EU-Thailand Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

2022/0252M(NLE) - 25/05/2023 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the report by Andrey KOVATCHEV (EPP, BG) containing a motion for a non-legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation (PCA) between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Thailand, of the other part.

EU engagement in the Indo-Pacific region

The Indo-Pacific region is home to increasingly important political, trade and security partners for the EU, including Thailand. A free, connected and stable Indo-Pacific region based on rules and respect for international law, in line with European principles and standards, is highly desirable for the EU's security and interests.

The renewed negotiations on the PCA concluded on 11 June 2022 with the aim of establishing a modern, broad and mutually beneficial partnership, based on shared interests and principles.

Negotiations between the EU and Thailand on a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) commenced in 2013, but the EU put the negotiations on hold in 2014. The EU and Thailand relaunched the negotiations on 15 March 2023.

The report reiterated the political significance of strong bilateral relations, based on shared values and principles, between ASEAN and the EU in general, and between Thailand and the EU in particular. It recalled its call for the swift implementation of the EU Global Gateway strategy in coordination with the Indo-Pacific strategy and welcomed the announcement of a EUR 10 billion financial package to accelerate infrastructure investments in ASEAN countries with the aim of building a new, economically sustainable partnership, in particular with regard to the green transition and sustainable connectivity.

EU-Thailand PCA

Members welcomed the conclusion of the PCA, which will provide a legal framework for enhancing longstanding, bilateral political and economic relations and collaboration on issues of global concern and represents an important step towards strengthening the EU's role in the Indo-Pacific region. They expressed hope that the conclusion of the PCA will provide a strong impetus for greater cooperation between the EU and Thailand for the benefit of all EU and Thai citizens, residents, businesses and other stakeholders. The report called for **visa-free travel** to Thailand for all EU citizens and supported working towards a visa-free regime for travel to the EU for Thai citizens.

Members stressed the parties' common objective of strengthening the global response to **climate change** and its impact and enhancing cooperation on policies to help mitigate climate change in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

The report highlighted that Thailand faces increasing environmental degradation in many regions, including the loss of biodiversity and declining wildlife populations, deforestation, desertification, water scarcity, and air and water pollution. Cooperation is needed to address these challenges.

Moreover, Members considered that the EU should maintain its commitment to **sustainable fishing** in the Indo-Pacific and strengthen its cooperation with Thailand on combating overfishing, overcapacity and IUU fishing in the Indo-Pacific. The Commission is urged to include canned fish and seafood as 'sensitive products' for the purposes of possible trade negotiations with Thailand.

The Thai authorities are urged to:

- respect the role of civil society organisations, **human rights defenders**, democracy defenders, civil society activists, journalists and others, to ensure freedom of expression and assembly;

- immediately put a halt to the deportations of ethnic **Rohingya and Uyghurs** and other asylum seekers, which are in blatant violation of fundamental international obligations that are binding on Thailand, particularly the principle of non-refoulement;

- take concrete steps towards the abolition of the **death penalty**.