

Mexico and Asia-Pacific: A Strategic Alliance

México y Asia-Pacífico: una alianza estratégica

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Abstract

This article discusses the opportunity to implement an effective foreign policy with Asia-Pacific, assuming a proactive role, and with the aim of diversifying our economic relations. The economic links (trade and investment) and cooperation (scientific and technological) with the region are studied with emphasis on future prospects.



Resumen

En este artículo se analiza la oportunidad para implementar una política exterior efectiva con Asia-Pacífico, asumiendo un papel proactivo, y con el objetivo de diversificar nuestras relaciones económicas. Se estudian los vínculos económicos (comercio e inversión) y de cooperación (científica y tecnológica) con la región con énfasis en las perspectivas a futuro.



Keywords

Asia-Pacific, trade, investment, scientific and technological cooperation, ANSEA, FIP



Palabras clave

Asia-Pacífico, comercio, inversión, cooperación científica y tecnológica, ANSEA, FIP

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Introduction

Mexicans have multiple allegiances; we are part of North America, one of the most dynamic commercial regions in the world. In addition, 97% of Mexicans living abroad live in the United States. On the other hand, we identify with Latin America by significant ties of language and culture. Furthermore, Europe, in addition to being a historical element, is one of our strategic partners in trade and politics.

At the same time, Mexicans are part of Asia-Pacific. Eleven Mexican states face the Pacific Ocean, and Asia-Pacific region increasingly takes on a priority and strategic role for Mexico in political, economic and cooperation terms. Also, Asia-Pacific accounts for more than half of the world's population, a third of the world trade (33.2%) and more than a third of the world gross domestic product (35.4%), a figure which, by 2040, is estimated to reach 50%.

In this context, this article analyzes the opportunity to implement an effective foreign policy with the Asia-Pacific region, assuming a proactive role, and with the aim of diversifying our economic relations. In the following sections, economic and cooperation links with the region will be studied, with emphasis on future prospects, to implement a comprehensive strategy that consolidates our ties with the region.

The importance of the Asia-Pacific region for Mexico

Asia-Pacific has become a priority extension for Mexico due to its economic dynamism and growing political and geostrategic weight on the world stage. In addition, we share common positions in key international fora: The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Group of Twenty (G20), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, and the United Nations.

For this reason, our country has built a solid institutional framework to expand its presence in the region. We currently have strategic partnerships with Japan and the Republic of Korea, a comprehensive strategic partnership with China, a privileged relationship with India and soon an integral one with Viet Nam.

In addition, we maintain a dynamic and fluid political dialogue through 12 embassies and 4 consular offices. We recently opened a consulate in Mumbai, India, and we hope to continue increasing our presence in the region.

These links have a historical basis spanning more than 400 years of contacts. This ranges from the first trans-peaceful trade routes of the Manila Galleon and migrations from China, Japan and Korea in the 19th and 20th centuries, followed by a long history of cultural, academic, scientific and technological cooperation, to multiple coincidences in the multilateral arena.

Today, Mexico's relationship with Asia-Pacific has become strategic, both economically and politically. In terms of trade, the region accounts for more than one third of all global economic activity. Three of the largest economies in the world (China, India and Japan) are located in this part of the world. Today, China and India have the highest growth rates and are leaders in technological innovation.

Due to the increasingly assertive and influential role of both nations, as well as the traditional weight of Japan and "Asian tigers" such as the Republic of Korea and Singapore, it is increasingly important to know and approach the Asia-Pacific region. Also, the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines,

Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, Laos, Brunei Darussalam and Cambodia), with a combined population of approximately 664 million people, and a GDP of approximately USD 3.3 trillion in 2021, represent the third largest economy in Asia and the fifth in the world after the United States, China, Japan and Germany.

Finally, Australian companies are important investors in infrastructure and energy in Mexico. On the other hand, with New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, we have key multilateral overlaps, especially in the areas of climate change, natural disaster prevention and disarmament.

