

2020 CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 23RD ASEAN-CHINA SUMMIT

Adopted on 12 November 2020

1. The 23rd ASEAN-China Summit was held via video conference on 12 November 2020. The Summit was chaired by H.E. Nguyễn Xuân Phúc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, and attended by Heads of State/Government and High Representatives of ASEAN Member States and H.E. Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of People's Republic of China. The Secretary-General of ASEAN was also in attendance.
2. We noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the 2016-2020 Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity. We welcomed the adoption of the new Plan of Action for the period 2021-2025 that will guide both sides in further strengthening the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations in the next five years, as well as the effective implementation of the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership Vision 2030.
3. We reiterated support to the priorities of ASEAN in advancing a "Cohesive and Responsive" ASEAN under Viet Nam's Chairmanship this year and welcomed the *ASEAN Leaders' Vision Statement on a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN: Rising Above Challenges and Sustaining Growth*, adopted at the 36th ASEAN Summit on 26 June 2020. We underlined the need to strengthen regional solidarity and maintain the ASEAN Centrality to respond effectively to current and future challenges as well as harness opportunities including those brought about by digital transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).
4. We recognised the unprecedented challenges posed by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the region and the world and underscored the importance of strengthened international collaboration in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies. We also highlighted the need for joint collaboration on scientific research, development, and production of vaccines and medicine that meet international health standards and are effective, affordable and accessible to all, whilst building and maintaining resilient, open, and connected regional supply chains and supporting a sustained economic recovery. Towards this end, ASEAN welcomed China's contribution to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund as well as an exclusive allocation of the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund to support programs in the public health sector and provision of medical supplies and equipment to ASEAN Member States. ASEAN looked forward to China's support for the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergency. ASEAN appreciated China's commitment that its COVID-19 vaccines once developed will be provided to ASEAN countries as a public good and on a priority basis. We also welcome China's participation in the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX) to ensure the equitable distribution of vaccines, especially to developing countries, underscoring our support for vaccine multilateralism. ASEAN Leaders also encouraged support from China for ASEAN's efforts to recover from the impact of COVID-19 and the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan.
5. We reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in the Southeast Asia (TAC) as the key code of conduct governing inter-State relations in the region, underscored its relevance to the wider region and recognised its contribution to promoting regional peace, stability, and security.

6. We underscored our support for maintaining the ASEAN Centrality and unity in the evolving regional architecture and reiterated our commitment to support an ASEAN-centred regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based, built upon ASEAN-led mechanisms, strengthening the efficiency of and promoting mutually-reinforcing synergy among ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). We underscored the importance of multilateralism, regionalism and international law in contributing to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity. ASEAN Leaders further affirmed the principles stated in the AOIP, including strengthening ASEAN Centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, a rules-based framework, good governance, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks, equality, mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit, and respect for international law. ASEAN Member States encouraged the enhancement of cooperation in the key areas of cooperation identified in the Outlook to enhance mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual benefit through ASEAN-led mechanisms.
7. We reaffirmed our commitment to maintain peace, security, stability and development, including through supporting the work of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission of Human Rights (AICHR) in the promotion and protection of the human rights in the region.
8. We reaffirmed our commitment to supporting and maintaining a free, open, transparent, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system that promotes economic cooperation. We welcomed the significant progress made towards finalizing the negotiations of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. We welcomed the conclusion and signing of the RCEP agreement at the 4th RCEP Summit on 15 November 2020 which demonstrated our strong commitment to supporting economic recovery, inclusive development as well as our support for an open, inclusive, rules-based trade and investment arrangement.
9. We reiterated the commitment to cooperate in combating transnational crimes, including illicit drug trafficking and addressing other non-traditional security issues through various mechanisms including the ASEAN Plus China Ministerial and Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC and SOMTC+China) Consultations and the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD)+China Consultations, and looked forward to the effective implementation of the ASEAN-China Work Plan on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues (2019-2023). We took note that China put forward its Global Initiative on Data Security and welcomed the establishment of an ASEAN-China Cyber Dialogue to further deepen communications and exchanges on cybersecurity policy and digital governance.
10. We agreed to enhance ASEAN-China cooperation to galvanize our efforts in mitigating the impact of COVID-19, as underlined during the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on COVID-19 on 14 April 2020 via videoconference as well as the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19 on 20 February 2020 in Vientiane, the ASEAN-China Transport Ministers' Special Meeting on COVID-19 on 16 July 2020. ASEAN and China continued to strengthen cooperation through ASEAN platforms and mechanisms, including regular, timely and transparent sharing and exchanges of situation updates, technical information and experiences in response to the outbreak, as well as sharing experiences in prevention and control, diagnosis and treatment, and other aspects of national responses. ASEAN welcomed China's commitment to keep markets open for trade and investment, and to strengthen the resiliency and sustainability of regional supply chains especially for essential goods such as food, commodities, medicines and medical supplies. We underscored the need to strengthen cooperation in public health including exploring the establishment of an ASEAN-China liaison mechanism for public health emergencies.

