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ASEAN-Switzerland Partnership: Joint Committee Reviews Achievements

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Disaster management, vocational education, peace and human rights as well as social forestry and climate change are at the heart of Switzerland's partnership with ASEAN. On 29 November 2019, delegations of Switzerland and ASEAN met in Jakarta to review the work accomplished. Over the past year, Switzerland deepened its Sectoral Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN, contributing to the "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability" agenda of Thailand's Chairmanship.



Swiss Assistant State Secretary for Asia-Pacific Raphael Nägeli (8th from left) and ASEAN Deputy Secretary General Hoang Anh Tuan (7th from left) co-chaired the 4th ASEAN-Switzerland Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee Meeting in Jakarta.

The Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee, which governs the ASEAN-Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Partnership, met for the fourth time. It was co-chaired by Ambassador Hoang Anh Tuan, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN for Political-Security Community and Ambassador Raphael Nägeli, Assistant State Secretary for Asia and Pacific of Switzerland. Delegations from the ten ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat and Switzerland attended the meeting.

ASEAN and Switzerland reviewed the implementation of their Practical Cooperation Areas 2017-2021. They discussed recent political developments such as digitalization and cybersecurity, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the South China Sea and Rakhine. The two delegations also explored new cooperation projects and future ministerial meetings.

Climate action and Sustainable Development Goals

The Committee reviewed the substantial achievements of the 10-year ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change at the regional and national levels. The partners are committed to continue their cooperation in the area of climate change, where action is urgently needed. They also discussed how to work together in the implementation of the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), following the ASEAN Forum on SDG with National Development Planning Agencies held in July 2019.

Businesses play an important role in achieving the SDG. Therefore, Switzerland is planning a joint project on sustainable production and consumption together with the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue in Bangkok. This follows the Interregional Dialogue on Business and Human Rights held in June 2019.

Memorandum on disaster management

Building on years of practical cooperation, Switzerland and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) signed, in 2019, a Memorandum of Intent to further develop cooperation and the exchange of expertise. The Implementation of the Memorandum has started with a workshop on strengthening coordination and reflecting on management of international humanitarian assistance.

Advancing peace and human rights

The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) visited Switzerland in 2019 to share experiences, lessons learned and best practices on peace facilitation with governmental and non-governmental organizations in Bern and Geneva. The Committee discussed ideas on how to deepen the cooperation between Switzerland and the ASEAN-IPR following the study visit.

2019 marked the 10th anniversary of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). Switzerland supported AICHR's efforts to develop recommendations on the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights, in particular the freedom of opinion and expression.

Narrowing the development gap through vocational education

Switzerland reiterated its commitment to support the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) through a multi-year project on vocational education and training. The project, which is being developed in close consultation with ASEAN Member States, responds to a strong demand for skills development. It aims at improving the quality of vocational education and training, its reputation and the involvement of the private sector.

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