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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (Brussels, 2 February 2024)
– Joint Ministerial Statement

24th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting
(Brussels, 2 February 2024)

Joint Ministerial Statement

1. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) convened the 24th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 2 February 2024 in Brussels, Belgium. The Meeting was co-chaired by the Philippine Secretary for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Enrique Manalo, as Country Coordinator for EU-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, H.E. Josep Borrell. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers from ASEAN and EU Member States, as well as the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission, and Timor-Leste as an ASEAN Observer.
2. We, the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and the EU, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, reaffirmed the shared values and common interests that underpin forty-seven (47) years of EU-ASEAN Dialogue Relations and noted with satisfaction the comprehensive and multifaceted nature of our dynamic partnership. We commended the good progress on the implementation of the EU-ASEAN Plan of Action (2023-2027) and noted the implementation of the Joint Leaders' Statement adopted at the EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit which took place in Brussels on 14 December 2022.
3. We reaffirmed our Strategic Partnership and our shared interest in keeping our regions peaceful, stable, and prosperous, in upholding and respecting international law and the rules-based international order based on adherence to international law and in maintaining peace, security and stability, including through, among others, the promotion and protection of human rights, including for persons with disabilities, gender equality and fundamental freedoms.

4. We recalled the substantive outcomes of the EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in 2022, in commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the establishment of a Dialogue Partnership between ASEAN and the EU. We recalled the recognition by Leaders of the common strategic interest of holding regular leaders level engagement in the future. We recalled the commitment to develop the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership that is based on international law, mutual interest and mutually beneficial cooperation on issues of common concern and the principle of equality.
5. We reiterated our shared commitment to support ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN-led mechanisms, and acknowledged that the Indo-Pacific represents a dynamic area with numerous growth opportunities and avenues for further potential cooperation guided by our strategic partnership which can only be fully unlocked by preserving peace, security, stability, and prosperity as well as respecting and upholding international law.
6. We noted that both the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific share relevant fundamental principles in promoting an open, inclusive, transparent and rules-based regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific region, in which ASEAN is central. We will explore potential collaboration in the four priority areas of the AOIP and the seven priority areas of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, all in accordance with the principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the ASEAN Charter, and the AOIP. We recalled that 22 Global Gateway Team Europe projects were presented at the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum in September 2023 and looked forward to receiving updates on the progress of the projects.
7. We welcomed the 5th EU-ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Human Rights held in October 2023, which marked another step forward in strengthening interregional cooperation to promote and protect human rights in both regions. ASEAN and the EU will explore further activities in areas of mutual interest for the upcoming two-year period.

8. We updated each other on recent developments in ASEAN and the EU. The EU expressed appreciation for Indonesia's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023 and support for the Lao PDR's 2024 ASEAN Chairmanship as well as its Chairmanship priorities under the theme of "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience". The EU expressed gratitude to the Philippines for its work as Country Coordinator for EU-ASEAN Dialogue Relations, and looked forward to further enhancing and broadening the EU-ASEAN partnership with Brunei Darussalam as the incoming Country Coordinator from 2024 to 2027.
9. We reaffirmed our continued commitment to supporting Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN, in line with the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN. The Meeting also noted the EU's support for Timor-Leste's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), which will aid its integration into the global economy and regional architecture
10. We were encouraged by the robust economic cooperation between ASEAN and the EU, with the EU being ASEAN's third largest foreign investor and third largest trading partner in 2022 and reaffirmed our commitment to make use of this positive momentum to further intensify trade and investment relations between the ASEAN and the EU. We recalled the need to find solutions to long-standing market access issues and welcomed the opportunities to enhance trade and investment opportunities and strengthen connectivity and economic linkages between both regions and boost sustainable development between both sides, for example through the work of the EU-ASEAN Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment (JWG). We welcomed trade and investment opportunities through EU bilateral free trade agreements with ASEAN Member States. We will intensify our engagement on trade and economic issues and explore other avenues in the short and medium terms to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest such as digital economy, green technologies and green services, sustainable commodity production and consumption, and supply chain resilience, while reaffirming a future EU-ASEAN FTA as a common long-term objective.

