public and especially with youth. The ASEAN Charter adopted in 2008 makes important references to human rights and building a "people-centered" ASEAN and led to the setting up of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). Since then, ASEAN's very active civil society representatives have come together regularly through events such as ASEAN's People's Forum and with Erasmus-style education exchange systems.



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Implementation of the various commitments made under the ASEAN Economic Community will also mean increased human mobility among countries, including for economic and labour migrants. Meanwhile, visa-free travel and the explosion of intra-ASEAN low-cost budget airlines mean that ASEAN citizens are able to travel more freely and frequently within the region. As Mahbubani notes, this means that ASEAN poets and artists can visit each other more easily. Inevitably this has led to more references to fellow ASEAN countries in the art and literature of the region. Civil society representatives, however, remain critical of the region's overall human rights performance and worry that ASEAN is not paying enough attention to the issue. Both ASEAN and the EU also need to work harder to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and to improve the lives of girls and women. They must also enhance efforts to promote and protect fundamental rights, including the rights of ethnic and religious minorities as well as refugees and migrants.

- How can young people become more involved in the ASEAN and EU projects?
- What can be done to promote greater people-to-people contacts – especially among young people – in ASEAN and Europe?
- What lessons can ASEAN and the EU learn from each other in terms of migrant and refugee resettlement and integration?
- What should be done to prevent a disconnect between the EU and ASEAN in the face of Brexit?

**Kick-starters include:**

- **Konstantinas Andrijauskas**, Associate Professor of Asian Studies and International Politics at Vilnius University's Institute of International Relations and Political Science
- **Clarita Carlos**, Professor of Political Science at the University of the Philippines
- **Tran Viet Thai**, Deputy Director-General at the Institute for Foreign Strategic Studies, Vietnam

**15.00-15.30: Coffee Break**

**15.30-17.00**

**Conclusion: Discuss the recommendation for the AEMM**

**Moderated by**



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- **Jörn Dosch**, Professor of International Politics and Development Cooperation at the University of Rostock, Germany
- **Frederick Kliem**, Senior Programme Manager at the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation's Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia, Singapore



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