By 2040, the Asia-Pacific region will account for more than half of the world economy, or more than double the U.S. economy. By 2030, it will house two-thirds of the world's middle class, and will have lifted millions out of poverty.

Its economic dynamism and population growth are driving demand in the sectors of education, health, food, agriculture and fisheries, medicine, critical natural and mineral resources, energy, financial services, advanced manufacturing and green infrastructure, among others. All these areas represent opportunities in which Mexico can promote its relations and economic exchange and cooperation.

In addition, countries like China, Japan, Republic of Korea, India, Singapore and Australia are increasingly participating in the Mexican market, either by taking advantage of the nearshoring phenomenon or through foreign direct investment projects. With appropriate public policies, the participation of Asian countries in the Mexican market will continue to strengthen and will constitute a relevant source of job creation.

In the political sphere, a rapprochement between Mexico and Asia-Pacific is also taking place. In the last year alone, the country held ministerial meetings with India, Indonesia, Japan, China, Bangladesh, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam. Similarly, vice-ministerial meetings were held with China and Japan. In addition, in my capacity as Director-General for Asia-Pacific in the Foreign Ministry, I held political consultation meetings with Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Australia, New Zealand, Mongolia, Thailand and Indonesia.

Our commitment to strengthening dialogue with the countries of your region is perceptible in the dynamism of the visits, in both directions. In the past year, high-level visits were made to Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, and the United Nations. New Zealand, Thailand

and Viet Nam, while, in Mexico, we hosted senior representatives from China, Japan, Thailand, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam.

The institutional framework that connects Mexico with Asia-Pacific is strong and increasingly broad. At the bilateral level, there has been a global strategic partnership with Japan since 2005; the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with the People's Republic of China since 2013; the Strategic Partnership for Mutual Prosperity with the Republic of Korea since 2005; and a privileged partnership with India since 2007. At the multilateral level, we have been part of APEC since 1993 and the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC) since 1999.

In trade, we have the Mexico-Japan Agreement for the Strengthening of the Economic Partnership and are members of CPTPP. We also have Agreements for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments (APRPI) with China, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea and Singapore.

Asia-Pacific is Mexico's second largest trading partner and six Asian countries are among the country's top ten trading partners: China, Republic of Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia and India. In contrast, Mexico is the first trading partner from Latin America for Japan, Republic of Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand, and the second for China.

Thus, Mexico has opted to develop a strategy of rapprochement and integration with Asia-Pacific. Through a fluid and permanent political dialogue, with strong ties in the field of cooperation, trade and investment, the country maintains diplomatic relations with 36 countries of the region through 12 embassies and commissions, the consulates of Mexico in China and India, as well as the liaison office in Taiwan.

Trade and investment as a pillar of ties with Asia-Pacific

The processes of economic openness and the growing importance of trade have played a key role in establishing interconnected market structures¹

¹ Alberto Francisco Torres, "El fortalecimiento de la facilitación comercial en México a partir del Tratado Integral y Progresista de Asociación Transpacífico," in *México y la Cuenca del Pacífico*, vol. 7, no. 21, September-December 2018, pp. 145-176, at <https://www.gob.mx/>

for Mexico, especially with the Asia-Pacific region. One of the most dynamic trade integration initiatives is the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership Treaty (CPTPP), which was signed on 8 March 2017 and entered into force in 2018 for six countries: Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand and Singapore; in January 2020 for Viet Nam; and in September 2021 for Peru. Following its ratification in Mexico in 2022,² the treaty entered into force in Malaysia, and in Chile and Brunei in 2023.³

CPTPP has begun to expand beyond the Asia-Pacific region. On the one hand, the United Kingdom formalized its annexation on July 15, 2023.⁴ Similarly, applications for accession have been received from China,⁵ the Republic of Korea,⁶ Taiwan⁷ and Uruguay.⁸

cms/uploads/attachment/file/581243/ElfortalecimientodelafacilitacioncomercialMexicoapartirTIPAT-588-Texto_del_art_culo-1297-3-10-20190211.pdf (date of access: October 17, 2023).

