

Overview of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations

Introduction

ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations commenced when H.E. Qian Qichen, the then Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, attended the opening session of the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 1991 in Kuala Lumpur as a guest of the Malaysian Government in which he expressed China's keen interest to cooperate with ASEAN for mutual benefit. Subsequently, China was accorded full Dialogue Partner status at the 29th AMM in July 1996 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

2. The relationship between ASEAN and China was elevated to a higher plane with the signing of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity at the 7th ASEAN-China Summit in October 2003 in Bali, Indonesia. The first and second Plans of Action to implement the Joint Declaration (POA) were concluded in 2010 and 2015 respectively. The third POA with a timeframe of 2016-2020 was adopted ad-referendum in November 2015 by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and China.

3. ASEAN and China agreed on eleven priority areas of cooperation, namely agriculture, information and communication technology, human resource development, Mekong Basin Development, investment, energy, transport, culture, public health, tourism and environment.

4. China appointed its first resident Ambassador to ASEAN and established its Mission to ASEAN in Jakarta in September 2012.

5. The ASEAN-China Centre in Beijing was launched at the 14th ASEAN-China Summit in November 2011 in Bali. The Centre is a one-stop information centre to promote ASEAN-China cooperation in trade, investment, tourism, education, and culture. The virtual centre can be accessed at <http://www.asean-china-center.org/>. Five Meetings of the Joint Council of the ASEAN-China Centre (ACC) have been held in Beijing since 2011.

6. 2016 marked the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-China dialogue relations. ASEAN Member States and China held a series of activities to commemorate this milestone. The celebrations culminated in a Commemorative Summit held back-to-back with the ASEAN Summit in September 2016 in Vientiane.

Political and Security Cooperation

7. ASEAN and China continue to enhance political-security dialogue and cooperation through various ASEAN Plus One mechanisms including summit, ministerial and senior officials' meetings, as well as in broader ASEAN-led frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus).

8. China was the first Dialogue Partner of ASEAN to accede to the TAC in October 2003. China's accession to the TAC has contributed to the stature of the TAC as the code of conduct for inter-state relations in the region. China was also

the first Nuclear Weapon State (NWS) which expressed its intention to accede to the Protocol to the SEANWFZ.

9. With the desire to promote peaceful, friendly and harmonious environment in the South China Sea, ASEAN and China signed the Declaration on the Conducts of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in November 2002 in Phnom Penh. ASEAN and China adopted the Guidelines to implement the DOC on 21 July 2011 in Bali, Indonesia. Further, the PMC Plus One Session with China held on 25 July 2016 in Vientiane endorsed the Joint Statement by Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States and China on the Full and Effective Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct (DOC) of Parties in the South China Sea (SCS) which reflected its commitment to ensure the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety.

10. At the 19th ASEAN-China Summit to Commemorate the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations the Leaders expressed commitment to the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety and working substantively towards the early adoption of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) based on consensus. The Leaders adopted the Joint Statement on the Application of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) in the South China Sea, and the 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 May 2017, the 14th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the DOC completed the negotiation of the draft COC framework, which will be submitted to the Foreign Ministers during the ASEAN PMC+1 Session with China in August 2017.

11. ASEAN and China have been cooperating under the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) since it was established in 2010. An ASEAN-China Defence Ministers' Informal Meeting was held on 15-16 October 2015 in Beijing. At the Meeting, the Ministers explored avenues of practical cooperation and welcomed the forging of closer ties, to be carried out within the existing ADMM-Plus framework.

12. Annual consultations are held between ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and China, while biannual consultations are held between the ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and China to promote their cooperation in combating transnational crimes and other non-traditional security issues. Significant progress has been made in ASEAN-China cooperation in the field of non-traditional security issues under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues signed in 2004 and renewed in 2009. A new MOU has been finalised and is scheduled for signing at the upcoming 5th AMMTC+China Consultation in September 2017 in Manila.

Economic Cooperation

13. ASEAN-China economic relations continue to maintain their strong momentum. China continued to be ASEAN's largest trading partner with total bilateral trade at USD 346.4 billion in 2015, accounting for 15.2 per cent of

ASEAN's total trade. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from China to ASEAN amounted to USD 8.2 billion in 2015, positioning China as ASEAN's fourth largest source of FDI.¹

14. The Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation was signed in November 2002 to establish the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA). The ACFTA was realised on 1 January 2010 and took full effect on 1 January 2015. In line with the mandate given by the Leaders to upgrade the ACFTA, the "Protocol to Amend the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Co-operation and Certain Agreements thereunder between ASEAN and the People's Republic of China" (ACFTA Upgrade Protocol) was signed on 21 November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, at the sidelines of the 27th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits. The Protocol, which entered into force on 1 July 2016, is expected to bring ASEAN and China closer to realising their twin goals of two-way trade and investment of US\$1 trillion and US\$150 billion respectively by 2020.

