Chairman’s Statement of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with China 9 September 2020, Viet Nam

1. The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with the People’s Republic of China was held on 9 September 2020. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr., Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines, and H.E. Wang Yi, State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China.

2. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the 2016-2020 Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity. Noting that the current Plan is due to be completed this year, the Meeting welcomed efforts to conclude the negotiations on the new Plan of Action for the period 2021-2025 that will guide both sides in further strengthening the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations in the next five years.

3. The Meeting reiterated support to the priorities of ASEAN this year in advancing a “Cohesive and Responsive” ASEAN under Viet Nam’s Chairmanship and welcomed the ASEAN Leaders’ Vision Statement on a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN: Rising Above Challenges and Sustaining Growth, adopted at the 36th ASEAN Summit on 26 June 2020. The Meeting underlined the need to strengthen regional solidarity and maintain ASEAN Centrality to respond effectively to current and future challenges as well as harness opportunities including those brought about by digital transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

4. The Meeting recognised the unprecedented challenges posed by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the region and the world and underscored the importance of collaboration in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies. The Meeting also highlighted the need for joint collaboration on scientific research, development, and production of vaccines and medicine that are affordable and accessible to all, whilst building and maintaining resilient, open, and connected supply chains and supporting a sustained economic recovery. Towards this end, ASEAN Ministers welcomed China’s pledge to support the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund and looked forward to China’s support to the ASEAN Regional Reserves of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergency once it is established. The ASEAN Ministers also encourage support from China in ASEAN's efforts to recover from the impact of COVID-19 and the development of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework.
5. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as the key code of conduct governing inter-State relations in the region, underscored its relevance to the wider region and recognised its contribution to promoting regional peace, stability, and security.

6. The Meeting underscored the importance of maintaining ASEAN Centrality and unity in the evolving regional architecture and reiterated their commitment to supporting an ASEAN-centred regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based, built upon ASEAN-led mechanisms, strengthening the efficiency of and promoting mutually-reinforcing synergy between the ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). The Meeting underscored the importance of multilateralism, regionalism and international law in contributing to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity. The ASEAN Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and looked forward to China’s cooperation with ASEAN through ASEAN-led mechanisms to promote mutual trust and confidence as well as to contribute to peace and prosperity in the region.

7. The Meeting welcomed the progress made towards the full conclusion of the negotiations of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. The Ministers looked forward to the signing of a modern, comprehensive, high quality and mutually beneficial agreement by the end of this year to demonstrate the firm commitment of ASEAN and its partners to upholding an open, inclusive, well-functioning and rules-based multilateral trading system.

8. The Meeting supported deepening defence exchange and cooperation between ASEAN and China. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the successful holding of the joint maritime exercise among ASEAN countries and China in Qingdao in April 2019, the completion of the first exchange program for ASEAN and Chinese young and middle-aged officers and military think tanks in China in October 2019, and the 10th ASEAN-China Defense Ministers’ Meeting in Bangkok in November 2019. The Meeting reiterated the importance of cooperation in combating transnational crimes and addressing other non-traditional security issues through mechanisms including ASEAN-China Ministerial and Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crimes (AMMTC and SOMTC+China) Consultations and the ASEAN Senior Official on Drug Matters (ASOD)+China Consultations, and looked forward to the effective implementation of the ASEAN-China Work Plan on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues (2019-2023). The Meeting noted the Global Initiative on Data Security put forward by China, and agreed to explore the establishment of an ASEAN-China Cyber Dialogue mechanism to exchange views on policy coordination in cyber and data security.

9. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN-China cooperation in mitigating the impact of COVID-19, as underlined at the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on COVID-19 on 20 February 2020 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, and the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on COVID-19 on 14 April 2020 via videoconference, as well as the Special ASEAN-China Transport Ministers’ Meeting on COVID-19 by on 16 July 2020. ASEAN and China continued to strengthen cooperation through ASEAN platforms and mechanisms, including regular, timely and transparent sharing and exchanges of situation updates,
technical information and experiences in response to the outbreak, as well as sharing experiences in prevention and control, diagnosis and treatment, and other aspects of national responses. ASEAN welcomed China’s commitment to keep markets open for trade and investment, and to strengthen the resiliency and sustainability of regional supply chains especially for essential goods such as food, commodities, medicines and medical supplies. ASEAN appreciated China’s commitment that its COVID-19 vaccines once developed will be provided to ASEAN countries on a priority basis. ASEAN also appreciated China’s support including its committed financial contribution to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, including an exclusive allocation of the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund to support programs in public health sector as well as the provision of medical supplies and equipment to ASEAN Member States. The Meeting underscored the need to strengthen cooperation in public health including exploring the establishment of an ASEAN-China liaison mechanism for public health emergencies.