- ² Ministry of Economy, “Acuerdo por el que se da a conocer la entrada en vigor del Tratado Integral y Progresista de Asociación Transpacífico, para Malasia,” *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, November 29, 2022, p. 120.
- ³ “Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (CPTPP)-Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam,” in SICE. Foreign Trade Information, at http://www.sice.oas.org/tpd/tpp/tpp_e.asp (date of access: October 17, 2023).
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, section “Accession of the United Kingdom”.
- ⁵ Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China, “China Officially Applies to Join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP),” September 18, 2021, at <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significant-news/202109/20210903201113.shtml> (date of access: October 16, 2023).
- ⁶ Christian Davies and Song Jung-A, “South Korea Applies to Join CPTPP in Wake of China’s Bid,” *Financial Times*, December 13, 2021, at <https://www.ft.com/content/3bb1ee0e-ae04-4836-88bb-fa5c85992ed> (date of access: October 16, 2023).
- ⁷ “Taiwan Applies to Join Pacific Trade Pact Week after,” in Reuters, September 22, 2021, at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-applies-join-pacific-trade-pact-cptpp-official-news-agency-2021-09-22/> (date of access: October 16, 2023).
- ⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Uruguay presentó solicitud de ingreso al CPTPP,” November 30, 2022, at http://www.sice.oas.org/tpd/tpp/Negotiations/Comunicado%20de%20prensa%20Uruguay%20153-22_s.pdf (date of access: October 16, 2023).

Thanks to CPTPP, Mexico experienced a 24% increase in its commercial activity with its members. The country transitioned from USD 71.359 billion in 2018 to USD 88.531 billion in 2022.⁹

In addition, Mexico has strengthened its commercial reach with the region through the status of partner State of the Pacific Alliance. Under this scheme, a Pacific Alliance free trade agreement with Singapore was formalized in January 2022. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Republic of Korea are the next candidates for Alliance membership. The expansion of the group is expected to lead to greater diversification in markets, products and production chains.¹⁰

Currently, eight of Mexico's first fifteen trading partners are from Asia-Pacific (China is 2nd, Korea 3rd, Japan 6th, Taiwan 8th, Malaysia 9th, India 10th, Vietnam 12th and Thailand 14th). The trade flow between Mexico and countries in the region grew by more than 17% between 2021 and 2022.

Table 1. Mexico: Main trading partners 2022 (million USD)

#	Country	Exports	Imports	Total trade	Balance	Variation 2021
1	United States	472 702	265 027	737 729	207 675	19.03%
2	China	10 918	118 697	129 615	-107 779	17.53%
3	Republic of Korea	7 497	22 489	29 986	-14 992	16.37%
4	Canada	1 5614	13 195	28 809	2419	18.58%
5	Germany	8 340	18 455	26 795	-10 115	8.16%
6	Japan	4 703	18 297	23 000	-13 594	8.22%

⁹ Roberto Morales, "El TIPAT entra en vigor para sus 11 integrantes," *El Economista*, August 27, 2023, at <https://www.economista.com.mx/empresas/El-TIPAT-entra-en-vigor-para-sus-11-integrantes-20230827-0056.html> (date of access: October 16, 2023).

¹⁰ "Los países candidatos a Estado Asociado representan grandes oportunidades para La Alianza del Pacífico," in Alianza de Pacífico, February 28, 2018, at <https://alianzapacifico.net/los-paises-candidatos-a-estado-asociado-representan-grandes-oportunidades-para-la-alianza-del-pacifico/> (date of access: October 16, 2023).

7	Brazil	4 540	12 148	16 688	-7608	33.90%
8	Taiwan	524	14 976	15 500	-14 452	25.37%
9	Malaysia	304	14 583	14 887	-14 279	17.04%
10	India	3 861	7 541	11 402	-3680	12.83%
11	Spain	5 489	5649	11 138	-160	17.51%
12	Viet Nam	303	10 353	10 656	-10 050	21.40%
13	Italy	899	7785	8 684	-6886	21.90%
14	Thailand	339	7 992	8 331	-7653	21.41%
15	Netherlands	2 235	3 928	6 163	-1693	23.60%

Source: Own processing, with information from the Bank of Mexico.

