

2021 CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 18TH ASEAN-INDIA SUMMIT

Adopted on 28 October 2021

1. The 18th ASEAN-India Summit was held via videoconference on 28 October 2021. The Summit was chaired by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.
2. We reaffirmed our support for Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship under the theme "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper", which focuses on harnessing the caring nature of ASEAN to build a harmonious and resilient Community with the people at its centre; preparing and adapting for the future to ensure that ASEAN remains relevant and its people can take advantage of the new opportunities, as well as overcome existing and future challenges; and creating opportunities for people to benefit through initiatives that enhance the sustainable prosperity of the region. We highlighted the importance of maintaining the momentum in ASEAN-India cooperation for the pursuit of these long-term goals.
3. We noted with satisfaction the significant progress in ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, with the implementation of various programmes and activities across the three ASEAN Community pillars, based on the current Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2021-2025). We welcomed the designation of 2022 as the "ASEAN-India Friendship Year" to commemorate the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India relations and we looked forward to realising the proposed programmes and activities to celebrate this milestone.
4. We reaffirmed our commitment to enhancing collaboration in addressing the unprecedented and continuing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating the post-pandemic recovery in both the ASEAN region and India. We welcomed India's support for ASEAN's efforts to recover from the pandemic, including India's contribution of USD 1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, and encouraged India to further support ASEAN's recovery efforts, including through the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies (RRMS) for Public Health Emergencies, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan, and other relevant initiatives and measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and prevent future public health emergencies or outbreaks. We also welcomed India's announcement to resume COVID-19 vaccine exports, and underscored the need for collaboration on vaccines, medicinal products and medical technologies for the treatment of COVID-19, including through the sharing of experience with India in research and development, and on making COVID-19 vaccines available, safe, effective and affordable to all as global public goods. To support a sustained economic recovery from the pandemic, we highlighted the need to continue enhancing cooperation on trade and investment, energy, finance, Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Blue Economy, and digital economy.
5. We reiterated our shared commitment to upholding ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based through ASEAN-led mechanisms. We appreciated India's active participation and positive contribution to ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) and agreed to continue utilising these mechanisms to effectively respond to evolving traditional and nontraditional threats and security challenges. We also expressed appreciation for India's active role as Co-Chair of the ADMM Plus Experts' Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief for the cycle of 2021-2024.

6. We noted the enhanced ASEAN-India collaboration in countering terrorism, violent extremism and transnational crimes, including through the implementation of the ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime (2016-2025), and the need to strengthen cooperation on cybersecurity through supporting the implementation of the ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy as well as through the various ASEAN-led mechanisms. We looked forward to the finalisation of the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC)+India Work Programme on Transnational Crime. We also looked forward to enhancing ASEAN-India cooperation in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism in the region, including through the implementation of the Bali Work Plan 2019-2025. We further noted the importance of increasing dialogue and cooperation in the maritime domain, through existing ASEAN-led mechanisms, to exchange views and share best practices in addressing common challenges on maritime issues.
7. We welcomed opportunities to promote practical cooperation with India in the ASEAN priority areas identified in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo Pacific (AOIP), namely, maritime cooperation, connectivity, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, and economic and other possible priority areas of cooperation, and in line with the common objectives and principles of the AOIP, with a view to promoting mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual benefit as well as to contributing to peace, stability and prosperity in the region. In this regard, we welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific for Peace, Stability, and Prosperity in the Region as a means to explore and promote practical cooperation with India in the ASEAN priority areas as identified in the AOIP and to strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership for achieving peace and prosperity in the region.
8. We agreed to further strengthen ASEAN-India economic relations, including through enhanced utilisation and effective implementation of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA). To this end, we looked forward to the review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) to make it more user-friendly, simple, trade facilitative for businesses that is supportive of sustainable and inclusive growth. We welcomed the full ratification of the ASEAN-India Investment Agreement by all Parties and the implementation of the ASEAN-India Trade in Services Agreement by all Parties. We acknowledged the important role of India in regional value chains and looked forward to India's participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) whenever it is ready to do so.
9. We emphasised the importance of strengthening ASEAN-India connectivity partnership and looked forward to more cooperation to enhance regional physical and digital connectivity, including the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, exploring synergies between the MPAC 2025 and India's connectivity strategies under India's Act East Policy in line with "Connecting the Connectivities" approach, and the timely completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway as well as its extension to Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam. We also looked forward to concrete cooperation in sustainable infrastructure, including through capacity building activities and enhancement of investment and business environments. In this regard, we welcomed India's proposal to utilise its Line of Credit of USD 1 billion for supporting physical and digital connectivity projects. We also support efforts to strengthen aviation and maritime connectivity by working towards initiating discussion on the ASEAN-India Air Transport Agreement (AI-ATA) and the ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Agreement (AI-MTA).

