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P7_TA(2014)0022

The future of EU-ASEAN relations

European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2014 on the future of EU-ASEAN relations (2013/2148(INI))

(2016/C 482/11)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the main legal framework for relations with ASEAN, namely the ASEAN-EEC Cooperation Agreement, signed in March 1980 ([1]),

— having regard to the ongoing negotiations and/or the conclusion of seven Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the European Union and the ASEAN Member States, namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam,

— having regard to the negotiations on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam and the conclusion of the EU-Singapore FTA,

— having regard to the EU strategy 'New Partnership with Southeast Asia' of July 2003 (COM(2003)0399), which identifies enhancing regional trade and investment relations with ASEAN as well as dialogue in specific policy areas as key priorities,

— having regard to the 7th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP) and the 22nd ASEAN Summit,

— having regard to the Nuremberg Declaration on an EU-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership of March 2007 and its Plan of Action of November 2007,

— having regard to the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action to Strengthen the ASEAN-EU Enhanced Partnership (2013-2017) adopted in Brunei Darussalam on 27 April 2012,

— having regard to the accession of the European Union to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in Phnom Penh on 12 July 2012 ([2]),

— having regard to the 9th Summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) held in Vientiane, Laos in November 2012,

— having regard to the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), established in February 1997 to provide a forum for non-governmental dialogue,

— having regard to the ASEAN-EU Programme of Regional Integration Support programme (APRIS), the ASEAN Regional Integration Support programme (ARISE), and the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI) in support of the harmonisation of policies and regulations in non-trade related sectors,

— having regard to the Joint EU-US statement on the Asia-Pacific Region of 12 July 2012,

— having regard to the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on 8 August 1967,

— having regard to the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint agreed in 2007 and the ASEAN Charter adopted in 2008,

— having regard to the first ASEAN Human Rights Declaration of 18 November 2012, the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the first dialogue between the AICHR and the newly established European Union (EU) Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, on 8 May 2013,

([1]) OJ C 85, 8.4.1980, p. 83.
([2]) OJ L 154, 15.6.2012, p. 1.

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— having regard to the 14th ASEAN summit held in 2009 and the establishment of a road map for a single market ASEAN (Economic) Community, ASEAN Political-Security Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community,

— having regard to the 22nd ASEAN summit held in Brunei on 24-25 April 2013,

— having regard to the 7th East Asia summit (EAS) held in Phnom Penh on 20 November 2012 by the leaders of 17 countries in ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea (ASEAN+3), India, Australia and New Zealand (ASEAN+6) and the United States,

— having regard to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER),

— having regard to the joint statement issued at the eighth meeting of ASEAN Ministers for Social Welfare and Development of 6 September 2013 in Phnom Penh in preparation for the ASEAN summit scheduled for October 2013 and the provision contained therein that access to social protection is a basic human right,

— having regard to its recent resolutions on ASEAN member states, in particular those of 11 September 2013 on the negotiations for an EU-Malaysia partnership and cooperation agreement ([1]), of 13 June 2013 on the situation of Rohingya Muslims ([2]), of 11 June 2013 on organised crime, corruption, and money laundering ([3]), of 18 April 2013 on Vietnam, in particular freedom of expression ([4]) and of 7 February 2013 on Laos: the case of Sombath Somphone ([5]),

— having regard to its recent resolutions on ASEAN member states, in particular those of 17 February 2011 on the border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia ([6]), of 7 July 2011 on Indonesia, including attacks on minorities ([7]), of 25 November 2010 on Burma: conduct of elections and the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi ([8]), of 20 May 2010 on the situation in Burma/Myanmar' ([9]), of 20 May 2010 on the situation in Thailand ([10]), of 26 November 2009 on the situation in Laos and Vietnam ([11]) and of 5 February 2009 on the situation of Burmese refugees in Thailand ([12]),

— having regard to the 'Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework', adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 16 June 2011,

— having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Development (A7-0441/2013),

A. whereas ASEAN is at present one of the most important emerging regional organisations in the world, in terms of both economic development and geopolitical dynamics;