Emerging opportunities in Asia-Pacific

As can be seen, Mexico's economic relations with Asia-Pacific identify China, Republic of Korea and Japan as our main trading partners. However, other nations in the area offer emerging opportunities that must be seized; bilateral trade with India, Viet Nam and Thailand has shown a marked upward trend, which suggests that they will continue to climb seats.

India embodies another target for diversification. According to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) economic growth projections, the country will grow 6.3% in 2023.¹¹ In addition, it represents a market of about 1.428 billion people (the largest in the world).¹²

As for another country on the Indian subcontinent, Bangladesh has experienced a rapid pace of global integration in recent years. From its location along the Bengal Bay, the country has access to several maritime trade routes with major nearby economies, such as India and China, as well as a potential market for our halal products of nearly 170 million people.

¹¹ "Navigating Global Divergences," in IMF, October 2023, sección "Projections Table," at <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2023/10/10/world-economic-outlook-october-2023#Projections> (date of access: October 18, 2023).

¹² "World Population. India," in the United Nations Population Fund, at <https://www.unfpa.org/es/data/world-population/IN> (date of access: October 18, 2023).

Indonesia is equally so. The country is inhabited by almost 280 million people. However, Mexico is the only Pacific Alliance country that does not have a free trade agreement with that nation, and that is a pending issue. For their part, countries such as Australia and New Zealand have attractive markets for the import of our processed food products, as well as for beverages such as beer, tequila, mezcal and coffee.

Scientific and technological cooperation as an innovative approach between Asia and Mexico

Aerospace

At present, the value of global aerospace production is estimated at approximately USD 582 billion. North America occupies the highest percentage of participation in it, with 51.1%, followed by Europe with 31.02% and Asia-Pacific with 13.93%. These three regions account for 96.05% of world production.¹³

With regard to space exploration,¹⁴ Mexico can be further enriched by signing collaboration agreements with countries that have accumulated experience in the areas of agriculture, meteorology, environmental protection and disaster control. Mexico already has a significant role in attracting aerospace projects, which can lead to a large foreign investment magnet and increased manufacturing operations and maintenance services.

¹³ Laura Ochoa Diaz, “La industria aeroespacial en México,” in SPCpro, September 20, 2022, at <https://spcpro.com/2022/09/la-industria-aeroespacial-en-mexico/> (date of access: October 17, 2023).

¹⁴ José Ramon Rivera Parga, “La exploración espacial: una oportunidad para incrementar el Poder Nacional del Estado Mexicano,” in *Revista del Centro de Estudios Superiores Navales*, vol. 38, no. 4, October-December 2017, pp. 33-62, at https://www.semar.gob.mx/redes/Articulo_Rivera_Parga.pdf (date of access: October 16, 2023)

Along these lines, cooperation and investment by Asian countries in Mexico have strengthened national aerospace capabilities. For example, in July 2022, the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) and the Korean Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen aerospace cooperation between Mexico and the Republic of Korea. This agreement promotes academic cooperation on aerospace issues, through postgraduate student residencies, research exchanges and bilateral research collaboration. In addition, Marcelo Ebrard, then foreign Minister of Mexico, and the President of the KARI, Lee Sang-Ryool, reached an agreement for the exchange of experiences and best practices for the institutionalization of the Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency (ALCE). Mexico will be home to its headquarters and the Agency has the potential to serve as an instrument of regional cooperation by coordinating exploration activities, research, special technology and its derived applications, with special emphasis on protection and security, for the benefit of the Latin American and Caribbean population.

Another aspect of aerospace cooperation is that which contributes to food security for the benefit of the population. In this area, a collaboration agreement between the Mexican Space Agency (AEM) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) stands out, whose main objective is to provide satellite support to agriculture and drought monitoring (a process called “precision agriculture”).

