



EU-ASEAN Relations

Essay Series


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The Philippines will be the country coordinator of ASEAN-EU relations for the next three years up to 2024. It succeeds Singapore in this important role at the forthcoming ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference Session with EU in August 2021.

The Philippines' role as country coordinator will be crucial as ASEAN-EU relations face the challenges of the pandemic and the post-pandemic future. Focus will be on issues that are strategic, transcendental and transformational. For the Philippines, these priority issues include climate change, environmental protection, biodiversity, conservation, sustainable development goals, gender justice, digital solutions, migration, maritime domain awareness, and cybersecurity.

These key areas will harness the full potential of ASEAN-EU relations to impact positively, the world's post-pandemic recovery. These will also complement existing areas of cooperation in connectivity and economic engagement, which have steadily progressed since ASEAN-EU relations started in 1977.

From being Dialogue Partner in 1980, and recently, Strategic Partner, the EU continues to make headway in cultivating stronger and deeper relations with ASEAN. It is the first international organization that acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2012, and co-founded the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1994.

Among ASEAN's ten Dialogue Partners, EU ranks as its third largest trading partner and source of foreign direct investments. Mutual confidence and positive momentum drive the ongoing ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement talks.

On 02 June 2021, negotiations on the landmark ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement were concluded. As the world's first bloc-to-bloc air transport agreement, it is a pivotal development in global connectivity. This demonstrates that the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action 2018-2022, which prioritizes regional connectivity, is not just ink on paper.

The Philippines appreciates EU's interest to promote synergies between the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the EU Connectivity Strategy. Enhanced connectivity will boost national efforts to restart and reenergize domestic economies while battling the pandemic.

The Philippines looks forward to facilitating negotiations on the successor ASEAN-EU Plan of Action during its country coordinatorship. It envisions a Plan of Action that is forward-looking, robust, and responsive to the aspirations of ASEAN and EU and their respective member countries. It will be a dynamic platform for broader and deeper engagement between the two regions.

As the world pivots to a post-pandemic future, ASEAN is cognizant of and ready for the opportunities emerging from the fluidity of the present. The stabilizing ASEAN centrality will continue to shape Southeast Asia's regional architecture. External partners have much to benefit from this balance of dynamism and stability.



When the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership was formalized in December 2020, it signaled a new direction and readiness to expand cooperation across political-security, economic, and socio-cultural spheres, from end to end. The Philippines is ready to steer and mobilize this new direction into concrete, beneficial gains for both organizations.

The thriving ASEAN-EU partnership is a bright spot in these dark times. The Philippines as country coordinator welcomes the challenge and opportunity to shape the way ahead for these two organizations, so vital to global peace and security, and a sustainable future for all.



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