

News story: The Third United Kingdom-Thailand Strategic Dialogue

1. The third session of the United Kingdom-Thailand Strategic Dialogue was held at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok, on 3 January 2018. The session was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and The Rt. Hon. Mark Field MP, Minister for Asia and the Pacific at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
2. The Strategic Dialogue was established in 2012 and designed to be a high-level forum for regular consultations between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Thailand on areas of bilateral collaboration as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest, in view of the ever-growing strategic partnership between the two countries. The inaugural session of the Strategic Dialogue took place on 20 May 2013 in Bangkok.
3. The two sides welcomed this continued high level engagement and again recognised the strength and strategic importance of the UK/Thailand bilateral relationship, especially in international trade, finance and investment; education; science and innovation; security and defence relations; political engagement; and consular cooperation. They welcomed the bilateral cooperation across the board, and discussed ways to deepen and strengthen this work especially as high level contacts have resumed following the EU FAC's Conclusions on 11 December 2017. Both sides noted the intention to exchange visits at the highest level.
4. The trading partnership between Thailand and the United Kingdom is strong. Thailand continues to be one of the UK's largest trading partners in ASEAN. Thailand and the UK committed to working together to ensure trade between our countries faces as few barriers as possible taking into account the Thai-UK Business Leadership Council's recommendations on market access barriers.
5. Both sides recognised the need to forge even closer relations to improve upon the existing bilateral trade relationship to maintain dynamism of economic cooperation and prepare our future trade relations in the Post-Brexit environment. Thailand hoped that the current poultry quota would not be affected after Brexit.
6. The UK is a leading investor in Thailand. Likewise, Thailand is an emerging investor in the UK. Both delegations looked forward to working together to support the implementation of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) and Thailand 4.0. The UK side welcomed the opportunities that this presents and will work closely with British companies to highlight the area for investment.

7. The UK and Thailand welcomed the initiative to focus bilateral cooperation in three sectors where both countries share potential and mutual interests, namely, Aerospace, FinTech, and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).
8. Recognising the importance of people-to-people contacts, the two sides welcomed the continuation of the UK-Thailand Consular Dialogue, which will be held on 19 February 2018. This is an important and productive set of discussions that brings real benefits to the safeguarding of British visitors in Thailand and Thai nationals in the UK.
9. This year, the discussion will focus on Immigration and Documentary Services and their streamlining so as to provide an effective and efficient service to our respective nationals. The two sides will also discuss ever closer cooperation on tourist safety issues and on prison matters for those of our nationals which are detained, and also explore the possibility of foreign embassies conducting same-sex marriages in Thailand. Finally, both sides look forward to talks on how to improve and support to victims and how child and adult safe-guarding.
10. The delegations continued discussions on visa procedures with a view to facilitating mobility and travel for tourists, students, skilled labour and residents in both directions while recognising the need to prevent abuses. Thailand reiterated the proposal for a bilateral agreement on visa exemption for holders of diplomatic passports.
11. The two delegations noted the importance of education and the English language in supporting economic growth and the emerging ASEAN Community. Both sides commended the notable progress made under the Thai-UK MoU on Education Partnership, signed in April 2016, under which more than 6,000 Thai teachers were trained and another 13,500 teachers are targeted. Both sides agreed to further coordinate to elevate our partnership to the national scale as this would contribute to Thailand 4.0. In this connection, the Thai side invited the UK to explore the opportunity of investment in education offered in the EEC.
12. Thailand and the UK were pleased with the continued success of the Newton UK-Thailand Research and Innovation Partnership. This programme supports excellent scientific collaboration between research organisations from both countries, including joint research on health and agriculture. Both sides recognised the mutual importance and significance of this. Both sides agreed to continue to look for opportunities to enhance science collaboration further in both directions, including to stimulate business potential and start-ups. The UK noted Thailand's wish to continue cooperation under the Newton Fund.
13. The two sides welcomed the range of areas of cooperation on law enforcement and expressed hope that the MoU on Combating Transnational Crime and Police

Cooperation would soon be signed to provide an overarching framework to strengthen internal law enforcement cooperation in combating organised transnational crime.

14. Recognising the warmth and depth of the defence relationship, both sides welcomed the increasing military activity levels and looked forward to even greater interaction. The meeting between Defence Ministers in the UK was a notable success and Exercise PANTHER GOLD 17, held in Thailand, delivered a major step forward in interoperability training. It was noted that this was likely to become a regular event in future years. Along with exchange visits, the education and training of officers in each other's military academies would continue to be a significant pillar of defence engagement.
15. Both sides agreed to coordinate with authorities concerned to expedite the signing of pending MoUs including the defence related MoU on Logistic and Material Cooperation and MoU on Combating Transnational Crime and Police Cooperation; and Cooperation in the field of Science, Technology and Innovation.
16. The two delegations exchanged views on political developments in Thailand and UK. The meeting discussed the opportunities that the UK's departure from the EU represented and welcomed the progress towards general election in Thailand scheduled for the end of this year following the necessary legal enactment.
17. Both sides recognised that the upholding of the rule of law; the protection and enhancement of human rights and democratic values; and an active and strong civil society are key to stable, inclusive, open, and prosperous society. The two sides agreed on the importance of adhering to international legal obligations.
18. Recognising both sides strong positions on the international scene, Thailand and the UK expressed their resolve to take a lead on global issues in order to promote peace, security, and stability.
19. The UK and Thailand discussed international collaboration in combating the illegal wildlife trade. The UK invited Thailand to send a high level representative to the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in October 2018.
20. The meeting noted the importance of maintaining regional stability and order and agreed to further exchange views on global and regional issues including climate change, North Korea, Rakhine State, reform of the UN, Modern Day Slavery, Business and human rights, and developments in ASEAN.
21. It was agreed that the United Kingdom would host the fourth session of the

Strategic Dialogue.