10. We encouraged the ASEAN-India Business Council to further enhance its role in promoting business-to-business and economic cooperation between ASEAN and India, especially in the areas of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and digital transformation through capacity building measures and sharing best practices for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), healthcare, start-ups and technology, connectivity, and women and youth empowerment through skills development. We noted the convening of the Indo-ASEAN Business Summit and Expo on 7-8 October 2021.
11. We agreed to continue strengthening cooperation in the fields of education, disaster management, public health, sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, smart cities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and possible internships for youth in strategic cooperation areas such as public health. In this regard, we thanked India for its support for knowledge and capacity building in the region, particularly through the 1,000 PhD Fellowships for ASEAN students at Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), and looked forward for possible expansion of the programme for Bachelor's and Master's Degrees; the establishment of IT Training Centres in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam, and the successful convening of the ASEAN-India Hackathon on 1-4 February 2021.
12. We were pleased to note the enhancement of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership through Track 1.5 dialogues, as well as cooperation in education, culture and people-to-people contacts, among others, through the Delhi Dialogue, ASEAN-India Youth Summits, ASEAN-India Youth Awards, ASEAN-India Students Exchange Programmes, Scholarship Programmes for ASEAN students at Nalanda University, ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programmes, ASEAN-India Research Training Fellowship, ASEAN-India Collaborative R&D and Special Course for ASEAN Diplomats. We welcomed India's support for the proposed ASEAN Cultural Heritage List (ACHL) and looked forward to the convening of the expert panel and working group to develop the modalities for the proposed ACHL to designate tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets of outstanding regional value, which exemplify the rich and diverse heritage of ASEAN. Further, we expressed gratitude for India's support towards The ASEAN magazine, which has contributed towards building a better understanding on the work of ASEAN to people in the region and beyond. We welcome the operationalization of the ASEAN-India Project Management Unit at ASEAN Secretariat for greater synergy between ASEAN's priorities and India's efforts.
13. We committed to further enhancing collaboration in addressing climate change issues, conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources as well as enhancing regional and sub-regional capacities on disaster management, and promoting sustainable and equitable development. We emphasised the importance of enhancing ASEAN's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from future emergencies and disasters and in this regard, we encouraged both ASEAN and India to share best practices and lessons learned, to improve the coordination of existing ASEAN processes and mechanisms, with a view to facilitating the implementation of the Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD). We also looked forward to enhancing cooperation in exchanging knowledge and capacity building to build a clean and green ASEAN Community through chemicals and waste management for the protection of the environment, and developing environmentally sustainable cities including urban biodiversity. In this regard, we looked forward to India's support and collaboration with the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN), and welcomed India's interest in collaborating with the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDDSD). We further looked forward to the convening of the EAS Workshops on combating marine pollution, with a focus on plastic marine debris, and on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. We noted India's plan to host the 4th edition of ASEAN-India Workshop on Blue Economy.

14. We looked forward to India's continued support in narrowing the development gap within ASEAN through the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV (2021-2025). We also welcomed India's continued cooperation in sub-regional development, including through the Mekong-Ganga cooperation as well as to promote sustainable and equitable development in ASEAN through aligning sub-regional growth with the comprehensive development of ASEAN.
15. We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, prosperity, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, and pursuing peaceful resolution of disputes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We underscored 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. We noted the positive progress in the ongoing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) and encouraged further progress towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We emphasised the need to promote an environment conducive to the COC negotiations and thus, welcomed practical measures that could reduce tensions and the risk of accidents, misunderstandings, and miscalculation. We stressed the importance of undertaking confidence building and preventive measures to enhance, among others, trust and confidence amongst parties, and reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.
16. We discussed the situation in the South China Sea, during which concerns were expressed by some countries on the land reclamations, activities, and serious incidents in the area, including damage to the marine environment, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region. We reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. We further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the DOC that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.
17. We discussed the recent developments in Myanmar and expressed concern over the situation in the country, including reports of fatalities and violence. We also heard calls for the release of political detainees including foreigners. We called on Myanmar to fulfil its commitment to the Five-Point Consensus of the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on 24 April 2021 and acceptance for the timely and complete implementation of the Five-Point Consensus namely, the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and all parties to exercise utmost restraint; constructive dialogue among all parties concerned shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people; the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair to facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary-General of ASEAN; ASEAN to provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre; and the Special Envoy and delegation to visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned. We welcomed the efforts by the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar and called on all parties concerned in Myanmar to swiftly and fully implement the Five-Point Consensus, including by facilitating the visit of the Special Envoy to Myanmar to build trust and confidence with full access to all parties concerned. We welcomed the provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar, through the AHA Centre. We welcomed the continued support from our external partners, including India, for ASEAN's efforts in the swift and complete implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, particularly on humanitarian assistance. In this regard, we appreciated

India's in-kind contribution of USD 200,000 in medical supplies to support ASEAN's efforts in providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar.