

ASEAN-China Transport Ministers' Special Meeting on Connectivity

September 2nd, 2013, Nanning, CHINA

JOINT STATEMENT

1. The ASEAN-China Transport Ministers' Special Meeting on Connectivity was held in Nanning, China, on September 2nd, 2013, on the sidelines of the 10th China-ASEAN Expo. H.E. YANG Chuantang, Minister of Transport of the People's Republic of China, and H.E. Sommad Pholsena, Minister of Public Works and Transport of Lao PDR, co-chaired the Meeting. The Ministers of Transport from China and ASEAN Member States conducted in-depth discussions on transport connectivity and had constructive exchanges of views and ideas with representatives from industry.

2. The Ministers noted that since the official launch of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area, a large ASEAN-China trade and economic region is taking shape, with a population of more than 1.9 billion, land area of over 14 million square kilometers and a gross value of production of nearly 10 trillion USD, and is now becoming the fastest-growing and most promising region in the world. The Ministers acknowledged that the convening of the Meeting is of great significance in strengthening transport infrastructure connectivity between and among China and ASEAN Member States, facilitating the establishment of a green, safe and efficient transport network, and promoting the economic prosperity and sustainable development in this region.

3. The Ministers considered it opportune to continue to build upon the existing collaborative mechanisms of and under the annual ASEAN-China Transport Ministers' Meeting (ATM+China) to deepen transport connectivity cooperation as both China and ASEAN Member States are working to upgrade the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area and advance negotiations on the "Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership". In this connection, the Ministers reached consensus as follows:

(i) to optimise the working mechanism. The ATM+China is the highest-level dialogue mechanism between the two sides in the transport sector, and plays a vital role in the implementation of transport cooperation

initiatives agreed on by Chinese and ASEAN Transport Ministers and the realisation of the common development and prosperity of the transport sector. As such, the Ministers agreed to make full use of the existing ASEAN-China Senior Transport Officials' Meeting (STOM+China) under ATM+China to maintain communication and coordination regarding connectivity cooperation activities.

(ii) to consider establishing a financing platform. Recognising that the funding shortage has been a bottleneck in hindering transport infrastructure connectivity, the Ministers felt it a compelling need to diversify financing channels and innovate financing modalities, acknowledging ASEAN and other development partners' efforts for infrastructure development with the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund (AIF); and at the same time effectively utilise the available funds on the highly needed connectivity projects. As such, the Ministers agreed to consider the establishment of a financing platform dedicated to ASEAN-China infrastructure connectivity to secure sustained and stable funding resources for projects on connectivity cooperation. This idea can be further studied by the relevant Senior Officials from both sides.

(iii) to dovetail with the connectivity master plans of both sides. The strengthening of connectivity not only provides a strong support for ASEAN Member States to materialise the ASEAN Economic Community by the end of 2015, but also lays a solid foundation for future economic integration in this area. With the aim of building a ASEAN-China integrated transport infrastructure network, the Ministers agreed to make efforts to better dovetail the master plan for China's transport development with the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity so as to optimise the general layout and structure of this regionally integrated network and raise the level of regional connectivity.

(iv) to encourage the participation of enterprises in the connectivity cooperation. The Ministers agreed to encourage competent enterprises to directly engage in the investment, construction and operation of projects so as to steadily advance the implementation of major projects.

(v) to strengthen maritime transport connectivity. The Ministers agreed to utilise the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund, where feasible, to accelerate the implementation of major port projects identified in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity so as to boost cooperation between ports in China and ASEAN Member States and promote maritime transport connectivity to enhance intra-ASEAN China shipping trades.

(vi) to strengthen air connectivity. The Ministers noted the commendable strides made by both sides in strengthening and integrating transport network between the two regions to facilitate regional and global air connections, raise business efficiencies, enhance competitiveness of the economies as well as support tourism. The Air Transport Agreement between ASEAN and China and its Protocol 1 on third and fourth freedom traffic rights, the first air agreement between ASEAN and an ASEAN Dialogue Partner, entered into force in August 2012. The Ministers welcomed a subsequent expansion of the Air Transport Agreement in September 2012, and looked forward to signing Protocol 2 on fifth freedom traffic rights as early as possible. The Ministers supported regular dialogue between both sides to work towards comprehensive civil aviation cooperation, including further expansion of the Air Transport Agreement in the years ahead.

(vii) to maintain a balanced development. Recognising the importance of a balanced development of ASEAN-China connectivity cooperation and the different stage of infrastructure development in this region, the Ministers agreed to further enhance the existing transport cooperation and improve connectivity both within ASEAN and between ASEAN and China, to the mutual benefit of both ASEAN Member States and China, with special emphasis on the least developed member states. To intensify connectivity of transport infrastructure network holistically which will include roads, railways, airports, and ports, the Ministers also committed that more support will be provided to implement the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. To this end, the Ministers tasked the senior officials to identify the key projects connecting China with ASEAN Member States or those linking ASEAN Members States at an early date.

4. The Ministers of Transport from ASEAN Member States extended gratitude to China's Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, for their thoughtful arrangements of the meeting as well as warm hospitality rendered to each delegation. The Ministers are also grateful for the technical support provided by the ASEAN Secretariat.

