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## China–Asean Relations January 2023 to March 2023: Chronology of Events

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# Resources for China–ASEAN Relations

As a research institute based in Singapore, the EAI monitors developments in relations and interactions between China and the individual countries of Southeast Asia as well as the ASEAN grouping as a whole. This material is presented in the form of (i) a chronology of events and (ii) a list of important documents.

—the Editors

## CHINA–ASEAN RELATIONS

### JANUARY 2023 TO MARCH 2023:

### CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Compiled by Ryan HO

#### JANUARY 2023

- 2nd Indonesia joins the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The entry into force of the RCEP for Indonesia is an important step towards its full implementation. Under the RCEP, on the basis of the agreements under the China–ASEAN free trade area, Indonesia has granted zero tariff treatment to over 700 additional Chinese products, including some auto parts, motorcycles, televisions, clothing, shoes, plastic products, luggage and chemical products. China's Ministry of Commerce says that the RCEP agreement will inject new impetus into regional economic integration, regional and global economic growth, and promote regional industrial and supply chain cooperation.
- 4th Chinese Premier Li Keqiang of the State Council meets with the visiting Philippines President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. at the Great Hall of the People. Li stresses that cooperation is key to China–Philippines bilateral relations, and that maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea serves the interests of countries in the region, including China and the Philippines. Marcos also maintains that Philippines–China

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relations are of great importance to both sides and to the Asia-Pacific region.

- 14th Chinese President Xi Jinping and General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) Central Committee Nguyen Phu Trong send congratulatory letters to each other for the Spring Festival. Xi comments that China and Vietnam are a community with a shared future that bears strategic significance and China regards Vietnam as a priority in its neighbourhood diplomacy.
- 16th Chinese Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Foreign Ministry Liu Jinsong holds a video meeting with the Director-General of the Department of East Asian Affairs at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs Chatchai Viriyavejakul. Both sides agree to expand cooperation in fields such as the digital economy and scientific and technological innovation, and help Thailand promote the bio-circular-green economic model. Both sides are also keen to explore cultural cooperation and promote development of cultural programmes.

## **FEBRUARY 2023**

- 4th The 22nd Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers Plus Three (22nd M-ATM Plus Three), co-chaired by Indonesian Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno and Japanese State Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Ishii Hiroo, takes place in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The meeting reports that ASEAN Plus Three countries recorded a year-on-year growth in international visitor arrivals by 79.36 per cent in 2022, which also translated to an optimistic outlook for the recovery of the tourism sector in the next two to three years. The meeting also acknowledges appreciation to China, Japan and Korea for the respective support from the ASEAN–China Centre, ASEAN–Japan Centre and ASEAN–Korea Centre in strengthening people-to-people connectivity and enhancing cultural understanding through various tourism activities and projects as well as their contributions to the implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Work Plan 2021–2025.
- 7th Officials from China and member economies of ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat attend the first round of consultations on the Version 3.0 of the China–ASEAN Free Trade Area negotiations via video link. The two sides hold in-depth discussions on topics such as procedural rules, organisational arrangements and work plans for the negotiations, and set a timetable and roadmap for subsequent talks.
- 10th Chinese Premier Li Keqiang holds talks with Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen at the Great Hall of the People during the

Prime Minister's official visit to China. Li expresses his hope that both countries will expand exchanges and cooperation in such areas as tourism and cultural heritage protection, and step up cooperation on law enforcement and security. Hun Sen thanks China for its support for Cambodia's rotating chairmanship of ASEAN and affirms that Cambodia is ready to work with China to deepen cooperation between ASEAN and China, promote regional connectivity and safeguard regional peace and development.

- 13th Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang holds talks with visiting Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai. Qin proposes that both countries work jointly to implement the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative.

Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi also meets Don Pramudwinai separately. They also exchange views on the Ukraine crisis, among other matters of common concern.

- 16th Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong meets with Vietnamese Ambassador to China Pham Sao Mai. Pham Sao Mai says that the Vietnamese side is ready to work with the Chinese side to earnestly implement the important outcomes of General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong's visit to China and take bilateral cooperation in various fields to a new level.

- 20th Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang meets with Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan in Beijing. The two sides agree to accelerate the full resumption of direct flights to better facilitate cross-border travel. China says it is ready to work with ASEAN countries to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and jointly safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea.

- 22nd Indonesian President Joko Widodo meets with visiting Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Jakarta. Jokowi says practical cooperation between Indonesia and China has yielded fruitful outcomes, bilateral trade and investment. He urges both sides to accelerate the key projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway, the North Kalimantan Industrial Park, and the development of Indonesia's new capital, and to expand cooperation in industrial chains and new energy, among others. Qin maintains that China will, as always, support ASEAN centrality and looks forward to a settlement of the Myanmar issue in the ASEAN way.