In line with the actions and instruments mentioned above, it becomes known that, in August of this year, the Ministry of Infrastructure, Communications and Transport (SICT), through the AEM, participated as guest of honor in the inauguration of the ASPACE Hong Kong Satellite Manufacturing Centre. Today, the center is consolidating itself as the most advanced satellite manufacturing center in Asia.¹⁵

¹⁵ AEM, “Asistió SICT a inauguración del Centro de Fabricación de Satélites más avanzado de Asia,” in AEM, August 2, 2023, at <https://www.gob.mx/aem/es/articulos/asistio-sict-a-inauguracion-del-centro-de-fabricacion-de-satelites-mas-avanzado-de-asia-341251> (date of access: October 17, 2023).

Pharmaceutical sector, health and technological innovation

In terms of strengthening its health system, Mexico has found two important allies in India and China in achieving goals for the provision of medicines and the expansion of treatments. With 60% of generic medicines produced in India and the Serum Institute of India producing more than 30% of all vaccines produced worldwide, India is a global power in research, development and manufacture of vaccines and medicines.¹⁶

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in the face of global vaccine shortages, India provided Mexico with 2.1 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine immunizations. At the same time, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Indian company INMUNOACT, IPN and the National Institute of Medical Sciences and Nutrition “Salvador Zubirán” (INCMNSZ), aimed at developing the latest technology for the treatment of cancer.

Regarding cooperation between Mexico and China, also in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, both countries strengthened their collaboration at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. With China’s support, Mexico acquired medical supplies for the health sector, as well as Cansino and Sinovac vaccines to support the national vaccination campaign. Likewise, a highlight in this support were the donations made by different authorities and sectors of Chinese society, as well as the sharing of experiences in the fight against the pandemic.

Semiconductors

As fundamental components of modern technology, semiconductors play an essential role in numerous applications. Electronics, information technologies, the internet, transport and renewable energies stand out among these.

¹⁶ Redacción El Economista, “SRE y sector salud colaboran para transferir tecnología india para tratar el cáncer,” *El Economista*, November 9, 2022, at <https://www.economista.com.mx/internacionales/sre-y-sector-salud-colaboran-para-transferir-tecnologia-india-para-tratar-el-cancer-20221108-0139.html> (date of access: October 17, 2023).

The Asian continent is the epicenter of the manufacture and development of semiconductors and electronic chips worldwide. Currently, the four main semiconductor suppliers for our country are located in Asia. Malaysia and China positioned themselves as the first semiconductor suppliers to our country in 2022, followed by Viet Nam and Taiwan.¹⁷

The benefits that our country can obtain if it seeks to expand its participation in the supply chains of these countries' thriving semiconductor industry are promising. This could result in job creation and contribute to increased economic competitiveness and technological innovation.

Regional cooperation

Mexico's relationship with Asia-Pacific presents a promising future at the regional level through two highly relevant mechanisms: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). This section explores the background, evolution, opportunities and challenges that Mexico faces in its quest to deepen its relations through both mechanisms.

Mexico's relationship with ASEAN

ASEAN is an example of regional cooperation that has proven to be successful and relevant in a region characterized by the variety of its membership. Founded on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, by five countries of South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), ASEAN was established with the purpose of promoting regional cooperation and stability in a region historically affected by tensions and conflicts. It is the third largest region in the world¹⁸ with 225 million people and a growing middle class.

¹⁷ Roberto Morales, "Malasia y China lideraron exportaciones de chips a México," *El Economista*, September 4, 2023, at <https://www.economista.com.mx/empresas/Malasia-y-China-lideraron-exportaciones-de-chips-a-Mexico-20230904-0136.html> (date of access: October 18, 2023).

¹⁸ "Interesting Facts of the ASEAN Region in Numbers," in ASEAN Indonesia 2023, August 8, 2023, at <https://asean2023.id/en/news/interesting-facts-of-the-asean-region-in-numbers> (date of access: October 19, 2023).