10. The Meeting noted the importance of the digital economy to regional resilience which had been underscored by the COVID-19 outbreak. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed the launching ceremony of the ASEAN-China Year of Digital Economy Cooperation conducted on 12 June 2020 via videoconference under the theme of “Combating COVID-19 through Joint Efforts and Cooperation through ICT and Digital Development” and expressed appreciation for the Messages of Congratulations delivered by H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam as the ASEAN Chair 2020, and H.E Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, at the launching ceremony. The Meeting also looked forward to discussions on the List of Activities for the ASEAN-China Year of Digital Economy Cooperation including China’s Initiative on Building ASEAN-China Partnership on Digital Economy and its work plan to explore cooperation in digital economy, smart manufacturing, 5G, big data, and smart city.

11. The Meeting reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthen ASEAN-China economic cooperation, including through, among others, supporting the multilateral trading system and enhancing regional economic integration frameworks. The Meeting welcomed the entry into force of the Upgrading Protocol under the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) as well as the implementation of the enhanced rules for trade in goods under the protocol. The Meeting looked forward to the continued discussions on the other aspects of the future Work Programme under the protocol as well as cooperation in new areas including e-commerce, non-tariff barriers and MSMEs to further enhance the FTA. Furthermore, the Meeting underlined the need for ASEAN and China to work together to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19. In this regard, the Meeting reaffirmed the commitment of ASEAN and China to facilitating trade and investment in order to maintain regional and global supply chain as underlined in the ASEAN-China Economic Ministers’ Joint Statement on Combating the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and Enhancing the ACFTA Cooperation issued on 29 May 2020.

12. The Meeting welcomed China’s proposal for the East Asia Summit (EAS) Leaders’ Statement on Cooperation to Promote Steady Growth of Regional Economy to be adopted at the 15th East Asia Summit in November this year, with a view to contributing to ensuring stable and sustained growth of the region.
13. The Meeting recognised the importance of deepening regional connectivity by, inter alia, enhancing synergies between the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC 2025) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and looked forward to the implementation of ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Synergising between the MPAC 2025 and the BRI adopted by the Leaders at the 22nd ASEAN-China Summit in November 2019 in Thailand. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged the early convening of a meeting between ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and Chinese Working Committee of the China-ASEAN Connectivity Cooperation Committee (CWC-CACCC) to discuss priority areas and projects. The Meeting also looked forward to working towards the full liberalisation of the ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement (AC-ATA), which will further enhance regional connectivity.

14. The Meeting agreed to explore an ASEAN-China Partnership on Blue Economy as envisaged in the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership Vision 2030 and reiterated at the 22nd ASEAN-China Summit.

15. The Meeting reaffirmed the commitment to closer people-to-people exchanges including through education, tourism and media, with a view to promoting mutual trust and understanding between the people of ASEAN and China. The Meeting agreed to further leverage the role of the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund and noted with appreciation the on-going implementation of the ASEAN-China Young Leaders’ Scholarship (ACYLS).

16. The Meeting exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and prosperity. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. The Meeting further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.

17. The Meeting underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. The Meeting welcomed on-going efforts to promote the implementation of the DOC, including confidence building measures and exploring practical maritime cooperation initiatives. The Meeting noted the conduct of the ad-hoc video conference of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. The Meeting also took note of the Paper on “Best Practices and Non-Binding Guidelines for Cooperative Activities on Marine Environmental Protection in the South China Sea”, initiated by Thailand. The Meeting further encouraged ASEAN and China to optimize the use of this Paper as appropriate
and on a voluntary basis. The Meeting warmly welcomed the continuously improving cooperation between ASEAN and China, and were encouraged by the progress of the substantive negotiations towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, within a mutually-agreed timeline. The Meeting acknowledged efforts undertaken by ASEAN and China for the step-by-step resumption of the COC negotiations, including continuing the second reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text in spite of the evolving pandemic situation. The Meeting emphasised the need to maintain and promote an environment conducive to the COC negotiations, and thus welcomed practical measures that could reduce tensions and the risk of accidents, misunderstandings and miscalculation.

18. The Meeting welcomed the proposal to designate 2021 as the ASEAN-China Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation with key areas including poverty alleviation, disaster prevention and mitigation, climate change and environmental protection, noting that the issues concerning sustainable development in all dimensions are crucial and ASEAN-China cooperation would contribute to the implementation of UN Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Meeting looked forward to concrete projects and programmes under the Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation, including through the collaborative work of the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD) in Thailand. The Meeting welcomed China’s proposal to establish a ministerial meeting mechanism on disaster management with ASEAN to better cope with natural disasters. In this connection, the meeting emphasised the need for ASEAN and China to enhance cooperation in areas related to sustainable development which may include sustainable water resources management, degradation of the environment, food security, and livelihoods of the poor and poverty eradication.

19. The Meeting agreed to undertake consultation and coordination in exploring the establishment of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and China. The Meeting also looked forward to the commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations in 2021.