

PRESS RELEASE

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Joint statement of the 22nd EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting

We, the Foreign Ministers of Member States of the European Union and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), gathered on 21 January 2019 in Brussels, Belgium, at the 22nd EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting.

We emphasise the importance of shared values and common interests that bind our two regions in a longstanding partnership as “partners in integration”, such as the principles of mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality for all states, and other principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the Charter of the United Nations, and international law. We welcome further dialogue and engagement between ASEAN and the EU and recognise the need for close cooperation to address the shared challenges we face. We welcome the successful convening of the EU-ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting in Brussels in October 2018 and underscore our commitment to implement the EU-ASEAN Plan of Action (2018-2022).

We reaffirm the significant role played by ASEAN and the European Union in shaping the political, socio-economic, and security agenda for both regions and globally, and agree in principle to upgrade EU-ASEAN relations to a Strategic Partnership, subject to details and timing to be worked out. We share a fundamental commitment to the rules-based international order. Respect for and promotion of international law- including the UN Charter- is crucial for preserving peace, promoting and protecting human rights, and advancing sustainable development. ASEAN and the EU both believe in the importance of strengthening the rules-based multilateral system, including through the promotion of effective multilateralism. We have a shared interest in promoting international law and internationally agreed norms and standards, thereby contributing to a peaceful, fair and prosperous world. We reaffirm our commitment to regionalism and multilateralism which are mutually reinforcing and which contribute to regional and global peace, security, stability, and prosperity.

We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen EU-ASEAN relations and cooperation across all areas of mutual interest, as outlined in the EU-ASEAN Plan of Action 2018-2022. We held wide-ranging discussions on how to further strengthen EU-ASEAN cooperation, especially on global challenges, such as fair and open trade; the promotion and protection of human rights; cybersecurity; sustainable development; narrowing the development gap; connectivity; maritime security; the circular economy; energy security and clean energy; smart cities; healthy oceans; environmental protection; climate change; biodiversity, and counter-terrorism.

We reiterate support for ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture, and for ASEAN’s role as a driving force in promoting dialogue, moderation, cooperation for peace, security, stability, prosperity, and the rule of law in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. ASEAN welcomes the EU’s interest in furthering engagement with the region through all ASEAN-led processes. Furthermore, the EU expresses its ambition to join the East Asia Summit in the future. The EU and its Member States note the adoption by the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) in October 2018 of their concept paper on observership of ADMM-Plus Experts Working Group activities and will prepare appropriate applications for observership in accordance with ADMM-Plus processes. ASEAN notes the conclusions adopted by the Council of the European Union in May 2018 on enhanced security cooperation in and with Asia. We welcome the EU’s continued role as co-chair, with Viet Nam and Australia, of the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security and undertake to convene the next EU-ASEAN High Level Dialogue on Maritime Security Cooperation this year. The EU looks forward to support ASEAN efforts in building a regional security and defence dialogue in the ARF Security Policy Conference and ARF Defence officials’ formats. We look forward to enhanced involvement by ASEAN Member States in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy activities.

The EU recalls its support for the “ASEAN Community Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together”. We reaffirm our shared commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Looking forward to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), we will actively contribute to the in-depth review of the SDGs to be addressed there. We also look forward to the HLPF in September under the auspices of the General Assembly at Heads of State and Government level. We welcome the 2019 ASEAN Chairmanship theme of “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability”. We also welcome the holding of the inaugural EU-ASEAN High Level Dialogue on Sustainable Development in 2017 and we look forward to the next meeting.

We agree to intensify engagement and dialogue between the two sides, including through the EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, the

ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference with the EU; the EU-ASEAN Trade Commissioner Consultations, the EU-ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting, the EU-ASEAN Senior Economic Officials' Meeting, and the EU-ASEAN Joint Cooperation Committee.

We resolve to enhance political and security dialogue and cooperation between ASEAN and the EU, including at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), such as in maritime security, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism, transnational crimes, and border management, and in this connection, look forward to the adoption of the EU-ASEAN Work Plan to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Crime for 2018-2020, and note the EU's interest in participating in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Group activities. We welcome the outcome of the eleventh EU-ASEAN Information and Communication Technologies Dialogue, which can play an important role in promoting an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace.

We welcome the outcome of the eighth EU-ASEAN Science, Technology and Innovation Dialogue supporting talent mobility, joint research schemes, and a policy exchange platform.

We reiterate the importance of and support efforts in strengthening connectivity between ASEAN and the EU. We believe that strengthened connectivity between the EU and ASEAN should be based on sustainability, market principles and agreed international rules, norms and standards. We encourage the expeditious conclusion of an ambitious and forward-looking EU-ASEAN Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement, consider potential sub-regional connectivity in the Mekong sub-region and the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), support the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and recognise the potential contribution of triangular cooperation to promoting connectivity. In this context we intend to deepen EU-ASEAN transport cooperation and welcome the planned meeting of the next EU-ASEAN High Level Transport Dialogue in Viet Nam in June.

We reaffirm the strategic importance of the economic partnership between ASEAN and the EU, with an aim to increase and strengthen two-way trade and investment flows between our two regions. We reaffirm our commitment to a future EU-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and to intensify work towards this end, and in this regard we note the progress made by the Joint Working Group in developing a framework setting out the parameters of such an agreement.

