

ASEAN-CHINA DIALOGUE RELATIONS

Introduction

ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations could be traced back to 1991, when H.E. Qian Qichen, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, attended the opening session of the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in July 1991 in Kuala Lumpur as a guest of the Malaysian Government. China expressed its keen interest to forge cooperation with ASEAN for mutual benefit. China was accorded full Dialogue Partner status at the 29th AMM in July 1996 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

1. ASEAN-China relations were elevated to a higher plane with the signing of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the People's Republic of China on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity at the 7th ASEAN-China Summit in October 2003 in Bali, Indonesia.
2. Subsequently, a five-year (2005-2010) Plan of Action to implement the Joint Declaration was adopted at the 8th ASEAN-China Summit in November 2004 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Plan of Action has served as the master plan to broaden and deepen ASEAN-China dialogue relations in a comprehensive and mutually beneficial manner with the view to strengthen the strategic partnership for regional peace, development and prosperity.
3. ASEAN and China agreed on eleven priority areas of cooperation, namely energy, transportation, culture, public health, tourism, agriculture, information technology, two-way investment, human resources development, Mekong River Basin Development and environment.
4. ASEAN and China celebrated 15 years of dialogue relations with the convening of the "Commemorative Summit Marking the 15th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations" in October 2006 in Nanning, China. The Commemorative Summit issued a Joint Statement to further strengthen ASEAN-China relations towards an enhanced strategic partnership.

Political-Security Cooperation

5. In building a strong foundation for a long-term partnership, ASEAN and China have concluded a number of key documents in the political and security field. These documents include the Joint Statement on ASEAN-China Cooperation Towards the 21st Century (1997), Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues (2002), Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) (2002), Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2003), and Joint Statement of ASEAN-China Commemorative Summit (2006).

6. China was the first Dialogue Partner of ASEAN to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia at the 7th ASEAN-China Summit in October 2003 in Bali. China's accession to the TAC has contributed to the stature of the TAC as the code of conduct for inter-state relations in the region. China has also expressed its intention to accede to the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ).

7. China supports ASEAN's role as the driving force of the regional processes initiated by ASEAN such as the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) process, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS).

8. In an effort to implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) (2002), the first and second ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meetings (SOM) on the Implementation of the DOC were convened in December 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and May 2006 in Siem Reap, Cambodia respectively. ASEAN and China continue consultations on the implementation of the DOC.

9. With a view to realise the Joint Declaration in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues, an MOU on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues was signed by ASEAN and China in January 2004 in Bangkok. ASEAN and China hold regular consultations to enhance cooperation to combat transnational crime. ASEAN and China convened an Informal Ministerial Consultations on Transnational Crime in November 2005 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam and in November 2007 in Brunei Darussalam. The First Formal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) Plus China will be held back-to-back with the AMMTC in November 2009 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

10. In an effort to rid themselves of the menace of illicit drugs by 2015, ASEAN and China cooperate through the ASEAN-China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD), which was established in 2000 in Bangkok, to advance regional cooperation to control and combat drug. Under ACCORD, ASEAN and China undertake four activities, namely promoting civic awareness and social responses on the dangers of drugs; reducing illicit consumption of drugs by building consensus and sharing best practices in demand reduction; strengthening the rule of law by an enhanced network of control measures; and improving cooperation in law enforcement and legislative review.

Economic Cooperation

11. Trade and economic ties between ASEAN and China have been growing rapidly over the past years, especially after the signing of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation in November 2002 to establish the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA). Both sides have targeted the realisation of ACFTA in 2010 for Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and China, and 2015 for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

12. The Agreements on Trade in Goods and Dispute Settlement Mechanism between ASEAN and China were signed in November 2004 in Vientiane. The Agreement on Trade in Goods has been implemented since July 2005. The Agreement on Trade in Services was signed at the sidelines of the 10th ASEAN-China Summit in January 2007 in Cebu, Philippines and entered into force on 1 July 2007. The ASEAN-China Trade Negotiating Committee (AC-TNC) concluded the negotiations on the ASEAN-China Investment Agreement in November 2008 and the agreement was signed during the 41st ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting in August 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand, which means that ASEAN-China negotiation processes on Free Trade Area (FTA) have been completed as set in the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and China.

13. The ASEAN-China FTA remains a regional trading arrangement of some global significance, given the magnitude of trade between the two sides, which accounted for 13.7% of global trade or almost half of Asia's total trade in 2007.

14. To promote ASEAN-China infrastructure and inter-connectivity, China recently announced that it has decided to set up the US\$ 10 billion China-ASEAN Investment Cooperation Fund to finance major ASEAN-China investment cooperation projects in infrastructure, energy and resources, information and communication technology and other fields.

15. Consultations to finalise the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Establishing the ASEAN-China Centre is ongoing. Consultations are also in progress to finalise the drafts MOU between ASEAN and China on Cooperation on Intellectual Property and the MOU between ASEAN and China on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).