11. We noted the importance of the digital economy to regional resilience which had been underscored by the COVID-19 outbreak. In this regard, we welcomed the launching ceremony of the ASEAN-China Year of Digital Economy Cooperation conducted on 12 June 2020 via videoconference under the theme of “Combating COVID-19 through Joint Efforts and Cooperation through ICT and Digital Development” and expressed appreciation for the Messages of Congratulations delivered by H.E. Nguyễn Xuân Phúc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam as the ASEAN Chair 2020, and H.E Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, at the launching ceremony. We welcomed the adoption of the Initiative on Building ASEAN-China Partnership on Digital Economy and agreed to formulate its work plan to explore practical cooperation to realise the Initiative. We also noted the activities conducted under the ASEAN-China Year of Digital Economy Cooperation in 2020. We looked forward to continuing building closer cooperation in science, technology and innovation through mechanism such as the ASEAN-China Joint Science Technology Committee and the ASEAN-China Science and Technology Ministers' Meeting, and we also look forward to the initiatives that will further enhance mechanisms on this area of cooperation.
12. We welcomed the robust growth of ASEAN-China trade and investment in spite of the global economic downturn and international trade contraction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. China maintained its position as ASEAN's largest trading partner since 2009 and in 2019, China was ASEAN's fourth largest external source of FDI among ASEAN's Dialogue Partners. According to preliminary ASEAN data, total merchandise trade between ASEAN and China in 2019 reached USD 507.9 billion, accounting for 18.0 per cent of ASEAN's total merchandise trade. During the first half of 2020, the trade volume between ASEAN and China increased by 2.2% where ASEAN leaps to become China's largest trading partner for the first time, making ASEAN and China each other's top trading partner. Total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from China to ASEAN amounted to USD 9.1 billion in 2019, accounting for 5.7 per cent of ASEAN's total FDI.
13. We welcomed the progress of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) implementation, including the agreement on the next steps of the Future Work Programme under the Protocol to Amend the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Certain Agreements thereunder between ASEAN and China (ACFTA Upgrading Protocol). We welcomed the issuance of the Report on the 10-Year Development of the ASEAN–China Free Trade Area Since Its Full Establishment. We also welcomed the approval of the two project proposals submitted under China's grant of RMB 50 million (approximately USD 7.3 million) to support ACFTA implementation, namely the “Outreach Program on Revised ROO under ACFTA Upgrading Protocol” and “Enhance ASEAN Tourism Digital Platforms”, and looked forward to the implementation of the two projects. We also encouraged greater efforts to further facilitate the implementation of the ACFTA.
14. We agreed to strengthen cooperation on promoting trade and investment to accelerate economic recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, we welcomed the ASEAN-China Economic Ministers' Joint Statement on Combating the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and Enhancing the ACFTA Cooperation, issued on 29 May 2020, which reaffirms ASEAN-China commitment to facilitate trade and investment, maintain the regional and global supply chains, mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic, and build a stronger economic region.