We reaffirm strong support for preserving and strengthening an open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at its core, and the need to address barriers to international trade. We express deep concern about the systemic impact of protectionist measures that are incompatible with WTO rules and that put the multilateral trading system at risk. We underline the urgent need to strengthen and reform the WTO to meet new challenges and to improve its negotiating, monitoring, rule-making and dispute settlement functions. We reaffirm our commitment to ensure free and open trade on a level playing field and fight all forms of protectionism, including protectionist unilateral trade measures, and unfair trade practices. We underline the importance of effective protection of Intellectual Property Rights, including geographical indications, for trade and investment.

We highlight the benefits from the growing digital economy including lower barriers to entry, reduced transaction costs and improved productivity. We recognise the need to work together to find solutions to the challenges stemming from the rapid expansion of the digital economy and technological changes, notably the fight against tax avoidance, evasion and fraud. We recognise the need to review two key aspects of the existing tax framework, namely profit allocation and nexus rules, with a view to aligning taxation with value creation. We will contribute to global discussions within the UN, the G20 and the OECD, and look forward to ambitious, effective and consensus-based solutions to address the impacts of the digitalisation of the economy on the international tax system by 2020, with an update this year.

We enhance economic cooperation, including on standard, quality and conformity assessment; micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and science and technology through the EU-ASEAN Trade and Investment Work Programme; and encourage greater Business-to-Business and Business-to-Government engagement, including through the EU-ASEAN Business Council and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council.

We welcome the establishment of a joint working group between the EU and relevant ASEAN Member States to address issues relating to palm oil.

We reaffirm our strong commitment to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and welcome the adoption of the Katowice Rulebook and commend the conclusion of the Paris Agreement Work Programme at the UN Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland, in 2018.

We recognise the urgency of the new course in global climate efforts as expressed in the EU-ASEAN Statement on the Paris Agreement of August 2017. We welcome the discussions on the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report, which unequivocally confirms the negative impacts of climate change, including its conclusions indicating that global emission reductions in all sectors are crucial and that further action is needed in mitigation, adaptation and support, notably to reach the temperature goal as set out in the Paris Agreement. We express our profound concern that current global efforts are

insufficient to meet the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement, and emphasise that mitigation of and adaptation to climate change represent immediate and urgent priorities.

We stress the importance of effective pre-2020 actions and an ambitious and effective post-2020 global framework to address the biodiversity crisis and the urgent need to move towards climate resilience, low greenhouse gas emission development and sustainable economic growth. We agree to enhance EU-ASEAN cooperation on climate change, sustainable development, circular economy, clean energy, biodiversity and environmental issues including through the ASEAN initiative to enhance complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and look forward to the launch of the ASEAN Centre on Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue in Thailand this year.

We call for strengthened cooperation on regional and global environmental challenges, including wildlife trafficking, deforestation, clean air, ocean pollution and marine litter, as well as promoting the circular economy. We look forward to an EU-ASEAN High Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change in 2019 to consider these issues further. We reaffirm our commitment to clean and sustainably managed oceans and to promoting global ocean governance and sustainable Blue Growth. We also stress the importance of strengthening efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

We recognise the importance of energy efficiency and renewable energy in achieving sustainable connectivity and in implementing the Paris Agreement. In this context the EU and ASEAN will exchange best practices.

We will enhance people-to-people ties, involving youth, academia, think-tanks, media, parliamentary bodies, and civil society, promote cooperation on education and encourage mobility of students and academics between ASEAN and the EU's higher education institutions, and enhance cooperation in communication, science, technology, and innovation. The EU welcomes ASEAN sustainable cities initiatives, such as the ASEAN Smart Cities Network and the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy.

We underline the importance of the respect for the rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, maritime security and safety, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with the universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the relevant standards and recommended practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organisation, and emphasise the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint.

We underscore the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety, and support the efforts of ASEAN Member States and China to work towards the early conclusion of an effective Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). The EU expressed its expectation that the Code of Conduct would be consistent with international law, including UNCLOS.

We underline the importance of the respect of the rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with international law. We reaffirm our commitment to promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, as well as ending all forms of poverty. We stress our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms with reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international human rights instruments to which we are parties. The EU and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights have identified specific areas where the EU and ASEAN would work more closely together, including the fight against human trafficking, business and human rights as well as women's and children's rights and the rights of migrant workers, and the right to development. We look forward to the third meeting of the EU-ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Human Rights later this year.

We reaffirm our commitment to promote cooperation on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the ASEAN Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and our commitment towards eradication of trafficking in human beings, as well as on the prevention of and the fight against people smuggling in ASEAN and the EU.

We call on the DPRK to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle all its nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and related programmes and facilities in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions. We are committed to supporting a comprehensive solution through diplomacy and fully implementing the UNSC resolutions, including restrictive measures. In this context, we urge the DPRK to return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and IAEA safeguards at an early date and to cooperate with its monitoring system. We underline that the development of inter-Korean relations, the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of, and the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula are important for peace, security and stability in East Asia and the entire world. We welcome the efforts of the Republic of Korea and other partners' diplomatic initiatives to achieve these objectives.

The EU congratulates Singapore for its Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2018 and looks forward to a successful Chairmanship by Thailand in 2019.

- [EU-ASEAN relations, factsheet](#)

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press.office@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press