

EU political relations with ASEAN

2017/2026(INI) - 03/10/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 563 votes to 46, with 66 abstentions, a resolution on EU political relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN has become one of the most dynamic and growth-oriented regions in the world. Relations between the EU and ASEAN cover a wide range of areas, including trade and investment, development, economics and politics. With bilateral trade in goods valued at more than EUR 200 billion per year, ASEAN is the EU's third largest trading partner and the EU ASEAN's second.

Strategic partnership: Members recommended upgrading relations between the EU and ASEAN to a strategic partnership. Noting that the EU is the first provider of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the ASEAN region, Members suggested **strengthening economic and political relations** while underlining the opportunities for cooperation in implementing the sustainable development goals.

Cooperation could be strengthened to **address global challenges** such as climate change, international crime and terrorism, border management, maritime security, financial sector development, transparency and macroeconomic policies.

Members emphasised the pursuit of a high level of EU-ASEAN cooperation in multilateral institutions such as the UN, but also the WTO. Given the important role played by the United Kingdom in fostering EU-ASEAN bonds, ASEAN, the European Union and its Member States should strengthen their relations in order to take account of the Brexit.

Security: Parliament urged the EU to upgrade and intensify its diplomatic efforts with ASEAN in order to **contribute to greater stability and security** in conflict areas with renewed tensions. In this context, it expressed concern over the increasing defence spending in the region and its neighbourhood and the **growing militarisation of conflicts, notably in the South and East China Seas**.

While stressing the importance of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular with regard to the latest developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Members stressed the need for the Union to support the development of peaceful relations between the China and its neighbours around the South China Sea, through multilateral mechanisms.

Parliament expressed its support for the **EU-ASEAN security partnership** and the sharing of experiences on non-conventional security issues with a view to strengthening regional capacity and cooperation in the field of maritime security, piracy and the fight against organised crime.

It reaffirmed the EU's support for ASEAN centrality and for its important role in promoting dialogue and cooperation for peace, security, stability and prosperity, in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Free Trade Agreement: Members urged the relaunching of negotiations for a regional EU-ASEAN free trade agreement and welcomed the steps taken to achieve the final objective of a region-to-region agreement. From a strategic point of view, they encouraged efforts to explore the possibilities of concluding free trade agreements with all ASEAN countries.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Parliament called on European companies investing in the ASEAN region to meet their corporate social responsibilities and to respect European standards concerning consumer, labour and environmental rights and to uphold the rights of indigenous population. Members

called on ASEAN countries to ensure respect for social, environmental and labour rights. They called for the application of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and the United Nations guidelines on business and human rights.

Human rights: concerned about the regression of democracy, violations of human rights and minorities, Members supported the **continuation of EU-ASEAN political dialogue on human rights** launched in 2015. They regretted the adoption of a repressive approach against drug users, which has cost the lives of many people and led to extrajudicial killings. They also called on all ASEAN countries to refrain from reinstating the death penalty and to ratify further UN human rights conventions.

ASEAN member states are invited to work together to **end statelessness** in the region as a whole. In this regard, Parliament noted that one million stateless persons reside in ASEAN Member States, the Rohingyas in Burma, representing the largest group of stateless persons in the world.

Climate change: recalling that ASEAN remains one of the regions most exposed to this phenomenon, ASEAN member states are urged to accelerate the shift towards low-carbon economies and to rapidly reduce deforestation, effectively curb forest fires and adopt more environment friendly technologies for transport and buildings. They welcomed the EU's initiative of a new dedicated EU-ASEAN Dialogue on Sustainable Development.

Lastly, Parliament urged for greater use of **parliamentary public diplomacy** in various policy areas.