

Remarks
by H.E. Le Luong Minh
Secretary-General of ASEAN
ASEAN-China Cultural Exchange Year in 2014
7 April 2014, Beijing

Your Excellency, Madam Deputy Prime Minister,
Your Excellency, Mister Minister,

On behalf of fellow colleagues from ASEAN Member States, I thank you for meeting and sharing with us your encouraging thoughts on close China-ASEAN cultural cooperation and cultural exchange. We also wish to thank the Government and the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China for their hospitality and excellent preparations for the Opening Events of the China-ASEAN Cultural Exchange Year.

As cultural ties between our peoples date back to centuries ago, since ASEAN and China established Dialogue Relations, and especially since our Dialogue Relations were elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 11 years ago, culture has always been an important area of ASEAN-China comprehensive cooperation.

The Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Government on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity signed in October 2003 and the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, the Plan of Action for the period of 2011-2015 adopted in October 2010, all identified culture as a key priority area in ASEAN-China cooperation. The decision by our Leaders at the recent 16th ASEAN-China Summit to designate 2014 as the ASEAN-China Cultural Exchange Year is another acknowledgement of the importance of culture in deepening mutual understanding of our cultures, histories, religions and civilizations.

Our geographical proximity, cultural similarities and favorable conditions for trade have made people-to-people contacts and connections between ASEAN countries and China flourish since ancient times. Today, we continue these cultural exchanges by celebrating our histories and traditions and creating new connections and stories.

A long list of joint activities, including more than 150 cultural initiatives, is being developed for implementation in 2014 through festivals, exhibitions, and performance. With the view of engaging our peoples more, these initiatives will be implemented through a mix of collaborative platforms at both national and local levels.

Together with our regular cooperation programs, the initiatives for 2014 ASEAN-China Cultural Exchange Year are designed to connect our peoples further. They also highlight the contribution of ASEAN-China relations to ASEAN's efforts in building a people-oriented, people-centred Community that is forward-looking in engagement with China, with East Asia and the rest of international community.

With ASEAN and China advancing, enhancing and deepening our strategic partnership, we are confident that these cultural exchange activities will bring the peoples of ASEAN and China closer, laying a firm foundation for a more peaceful, stable and prosperous region that we are building together. ASEAN will do its utmost to ensure success of this ASEAN-China Cultural Exchange Year.

Once again, we thank you, Your Excellencies, for your warm reception!