

2020 ASEAN-EU JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON CONNECTIVITY

Adopted on 1 December 2020

1. We, the Foreign Ministers of Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Foreign Ministers of Member States of the European Union (EU), and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, held the 23rd ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting via video conference on Tuesday, 1 December 2020.
2. Recognising the unique experience of connectivity and regional integration of ASEAN and the EU, we reaffirmed our commitment to promote connectivity within and between ASEAN and the EU.
3. In this regard, we looked forward to strengthening further practical cooperation between ASEAN and the EU in this area, including through exploring a possible connectivity partnership, with due consideration to the EU Strategy Connecting Europe and Asia and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025.
4. We reaffirmed the definition of connectivity as agreed at the 13th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting and acknowledged the strong ASEAN-EU cooperation and the importance of strengthening synergies between the MPAC 2025 in areas of sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility, and the EU Connectivity Strategy in the four pillars of energy, digital, transport and people-to-people. By building on the synergies between our connectivity approaches and avoiding duplication, we endeavour to advance our respective green growth strategies, including the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the European Green Deal, which can support ASEAN's Connecting the Connectivities approach.
5. Connectivity should uphold, as mutually agreed by ASEM partners, the spirit of peace, inclusiveness, development, cooperation, economic, fiscal, financial, social and environmental sustainability, a level-playing field for relevant stakeholders, comprehensiveness and be rules-based and of mutual benefit, as well as to adhere to and effectively implement relevant international norms and standards. We wish to continue to translate these into concrete connectivity action.
6. We reiterated the strategic importance of our partnership and recognise efforts to further enhance two-way trade and investment flows between ASEAN and the EU to boost confidence, improve economic stability and strengthen connectivity and economic linkages between the two regions to support the region's post-pandemic recovery process. To this end, we will continue to implement the ASEAN-EU Trade and Investment Work Programme for 2020-2021. We noted the progress made by the Joint Working Group for the development of a Framework setting out the parameters of a future ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement and will facilitate further work on this.
7. We recognised that connectivity can mitigate the impact of and support a robust socio-economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling us to build back better, greener and in a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient manner. We agreed that moving towards low greenhouse gas emissions, climate-resilient, resource efficient development and a circular economy, enhanced food, energy and health security as well as digital transformation should be a part of any recovery strategy. ASEAN welcomed the EU's policy exchange dialogues to share advances in research on COVID-19, including the role of extensive immunisations against COVID-19 as a global public good for health by making vaccines available and affordable for all.

8. We noted the far-reaching impact of the transboundary nature of the COVID-19 pandemic on connectivity, in particular on people-to-people linkages and global supply chains, underscoring the interconnectedness of Europe and Asia. We reaffirmed our commitment to enhance the resilience, safety and security of regional and global logistics, supply chains, including through promoting trade facilitation measures, in line with WTO commitments; other initiatives to prevent the disruption of global and regional supply network and to better protect against future socio-economic impacts, and to share experiences and best practices in cross-border supply chain management.
9. We commit to ensuring that public health-related measures on travel and transport resulting from COVID-19, are responsive, targeted, transparent, proportionate, temporary, and non-discriminatory.
10. We welcomed the development of quality infrastructure investment and its contribution towards affordable, reliable and sustainable connectivity, with due consideration to the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment. We will boost our cooperation to spur sustainable investments and recognise the vital role of the private sector, of the IMF and multilateral, regional and European development banks to facilitate financing of sustainable connectivity.
11. We also recognise the need for new financing tools to support strategic investment in connectivity also to crowd-in private sector investment, while accelerating research and technology innovation. ASEAN and the EU welcome the work of the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility (ACGF) under the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (AIF) and the work of the European Investment Bank in supporting infrastructure investment in numerous ASEAN member states. In this regard, we welcome the work of the International Platform on Sustainable Finance, and encouraged the relevant ASEAN processes studying the development of sustainable finance taxonomies and the IPSF Working Group on Sustainable Finance Taxonomies to explore potential synergies.
12. We are committed to achieving our respective commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC through the operationalisation of the Katowice Climate Package. We encouraged regular policy dialogue that will address all aspects of energy. We are committed to also work together to support infrastructure investments and energy innovations, with a view to achieving safe, sustainable and affordable energy transition, including renewable energy, and promoting efficient regional and global energy markets. We underscored the importance of strengthening energy connectivity, particularly through interconnected power grids, smart grids, and sustainable cross-border power trade via the ASEAN Power Grid (APG) as well as transparent and flexible natural gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) markets, including via the Trans ASEAN Gas Pipeline (TAGP).
13. We agreed to strengthen cooperation in the development of Smart Cities, and ASEAN welcomed the EU's support for the ASEAN Smart Cities Network, the ASEAN Sustainable Urbanisation Strategy, and the Smart Green ASEAN Cities programme.
14. We recognised digital connectivity with a focus on our people as a key enabler to inclusive growth and sustainable development through cooperation in the areas of digital innovation, digital infrastructure and logistics, digitalisation of manufacturing and services, ICT security, the adoption of technology by MSMEs, and increasing access to digital services, ensuring protection of personal and consumers' data and privacy.
15. We further recognise that the same rights people have offline must also be protected online, as prescribed in relevant UNGA Resolutions and international conventions, as well as domestic laws and regulations.

