

UK announces agreement to strengthen ties with Southeast Asia and scale-up security and development links



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Minister for Asia, Amanda Milling has visited Cambodia this week and announced a milestone agreement on a range of issues with influential countries in Southeast Asia.

The new Plan of Action will deepen cooperation on trade and investment, defence and security – including maritime security and cyber – as well as climate change, girls’ education, digital and science and technology.

As part of the agreement, the UK will scale-up development and security links in Southeast Asia, opening a regional British International Investment (BII) office in Singapore later this year to invest up to £500 million in the Indo-Pacific. The UK is also offering training for countries in the region on security issues and maritime law, including from the Royal Navy.

This week Cambodia is hosting foreign ministers and representatives from ASEAN countries – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Minister for Asia Amanda Milling said:

The UK continues to deepen our economic ties and strengthen our security partnerships with these fast-growing economies in Southeast Asia.

Practical measures including opening a new BII office in

Singapore to boost investment and providing training on security and maritime law demonstrate our ongoing commitment to the region and increased engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

Minister Milling co-chaired the ASEAN-UK Post-Ministerial Conference today (4 August), the first since the UK became an ASEAN Dialogue Partner. The UK's Dialogue Partner status, the first ASEAN has agreed to in 25 years, was formalised in August 2021 and an important part to the UK's tilt towards the Indo-Pacific.

Closer ties with the Southeast Asia bloc 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 Minister also announced that InfraCo Asia, which the UK supports through its funding to the Private Infrastructure Development Group, is providing a \$2.3 million loan to support the development of Cambodia's water supply network.

During the meeting, Minister Milling made clear that Russia's unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack against the sovereign democratic state of Ukraine remains in the hearts of the British people and the UK stands united with international partners in condemning the Russian government's reprehensible actions.

On Myanmar, Minister Milling strongly condemned the recent appalling and barbaric executions of pro-democracy activists by the Myanmar junta. She reiterated the UK continues to support ASEAN's Five Point Consensus on Myanmar and the urgent need for an immediate end to the violence and for a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Since becoming Dialogue Partner, the UK invited ASEAN to be represented at the G7 Foreign Ministers last December and during the global COVID-19 pandemic, donated 4.3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to ASEAN members and contributed £1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.

The UK also recently signed an MoU with the Asian Development Bank to support ASEAN states to invest in green infrastructure through a £107 million trust fund to support the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility.

Background

ASEAN-UK plan of action 2022 to 2026

ASEAN factsheet

the UK officially became Dialogue Partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on 5 August 2021

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

The ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility, managed by the Asian Development Bank and with £110 million of UK financial support, was announced by the Foreign Secretary at COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021

Minister Milling travelled to Cambodia for a 2-day visit in January, in the month Cambodia became Chair of ASEAN in 2022

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