

Final Summary Report of NACT Special Working Group Meeting on “2030 Vision for ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership”

Beijing, China
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Hosted by China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU), the NACT Special Working Group (SWG) Meeting was held at Diaoyutai Hotel, Beijing, China on 26 January 2018. Themed “2030 Vision for ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership” (2030 vision), the SWG meeting reviewed the past 15 years of ASEAN-China strategic partnership and discussed the reports on the 2030 vision submitted by the NACT members. The meeting was attended by country coordinators and senior researchers from all NACT members and it was divided into four sessions. In the opening session, Deputy Director-General Mao Ning from Department of Asian Affairs of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CFAU Vice President Sun Jisheng and Professorial Fellow John Wong of the East Asian Institute of National University of Singapore were present to deliver their opening remarks. It was also a great honor to have DSG of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee from ASEAN Secretariat and Academy Member and Director of International Studies Zhang Yunling from Chinese Academy of Social Science give the keynote speeches. In the other three sessions, each NACT member took turns to present their report on the 2030 vision with the focus on how ASEAN-China relations are envisioned toward the end of 2030 and what specific goals can be achieved in the three pillar areas of cooperation, namely political and security cooperation, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation. At the end of each session, there was an in-depth and engaging discussion among the representatives based on what has been presented by the speakers.

Achievements

The process of ASEAN-China relations was reviewed and assessed and great consensus has been reached in this regard. It was agreed by all participants that China and ASEAN countries are close neighbors sharing geographical proximity and intertwined interests. Ever since the year of 2003 when China-ASEAN Strategic Partnership was established, the two sides have made great efforts and succeeded in elevating the relationship to a higher plane, making it one of the most dynamic relations among all ASEAN dialogue partnerships. During the past 15 years, China and ASEAN countries have obtained outstanding achievements in multiple fields.

In the political and security area, China and ASEAN have made steady progress in enhancing political trust and security cooperation, which contributes a lot to building a stable and peaceful region. China scored a number of firsts in terms of its political relationship with ASEAN, such as the first Dialogue Partner of ASEAN to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), the first Nuclear Weapon State (NWS) which expressed its intention to accede to the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, and also the first dialogue partnership to support ASEAN centrality. Meanwhile, China and ASEAN continue to enhance political-security dialogue and cooperation through various ASEAN Plus One mechanisms including summit, ministerial and senior officials' meetings, as well as in broader ASEAN-led frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus).

Upholding the principle of settling differences and disputes by peaceful means, China and ASEAN have managed to handle sensitive issues through dialogue and consultation and ensured that the security cooperation proceeds on the right track. The two parties have agreed on the framework of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) in 2017 and officially launched negotiations on the COC a few months later during the 20th ASEAN-China Summit. Joint efforts have also been made to carry out non-traditional security cooperation, especially in the realms of combatting transnational crime, countering drug trafficking and conducting natural disaster response.

In the economic area, China and ASEAN have continued to make joint efforts to strengthen trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, which has helped to create a dynamic economic development region. Economic cooperation has been proven to be the heart and also the major impetus for the strategic ties. China, among ASEAN dialogue partners, has taken the lead in building the largest free trade area among developing countries in 2002 which came into effect in 2010 and got upgraded in 2015. Against the backdrop of slow recovery of global economy and increasing sentiment of anti-globalization, the rapid economic growth of China and ASEAN and their cooperation have injected new momentum into building an open world economy.

In the socio-cultural area, China and ASEAN have carried out in-depth and practical socio-cultural cooperation, which has enhanced public support for the strategic relationship. During the past 15 years, a number of activities have been carried out in the areas of public health, education, culture, labor and social security, local government and people-to-people exchanges, environment, media,

youth, social development, and poverty reduction. With the close and regular cultural and people-to-people exchanges, the mutual understanding and learning between the two peoples have been greatly improved, cementing an increasingly solid popular basis for the relationship.