16. We acknowledged the importance of due recognition of data protection and cybersecurity, consistent with applicable international and domestic laws, at the core of digital connectivity. We looked forward to the facilitation of the digital economy, to continuing the work under the ASEAN-EU Dialogue on ASEAN Digital Index (ADIX) as a policy tool to measure the progress and impacts of digitalisation to the society and economy, and to work together on consumer and personal data protection to address challenges related to digital transformation as well as privacy, regulations, cybersecurity, cross-border data flows, and other issues.
17. To that extent, we encourage the implementation of the ASEAN-EU Statement on Cybersecurity Cooperation to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment, consistent with applicable international and domestic laws.
18. We encouraged the exploration of opportunities offered by the EU's global satellite navigation system, Galileo and the EU's Earth Observation Programme, Copernicus and underlined their potential in a digital economy for their free and open services to benefit transport connectivity, environmental policy, energy and telecommunication interconnections, economic diversification and MSMEs.
19. We emphasised the need to continue enhancing sustainable transport connectivity through integrated intermodal and multimodal systems, and by strengthening the safety, security and sustainability of transport, taking into account fiscal and environmental sustainability. We looked forward to strengthening ASEAN-EU continued cooperation through the dedicated ASEAN-EU Transport Dialogue.
20. The launch of the ASEAN Customs Transit System (ACTS) under the EU ARISE+ programme is a promising first step to identify ASEAN and the EU cooperation on regulatory alignment, simplifying customs procedures, and movement of transit goods by road.
21. On aviation, we urged the expeditious conclusion of the ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement to strengthen cooperation on civil aviation and enhance air connectivity between and beyond ASEAN and the EU. We recognised the importance of working on environmental goals and plans at domestic and international levels, as applicable.
22. On maritime transport, we supported the principles and objectives of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Initial Strategy on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions from Ships, and emphasised the importance of upholding standards for a highly skilled transport workforce, particularly seafarers, in accordance with the standards of the IMO, including through the implementation of Maritime Labour Convention 2006.
23. We acknowledged the importance of people-to-people connectivity as key to mutual understanding and achieving socio-economic resilience, including by enabling and promoting people mobility through education and cultural exchanges, sustainable travel and tourism, economic cooperation, joint research schemes and quality-jobs creation. We commended the collaboration under the ASEAN COSTI (Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation) and the ASEAN-EU Dialogue in Science and Technology, to highlight new features linked to connectivity via supporting high performance computing online-school.
24. We further noted efforts in science and technology, building research capabilities and developing infrastructure in ASEAN. We welcomed technology transfer initiatives aimed at encouraging the sharing and adaptation of innovations supporting sustainable manufacturing and green growth.