11. We recognised the importance of a rules-based, non-discriminatory, open, fair, inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, and looked forward to a successful 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) taking place from 26 to 29 February 2024. We supported the need to pursue WTO reform that is member-driven, open, transparent, inclusive and must address the interests of all its Members, including development issues. We underlined our adherence to the rules and foundational principles of WTO, and reaffirmed our commitment to fulfilling its objectives. We aim to promote open, resilient, efficient, and environmentally, economically and socially sustainable global supply chains and access to markets. In this context, we agreed to explore cooperation in the field of climate neutral technologies, with the aim to accelerate the scale-up of renewable energies, renewable and low-carbon hydrogen in particular from renewable energy as well as grids and battery storage, to strengthen the interconnectivity of energy systems, to substantially increase the uptake and system integration of renewable energy, and facilitate transboundary flows of renewable energy, to achieve closer integration of open and resilient global supply chains and to significantly contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy.
12. We acknowledged the importance of food security and nutrition. We reaffirmed our commitment and call on all countries to promote uninterrupted global flow of essential agricultural goods and inputs, including fertilizers, to ensure stability of prices and food security in the global markets. In this respect, we stressed the importance of security and stability in the Black Sea, vital for sustainable grain exports and noted efforts to facilitate exports of grain and other agricultural products.
13. We reiterated the need to promote decent work and labour rights for every person, paying special attention to vulnerable groups and those in the hard-to-reach sectors.

14. We recognised the need to enhance cooperation and support for, including in terms of financing, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and capacity building, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, guided by, among others, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and related Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, with a view to promote sustainable development and address the global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental protection, leaving no one behind. This work will be undertaken through the relevant platforms and EU-ASEAN dialogue mechanisms, such as through the EU-ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change and the High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change, the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Development Dialogue and the ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform hosted by the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDDSD), supported by the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (E-READI) funded by the EU. Noting the importance of mine action in national rehabilitation and sustainable development, ASEAN encouraged the EU to support the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC).
15. We also welcomed the holding of the first-ever EU-ASEAN Energy Dialogue in 2023 and look forward to its next iteration. We noted the work of the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility and Team Europe's support under Global Gateway. We welcomed the ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality and intend to reinforce our cooperation to foster its operationalisation, in particular in relation to carbon pricing. We welcomed the EU's commitment to reduce, by 2030, its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990 levels and to attain climate neutrality by 2050, and will work together to implement the decisions made at COP28. We are committed to enhance cooperation to implement the recommendations for enhanced action stemming from the COP28 outcomes on the first Global Stocktake (GST) and the agreed global targets on tripling renewable energy and doubling the improvement rate of energy efficiency by 2030 including through financial support, technology transfer, and capacity building.

16. We recognised the long-standing robust partnership of ASEAN and the EU on our concerted efforts to conserve and sustainably use our natural heritage and natural ecosystems, particularly the need to simultaneously address the interlinked crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. In light of the global concern on biodiversity loss, ASEAN expressed appreciation for the EU's support to the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) project, which recently concluded, and looked forward to the EU's continued support. ASEAN looked forward to the EU's support in the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change and welcomed the EU's expertise to develop among others regional strategies and policies to address the pertinent global issue. We also looked forward to EU's cooperation with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACCTHPC), including the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP).
17. We welcomed the convening of the Third Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Palm Oil and Technical Webinar between the European Union and Relevant ASEAN Member States, and took note of the voluntary attendance of Member States at the Meeting, to continue promoting mutual understanding on the sustainable production of vegetable oils and addressing the challenges in this sector in a holistic, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner. We looked forward to the convening of the Fourth Joint Working Group on Palm Oil between the European Union and Relevant ASEAN Member States. We noted that relevant producing countries and the EU have established a Joint Task Force to strengthen the cooperation for the implementation of the EU's Deforestation Regulation.
18. We welcomed the adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and we encouraged all States and regional economic integration organizations to sign, ratify, approve, accept or accede to the Agreement at the earliest possible date to allow its swift entry into force.

