

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. RES. 141

Supporting ASEAN Centrality in the Indo-Pacific Region.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 30, 2023

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. VAN HOLLEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## RESOLUTION

Supporting ASEAN Centrality in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Whereas, with more than 686,000,000 people, the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) collectively boast the third largest population in the world and a gross domestic product of \$3,300,000,000,000, and serves to promote economic growth and regional stability among its members, as well as a rules-based international order;

Whereas ASEAN is situated in a critical geographic position, straddling the sea lanes between the Indian Ocean to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east;

Whereas, at the 10th annual U.S.-ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., and the ASEAN leaders elevated United States-ASEAN relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership;

Whereas, under this framework, there has been an unprecedented expansion in United States-ASEAN relations, including the launch of five new high-level dialogues on health, transportation, gender equality and women's empowerment, environment and climate, and energy, as well as elevated engagement on foreign affairs, economics, and defense;

Whereas, in October 2022, the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate joined a senior officials' dialogue on the environment and climate with ASEAN, during which the two sides decided to establish a cooperation work plan and to hold a special U.S.-ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on the Environment and Climate in 2023;

Whereas President Biden has reaffirmed the strong support of the United States for ASEAN centrality and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, building on the historic success of the first-ever U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit in Washington, DC in May 2022;

Whereas the United States is committed to supporting the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific's Maritime Pillar, and the United States Government has announced \$60,000,000 in new regional maritime initiatives;

Whereas, in 2022, the United States provided over \$860,000,000 in assistance through the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to ASEAN partners to support the environment, access to education, strengthened health systems, security modernization efforts, rule of law, and human rights;

Whereas the Department of Agriculture and the United States International Development Finance Corporation plan to invest \$57,000,000 in new programs across Southeast Asia to promote food security and ensure access to safe water, including a new “Food for School Feeding” program;

Whereas the United States supports the ASEAN Center for Pandemic Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED), including through USAID assistance and through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;

Whereas the United States International Development Finance Corporation will invest \$215,000,000 in loans to Southeast Asian financial institutions, in order to help low-income women access capital and contribute to economic growth;

Whereas the Mekong-U.S. Partnership, established in 2020 to expand upon the Lower Mekong Initiative, promotes sustainable long-term economic development throughout mainland Southeast Asia and fosters regional cooperation, integration, and capacity building;

Whereas the strength of U.S.-ASEAN relations is anchored in the friendship shared by our combined 1,000,000,000 people, and each year the United States provides more than \$70,000,000 to support educational and cultural exchanges that foster greater understanding;

Whereas more than 650 students, teachers, and scholars participate in Fulbright exchanges between the United States and ASEAN, and participants from all 10 ASEAN member states take part in the program;

Whereas 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), which of-

fers exchanges, regional workshops, small grant funding, and other programs to develop ties between the United States and ASEAN;

Whereas, at the September 2020 ASEAN-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the United States announced the new YSEALI Academy at Fulbright University in Vietnam to expand YSEALI's people-to-people engagement between the United States and ASEAN;

Whereas seven ASEAN member States link to 23 States and the District of Columbia through 81 sister city, nine sister state, and 20 sister county connections; and

Whereas the Peace Corps has programs in five ASEAN member States (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam), including the inaugural program in Vietnam launched in 2022 with 10 Peace Corps Trainees to promote English language learning and literacy in Vietnam's secondary schools: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2           (1) promotes deepening cooperation with  
3       ASEAN member states and the ASEAN Secretariat  
4       under our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to  
5       promote peace, security, and stability in the Indo-  
6       Pacific region;

7           (2) reaffirms the importance of ASEAN cen-  
8       trality, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, and  
9       ASEAN-led mechanisms in the institutional archi-  
10      tecture of the Indo-Pacific region;

1           (3) commemorates the 10th anniversary of  
2           YSEALI on December 3, 2023, and supports its ex-  
3           panding programs;

4           (4) commends the work and mission of the  
5           Peace Corps in the region, including the historic ar-  
6           rival of the first Peace Corps Volunteers to Vietnam,  
7           at the invitation of the Government of Vietnam;

8           (5) celebrates the 10th anniversary of our com-  
9           prehensive partnership with Vietnam and supports  
10          elevating our relationship to a strategic partnership;

11          (6) congratulates Indonesia for its successful  
12          leadership as Chair of the G20 and United States-  
13          ASEAN country coordinator in 2022, and extends  
14          United States support and best wishes as it assumes  
15          the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2023, under the theme  
16          “ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth”;

17          (7) applauds the steadfast U.S.-Indonesia Stra-  
18          tegic Partnership, Indonesia’s leadership on the  
19          issue of women and girls’ education in Afghanistan,  
20          and Indonesia’s dedication to renewable energy and  
21          a transition away from fossil fuels, as committed to  
22          in the Just Energy Transition Partnership agree-  
23          ment;

24          (8) reaffirms the importance of the Mekong-  
25          U.S. Partnership and the value of transboundary co-

1 operation across the Mekong sub-region, and sup-  
2 ports a whole-of-government approach in providing  
3 coordinated assistance, including programmatic sup-  
4 port from USAID and the Department of State;

5 (9) encourages ASEAN, including through the  
6 ASEAN Chair and Office of the Special Envoy, to  
7 play an active role beyond the Five Point Consensus  
8 to bring about an end to all forms of violence in  
9 Burma, the release of all those arbitrarily detained,  
10 and unhindered humanitarian access throughout the  
11 country; and

12 (10) supports the people of Burma in their  
13 quest for democracy, sustainable peace, and genuine  
14 ethnic and religious reconciliation.

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