

**Draft
Press Release**

Thailand ends year of EU-ASEAN coordinatorship on a high with the EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum and Strategic Forum on 26-28 February 2018 in Brussels, Belgium

On 26-28 February 2018, H.E. Mr. Apichart Chinwanno, Former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led a Thai Delegation to attend the EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum (YLF) and Strategic Thinkers Forum (STF) in Brussels, Belgium. The Strategic Thinkers Forum was agreed to be held by ASEAN and the EU Ministers at the 21st ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok on 13-14 October 2016. The Young Leaders Forum was initiated by the European Parliament through the European Parliament Resolution on political relations with ASEAN (2017/2026(INI)) which suggests to increase engagement from young stakeholders in the ASEAN-EU relations. The fora are where thinkers, academics, officials, young professionals, and students from ASEAN and the EU Member States, as well as the ASEAN Secretariat came together to discuss the future evolution of ASEAN-EU Relations.

Resumed FTA negotiations, accelerated conclusion of the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement and development of new digital innovations would also enhance economic cooperation, the STF agreed. In addition the YLF participants shared their views on how to promote people-to-people contacts through inter-regional sports events for students, exchange of artists, and academic collaboration as well as exchange programmes for professionals.

The forums also benefited from a number of seasoned diplomats and professionals who laid down the foundations for the discussions.

On 26 February, on the first day of the events, Mr. Chittipat Tongprasroeth, Deputy Director-General of Department of ASEAN Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, delivered opening remarks for the YLF along with Mr. David Daly, Head of the South East Asia Division, European External Action Service. Dr. Natthanan Kunnamas, the Director of Centre for European Studies, Chulalongkorn University was one of the speakers for discussion on Political and Security topic. Thai youth representatives, Ms. Ananya Hemvijitrphan and Mr. Pachara Aungsusuknarumol, also contributed constructively to the forum. The summary of the discussion at the YLF is in the following link: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/association-southeast-asian-nations-asean/40499/eu-and-asean-young-leaders-address-shared-global-challenges_en

On 27 February 2018, H.E. Le Loung Minh, Former ASEAN Secretary General presided over as the Keynote Speaker for the public forum. The forum was open to all general public and civil societies with some interesting topics such as “*ASEAN, Europe and a volatile world*” and “*Will EU-ASEAN relations still matter in forty years?*” and attracted an audience of over 200 people.

Dr. Suthad Setboonsarng, Board of Bank of Thailand, was a panelist who expressed his views on how ASEAN and the EU can work together for tangible outcome through trade facilitation. He reiterated the importance of ASEAN-EU cooperation to prepare for the transformation in global economy due technology changes.

On 28 February 2018, H.E. Mr. Apichart Chinwanno delivered opening remarks for the STF along with Mr. Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary General, Economic and Global Issues at

the EEAS. The forum discussed various topics under the theme “*EU-ASEAN: Old Friends, New Challenges, Building a reinvigorated partnership*”.

“Key to this [enhancing our partnership] is how both regions can work together to ensure that the ASEAN-EU relations is resilient, innovative, and leaves no one behind.” Mr. Chinwanno stressed. During the deliberations, the forum agreed that the focus on ASEAN-EU engagement in political-security cooperation could be elevated through promotion of a rules-based order and strengthened security cooperation as well as enhanced human security, strengthened responses to natural disasters and shared expertise on de-radicalisation.

The finalised and agreed integrated recommendations for future ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations from both YLF and STF will be presented to the 22nd AEMM which is to be held this year in Europe.

Both fora are co-organised by the EU and Thailand, as the current country coordinator for ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations.
