

# 12th European Union-Thailand Senior Officials' Meeting

The 12th EU-Thailand Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) took place at the European External Action Service in Brussels on 9 June 2017. The EU side was chaired by Mr Gunnar Wiegand, Managing Director, Asia and the Pacific, European External Action Service. The Thai side was chaired by Mr Songphol Sukchan, Director-General of the Department of European Affairs, Royal Thai Foreign Ministry.

It was the first SOM since 2012. The EU and Thai senior officials held an open and friendly exchange on a broad range of issues of mutual interest with regard to the development of their relations. Prior to the SOM, the EU-Thailand Working Group on Trade and Investment was also convened.

The discussions included political, security, economic, trade, development cooperation, environmental as well as human rights issues in Thailand and the EU, together with regional and international matters. ASEAN integration and Thailand's role as ASEAN coordinator for the EU figured prominently in the meeting. The EU and Thailand remain committed to the global efforts against climate change and the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss, in particular, the on-going substantial and intense dialogues concerning illegal fishing (IUU), labour issues and prevention of human trafficking, as well as air safety and to underline the need to complete the implementation of the ongoing reforms. Both sides welcomed that Thailand and the European Union will hold the first negotiation round for a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) to strengthen cooperation on tackling illegal logging of timber and related trade later this month. Bilateral cooperation was also discussed on sustainable development, and science, technology and innovation.

Legislative preparations are being made for Thailand's general election which, with all the required processes being met in accordance with the timeline under the Constitution, could take place by the end of 2018. Against this background the two sides discussed not only the current cooperation, but also prospects for closer ties. The co-chairs concurred that the SOM was a significant step for facilitating future strengthened engagement and closer cooperation between the European Union and Thailand.