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Pre-Recorded Keynote Speech at the
Hong Ting Forum: Expanding New Frontiers for China-ASEAN Cooperation

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Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. Let me begin by Thanking the organisers—the China Mission to ASEAN and the Xinhua News Agency—for convening us around a theme that captures what our region is working towards: "Expanding New Frontiers for China–ASEAN Cooperation".

The Hong Ting Forum has established itself as a meaningful space for substantive dialogue and forward-looking cooperation. The sustained collaboration between ASEAN Member States, the China Mission to ASEAN, and Xinhua News Agency reflects genuine interest from our business communities and the wider populations of ASEAN and China in strengthening the partnership between our regions to advance friendship, prosperity, and stability.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN and China share one of the most substantive and dynamic partnerships in our region. Our collaboration has deepened over the years, built on mutual respect, practical cooperation, and a shared commitment to peace, prosperity, and development. Economically, our relationship is unparalleled. China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner since 2009, while ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner since 2020. Our connectivity across trade, investment, and supply chains has not only strengthened but has also weathered global uncertainties. The ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) has anchored this economic relationship, enabling sustainable cooperation between our regions since 2003.

To stay relevant and address contemporary issues like the digital and green economies, ASEAN and China signed the ACFTA 3.0 Upgrade Protocol in October 2025 during the 28th ASEAN-China Summit. Beyond this, ASEAN and China are also key partners in implementing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. RCEP has opened a new chapter in our regional architecture by creating a more predictable framework for rules-based trade, enhancing economic integration, and reinforcing ASEAN centrality in regional economic architectures.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today also marks the release of the report "RCEP and the Vision of the Maritime Silk Road: New Frontiers for China–ASEAN Cooperation." I congratulate Xinhua Institute on this publication, particularly at a time when our region needs clarity, stability, and pathways for shared progress.

This report should deepen our understanding of how RCEP can serve as a complementary engine for deeper economic integration. Looking ahead, I want to offer three recommendations on how the Hong Ting Forum can play an instrumental role in contributing to ASEAN–China economic relations:

First, Build Strategic and Coordinated Foresight for Regional Economic Integration between ASEAN and China: The Forum can articulate long-term trends and strategic scenarios that shape our region. This ensures that cooperation under RCEP, ACFTA 3.0, and related initiatives remains coherent, inclusive, and aligned with the broader regional vision of peace, prosperity, and stability. This can be achieved through publications like the report launched today.

Two, Enrich High-level Discussion on ASEAN-China cooperation: The Forum can strengthen the discussions and consultations that underpin ASEAN-China relations. By fostering mutual understanding across governments, experts, and stakeholders, the Forum builds the strategic trust essential for long-term cooperation. Today's report offers valuable insights as we pursue new frontiers that can enhance connectivity, deepen economic integration, and support sustainable development for all our peoples.

Third, Solicit Inputs from Stakeholders and Develop Policy Recommendations: The Forum can gather input from various stakeholders and develop recommendations for ASEAN-China cooperation. These inputs are particularly valuable given the Forum brings together business leaders, academics, and media.

I encourage the Hong Ting Forum to make full use of the China–ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO), a prominent event that continuously integrates economic and trade cooperation, dialogue, and people-to-people exchanges between ASEAN and China.

Leaders and Representatives from the ASEAN Member States,

The future of ASEAN–China cooperation holds real promise. As we navigate rapid transformation, we must continue building on the foundations of partnership, openness, and mutual benefit that have long guided our engagement. Through continued dialogue, shared purpose, and collective resolve, ASEAN and China will keep shaping a region defined by stability, opportunity, and enduring friendship.

This requires staying committed to translating our shared vision into tangible outcomes—outcomes that uplift our communities, strengthen our economies, and secure a more peaceful future for the next generation.

Thank you.