It is worth mentioning that its 10 member States together represent the fourth largest exporting region in the world¹⁹ and are the main suppliers of the global value supply chain. ASEAN is directly linked to strategic Mexican industries such as manufacturing, automotive, aerospace, telecommunications and electrical-electronics.

The importance of ASEAN is enhanced by the entry into force (on 1 January 2022) of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), made up of ASEAN members, plus China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand. The RCEP is the largest free trade agreement in the world, accounting for one third of world GDP, 28% of world trade and 30% of the world population (about 2300 million people).²⁰

Furthermore, the diversity of its members is a fundamental aspect of ASEAN, which makes it a melting pot of political, economic and cultural systems. Over the years, the association has experienced significant membership growth, with the addition of Brunei Darussalam (1984), Viet Nam (1995), Laos and Myanmar (1997), Cambodia (1999) and the subsequent inclusion of Timor-Leste as an observer in 2002. In 2023, Timor-Leste adopted a road map for its full membership.

In addition, ASEAN has established relations with observer countries and sectorial dialogue partners. These include China, Japan, Republic of Korea, the United States, Russia, European Union, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, India, among others.

Mexico's accession to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) could have significant benefits.²¹ This treaty, which embodies principles

¹⁹ Amelia U. Santos-Paulino, *The Asian Economic Integration Cooperation Agreement: Lessons for Economic and Social Development*, New York, UNCTAD (UNCTAD Research Paper, 3), August 2017, p. 7, at https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ser-rp-2017d3_en.pdf (date of access: October 19, 2023).

²⁰ Jorge O. Armijo de la Garza, *La RCEP y su impacto como parte de una nueva estrategia de China*, Mexico, Center for International Studies "Gilberto Bosques"-Senate of the Republic, December 2020, at <https://centrogilbertobosques.senado.gob.mx/analisisinvestigacion/contexto/rcep-china> (date of access: October 19, 2023).

²¹ In September 2023, the instruments of accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South East Asia (TAC) were signed by the Republic of Panama, the Republic of Serbia and the State of Kuwait on the framework of the 43rd ASEAN Summit in Jakarta. Accession raised the number of contracting parties to 54, reflecting the importance and relevance of the TAC in current regional and global contexts. ASEAN, "Panama, Serbia, Kuwait Sign

of peaceful coexistence and friendly cooperation among the States of South-East Asia, is legally binding and may open up opportunities for greater cooperation in areas such as trade, security and economic development.

Brazil's accession to the TAC, in 2011,²² demonstrates the opening of ASEAN to Latin American countries, and Mexico could follow suit to strengthen its ties with the region. The cooperation between ASEAN and the Pacific Alliance, which includes Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, also offers a way to foster stronger and more beneficial relations for both sides.²³

Mexico and the Pacific Islands Forum

PIF is one of the most important political and economic organizations in the South Pacific. This forum stands out for its particular membership, which includes island countries and archipelagos, often vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change and with largely shared colonial histories. The history of the PIF and its relevance today become central points when considering the strengthening of Mexico's ties with this region.

The PIF was established with the purpose of fostering cooperation between governments, collaboration with international organizations and representing the interests of its members through annual meetings. Currently, it is composed of 18 members: Australia, Fiji, Cook Islands,

Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia," September 4, 2023, at <https://asean.org/panama-serbia-kuwait-sign-treaty-of-amity-and-cooperation-in-southeast-asia/> (date of access: October 13, 2023).

²² Brazil was the first Latin American country to join the TAC on 16 November 2011, on the sidelines of the XIX ASEAN Summit. Recently, Brazil obtained the status of ASEAN's Sectorial Dialogue Partner at the 55th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 3 August 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. ASEAN, "Overview: ASEAN-Brazil Sectorial Dialogue Relations," January 2024, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Overview-of-ASEAN-Brazil-Sectorial-Dialogue-Relations-as-of-January-2024.pdf> (date of access: February 7, 2024).