19. We agreed that sustainable connectivity, including the development of quality infrastructure investment with due consideration to the G20 Principles for Quality Investment Infrastructure, represents a key priority for the region-to-region relationship and must contribute to accelerating the digital and energy transitions, while upholding a commitment to human capital development, decent work and health resilience in both regions. We welcomed the progress made in implementing Team Europe's expected mobilisation of around EUR 10 billion for the benefit of the ASEAN region linked to the implementation of the EU Global Gateway strategy and the Team Europe Initiative on Sustainable Connectivity for ASEAN as announced at the EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in December 2022. We encouraged the EU's support for the ASEAN Power Grid Initiative in providing capacity-building and expertise for an integrated Southeast Asia power grid system, as well as encouraged further progress in implementing the EU-ASEAN Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity adopted at the 23rd Ministerial Meeting. We welcomed the EU's new SCOPE programme which aims to support sustainable connectivity between the EU and ASEAN and within ASEAN, including in the fields of the digital, renewable energy, transport and on people-to-people connectivity.
20. We welcomed the launch of negotiation of the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) and look forward to exploring enhanced cooperation in this field.
21. We welcomed progress on the implementation of the EU-ASEAN Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (CATA) as the world's first region-to-region aviation agreement which will restore the aviation sector's recovery post COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen air connectivity between Europe and Southeast Asia and beyond and bring tangible benefits to cooperation in the area of aviation. We looked forward to Member States in both regions to ratify the agreement.

22. Recalling the EU-ASEAN Statement on Cybersecurity Cooperation adopted in 2019, we underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation in cybersecurity to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible, and peaceful information and communication technology and looked forward to exploring further dialogue and initiatives to advance cooperation between ASEAN and the EU. We agreed to explore further the cooperation between the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE), the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC) and the EU. We also welcomed the EU's continuous commitment to critical infrastructure protection, including within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).
23. ASEAN welcomed the EU's contributions towards ASEAN Community building and regional integration efforts. We also identified areas in which we could expand the breadth and depth of EU-ASEAN cooperation, including maritime cooperation, climate change and green growth, disaster management, biodiversity conservation, smart cities, digitalisation including narrowing the digital divide, combatting transnational crime and terrorism, sustainable development, rural development, and poverty alleviation, supporting human capital development, education and vocational training, culture, empowerment of persons with disabilities, and narrowing the development gap, as well as empowering micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). We also reaffirmed our shared commitment to maintain and promote ASEAN's resilience against emerging challenges and future shocks through cooperation on enhancing energy security and food security, maintaining financial stability, and strengthening regional health architecture. ASEAN welcomed the strengthened partnership with the EU as well as the EU's support and sharing of best practices and experiences which can assist ASEAN's efforts to narrow the development gap, among ASEAN Member States as well as between ASEAN and the rest of the world, achieve the UN SDGs, and enhance ASEAN's competitiveness as a region, including through the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV (2021-2025), as well as taking into account existing sub-regional cooperation frameworks.

24. We engaged in frank and fruitful discussions on regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern. We reaffirmed our fundamental commitment to maintain the rules-based international order based on adherence to international law, including the UN Charter, which is crucial for maintaining peace, promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and advancing sustainable development. We reaffirmed our shared commitments to the importance of strengthening the rules-based multilateral system through the promotion of effective multilateralism, international law and international norms and standards.
25. We welcomed the EU's support for ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the EU's active engagement in the ASEAN Regional Forum. ASEAN noted with appreciation the EU's interest in the observership programme of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus Experts' Working Groups on Peacekeeping Operations, and on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief for the 2024-2027 cycle, subject to its mechanism's enlargement and application processes. ASEAN noted the EU's commitment to adhere to all relevant ASEAN-led security mechanisms, including the East Asia Summit, and the ADMM-Plus, in full respect of the relevant procedures and processes.
26. We underlined our shared interest in developing cooperation in the field of Disaster Management and Emergency Response notably between ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) and the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), including through training and knowledge exchange in areas mutually identified as reflected in ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region. ASEAN welcomed EU's support for activities under ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021-2025. We also welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on Sustainable Resilience and look forward to forging stronger partnerships and collaboration in strengthening climate and disaster resilience in the region, including through knowledge sharing, technical assistance, capacity-building activities, resource mobilisation, and other appropriate methods.

