

TÜRKİYE'S ASEAN DIALOGUE PARTNERSHIP

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The 59th ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Foreign Ministerial Meeting, held in Pasay, Philippines between 18 and 23 July 2026 has had significant outcomes for Turkish foreign policy and the Southeast Asian region. At the meeting on 21 July 2026, it was decided to establish a Dialogue Partnership between Türkiye and ASEAN. Thus, following United Kingdoms acceptance as a Dialogue Partner in 2021, Türkiye became the 12th country to be accepted as an ASEAN Dialogue Partner.

In the early 1990s, Türkiye sought to develop institutional relations with ASEAN. Institutional relations between Türkiye and ASEAN began in 2010 with Türkiyes accession to The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. Following this step, Türkiye attained the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner with ASEAN in 2017 and established institutional cooperation with ASEAN in the fields of economy, transportation, disaster management, education, and other sectoral areas. In 2024, Türkiye applied for 'Dialogue Partner' status with ASEAN to further strengthen its institutional ties. After being accepted in principle in 2025, Türkiye was officially admitted as an ASEAN Dialogue Partner on 21 July 2026.[1] This marked the highest level of institutional relations with ASEAN. When the factors that played a role in the process leading to Türkiyes ASEAN Dialogue Partnership are examined, the Strategic Autonomy approach that Türkiye has pursued in its foreign policy stands out first. In line with the concept of strategic autonomy, Türkiye has adopted a policy of diversifying its foreign policy strategies and collaborating with multiple actors, rather than the unilateral foreign policy approach followed in earlier periods. The transformations in the international system, debates on multipolarity, and the emergence of new areas of competition have increased the importance of middle powers while also

offering new opportunities for cooperation among them. In this context, ASEAN stands out as an important platform for Türkiye to diversify its relations with Southeast Asian countries and strengthen its political, economic, and diplomatic interaction in the region.

Second, Türkiyes Asia Anew initiative, launched in 2019, recognizes the regional importance of Asian countries and Asia as a region and aims to develop economic, commercial, security, and institutional cooperation. In line with this, Türkiye has signed free trade agreements with many countries. In 2025, significant progress was made in relations between Türkiye and ASEAN countries; cooperation deepened in various fields, and high-level visits took place. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan embarked on an Asian tour in 2025 that included the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, during which he expressed Türkiyes willingness to advance relations with countries in the region. Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan attended the ASEAN Summit held in Malaysia in 2025 and expressed Türkiyes desire to strengthen its relations with ASEAN once again during the Türkiye-ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partnership Seventh Trilateral Meeting. In 2025, the leaders of Malaysia, which held the ASEAN chairmanship that year, and Indonesia visited Türkiye.

Finally, it is necessary to state the role of Türkiyes recent success in the field of defense industry. Türkiye signed various agreements and developed partnerships with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines regarding the export of defense industry products in 2025. This demonstrates that the defense industry has become an increasingly important area of cooperation in Türkiyes relations with Southeast Asian countries and has contributed to the deepening of its diplomatic and economic ties in the region. As we emphasized after the 2025 ASEAN Summit, during its ASEAN Chairmanship, Malaysia achieved various diplomatic successes, particularly in the area of mediation.[2] It is also claimed that Malaysia played a facilitating role in Türkiyes Dialogue Partnership process.[3]

Ultimately, the Dialogue Partnership has not only marked a new phase in Türkiye-ASEAN relations but has also been a significant outcome for Türkiyes aim to strengthen its ties with the Asia-Pacific region under the Asia Anew initiative. This partnership will likely lead to an expansion of Türkiyes areas of cooperation with ASEAN. The Dialogue Partnership offers countries the opportunity to participate in high-level consultation meetings and summits in a broader sense.[4] It enables consultation meetings with ASEAN countries at the ASEAN+1 leadership level and facilitates meetings with member countries at the foreign minister level, instead of the Trilateral Sectoral Partnership meetings that previously took place at the level of Foreign Ministers and the ASEAN Secretary-General.

From another perspective, Türkiye has recently strengthened its bilateral relations with various countries and regions through new cooperation mechanisms and agreements; such as Türkiyes hosting of the NATO Summit on 10-11 July 2026 and its admission as an ASEAN Dialogue Partner on 21 July 2026. These are indicators of Türkiyes growing diplomatic influence at the regional and global levels.

The ASEAN Dialogue Partnership offers an important opportunity for Türkiye to enhance its diplomatic visibility in Southeast Asia and develop more regular and institutionalized relations with countries in the region. It is important for Türkiye to effectively take

advantage of the opportunities offered by the Dialogue Partnership.[5] In this context, it also is important to strengthen political dialogue with ASEAN countries, increase and facilitate trade and investments, and develop new cooperation mechanisms with different countries in areas such as defense industry.

*Image: https://antakyagazetesi.com/turkiye-asyada-gucunu-artirdi/

[1] Sercan İrkin, Dışişleri Bakanlığı, Türkiyenin ASEAN Diyalog Ortaklığına Kabul Edilmesini Memnuniyetle Karşıladı, *Anadolu Ajansı,* 21 Temmuz 2026, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/disisleri-bakanligi-turkiyenin-asean-diyalog-ortakligina-kabul-edilmesini-memnuniyetle-karsiladi/4004821

[2] Seyda Nur Osmanlı, HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 47TH ASEAN SUMMIT, *Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)*, January 20, 2026, https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/HIGHLIGHTS-FROM-THE-47TH-ASEAN-SUMMIT

[3] Muhammad Syameer Luthfy bin Hamzah, Türkiye Enters ASEANs Inner Circle, While Malaysia Takes Lead, *Daily Sabah,* July 25, 2026, https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/turkiye-enters-aseans-inner-circle-while-malaysia-takes-lead

[4] Sercan İrkin, Dışişleri Bakanlığı, Türkiyenin ASEAN Diyalog Ortaklığına Kabul Edilmesini Memnuniyetle Karşıladı, *Anadolu Ajansı,* 21 Temmuz 2026, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/disisleri-bakanligi-turkiyenin-asean-diyalog-ortakligina-kabul-edilmesini-memnuniyetle-karsiladi/4004821

[5] Ali Oğuz Diriöz, Türkiyenin ASEAN Diyalog Ortaklığı: Yeniden Asyadan Somut Ortaklığa, *Independent Türkçe,* July 31, 2026, https://www.indyturk.com/node/780611/yazarlar/türkiyenin-asean-diyalog-ortaklığı-yeniden-asyadan-somut-ortaklığa

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