B. whereas the ASEAN Charter, signed in November 2007, establishes legal personality and a legal and institutional framework for ASEAN, including the creation of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to support and coordinate the work of ASEAN;

([1]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0367.
([2]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0286.
([3]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0245.
([4]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0189.
([5]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0058.
([6]) OJ C 188 E, 28.6.2012, p. 57.
([7]) OJ C 33 E, 5.2.2013, p. 201.
([8]) OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 120.
([9]) OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 154.
([10]) OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 152.
([11]) OJ C 285 E, 21.10.2010, p. 76.
([12]) OJ C 67 E, 18.3.2010, p. 144.

C. whereas the ASEAN Economic Community aims to create an internal market for 600 million people by 2015, which will make ASEAN, with its competitive economic operators and fast-growing internal demand, comparable to other large markets in the world, such as the EU, the United States, China, Japan and India and, consequently, a strong economic partner in the regional and international market; whereas some ASEAN member states will face challenges in this process in terms of competitiveness, social stability and the strengthening and development of the social components of the integration process;

D. whereas ASEAN member states' economic restructuring efforts after the 1997 Asian financial crisis have helped them to show in general good resistance against the present global economic crisis;

E. whereas in 1993 the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was established to foster dialogue and consultation on political and security issues and to contribute to confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region;

F. whereas the latest ASEAN summit called for the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and encouraged nuclear-weapon states to accede to the protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Treaty; whereas the summit also discussed the possible future participation of East Timor in ASEÀN;

G. whereas China has been increasing its economic ties with Southeast Asian countries; whereas some ASEAN member states have strengthened cooperation with the US on maritime security; whereas Russia considers Asia as an important part of its international strategy; whereas ASEAN countries continue to play an important role in preserving peace and stability in the region; whereas the EU and ASEAN share a common concern about the unresolved territorial disputes in the South China Sea and have significant interest in maintaining peace, stability, respect for international law and, especially, the UN Charter and the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea; supports the Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea of July 2012 and the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea of 2011, encouraging a settlement through peaceful means;

H. whereas the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration continues to give individual countries the freedom to adopt their own legal instruments for the protection of human rights, while establishing a general framework for the protection of human rights in the region as a whole;

I. whereas on 8 November 2013 Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines, destroying entire towns, leaving a still unknown number of people — possibly thousands — dead and millions homeless; whereas this storm, which is the strongest recorded storm ever to make landfall, could demonstrate the grave danger of increasingly frequent extreme weather conditions;

J. whereas the high pollution levels caused by smoke from major forest fires in the region, are having major environmental consequences and could constitute a non.-traditional security threat;

K. whereas the EU and ASEAN share the political objective of promoting wellbeing, cooperation and peace in their respective regions and worldwide;

L. whereas the Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action of 2012 between the EU and ASEAN aims to give more strategic focus to cooperation on the three pillars of ASEAN, as well as to cultural and development cooperation, and it has regular meetings at ministerial and senior official levels;

M. whereas, in view of the ongoing negotiations on free trade agreements (FTAs) between the EU and Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam as well as the conclusion of the EU-Singapore FTA and the long-term goal of a region-to-region FTA, it is ever more urgent to develop a more comprehensive policy framework with the ASEAN partners;

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1. Takes the view that ASEAN, as a major regional and global economic actor, can play an important role in promoting a peaceful, multilateral world order; wishes to see ASEAN's institutional, economic and political capacities further develop;

2. Strongly encourages ASEAN to continue its political and economic integration path, notably the ambitious ASEAN plan for an Economic Community by 2015, including the liberalisation of its internal labour market, which would be highly beneficial for all the countries involved;

3. Congratulates ASEAN leaders on the significant progress being achieved in the regional integration process, most visibly with the forthcoming establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community; believes that these positive developments should be matched by strengthening its parliamentary dimension and invites ASEAN leaders to consider a formal Charter recognition of the role of the ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) as an integral part of ASEAN itself;