27. We underlined the importance of the respect for the rule of law, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, maritime security and safety, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
28. We noted the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/72 emphasising in the Preamble, the universal and unified character of the 1982 UNCLOS, and reaffirming that the Convention sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector, and that its integrity needs to be maintained.
29. We reaffirmed our commitment to maintaining and further strengthening stability in our respective maritime spheres to bring about overall peace, security, stability, and prosperity in our regions, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.
30. We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of all activities and avoid actions that could increase tensions and the risk of accidents, misunderstandings, and miscalculation, as well as to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.
31. We recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, and prosperity. 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 encourage all countries to avoid any unilateral actions that endanger peace, security and stability in the region. We emphasised the need to maintain and promote an environment conducive to the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) negotiations. We welcomed further progress towards the early conclusion of an effective, and substantive COC that is consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

32. In 2022, we witnessed the war in Ukraine further adversely impact the global economy. There was a discussion on the issue. We reiterated our positions as expressed in other fora, including the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, which, in Resolution No. ES-11/1 dated 2 March 2022, as adopted by majority vote (141 votes for, 5 against, 35 abstentions, 12 absent) deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine. Most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy – constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity, and elevating financial stability risks. There were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions. We continue to reaffirm, as for all nations, the need to respect the sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine.
33. We discussed the developments in Myanmar and reaffirmed our united position that the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus remains our main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar. We strongly condemned the continued acts of violence and urged all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt violence. We called for all parties to create a conducive environment for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, and inclusive national dialogue. We appreciated the ASEAN Chairs’ continuing efforts in intensifying engagement with all relevant stakeholders in Myanmar to build trust and confidence, create a conducive environment, and bridge gaps and differences leading toward an inclusive national dialogue for a comprehensive political solution. We supported sustaining such engagements to push for the implementation of the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus in its entirety, in line with the ASEAN Leaders’ decision made at the 42nd ASEAN Summit. We called for continued support of ASEAN’s other External Partners, including the UN, as well as neighbouring countries of Myanmar, to work with ASEAN for concrete implementation of the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus. We stressed the importance of and reiterated our continued support for Myanmar’s commitment to ensure safety and security for all communities in Rakhine State as effectively as possible and facilitate the voluntary return of displaced persons in a safe, secure, and dignified manner in accordance with the bilateral agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

34. We expressed grave concern over the surge in the DPRK's intercontinental ballistic missile testing and ballistic missile launches, which constitute a flagrant violation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions. We urged the DPRK to cease these launches and to refrain from nuclear tests. In this regard, we stressed the importance of endeavours to de-escalate the situation and to resume peaceful dialogue amongst all parties concerned in order to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. We called on the DPRK to fully comply with all relevant UNSC resolutions. ASEAN and the EU reiterated their commitment to the full implementation of all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and support international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. Diplomatic efforts, including the creation of a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue amongst all concerned parties, should remain a priority. We reiterated our readiness to play a constructive role, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms such as the ARF in promoting a conducive atmosphere to peaceful dialogue amongst the concerned parties.
35. We expressed concern over the continuing humanitarian crisis and human rights situation in Afghanistan. We called for unhindered access to the delivery of basic needs and humanitarian assistance to all regions and all people, including women and children, in the country. We encouraged further coordinated efforts from the international community to help address the crisis. We stressed the importance of an inclusive and fully representative government, based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons living in Afghanistan, particularly women, girls and children.

36. We exchanged views and expressed grave concerns over developments in the Middle East. We agreed to condemn all attacks against civilians and we noted the call of some of us for a durable ceasefire. We called for rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need, including through increased capacity at border crossings and through a dedicated maritime route. We called on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, refrain from targeting them and to abide by international law, including international humanitarian law. We called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, especially women, children, the sick and the elderly. In this context, some of us raised the importance of release from arbitrary detention. We urged all parties concerned to work towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict with a view to realising the two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders in accordance with international law and the relevant UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. We took note, and some of us underlined the importance of, the order on provisional measures issued by interim ruling by the International Court of Justice on 26 January 2024.
37. In line with the principles of the UN Charter, we reaffirmed our commitment to continue encouraging dialogue and understanding and promoting the spirit of peaceful co-existence to achieve peace and harmony in a diverse global community. We are committed to embrace the values of tolerance and moderation, and full respect of the cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity.
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