16. The total trade between ASEAN and China reached US\$ 192.5 billion in 2008. This growth puts China as ASEAN's third largest trading partner in 2009, accounting for 11.3% of ASEAN's total trade.

17. The private sector has been playing an important role in enhancing closer economic ties between ASEAN and China. The China-ASEAN EXPO (CAEXPO), showcasing products from ASEAN and China, has been organised on an annual basis since 2004 in Nanning, China. Many new products have been introduced every year by various enterprises in ASEAN and China. In addition, the ASEAN-China Business and Investment Summit (CABIS), which is held back-to-back with the annual CAEXPO, serves as an effective way of bringing government and the private sector together to exchange views on matters affecting the economy and business of ASEAN Member States and China.

18. The ASEAN-China MOU on Strengthening Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Cooperation was signed in November 2007 at the sidelines of the 11th ASEAN-China Summit in Singapore. The MOU is meant to support the implementation of the ACFTA.

19. SEAN-China cooperation in agriculture has deepened and widened with the signing of the MOU on Agricultural Cooperation in November 2002 in Phnom Penh. The MOU provides for a more direct cooperation in the agricultural sector between the lead national agencies responsible for agriculture in ASEAN and China. An extended ASEAN-China MOU on Agricultural Cooperation for 2007-2011 was signed in January 2007 in Cebu.

20. The area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), ASEAN and China are continuously working towards strengthening strategic partnership in ICT to promote international cooperation in terms of investment human resources development on ICT and to explore the possibility of establishing Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) information highway. To this end, the two sides concluded two important documents, namely the MOU on Cooperation in ICT, which was signed in October 2003 in Bali; and the Beijing Declaration on ASEAN-China ICT Cooperative Partnership for Common Development, which was adopted in May 2005 in Beijing. In an effort to further strengthen implementation of the Beijing Declaration, ASEAN and China adopted a 2007-2012 Plan of Action during the 12th ASEAN Summit in January 2007 in Cebu.

21. ASEAN and China deepened cooperation in the transport area with the signing of the MOU on Transport Cooperation in November 2004 in Vientiane. Through this MOU, both sides shall promote the following areas for medium and long-term cooperation: i) transport infrastructure construction; ii) transport facilitation; iii) maritime safety and security; iv) air transport; v) human resources development; and vi) information exchange. The ASEAN-China Maritime Transport Agreement (ACMTA) was signed in November 2007 in Singapore. The Seventh ASEAN-China Transport Ministers' Meeting (ATM + China) held in November 2008 agreed in principle with the Strategic Plan for ASEAN-China Transport Cooperation, which identifies some 90 transport infrastructure projects aimed at enhancing international and cross-border transportation and facilitation.

22. Tourism cooperation is one of the potential areas for cooperation between ASEAN and China. The ASEAN-China cooperation on tourism has been strengthened and the number of tourist from both sides has been steadily increasing. ASEAN and China are confident that the number of visitors will continue to rise substantially, along with expanded and deepened relationships.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

23. Both sides signed an MOU on Cultural Cooperation in August 2005 in Bangkok. Through this MOU, ASEAN and China will promote exchanges and cooperation in the fields of culture, both tangible and intangible, in accordance with their respective domestic laws, regulation, policies, administrative guidelines and procedures.

24. To promote strategic partnership for peace and prosperity between ASEAN and China as well as to enhance media exchange and cooperation, the 1st ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) + China was held in October 2008 in Nanning. The Ministers signed an MOU on Information and Media cooperation, laying a solid foundation for the strengthening of cooperation in the fields of information and media.

25. ASEAN and China attach importance to and strengthen youth exchange and cooperation. The First Meeting of ASEAN and China Ministers responsible for youth was held in September 2004 in Beijing and the Ministers adopted the Beijing Declaration on ASEAN-China Cooperation on Youth and agreed to establish a 10+1 youth ministers as mechanism to broaden the base for everlasting friendship. This declaration serves as a blueprint for fostering the partnership between ASEAN and China for peace and prosperity. With a view to strengthen cooperation in the area of youth, a series of activities have been organised.

26. In the area of science and technology, ASEAN and China established the ASEAN-China Joint Science and Technology (JSTC) in 1995 as a body to plan, approve, coordinate, monitor and evaluate joint cooperative programmes and activities. Since then, there have been many joint programmes and activities convened.

27. ASEAN and China cooperation has been intensified in health with the convening the First ASEAN-China Health Ministerial Meeting in 2006 in Myanmar. Both sides are collaborating in the areas of HIV/AIDS prevention and control, avian influenza and other emerging infectious diseases, and traditional medicine at the first stage. The Second ASEAN-China Health Ministerial Meeting in 2008 in Manila, Philippines engaged in an extensive discussion on new areas of collaboration, namely health emergency management, oral health, establishment of China-ASEAN Forum on traditional medicine, involvement of NGOs in HIV prevention, care and management, as well as food quality, supervision, inspection and quarantine.

28. China continues to support ASEAN's effort to narrow the development gap in the region through the implementation of projects/programmes under the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) and other sub-regional economic growth areas such as the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC) and the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA).