

**Joint Press Briefing on the
14th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting
on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the
South China Sea (SOM-DOC)
18 May 2017, Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China**

**Remarks by
Mr Chee Wee Kiong
Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Singapore**

- Singapore and China co-chaired the 14th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.
- We discussed the South China Sea (SCS) issue and are encouraged that for the past months there have been no major disruptions and the situation in the SCS and the region has been stable. This afternoon's 14th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS has made headway in both the implementation of *the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS* (DOC) and the consultations on the Code of Conduct (COC).
- On the DOC, we reaffirmed the importance and the commitment of all parties to fully and effectively implement the DOC. In this regard, we have made positive progress on concrete follow-ups to the documents adopted by our Leaders at the 19th ASEAN-China Commemorative Summit in September last year.

- o First, as a follow-up to the adopted *Guidelines for Hotline Communications among Senior Officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of ASEAN Member States and China in Response to Maritime Emergencies in the Implementation of the DOC in the SCS*, ASEAN Member States and China conducted a MFA-to-MFA Hotline Test Exercise from 18 to 24 April 2017. We are pleased to announce that the Test Exercise was a success. This will bring us one step closer to formal operationalisation of the 24/7 Hotline for maritime emergencies in the SCS.

- o Second, our defence officials are now also currently exploring ways to exercise the adopted *Joint Statement on the Application of the Code of Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) in the SCS*.

- o These early harvest measures are practical measures to build trust and confidence among parties to the DOC, prevent miscalculations and accidents on the ground.

- In addition, we convened an Ad-Hoc Technical Officials meeting as part of the 21st ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS.
 - o Our technical officials had a fruitful exchange of views on topics such as “marine environmental protection” and “safety of navigation” in the SCS.

- On the COC, we are pleased to announce that the senior officials have completed the negotiation of the draft COC framework, ahead of the mid-2017 deadline which Leaders of ASEAN Member States and China had set. This draft COC framework will be submitted to the Foreign Ministers during the ASEAN-China Post Ministerial Conference in August 2017 in the Philippines for their political support.
- This draft framework includes elements which parties have agreed upon and will provide a basis for future consultations on the COC.
- We hope to continue the positive momentum of consultations and make steady progress towards a substantive COC based on consensus, as directed by our Leaders.

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