4. Underlines the great economic potential of the ASEAN region and encourages the ASEAN states and national and foreign enterprises operating in ASEAN countries to act in accordance with the principles of corporate social responsibility, to actively respect ILO core labour standards and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, to promote appropriate employment protection and access to decent work conditions, and to establish an environment that is more conducive to the development of trade unions and their activities; in this connection, urges the Commission to help develop measures to increase international and local law enforcement capacities;

5. Considers that the ASEAN countries should advance towards a new phase of inclusive economic and social development, with particular emphasis on promoting their peoples' human, social, labour and economic rights, in order to ensure fairer and more equal societies; to achieve this, considers that they should use their increased economic wealth to strengthen their social security and protection networks; urges equally the EU to enhance its cooperation on human rights so as to contribute to making the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) effective for the promotion and protection of human rights;

6. Emphasises that the EU and ASEAN have shared values as well as common political and economic interests, which should continue to be developed with high priority and upgraded to the level of a strategic partnership; welcomes the fact that, in recognition of the importance of this relationship, the EEAS is actively considering the appointment of an EU Head of Delegation to ASEAN; expects this to result in enhanced coordination between the EU Heads of Delegation in ASEAN member states and EU Member States' embassies and broaden the EU's political credibility and visibility; calls on the VP/HR and the Commission to come forward with a renewed, more comprehensive strategy for Southeast Asia;

7. Believes that the EU and its Member States should work on a common and coherent approach for the ASEAN region, supporting and complementing each other and, thus, enabling the EU to develop a stronger economic and political presence in the region; believes that it is important to increase the presence at all levels of EU and Member State representatives in ASEAN regional and national fora;

8. Recommends that the Union endeavour to heighten public awareness in these countries of the fact that its external policy is governed by its role as a regulatory power seeking to promote regional integration through political dialogue, preferential trade accords and partnership agreements;

9. Warmly welcomes the negotiation of seven Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the EU and seven individual ASEAN member states, which will be the cornerstones for deepening mutual relations, and underlines the need for accelerated negotiations with the remaining ASEAN members; calls for swift ratification of the existing PCAs; believes, however, that the PCAs with individual States should not become a stumbling block for the overall relationship between the EU and ASEAN;

10. Supports the strengthening of the parliamentary dimension of the relationship; considers that establishing a formal Euro-ASEAN inter parliamentary assembly would further upgrade relations between the EU and ASEAN Member States once the conditions were ripe and would also provide a forum for multilateral exchange to address global issues in a more comprehensive way; also suggests the creation of links between Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR); believes that the Office for the Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy could provide capacity-building assistance to the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), enhancing the role of national parliaments as well as of the AIPA within ASEAN;

11. Highlights the benefits of increasing joint high-level meetings and mutual collaboration and understanding in multilateral fora, such as the United Nations and its agencies, the IMF and the WTO;

12. Stresses that the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP), as the existing channels for dialogue between the EU and ASEAN, should be upgraded at governmental and parliamentary level and further extended;

13. Supports ASEAN in developing its own space within the conflicting economic and security interests of China, Japan and the United States; would like the EU to be an active political partner for ASEAN in its pursuit of non-military solutions to important security and geostrategic challenges by sharing the EU's experience of conflict prevention, resolution and dispute settlement in managing border and territorial disputes, in order to enhance peace and regional stability;

14. Is concerned at the recent developments in the South China Sea and welcomes work of the Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, aimed at finding a peaceful and mutually beneficial solution to the maritime border dispute in the area;

15. Urges the Union to help alleviate geopolitical regional tensions by means of a close relationship with ASEAN, which will mean stepping up conflict resolution mechanisms;

16. Notes the efforts made on counter-piracy measures by ASEAN states and welcomes the positive reports so far; underlines the critical and complex nature of maritime shipping routes in the area for the world economy and their vulnerability, and considers that this should be a permanent concern in the EU's efforts in the region;

17. Calls for the Commission and the EEAS to continue providing assistance to the capacity-building efforts of the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN institutions, drawing from experiences in the EU; suggests that the 'ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU' programme (ARISE) should continue providing such assistance;