Opportunities and Challenges

The participants agreed that there have been plentiful opportunities and good foundations created since the establishment of the strategic partnership. ASEAN and China partnership has entered a period of maturity. Both sides now are reaping extensive benefits due to their enhanced cooperation in all fields. The level of interdependence between both sides has increased to a higher level and we have seen proactive engagement of China in the multilateral frameworks, which has significantly reduced tensions and security threats in the region. As a result, the ASEAN-China relations have contributed to the peace and stability in the region along with economic development and people-to-people exchange.

In addition, there is still potential and much scope to further expand and deepen ASEAN-China cooperation. In recent years, ASEAN and China have injected new momentum into the cooperation by actively synergizing regional development strategies. The Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity and China's Belt and Road Initiative are prime examples of mutually complementary initiatives. Both have the potential to enhance infrastructure, people-to-people, financial and information connectivity. The cooperation between ASEAN and China on connectivity meets their interest with a bright future in which both sides could fully take existing advantages such as deep neighborliness and friendship, rapid economic growth and synergism between the ASEAN blueprints and the Belt and Road Initiative and, as well as regional mechanisms.

Besides good prospects, the participants recognized there are also challenges embedded in the ASEAN-China relations. There remains lingering suspicion that the rise of China is seen by some countries as a threat for ASEAN, particularly in the areas of security and geopolitical domination. Besides the asymmetry in terms of size and sphere of influence, China's determination to secure its national interest creates ongoing anxiety among ASEAN member countries and continues to fuel tensions in the South China Sea over disputes which could lead to unintended conflicts without proper resolution. Security challenges may arrive as rival states are striving to engage other external powers in the region to balance with the rise of China.

Mutual trust in this regard is the decisive factor to drive future development of strategic partnership. It is therefore critical for ASEAN and China to review opportunities and challenges in the past to lay the foundation for further enhancing mutual trust and confidence and creating an environment to further strengthen friendly and good-neighborly relations. China and ASEAN, have been active in putting forward initiatives to build a “Community of a Shared Future” and “Diamond Decade” and are on the way to realize them.

The future outlook of ASEAN-China relations rests upon the ability of both sides to ensure that the opportunities created thus far can be maintained and to further motivate greater cooperation and synergy to address common traditional and non-traditional concerns, thereby increasing tangible benefits for both sides to enjoy reciprocally. Both sides should also be able to ensure that the complex challenges lying ahead can be worked out jointly through honest and sincere respect for one another’s respective national interests for the common good not only between themselves but for the world at large.

Objectives and Principles

It was agreed by all the participants that a higher level of ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership should be achieved by 2030.

The major objectives highlighted by the participants include:

---Enrich, develop and upgrade the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership, enhance political mutual trust and carry out strategic coordination on bilateral, regional and global issues; respect each other’s core interests and concerns and resolve disputes and conflicts through peaceful means, so as to promote the building of an ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

---Jointly promote the alignment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the Belt and Road Initiative and other development plans and initiatives of ASEAN and China and by complementing each other with comparative strengths, fully unleash the potential of cooperation, narrow the development gap between different regions and deliver more widely-shared benefits to the two peoples.

---Promote and enhance all-round cooperation in areas of politics, security, trade and economy, and people-to-people exchanges, facilitate sound interactions between different fields, and on the basis of shared security and prosperity, jointly build an impregnable ASEAN-China community with a shared future that enjoys

high levels of political mutual trust, win-win economic cooperation that benefits both sides and people-to-people connectivity.

---Enhance strategic communication and coordination in regional and global multilateral cooperation frameworks, jointly rise to global challenges, and facilitate the building of a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation.

ASEAN-China cooperation should :

---Stick to the UN Charter principles;

---Uphold the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence;

---Adhere to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation;

---Share commitment and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity;

---Give full play to the unique advantages of the “ASEAN way”;

---Enhance the centrality of ASEAN in regional cooperation mechanisms and frameworks;

---Nurture the cooperative spirit that values equality, mutual-benefit, openness and inclusiveness and foster a culture that emphasizes on achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration;

---Enhance consultations on matters seriously affecting the common interest of both sides.

