

**Joint Press Briefing on
11th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting
on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the
South China Sea (SOM-DOC)
and
22nd ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultations (ACSOC)
27 -28 April 2016, Singapore**

**Remarks by
Mr Chee Wee Kiong
Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Singapore**

Singapore and China co-chaired the 11th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the 22nd ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultations over the last two days.

This is the first meeting that Singapore is hosting since we took over from Thailand as ASEAN-China country coordinator in August last year.

2016 is significant as it marks the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-China dialogue relations. ASEAN Member States and China have agreed to jointly hold a series of activities to commemorate this milestone. This includes the exchange of congratulatory messages between the Leaders and Foreign Ministers of China and ASEAN Chair Laos, commemorative receptions in Jakarta and Beijing, Cultural Performances, Youth Exchange visits and Entrepreneur Forums.

The celebrations will culminate in a Commemorative Summit to be held back-to-back with the ASEAN Summit in September in Vientiane, Laos. In preparation for the Commemorative Summit, both sides had extensive discussions on the deliverables and arrangements during the 11th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the 22nd ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultations.

- We have tasked our officials to follow-up on the deliverables and necessary arrangements for the Commemorative Summit.

- More information on the commemorative activities will be released to the media in due course.

The 25th anniversary is a timely juncture to review the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership. We discussed ways to strengthen this partnership, including through the effective implementation of the ASEAN-China Plan of Action (2016-2020) that was endorsed by the Leaders at the 18th ASEAN-China Summit in November 2015. We also identified potential opportunities and challenges that could arise in the course of our relations.

The Senior Officials also discussed the evolving regional architecture and challenges that regional and international developments may pose to ASEAN-China relations.

In the face of these challenges, we explored broadening and deepening cooperation in a number of areas, such as trade and non-traditional security issues.

Recognising the importance of enhancing mutual understanding in all areas of cooperation, we have discussed the SCS issue, including recent complicated developments on the ground, and also made some progress on both the implementation of the DOC and the consultations on the COC.

On the DOC, we reaffirmed the importance and commitment of all parties to fully and effectively implement the DOC, to better manage the increased tensions in the SCS.

- The 11th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea made progress on some of the early harvest measures. This includes adopting the MFA-to-MFA hotline for maritime emergencies which will be manned 24/7. The Senior Officials will be the focal point of this hotline.
- This hotline will be a useful and practical measure to build trust and confidence among parties to the DOC, and help prevent accidents on the ground.

- The recent developments in the SCS underscore the need for practical measures to prevent miscalculation among the state assets operating on the frontline. In this regard, we had a good discussion on a proposed ASEAN-China Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES).

On the COC, we had useful and frank discussions on the structure and elements of the COC based on the two papers on the “List of Elements of the Possible Outline of a COC” and the “List of Crucial and Complex Issues”, which we discussed at the last SOM-DOC in Chengdu.

We hope to continue the positive momentum of negotiations and make steady progress towards a substantive COC based on consensus, as directed by our Foreign Ministers and Leaders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All in all, the meetings over the last two days have reinforced the point that ASEAN’s partnership with China is substantive, mutually beneficial and positive.

Both sides reaffirmed the value and importance that they place on the ASEAN-China partnership.

Moving ahead, we commit to work together to bridge the gaps, and deepen and broaden cooperation.

We will continue to foster opportunities for dialogue and communication between ASEAN and China, including through the ACSOC and SOM-DOC processes.

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