18. Encourages supporting cross-regional visits of cultural performers and urges the Member States to encourage broader coverage of the ASEAN region in state-run media and education and to increase their presence in the region through cultural institutes or other means, which would broaden and deepen cultural ties with ASEAN countries and improve and promote mutual cultural knowledge and dialogue;

19. Believes that it is worth considering organising a 'cultural' year with a changing topic every year, whereby an EU country could be featured in ASEAN member states, and likewise, an ASEAN country could be featured in Europe;

20. Welcomes the fact that the EU is now the biggest partner in scientific cooperation with most ASEAN member states, suggests that the Commission's research and innovation programme Horizon 2020 should be promoted more actively with science institutions in the region;

21. Highlights the important role of exchange programmes to facilitate the mobility of young people, such as Erasmus, for intercultural students' and research cooperation between EU and ASEAN higher education institutions; suggests establishing ASEAN study centres in European and EU study centres in ASEAN universities and expanding possibilities for joint degrees; believes that the EU needs to expand university programmes in English to better facilitate access for Asian students to European universities, while EU researchers should be helped to join research programmes in Asia including in cooperation with the ASEAN University Network (AUN);

22. Suggests, in particular through the use of the new Partnership Instrument, that steps be taken to intensify regular exchanges and mutual learning processes, for example on multicultural societies and democratic state structures for the 21st century; underlines the need to include minority rights and promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and to improve the lives of girls and women, social and labour standards, including by abolishing forced and child labour, promoting appropriate employment protection and access to decent working conditions, and developing sustainable and comprehensive state welfare systems, legal and security systems, economic cooperation and other appropriate measures;

23. Insists on the importance of developing people-to-people contacts and commends the work of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), whose core function is to develop links between civil societies in both regions; calls for the EU to take on a more active and prominent institutional role than that of a simple member;

24. Calls for the launching of a city-twinning initiative in order to link up regions in Europe and Asia which have had few exchanges up to now;

25. Suggests that the EU increase its inter-regional cooperation with ASEAN on disaster and crisis prevention and management, major challenges such as sustainable development in the areas of food security, resource management (including the use of water and marine resources, including in the Mekong sub-region), agricultural investment, support for small farmers, urbanisation, connectivity and transport, as well as climate change, renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy transition, tourism, research and innovation;

26. Notes that poverty continues to be a problem in the ASEAN countries and that it mainly affects women, the poorly-skilled, rural areas and minority ethnic or religious groups; sees a need, therefore, to improve the distribution of wealth and promote social justice at all levels, and considers that there is still a need for a new EU strategy to promote development and combat inequality in these countries, including by providing access to financing via microcredits; believes that such a strategy should be based in particular on the following principles: policy coherence for development, long-term aid effectiveness, priority for basic social needs and participation by national stakeholders, including national parliaments, local authorities, and development NGOs and civil society;

27. Highlights the fact that the EU should provide assistance to the capacity building of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, as well as technical assistance to the ASEAN Committee on Women and Children;

28. Is looking forward to enhanced cooperation and mutual rapprochement on human rights issues such as freedom of expression and of the media, freedom of assembly and association, including for trade unions, and considers that the EU and ASEAN have their own areas where there is room for improvement, for example with regard to the treatment of migrants and minorities;

29. Expects that the review of the Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights will provide an opportunity to strengthen its role; calls on ASEAN to develop standards and rules facilitating the implementation of its Human Rights Declaration; stresses that ASEAN member states' obligations under international law supersede any conflicting provisions in this Declaration; suggests also that regional mechanisms for dispute settlement and sanctions in case of human rights violations should be developed in the future, along the same lines as those existing in other regions, such as the European Court on Human Rights; supports enhanced cooperation on mutual concerns regarding human rights;

30. Urges the EU to upgrade its assistance and cooperation to combat corruption, inter alia by encouraging the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption;

31. Urges the Commission to carry on helping ASEAN countries to continue to reduce disparities between countries and to accompany them along the path of political, economic and institutional integration at regional level, paying special attention to the LDCs (Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar);

