

UK becomes Dialogue Partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The partnership, which is the first ASEAN has agreed in 25 years, will lead to closer cooperation between the UK and the region on a range of issues such as trade, investment, climate change, the environment, science and technology, and education.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab joined a virtual ceremony with ASEAN Foreign Ministers where they welcomed the UK as an ASEAN 'Dialogue Partner'.

Since the UK submitted its application to become a Dialogue Partner in June 2020, the Foreign Secretary has attended two UK-ASEAN Ministerial Meetings and hosted the ASEAN Chair at the G7 Foreign & Development Ministers meeting in May.

ASEAN is an influential group of ten member countries in the Indo-Pacific. By becoming a Dialogue Partner the UK will formalise its relations with the group – including through attending annual Foreign and Economic Ministers meetings along with other Ministerial engagements.

Dialogue Partner status puts the UK at the heart of the Indo-Pacific. The UK will work with ASEAN and its members on key shared challenges such as maritime security and transnational crime, boost our economies through trade, and strengthen our cooperation on issues such COVID-19 and climate change.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab said:

I am delighted that the UK has, today, formally become a Dialogue Partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc – the first new country in 25 years.

This is a landmark moment in the UK's tilt towards the Indo Pacific. Our closer ties with ASEAN will help create green jobs, reinforce our security cooperation, promote tech and science partnerships, and safeguard key pillars of international law like the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The new agreement will also help the UK to deepen economic links with ASEAN, which has a combined GDP of \$3.2 trillion. Total trade between the UK and ASEAN was £32.3 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2021 with huge potential to boost this trade, creating jobs at home.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

This is great news and shows Global Britain in action, forging stronger relationships around the world as an independent trading

nation.

Along with CPTPP accession and deals with countries like Singapore and Vietnam, this will help unlock opportunities for British businesses in a high-growth region of more than 650 million people, allowing them to expand and create jobs across the UK.

Dominic Raab has visited Southeast Asia five times since becoming Foreign Secretary, demonstrating the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific, as set out in the Integrated Review.

Today's announcement comes at a time of growing UK defence and security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, as the UK's Carrier Strike Group, led by the HMS Queen Elizabeth, is in the region and has completed a series of engagements with a range of ASEAN partners, with further interactions planned in the autumn.

In June, the UK formally launched accession negotiations with the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) nations. The CPTPP is one of the largest free trade areas in the world, accounting for 13% of global GDP in 2019. Four ASEAN states – Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei – are members of the CPTPP.

- The UK is already a Dialogue Partner of ASEANAPOL (the regional policing body), and supports the ASEAN-Singapore Cyber Security Centre of Excellence.
- The UK also has a £6m joint research programme with Singapore on marine debris in Southeast Asia, a £15m ASEAN Low Carbon Energy programme, a cross-sectoral project on green finance and energy efficiency, led the Friends of Indonesia Renewable Energy (FIRE) Dialogue, and provides £4.2m funding for UK-ASEAN science partnerships that research the impact of climate change and the transition to clean energy.
- The other ASEAN Dialogue Partners are: Australia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia and the United States of America.