15. The ASEAN-China EXPO (CAEXPO), an event which showcases products from ASEAN and China, has been organised and hosted by China on an annual basis in Nanning, China since 2004. At the margin of the CAEXPO, an ASEAN-China Business and Investment Summit (CABIS) was established to bring government and the private sector together to exchange views on matters affecting the economy and businesses of ASEAN Member States and China. The 13th CAEXPO was held on 11-14 September 2016 under the theme "Building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Forging an Even-closer China-ASEAN Community of Common Destiny".

16. ASEAN-China cooperation in agriculture focuses on enhancing cooperation in human resource development through a series of training courses on agricultural technologies to help train agricultural technicians and officials of ASEAN Member States. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the ASEAN Secretariat and the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China on Agricultural Cooperation (2007-2011) was renewed on 27 September 2013 for a period of five years.

17. ASEAN and China continued to strengthen their cooperation in Information and Communication Technology. ASEAN and China in November 2013 signed an MOU on cooperation in ICT, which covers the areas such as promoting industry, human resources and infrastructure development, as well as cooperation in new technologies and information exchange. The 11th TELMIN+China held in November 2016 in Bandar Seri Begawan, endorsed the Action Plan for Deepening the China-ASEAN Partnership for Common Development in the ICT Field (2017-2021) to strengthen further China-ASEAN ICT cooperation towards promoting socio-economic development, particularly in the ever changing ICT environment. Along this line, the Ministers endorsed the China-ASEAN ICT Work Plan for 2017 which includes the activities to exchange and cooperate in the areas of ICT development and regulatory policies, interconnection of ICT infrastructures, new technologies, capacity building of cyber security emergency response and handling of spam, integrated development of the Internet and the manufacturing industry, policies and successful stories of MSME in harnessing the use of ICT.

¹ Joint Media Statement of the 15th ASEAN-MOFCOM Consultations, 4 August 2016, Vientiane

18. ASEAN and China signed an MOU on Transport Cooperation in November 2004 in Vientiane. The MOU aims to promote medium and long-term cooperation. ASEAN and China signed two agreements on transport, namely i) ASEAN-China Maritime Transport Agreement (AC-MTA) signed on 2 November 2007 and ii) ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement (AC-ATA) signed on 12 November 2010.

19. At the 15th ASEAN and China Transport Ministers Meeting (ATM+China) held on 17 November 2016 in Manila, the Ministers adopted the revised Strategic Plan for ASEAN-China Transport Cooperation which aligns with ASEAN's goals and actions in the Kuala Lumpur Transport Strategic Plan 2016-2025 and China's vision of "Belt and Road". The strategic plan serves as an important guide for prioritisation, investment programming and funds mobilisation for seven key ASEAN-China transport corridors. The Ministers also adopted the Development Strategy for ASEAN-China Transport Scientific and Technological Cooperation which aims to promote transport scientific and technological cooperation and exchanges among ASEAN Member States and China, through research and development, standard and specifications, technological services, exchanges between scientific and technological personnel and setting up a research platform.

20. On tourism, China has become a major source of tourists for ASEAN. In 2016, the total number of tourist arrivals from China to ASEAN was 19.8 million, an increase of 6.4% compared to 2015, while the number of ASEAN tourists to China recorded 10.34 million, an increase of 57.8 %. Since the implementation of the ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement and its protocols in early 2017, 37 cities in ASEAN have been connected with 52 cities in China through nearly 5,000 direct flights per week. With the designation of 2017 as ASEAN-China Year of Tourism Cooperation, two-way traffic will be further boosted, as there would be more events and activities, such as promotion campaigns, family trips, press trips and joint booths at travel marts organised in both ASEAN Member States and China.

21. On cooperation in quality inspection, two MOUs on Strengthening Sanitary and Phytosanitary Cooperation (SPS) and Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment (TBT) between ASEAN and China were signed on 20 November 2007 and 24 October 2009, respectively. In order to implement the MOUs, ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine on SPS and TBT was established and held alternately every year. The 5th ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine was held on 10 September 2016 in Nanning, China, under the theme "Promote China-ASEAN SPS Connectivity, Build Up Community of Common Destiny for Quality and Safety". The Ministers reviewed and welcomed the progress made through SPS cooperation and the implementation of China-ASEAN SPS MOU Plan of Action for 2015-2016. The Ministers emphasized their commitment to deepen cooperation through the implementation of SPS MOU Plan of Action for 2017-2018.

22. The year 2012 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Cooperation in Science and Technology. A series of activities were implemented to mark the year, including among others the ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation and launching of the ASEAN-China Science and Technology Partnership (STEP) Programme. Notable progress has been made in implementing STEP including building ASEAN-China joint laboratories, ASEAN-China Remote Sensing Satellite Data Sharing and Service Platform, ASEAN-China

technology Transfer Centre, and Talented Young Scientists Visiting China. The China-ASEAN Technology Transfer Center has contributed to facilitating information sharing, resource matchmaking and other related services to encourage collaboration between Chinese and ASEAN enterprises and science parks.