32. Urges for the activation of the EU 2004 Land Policy Guidelines to counter land-grabbing; in particular, stresses that donors should engage in land policy which are geared towards the defence and strengthening of small-scale family agriculture;

33. Expresses its appreciation of the ASEAN member states' decision to declare ASEAN a nuclear-weapon-free zone and believes that others should follow their example;

34. Expresses concern regarding environmental policy, in particular over the rate of illegal logging, burning and resulting smog that has a significant negative impact also across ASEAN borders; regrets the fact that the EU biofuel policy contributes to the rapid expansion of oil palm production, leading to dispossession and/or adverse incorporation of the

rural poor into oil palm plantation; deems it therefore essential to support, within the context of development aid, the right to land resources of poor people in developing countries; encourages stronger efforts for the protection of the environment and biodiversity, commends the work of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and is looking forward to tighter cooperation between the EU and ASEAN on climate change mitigation and adaptation;

35. Urges the ASEAN member states to reach agreement on coordinated measures for the prevention and containment of environmentally devastating fires; urges Indonesia to ratify the 2002 agreement on haze pollution resulting from fires in the region;

36. Stresses that the EU should also intensify policy dialogues and cooperation on issues such as fundamental rights, including those of ethnic and religious minorities, and, likewise, while protecting freedom of expression and the free flow of information, on matters of common concern relating to the rule of law and security matters, such as the fight against transnational crime, corruption, tax evasion, money laundering and trafficking in people and drugs, and counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, disarmament, maritime security and cyber security;

37. Is concerned at the urban development challenges faced by the ASEAN countries as a result of their economic growth, including the management of migration flows from the countryside to cities, urban planning and provision of infrastructure and basic services, measures to prevent the spread of shanty towns and the advisability of using clean, renewable energy sources to combat pollution; calls on the Commission to collaborate with the ASEAN countries on strategies to address these problems;

38. Proposes to support regional economic integration, especially with regard to the free flow of goods, services and investment, mobility of skilled workers, and to further enhance cooperation on disaster and crisis management, security, the fight against poverty and migration issues;

39. Recalls that it is also important to support the booming private sector by strengthening the dialogue between European and Asian companies and public-private cooperation on financial, investment, economic and trade issues, including the internationalisation of European SMEs and their market access, and the ongoing global financial crisis; encourages the exchange of best practices between the EU and ASEAN in this respect;

40. Notes that for several ASEAN members textile exports to the EU represent an important sector and recalls that the granting of GSP and GSP+ is linked to the implementation of basic labour standards and ILO and other core international conventions which are essential for sustainable development;

41. Calls on the leaders of the ASEAN member states to support the EU's objective of participating in future East Asia Summits, following the EU's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia;

42. Welcomes the peace process and the democratic reforms in Burma/Myanmar, which open a historic window of opportunity for greatly enhanced EU-ASEAN relations; remains particularly concerned, however, at the situation of ethnic minorities; urges the Burmese Government and its ASEAN neighbours, especially with regard to the Rohingyas, to make every possible effort to improve their living conditions and rights as citizens;

43. Welcomes the ratification by Cambodia and the Philippines of the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and appeals to all ASEAN member states to do the same; appeals also to all ASEAN member states to follow the worldwide trend towards the abolition of the death penalty; encourages the ASEAN member states to ratify and implement the UN Convention Against Corruption;

44. Commends Indonesia and the Philippines for their active engagement with the Open Government Partnership (OPG) and the commitment shown to foster greater government openness and public integrity; suggests that the remaining ASEAN countries seek membership of the OPG and develop their own Action Plans in close and meaningful cooperation with civil society and grassroots organisations;

45. Expresses concern, however, at the fact that in many ASEAN countries cases of land grabbing, impunity for those connected to the ruling elites and corruption are endangering the enormous economic and social progress achieved in the region;

46. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the EEAS, the Council and the Commission, the ASEAN Inter Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), the ASEAN Secretariat and the governments and parliaments of the ASEAN member states.