

May might have celebrated labour day, but is one day really *truly* ever enough to reward the hard work we put at the Council every day? Especially if one takes a look back to review the activities we have had in May!

Meetings in Brussels



In the first week of May, I travelled to Brussels to meet with the Directorate-Generals for Transport & Mobility, Trade, Environment, Energy and International Partnerships in the European Commission; European External Action Service; The Cabinets for EVP Dombrovskis in the Commission and President Michel in the European Council; and the Ambassadors to the EU from Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and (for the very first time) Timor Leste.

The various meetings held in Brussels were aimed at focusing on how to build on the momentum from the ASEAN-EU summits in December 2022; developments on trade negotiations; and how to better communicate with ASEAN on the various EU sustainability initiatives. We pressed the case for the restart of FTA talks with the Philippines and Malaysia, and also for enhanced dialog on issues such as CBAM and Deforestation Directive.

Other Events in May

The Council held the webinar on “Unlocking Investments for ASEAN Green Growth”, jointly organised with the Hinrich Foundation to discuss about the need to balance with investment and sustainable growth. If you missed the webinar, you can view it [here](#).

We also held a [joint webinar](#) with ITC looking at the implications of the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism on ASEAN. From the discussion on the webinar, things might not be as bad as many people in ASEAN think or believe!

#MabuhayManila

Jet-setting to Manila straight after Kuala Lumpur, I participated and spoke about the importance of battling ant-illicit trade at the Global Anti-illicit Trade Summit organised by Economist Impact. #DidYouKnow that the market for counterfeit products in SEA is worth approximately USD 35 billion annually? While the recording of the session is not available, the insights shared during the session can be found in the report recently published by the Council [here](#). I also had the pleasure of presenting this report to a small select band of law enforcement and customs officials at the Crime Stoppers International round table in Manila.

Speaking of reports, the Council recently published our report on Battling Obesity in ASEAN, identifying the need to recognise obesity as a disease; and therefore, taking the necessary action to address obesity at its roots. The publication can be found [here](#). This report was published in the Philippines where we held not one, but two health events. The first being the fourth installation of the [Value of Diagnostics](#) series; and the second, our [inaugural health roadshow](#) underscoring the importance of public-private partnership in ensuring that healthcare remains accessible, available *and* affordable for all Filipinos.

While we are in the topic of Philippines, the Council wrapped up a wonderful business mission in sunny Philippines. Not only were we blessed with good weather and great food, but also meetings with the House of Representatives, Department of Trade and Industry, Finance, Tourism, Science and Technology, Information and Communications Technology, Agriculture, National Economic Development Agency, Bureau of Customs and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. We thank the Philippines, a long-standing friend and partner of the Council, for the open discussions to boost investment and development in this fast-growing region. This was a record-breaking mission for us, with 36 entities with us and a delegation of more than 70 people – highlighting how important the Philippines is to European businesses.

European-Philippines Business Dialogue & Annual Gala Dinner



To wrap up what is already a filling week in the Philippines, the EU-ABC and European Chamber Commerce of the Philippines co-organised the European-Philippines Business Dialogue (EPBD) & Annual Gala Dinner on the 26th May. The EPBD featured a series of high-level discussion on maximising the potential of the Philippines to draw investment into the country. There was an amazing line-up of speakers, including Secretary Diokno, Hon. Felipe Medalia, Hon. Ivan John Uy, Hon Ernesto Perez which graced the event. As icing on the cake for the mission trip to the Philippines, our delegates were able to celebrate the gala dinner with the attendance of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, H.E. Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. H.E. shared, [during his opening speech](#),

I take this opportunity to call upon our friends from the EU-ABC and ECCP to actively advocate for the resumption of negotiations ..., as well as to strive for fair treatment and more beneficial reciprocity.

As credible voices of the European business community in the Philippines and the region, the EU-ABC and ECCP can help move this thing forward, all the way to a favourable conclusion.

...

we now have before us so many opportunities. We now have before us so many – so much potential in terms of growth, in terms of expanding the roles of the EU in ASEAN and of course in the Philippines.

Council Events in June

The Council will continue our action in June. A couple of events happening in the first week. In partnership with Bosch, the Council will be [organising an in-person briefing](#) by **Member of the European Parliament Reinhard Buetikofer** and **Hans Vriens of Vriens and Partners** – held fresh on the heels of the Shangri-La Dialogue. Following which, in a bid to enhance understanding of the EUDR, the Council, with SAP, along **with the support of the Delegation of the EU to Singapore**, is organising an **in-person forum*** with **Ms Astrid Schomaker, Director for Green Diplomacy & Multilateralism at the EU's DG Environment**. **Hybrid option available for those of you who are unable to attend physically.*

Our Value of Diagnostics series will also be coming up in June. This time, the conversation will be brought to Indonesia to further the discussion on leveraging diagnostics to strengthen healthcare. For those who are interested, link to join [here](#).

I will be flying off to Thailand for our annual consultation session with ASEAN Directors-General of Customs, and for a launch event for our Anti-Illicit Trade report. We will also have interactions with the European Parliament's International Trade Committee during their visit to Indonesia, and also, with our members, will be involved in a kick off session with ASEAN on their Carbon Neutrality Plan: a key development in the region's fight against climate change.

That is all for the month of May, folks! There will be a special edition coming up to announce the new Board of the Council as we bid farewell to our Chairman, Martin Hayes, who has steadied the boat and led the charge for the past year. We thank him for his contribution to the Council over the last nine years that he has served on the Board, the only remaining original Board member, and look forward to welcoming the new Board to carry on his legacy, or, as ASEAN likes to say "build back better" (forward).