23. On connectivity, at 19th ASEAN-China Summit in September 2016, the Leaders expressed commitment to continue to strengthen cooperation in the area of connectivity that will bring mutual benefits, including through capacity building and resource mobilisation for the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025), exploring ways to improve connectivity between both sides by synergising common priorities identified in the MPAC 2025 and China's "Belt and Road" initiative, and encourage the active involvement of relevant multilateral financial institutions.

Socio-Cultural Cooperation

24. On socio-cultural cooperation, a number of activities have been carried out in the areas of public health, education, culture, labour and social security, local government and people-to-people exchanges, environment, media, youth, social development, and poverty reduction.

25. The Ministers on Health of ASEAN and China signed an MOU on Health Cooperation at the Fourth ASEAN-China Health Ministers Meeting on 6 July 2012 in Phuket, Thailand. To operationalise the MoU through its plan of action, yearly priorities of collaboration are agreed by ASEAN and China through the ASEAN China Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (AC-SOMHD) and the ASEAN China Health Ministers Meeting. At the Fifth ASEAN-China Health Ministers Meeting on 19 September 2014 in Ha Noi, the Ministers welcomed the ASEAN-China cooperation in communicable diseases prevention and control, especially the collaboration on malaria, dengue fever, HIV and AIDS, and plague prevention and control in border areas. The Ministers were committed to strengthen the ASEAN-China cooperation in capacity building for public health personnel in the region and in traditional medicine. The Seventh AC-SOMHD held on 20 April 2017 in Brunei Darussalam agreed on priority areas for 2017-2018.

26. ASEAN-China cooperation on education made good progress. 2016 was designated as the ASEAN-China Year of Educational Exchange. One of the main activities was the 9th China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week (CAECW) which was held in Guiyang on 1–4 August 2016. The 9th CAECW focused on three cross-cutting themes, namely skills and talents cultivation of 21st Century; youth employment and enterprise education; and education reform and innovation. The highlight of the CAECW was the 2nd China-ASEAN Education Ministers Round Table Conference on 3 August 2016 which adopted a Joint Communiqué on the Development of ASEAN-China Education Cooperation in support of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020. The week-long event also featured several important education and youth events including the First China-ASEAN Youth Education Forum and Public Speaking Contest 2016, the 2016 China-ASEAN Youth Camp, and the China-Southeast Asia TVET Mobility and Networking Programme.

27. Programmes and activities to strengthen youth exchanges and cooperation between ASEAN and China are held regularly. These include China-ASEAN Youth Camp, GMS Youth Friendship Programme and the ASEAN Young Leaders Training Program. The activities aim to promote the mutual trust and understanding between the Chinese and ASEAN young people and contribute to the regional economic development and social cooperation.

28. Cooperation in culture also made a good progress through the implementation of Plans of Action on ASEAN-China Cultural Cooperation. At the Third ASEAN Plus China Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA+China) Meeting on 25 August 2016 in Bandar Seri Begawan, the ASEAN Ministers expressed their appreciation of China's efforts in cooperation with AMS in the implementation of the Plan of Action on ASEAN-China Cooperation in Culture (2014 – 2018), and their interest to continue cooperation with China in the areas of culture and the arts, cultural industries, cultural heritage safeguarding, public cultural service system, culture and technology development, and creativity across China, including Hong Kong and Macau. The year 2014 was designated as the ASEAN-China Cultural Exchange Year with various activities undertaken in ASEAN Member States and China. The 11th ASEAN-China Cultural Forum was held on 9-12 September 2016 in Nanning, China under the theme "Exchange and Sharing: Cooperation and Development of Cultural and Art Education of China and ASEAN".

29. On environmental cooperation, the ASEAN-China Environmental Protection Cooperation Strategy 2009-2015 was adopted by the Environment Ministers of ASEAN Member States and China at the 8th ASEAN Plus Three Environment Ministers Meeting in October 2009 to serve as a guiding document for enhancing ASEAN-China cooperation in common priority areas of environmental protection up to 2015. The China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Centre (CAEC) was established in Beijing on 17 March 2010 and officially inaugurated on 24 May 2011 to implement the Cooperation Strategy. Upon conclusion of the Cooperation Strategy, ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) and China endorsed the ASEAN-China Strategy on Environmental Cooperation (2016-2020). Subsequently, a seminar was held in June 2016 in Kunming, China to formulate ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Action Plan (2016-2020) to operationalise the new strategy paper.

30. On disaster management, an MOU between the Government of the People's Republic of China and ASEAN on Disaster Management Cooperation was signed on 6 October 2014. With the total committed grant assistance of RMB 50 million, the MOU aims to support the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme, the operationalisation of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), and the ASEAN Secretariat's capacity building programmes on disaster management. To operationalise the MOU, a series of consultations were conducted to develop an implementation plan including the Project Technical Consultation of Disaster Management Cooperation between China and ASEAN.

31. ASEAN and China have continued to organise exchange visits for media personnel. On 16-18 September 2015, Thailand hosted the Visit of Broadcasting Personnel to Thailand with the funding under the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund.

The visit had helped the participant to broaden their perspective of ASEAN and China broadcasting personnel and enhance their media capability by learning new knowledge and practices, and by sharing their skills and experiences among ASEAN and China media practitioners through the visit.
