

Overview of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations

Introduction

1. The ASEAN-Australia dialogue relationship has evolved and matured considerably since Australia became ASEAN's very first Dialogue Partner more than three decades ago in 1974.
2. Over the years, ASEAN-Australia partnership has been constantly strengthened and enhanced. The Leaders of ASEAN and Australia, together with New Zealand, met in 2004 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of their dialogue relations. At the Summit in 2004, the Leaders adopted the Joint Declaration of the Leaders at the ASEAN-Australia and New Zealand Commemorative Summit to further broaden and deepen their dialogue relations in all fields including political, economic and socio-cultural cooperation.

Political and Security Cooperation

3. Australia has been actively participating in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which is the only inter-governmental forum aimed at contributing to the promotion of peace and security through dialogue and cooperation in Asia Pacific. Australia hosted a number of ARF Inter-Sessional Meetings (ISMs) on CBMs and the ARF Workshop on Managing the Consequences of a Major Terrorist Attack. The regular ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences (PMCs) and ASEAN-Australia Dialogue offer an important opportunity for ASEAN and Australia to review contemporary political, security, economic and development cooperation issues affecting the dialogue partnership.
4. Following the signing of the ASEAN-Australia Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism in July 2004, both sides adopted the Work Programme to Implement the Joint Declaration to work closer together to fight terrorism and other transnational crimes. In this field, ASEAN and Australia have convened the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) + Australia Consultations and the annual Meeting of Directors-General of Immigration and Consular Matters (DGICM) + Australia Consultations to strengthen closer cooperation in combating transnational crime, including terrorism and people trafficking.
5. Following its successful implementation, the four-year Australian-Government-funded project the ASEAN Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking (ARCPPT) has been extended to a second phase and renamed the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP) project. ARTIP has been implemented since August 2006 and will carry-on until August 2011. The project involves the establishment of a training curricula and modules on cases of combating trafficking in persons for front line officials of the ASEAN law enforcement agencies.
6. In December 2005, Australia acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). The accession to the TAC underscored the importance of the TAC as a code of conduct governing inter-state relations, and a strong commitment to promote peace and security in the region.
7. ASEAN-Australia partnership reached a significant milestone with the adoption of the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Partnership and the Plan of Action to implement the Joint Declaration. The Joint Declaration reflected a strong desire and commitment of both sides to promote cooperation and partnership in areas of political, economic and socio-cultural

cooperation. It also sets out the direction of ASEAN-Australia dialogue relations in the years to come.

8. Australia has been actively involved in the East Asia Summit (EAS), which was initiated by ASEAN. The First, Second and Third East Asia Summits were held on 14 December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur; on 15 January 2007 in Cebu, Philippines; and 21 December 2007 in Singapore, respectively.

9. Following the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter, and based on the strong foundation of the ASEAN-Australia dialogue relations, Australia has appointed Ambassador Gillian Bird, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as its Ambassador to ASEAN.

Economic Cooperation

10. Australia is an important trading partner of ASEAN. The ASEAN total trade with Australia has grown from USD 41.9 billion in 2007 to USD 51.5 billion in 2008. Total Australian FDI to ASEAN has also grown from USD 303 million in 2006 to USD 973.3 million in 2008. The number of Australian tourists also rose from 2.4 million in 2007 to 2.9 million in 2008. The ASEAN-Dialogue Partners (including Australia) trade and investment statistic data can be accessed through <http://www.asean.org/19230.htm>.

11. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)-Closer Economic Relations (CER) Consultations, which are held annually, have become the highest-level forum where trade policies and ideas supportive of closer ASEAN-Australia partnership are discussed and initiated. ASEAN Senior Economic Officials (SEOM) also regularly meet their counterparts from the CER.

12. The ASEAN-Australia and New Zealand Commemorative Summit in 2004 launched negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) was signed by the Economic Ministers of ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand at the sidelines of the 14th ASEAN Summit on 27 February 2009 in Cha-am/Hua Hin, Thailand. The Agreement is the single most comprehensive economic agreement entered into by ASEAN to date. It covers trade in goods and services (including financial services and telecommunications), investment, electronic commerce, movement of natural persons, intellectual property, competition policy and economic cooperation. It was the first region-to-region arrangement for ASEAN and the first FTA that Australia and New Zealand have jointly negotiated. Following the signing of the AANZFTA Agreement, preparations are currently being undertaken for the ratification and the subsequent implementation of the Agreement by the parties.

Development Cooperation

13. The current primary vehicle for Australia's regional assistance to ASEAN is the seven-year ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme Phase II (AADCP II) (2008-2015). AADCP II, with a total budget of A\$ 57 million, builds up the approach and successes of AADCP I, which concluded in June 2008. The overall objective of AADCP II is to support ASEAN to implement its economic integration policies and priorities in line with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The three core components of the AADCP II aims to:

- Strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat's institutional capacity to facilitate and support ASEAN integration and community building efforts;
- Support movement towards the ASEAN Economic Community through: provision of timely and high quality economic research and policy advice; and
- Support for regional mechanisms and capacity for the implementation of selected AEC Blueprint activities at the national level.

14. Australia has also provided A\$ 5 million to support a three-year programme called the ASEAN Plus Three Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Programme (2006-2009). The Programme's objective is to enhance the regional preparedness and capacity through integrated approaches to prevention, surveillance and timely response to emerging infectious diseases. The programme has conducted numerous regional workshops, developed a regional communication and integration strategy, an annual programme action plan, and a programme implementation document.

15. In supporting ASEAN efforts to narrow the development gap within ASEAN, Australia has allocated A\$ 2.7 million to support development within the sub-region. Focusing on Southern Philippines and Eastern Indonesia, the initiative, which ended recently, aimed to support private sector and infrastructure investment by promoting growth and security within the sub region.