²³ In 2019, the parties agreed to begin the negotiation of a new Plan with a projection into 3 or 5 years; and in November 2021, the Work Plan 2021-2025 was adopted. There is currently an interest of the parties to develop cooperation projects in the field of gender, student exchanges, digital economy, plastic waste as well as cultural exhibitions. Currently, Colombia is making the necessary arrangements to organize the next meeting between representatives.

Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, French Polynesia, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Mexico, as a Pacific nation, has the opportunity to establish closer relations with the PIF countries. The geographic diversity of our country gives it a unique understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing island nations in the Pacific. In addition, the region has regained its geostrategic importance, as China²⁴ and the United States increase their presence in the area.

The PIF has opened its doors to observer countries wishing to collaborate with the region. The Forum's Dialogue Partners mechanism (formally known as the Post Forum Dialogue mechanism) was established by the Forum's leaders in 1989 to invite selected countries outside the "Blue Pacific" that maintain cooperation, commitment and significant interests with the region, in order to generate understanding, support and action in favor of the vision and priorities of the area.

In principle, there were five founding dialogue partners. Since then, the figures have been growing progressively and there are currently 21 partners: Canada (1989), Japan (1989), United Kingdom (1989), United States (1989), France (1989), People's Republic of China (1990), European Union (1991), Republic of Korea (1995), Malaysia (1997), Indonesia (2001), Philippines (2000), India (2003), Thailand (2005), Italy (2007), Cuba (2012), Spain (2014), Germany (2016), Türkiye (2016), Norway (2021), Singapore (2021) and Chile (2021).

Mexico already has diplomatic relations with 15 of the 18 members, so Mexico's accession to the PIF as a dialogue partner is seen as an opportunity to strengthen its ties with this region and collaborate on issues of mutual importance. The PIF criteria for dialogue partners include commitment to the PIF vision and priorities, historical connections with

²⁴ After condemning the Australia-United States-United Kingdom Trilateral Security Pact (AUKUS) as "driving an arms race," China signed a security agreement with Solomon Islands in April 2022. Macarena Vidal Liy, "China acusa a EE UU, Reino Unido y Australia de fomentar una 'carrera armamentística' con su pacto de defensa," *El País*, September 16, 2021, at <https://elpais.com/internacional/2021-09-16/china-acusa-a-ee-uu-reino-unido-y-australia-de-fomentar-una-carrera-de-armas-con-su-pacto-de-defensa.html> (date of access: October 17, 2023).

the region and long-term commitment, as well as support for sustainable development and cooperation on international issues.

Conclusion

Mexico's relationship with the Asia-Pacific region is integral and comprises different dimensions. First, we have a wealth of history that spans more than 400 years, including migrations and trade routes. This underscores the depth of the connection between the two regions.

Secondly, the region has a strategic importance for our country, both from a commercial and geopolitical dimension. It represents a significant share of the world's population, trade and GDP, and is also a leader in economic growth and technological innovation.

Mexico should take advantage of the relationship with Asia-Pacific countries, which include our main trading partners such as China, Republic of Korea, Japan, India, Malaysia, Taiwan and Viet Nam, Australia and Indonesia. These countries offer significant potential as markets for growth of business relationships and scientific and technological collaboration in areas such as aerospace, pharmaceutical and health industries, and semiconductors.

In addition, Mexico's participation in ASEAN and PIF provides fertile ground for interregional collaboration. Both regional mechanisms will expand cooperation in areas such as climate change, development, peace and stability, among others.

At the crossroads of opportunities and challenges presented by the 21st century, Mexico has the opportunity to approach the Asia-Pacific region, cement strategic alliances that transcend geographical boundaries and leverage its strategic position to become a bridge between Latin America and Asia. Collaboration in emerging sectors such as technology and sustainability appears as the path to the future.

Mexico can learn and share knowledge with Asia-Pacific nations, generating synergies that promote mutual development. This two-way exchange of knowledge will not only strengthen our country's position on the world stage, but will also open a door to new forms of cooperation.