Areas of Cooperation

For realizing the above mentioned objectives, the participants made a variety of recommendations in the areas of political and security, economy and people-to-people cooperation. They highlighted the following important points.

Political and Security Cooperation

As the political and security situation in East Asia remains in a state of flux, ASEAN and China must remain committed to maintaining peace and stability in the area. It is significant that China and ASEAN continue to support the purpose and principles of TAC as the basis for the conduct of inter-state relations; guided by “amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness”, China and ASEAN work together toward an amicable, tranquil and prosperous neighborhood, and a community of a shared future with common ideals, common prosperity and common responsibility, and bring our vibrant partnership of good neighborliness

and friendship to a new high. To this end, the following are suggested areas of cooperation:

---Consolidate peace, friendship and cooperation in the South China Sea. China and ASEAN will stay committed to the goal of maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea and the approach of peacefully resolving disputes over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests through consultation and negotiation between parties directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. Through friendly consultation, China and ASEAN will work together to ensure full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and to expedite and conclude substantive consultation on the COC. Within the frameworks of DOC implementation and COC negotiation, China and ASEAN will create more practical measures for dialogue and cooperation in the South China Sea in such areas as marine scientific research, protection of the marine environment, safety of navigation and communication at sea, search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance and combating piracy, etc. As an important confidence building measure, China and ASEAN will conduct regularly the joint maritime exercises to promote understanding, trust and confidence building among the regional navies.

---Strengthen cooperation in non-traditional security fields. We will hold regular dialogue for the purpose of information sharing, exchange of experiences and best practices, and possibly even coordinated actions to jointly combat terrorist-related activities and other non-traditional security threats, such as climate change, public health crisis, and transnational crimes including people smuggling and trafficking in persons, cybercrimes, etc. Joint efforts will continue to be made in preventative diplomacy in ASEAN Regional Forum and other ASEAN-centered mechanisms.

---Promote the building of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Southeast Asia. China supports ASEAN's ongoing effort to preserve Southeast Asia as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and will contribute to the signing and ratification by nuclear weapon states of the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

Economic Cooperation

The SWG agrees that economic development should be kept as a priority and common denominator between China and ASEAN. China and ASEAN countries

will, by relying more on the driving force of the market and innovation and by strengthening a regional value chain, construct a more substantial, competitive, dynamic and sustainable ASEAN-China Economic Community that serves as the main contributor of the economic growth of East Asia. Some medium- and long-term goals are set up as follows:

---Continue to explore better ways to complement one another as well as to maximize mutual benefits and find new opportunities for economic integration between ASEAN and China.

---Achieve connectivity in all fields. China and ASEAN will realize the seamless alignment of economies in fields including economy, trade, infrastructure, institutional arrangements and personnel. Priority will be given to the formulation and implementation of a China-ASEAN Transport Network Plan.

---Expand bilateral trade and investment. The volume of bilateral trade and investment between China and ASEAN will reach a higher level in 2030, making the bilateral economic relations among the most dynamic and competitive in Asia-Pacific. The upgraded China-ASEAN Free Trade Area will set up new standards for global multilateral trade schemes. China and ASEAN will work hard to increase exports of ASEAN countries to China in order to realize a dynamic balance in terms of trade between the two sides. Rules and regulations on FDI should also be aligned to provide companies with the same treatment as each other's own nationals.

---Promote financial cooperation. China and ASEAN will deepen cooperation within the framework of the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM), promote the development of the Asia Bond Market, establish and improve regional financial infrastructure, enhance the ability of this region to mitigate financial risks and increase the local currency usage in trade settlements.

---Build an effective, convenient and environment-friendly regional supply chain. Particular emphasis will be given to support SMEs to integrate into regional supply chain networks and global value chains through E-Commerce platforms. By promoting the growth of E-Commerce, businesses and consumers can benefit from lower costs, more product variety and secure payment solutions.