- 24th Chinese Director-General of the Department of Consular Affairs of the Foreign Ministry Wu Xi meets with Vietnamese Consul General in

Kunming Hoàng Minh Sơn, Vietnamese Consul General in Hong Kong Phạm Bình Dân, Vietnamese Consul General in Shanghai Nguyen The Tung and Vietnamese Consul General in Nanning Do Nam Trung. Wu briefs them on the guiding principles of General Secretary Xi Jinping's recent speech on "correctly understanding and vigorously advancing Chinese modernization". The two sides also exchange views on specific consular issues.

### **MARCH 2023**

- 2nd Chinese President Xi Jinping sends a congratulatory message to Vo Van Thuong on his election as president of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Xi says he attaches great importance to China–Vietnam relations and stands ready to work with Vo Van Thuong to promote bilateral relations.
- 3rd Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong meets with Thai Ambassador to China Arthayudh Srisamoot. Thailand says it is ready to make all-out efforts with China to implement the common understanding reached between leaders of the two countries, comprehensively resume exchanges at all levels, promote practical cooperation in various fields, enhance people-to-people exchanges and continuously elevate the Thailand–China comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership to new heights.
- 8th–10th ASEAN and Chinese delegates meet in Jakarta to continue negotiations on a code of conduct (COC) for the South China Sea. Both ASEAN and China aim to conduct an exercise on a security hotline this year to prevent an accidental collision from escalating tensions in the disputed Sea.
- 9th–11th Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong visits Vietnam and meets with Vietnamese Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son and Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Minh Vu. Vietnam thanks China for designating Vietnam as one of the first pilot destinations for China's outbound group tours.
- 17th At the 24th ASEAN–China Joint Cooperation Committee meeting held at the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN and China reaffirm their commitment to advance their comprehensive strategic partnership. China also reaffirms its support for ASEAN Community building and for ASEAN Centrality in regional ASEAN-led mechanisms. The meeting, co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to ASEAN Aung Myo Myint and Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to ASEAN Hou Yanqi, discusses the 2023 cooperation theme, "ASEAN–China Year of

Agricultural Development and Food Security” and ways to promote cooperation under the ASEAN–China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

24th Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong co-chairs the Seventh Meeting of the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea with Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines Maria Theresa P. Lazaro in Manila. The two sides agree to exercise restraint, make good use of the hotline between the two foreign ministries, improve maritime communication and dialogue mechanisms, and enhance talks and exchanges between different departments and at multiple levels. They also agree to leverage the mechanism and promote practical cooperation in areas such as diplomacy, defence, oil and gas development, maritime research and environmental protection.

28th Senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi meets with ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn in Beijing. They discuss upholding peaceful development, strengthening cooperation in areas such as trade and green development, and further advancing bilateral ties.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang has a telephone conversation with Vietnamese Minister of Foreign Affairs Bui Thanh Son. Both sides vouch that they will take the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the China–Vietnam comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership as an opportunity to strengthen strategic communication, consolidate political mutual trust and enhance exchanges at all levels and in various fields. Bui Thanh Son congratulates China on the success of its two sessions (*lianghui*).

28th–31st China hosts the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) in the coastal city of Boao, Hainan province. The forum, themed “An Uncertain World: Solidarity and Cooperation for Development amid Challenges”, convenes top leaders—including Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Malaysia Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and China’s Premier Li Qiang—as well as the heads of international organisations and experts who attend the event in person. Chinese Premier Li Qiang reiterates that China is an “anchor for world peace”, highlighting that China’s economy has rebounded from the COVID-19 pandemic and that several international organisations have expressed optimism towards China’s economic performance for 2023.

31st Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who is on an official visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People. State Councillor Wang Yi and Foreign Minister Qin Gang are also present at the meeting. Xi says that China is ready to strengthen

strategic communication with Singapore, deepen strategic alignment and make “high quality” the most distinct feature of China–Singapore cooperation. The two sides also exchange in-depth views on major-country relations and international and regional issues of mutual interest and concern.

Chinese President Xi Jinping also meets with Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Great Hall of the People. Xi highlights that China is ready to work with Malaysia to step up exchanges between government departments, legislative bodies and political parties of the two countries, and increase exchanges on governance experience. Anwar says the Malaysia Madani proposed by the Malaysian government can be seen to align with the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind. He maintains that Malaysia is ready to make all-out efforts with China to implement relevant initiatives and advance Belt and Road cooperation.

This chronology of events in ASEAN–China relations was sourced mainly from the ASEAN Secretariat website <<https://asean.org>>; *The Straits Times*; *Comparative Connections: An E-Journal of East Asian Bilateral Relations* <<https://cc.pacforum.org>>; *the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs* <<https://www.fmprc.gov.cn>>; *People's Daily*; *South China Morning Post*; *Manila Standard*; *BBC*; *The Jakarta Post*; *Borneo Bulletin*; *The Associated Press Newswire*; *Xinhuanet* <<http://www.xinhuanet.com>> and *Channel News Asia* <<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news>>.