15. We looked forward to the 17th China ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) which will be held on 27-30 November 2020 in Nanning, China with the theme “Building the Belt and Road, Strengthening Digital Economy Cooperation”, and expressed appreciation for China’s organization of the relevant forums on various issues and commemorative activities to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the full establishment of the ACFTA on the sidelines of the 17th CAEXPO this year. We welcomed the opportunity for ASEAN goods and products to be showcased at the 3rd China International Import Expo on 5-10 November 2020 in Shanghai, China.
16. We welcomed China’s support for the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) to forge partnership in enhancing smart and sustainable urban development in the region. We encouraged further cooperation to realise the 2019 ASEAN-China Leaders’ Statement on Smart City Cooperation Initiative through the establishment of mutually-beneficial city partnerships between the ASCN Cities and Chinese cities, as well as with the private sector and other relevant institutions from both sides.
17. ASEAN Leaders expressed appreciation for China’s support in enhancing ASEAN Connectivity and welcomed further cooperation to implement the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Synergising the MPAC 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) adopted in November 2019. We looked forward to the implementation of such cooperation in an open, inclusive, transparent and mutually beneficial manner. We looked forward to working towards the full liberalisation of the ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement (AC-ATA), which will further enhance regional connectivity. We welcomed the progress made in the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) and encouraged greater linkages and contribution of the MLC to ASEAN’s common goals of development. We look forward to fostering greater connectivity between the regions of Western China and ASEAN through the China-Singapore (Chongqing) Connectivity Initiative-ILSTC (CCI-ILSTC).
18. We appreciated China’s support in narrowing the development gap within ASEAN through the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan III (2016-2020), and to top up the ASEAN-China grant for IAI to fund the “Enhancing the Capacity of Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratories in Cambodia and Myanmar” project. We looked forward to China’s continued support for the implementation of the IAI Work Plan IV (2021-2025). We welcomed China’s efforts to support ASEAN’s efforts in narrowing the development gap, promoting sustainable and equitable development.
19. We recalled our agreement at the 22nd ASEAN-China Summit to explore partnership on blue economy as envisaged in the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership Vision 2030 and to task our officials to continue studying the said proposal.
20. We commend the development of the ASEAN Development Outlook report guided by the theme Inclusive and Sustainable Development. Its forward-looking analysis will inform our strategic development cooperation. Encouraged by the report, we reaffirm our commitment to work together in further strengthening our collective knowledge towards evidence-informed policy planning and implementation. We looked forward to the online conduct of the ASEAN-China-UNDP 2020 Symposium: Enhancing the Roles of Youth in Achieving the SDGs.

21. We reaffirmed the commitment to closer people-to-people exchanges including through culture, education, tourism and media, with a view to promoting mutual trust and understanding between the people of ASEAN and China. We encouraged ASEAN and China to strengthen cooperation in the tourism sector by developing new strategic cooperation measures, including innovative ways to revitalize the tourism industry through available platforms, particularly the ASEAN-China Centre. We agreed to further leverage the role of the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund and noted with appreciation the on-going implementation of the ASEAN-China Young Leaders' Scholarship (ACYLS). We noted the conduct of the "ASEAN-China Cooperation on Poverty Alleviation against the Backdrop of the COVID-19 Pandemic", "Future of Labor in ASEAN and China: Challenges and Responses" and "Advancing Regional Cooperation on Managing Digital Platforms: Implications and Ways Forward for ASEAN and China in the New Normal" by the Network of ASEAN-China Think-Tanks (NACT) this year.
22. We exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern. We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, especially during this time in the common fight against COVID-19. We reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability, and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation, as well as to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.
23. We underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of DOC in its entirety. We welcomed on-going efforts to promote the implementation of the DOC, including confidence building measures. We warmly welcomed the continued cooperation between ASEAN and China, and were encouraged by the progress of the substantive negotiations towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) in line with international law, including 1982 UNCLOS, within a mutually-agreed timeline. We acknowledged efforts undertaken by ASEAN and China for the step-by-step resumption of the COC negotiations, including the conduct of the Ad-hoc Video Conference of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. We emphasised the need to maintain and promote an environment conducive to the COC negotiations, and thus welcomed practical measures that could reduce tensions and the risk of accidents, misunderstandings and miscalculation.
24. We welcomed the designation of 2021 as the ASEAN-China Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation with key areas including poverty alleviation, disaster prevention and mitigation, climate change and environmental protection, noting that the issues concerning sustainable development in all dimensions are crucial and ASEAN-China cooperation would contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We looked forward to concrete projects and programmes under the Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation, including through the collaborative work of the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDD) in Thailand. We support ASEAN's efforts in promoting sustainable and equitable development across the ASEAN Community including through aligning sub-regional growth with the comprehensive development of ASEAN.

25. We recognised that our region is prone to natural disasters, and emphasised the need to forge closer collaboration in disaster management, support regional and sub-regional capacities in disaster management and emergency response. We welcomed works towards the establishment of a ministerial meeting mechanism on disaster management between ASEAN and China to better cope with natural disasters. We looked forward to the finalisation of the Framework of ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025). In this connection, we emphasised the need for ASEAN and China to enhance cooperation in areas related to sustainable development which may include ecologically friendly urban development, air and water quality management, sustainable water resources management, food security, improvement of livelihoods of the poor, and poverty eradication.

26. As we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations in 2021, we are confident that ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership will continue to be one of the most dynamic and substantive partnerships of ASEAN and we look forward to strengthening our partnership, one that is forward-looking and mutually-beneficial. We agreed to undertake consultations on the proposed establishment of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and China. We also looked forward to the commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations in 2021.