---Build an innovative economic community. By enhancing cooperation in applied scientific research, reform of innovation mechanisms, human resources strategy and other areas, China and ASEAN will strengthen the productivity and resilience

of local economies and jointly lead the new round of industrial revolution. Efforts will also be made to reduce the unequal impact of high technology adoption to the people.

---Realize inclusive growth and narrow development gap. China and ASEAN will strive for the goals of achieving inclusive growth and poverty alleviation set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by enhancing bilateral cooperation and implementing the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI). China and ASEAN countries should learn from each other's policies and experience in poverty alleviation and innovate our models in delivering financial aid. Efforts should also be made to narrow the development gap between countries in this region by implementing multiple sub-regional cooperation initiatives and projects including the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle and the East ASEAN Growth Area.

---Jointly improve regional and global economic governance. Dedicated to the building of the East Asia Economic Community, China and ASEAN will work expeditiously to conclude a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and strengthen coordination in broader global economic governance frameworks including the APEC and G20, and work together towards a more open, inclusive, balanced and win-win regional integration and economic globalization that benefits all.

Social, Cultural and People-to-People Cooperation

It is widely acknowledged and agreed among the participants that the differences in governance, development level, and religion, among others, between ASEAN member states and China have never stopped advancing bilateral people-to-people exchanges and it is of great necessity to conduct much wider and deeper exchanges in all fields of social, cultural and people-to-people cooperation with the special focus on the youth toward the end of 2030 to further promote and enhance mutual understanding and mutual trust between both sides. The exchanges and cooperation should be based on openness, inclusiveness, equality and mutual respect and further expanded and deepened within the framework of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative. Proposals from all NACT members in this regard cover a broad range of topics, namely culture, education, sports, literature, library, film, tourism, poverty reduction, public health, technology transfer, medicine, social security, anti-corruption, environmental protection, disaster management, heritage preservation and so on. The highlights given by the speakers at the meetings are summarized as follows:

---Promote greater cultural awareness and preserve each other's rich and diverse national heritage, which is a core element of creating a harmonious world where individuals can live in peace and prosperity. Encourage thoughts-and-values-based cultural exchanges at the local and community level. Encourage business cooperation in the fields of film, television and literature, making culture industry a new engine for bilateral cultural cooperation. Build talent training bases for an innovative cultural industry and develop more cultural products that meet the need of the target market and represent the culture connectivity between the two sides.

---Upgrade education cooperation in terms of both quality and quantity. Conduct educational cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. Establish ASEAN-China Foundation and launch scholarship programs to promote the exchange of talented undergraduate students, postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellow and young professional between ASEAN and China. Create a mechanism to facilitate mutual recognition of academic degree with the setting up of ASEAN-China Academic Research Network. Set up a China-ASEAN university which is a network based on the existing universities as members to further promote students mobility.

---Encourage tourism collaboration between ASEAN and China under the Belt and Road Initiative by fostering the development of tourism infrastructure, open skies, visa facilitation and overseas payment. Promote each other's quality tourism resources through new media and other modern means of information technology, encourage the cooperation between travel agencies and the alignment of standards of tourism services, and explore new areas of tourism including cultural tourism, ecotourism and silk road tours.

---Promote people-to-people connectivity by strengthening bilateral ties at the local and grassroots level. Identify a group of friendship cities to promote exchanges through daily interactions between the peoples. Encourage social organizations and the public to participate in the operation of exchange projects in this field.

---An ASEAN-China Big Data Platform will be built using information technology to facilitate the sharing of experience of social and cultural governance and to strengthen cooperation in capacity building in such fields as science, technology, poverty production, ecologically friendly urban development and so on.

---Build an ASEAN-China Socio-cultural Community engaging various stakeholders including individuals, non-government organizations, institutes, and

media, etc. NACT should also play a bigger part in providing forward-looking and pragmatic policy suggestions for ASEAN -China cooperation based on conducting the annual evaluation of the implementation of the “2030 Vision for ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership”.