

## 2021 CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 24<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN-CHINA SUMMIT

*Adopted on 26 October 2021*

1. The 24<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit was held via video conference on 26 October 2021. The Summit was chaired by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.
2. We reiterated our support for Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship under the theme "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper", which focuses on harnessing the caring nature of ASEAN to build a harmonious and resilient Community with the people at the centre; preparing and adapting for the future to ensure ASEAN remains relevant and its people can take advantage of the new opportunities, as well as overcome existing and future challenges; and creating opportunities for people to benefit through initiatives that enhance the sustainable prosperity of the region. We highlighted the importance of maintaining momentum in cooperating within and beyond ASEAN for the pursuit of these long-term goals.
3. We noted with satisfaction the achievements attained since the establishment of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations in 1991 and welcomed the meaningful commemorative activities held by ASEAN and China to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations. We noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the 2021- 2025 Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity.
4. We agreed to establish a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and China that is meaningful, substantive and mutually beneficial.
5. We highlighted the importance of working closely together to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and advance the region's recovery and growth. In this regard, we adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Cooperation in Support of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. We 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, R&D of vaccines and medicines, and improving skills of medical personnel. ASEAN expressed appreciation to China for its support for ASEAN's Community building efforts and initiatives to address the pandemic, including through the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its Implementation Plan as well as its provision of medical supplies and vaccines to ASEAN Member States, implementation of the ASEAN-China Public Health Cooperation Initiative: Programme on Public Health Emergency Preparedness Capacity (PROMPT) to enhance regional capacity in COVID-19 response and future public health emergencies, and further strengthening health cooperation through the ASEAN-China Health Ministers Meeting and ASEAN-China Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD). ASEAN looked forward to China's support for the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies (RRMS) and welcomed continued efforts to explore the establishment of an APT Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies.

6. We agreed to explore ways to strengthen technical cooperation between ASEAN and China through, among others, possible cooperation with the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) in areas aligned with the needs and priorities of ASEAN and its Member States, including considering establishment of dedicated CIDCA offices in interested ASEAN Member States.
7. We reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as the key code of conduct governing inter-state relations in the region, and underscored its relevance to the wider region and recognised its contribution to promoting regional peace, stability, and security.
8. We underscored our support for upholding 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), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF). We underscored the importance of multilateralism, regionalism and international law in contributing to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity. ASEAN further affirmed the principles stated in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (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 encouraged China to enhance cooperation in the areas of cooperation identified in the Outlook such as maritime cooperation, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and economic and other areas of cooperation.
9. We reiterated the importance of cooperation 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 will continue to support the ASEAN-China Cyber Dialogue to further deepen communications and exchanges on cybersecurity policy and digital governance.
10. We reaffirmed our commitment to upholding an open, inclusive, transparent, and rules-based multilateral trading system, as embodied in the World Trade Organization (WTO), amidst the global trade uncertainties, including the trends of protectionism. We welcomed the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in November 2020, and reaffirmed our commitment to expedite our domestic procedures to have the RCEP Agreement enter into force in early January 2022 and emphasized that the timely implementation of RCEP is an important post-pandemic recovery strategy in order to enhance market and employment opportunities for businesses and people in the region, as well as facilitate economic recovery. We welcomed China's early ratification of the RCEP Agreement in April 2021.
11. In mitigating the impact of COVID-19, we reiterated our 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.

12. We welcomed the robust growth of ASEAN-China trade and investment despite 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. In 2020, ASEAN and China became each other's largest trading partner for the first time with total merchandise trade reaching USD 516.9 billion, an increase of 1.8% year-on-year. Total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from China to ASEAN amounted to USD 7.6 billion in 2020, accounting for 5.5% of ASEAN's total FDI, making China the fourth largest source of FDI among ASEAN's Dialogue Partners.
13. We welcomed the progress of implementation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), including the agreement on the next steps to implement the remaining elements 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 agreed to the conduct of a joint feasibility study to develop a more inclusive, modern, comprehensive, and mutually beneficial ACFTA, and to identify other areas for possible inclusion in further enhancing the ACFTA to ensure that it remains relevant to businesses, responsive to contemporary global challenges, and forward-looking. We also welcomed the progress of the two approved projects to support ACFTA implementation, namely the "Outreach Program on Revised Rules of Origin under ACFTA Upgrading Protocol" and "Enhance ASEAN Tourism Digital Platforms".
14. We welcomed the issuance of the Joint Statement on Further Enhancing Trade and Economic Cooperation at the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations by the ASEAN and China Economic Ministers, which reaffirmed the commitment of ASEAN and China to further expand ASEAN-China trade and investment cooperation, deepen post-pandemic cooperation in trade and economic fields, enhance the level of ASEAN-China economic integration, and strengthen cooperation for the implementation of the RCEP Agreement.
15. ASEAN appreciated China's efforts in hosting the 18th China ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) held on 10-13 September 2021 in Nanning, China with the theme "Sharing the Opportunities Created by the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, Building the China-ASEAN Community of a Shared Future", as well as other relevant forums on various issues. We welcomed the opportunity for ASEAN goods and products to be showcased at the 4<sup>th</sup> China International Import Expo on 5-10 November 2021 in Shanghai, China.
16. We noted the importance of the digital economy to regional resilience which had been underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic. We looked forward to the early formulation of the Action Plan on Implementing the ASEAN-China Partnership on Digital Economy Cooperation (2021-2025) to explore cooperation in digital economy, digital transformation, smart manufacturing, 5G, big data, and smart cities, capacity building for MSMEs, start-ups and local entrepreneurs, as well as the use of digital technology to combat COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. We looked forward to continuing building closer cooperation in science, technology and innovation through mechanisms such as the ASEAN-China Joint Science Technology Committee, and we also look forward to the initiatives that will further enhance mechanisms in this area of cooperation.
17. 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.

18. ASEAN 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 contribution of the MLC to ASEAN's development objectives. We look forward to fostering greater connectivity between the regions of Western China and ASEAN through the China-Singapore (Chongqing) Connectivity Initiative-New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor (CCI-ILSTC). We also look forward to the completion and opening to traffic of the China-Laos Railway by the end of this year.
  
19. We welcomed China's continued support for ASEAN's efforts in narrowing the development gap within ASEAN and promoting sustainable and equitable development through the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV (2021-2025). We also welcomed the efforts undertaken in strengthening relevant sub-regional frameworks, including the BIMP-EAGA-China Cooperation (BECC), Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) and other relevant sub-regional framework and cooperation mechanisms to support efforts to narrow the development gap in the region.
  
20. We commended 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 recognised the importance of promoting complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.
  
21. We reaffirmed the commitment to enhance closer people-to-people exchanges including through culture, education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), tourism and media, with a view to promoting mutual trust and understanding between the people of ASEAN and China, and noted the proposal to establish an ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting mechanism on education. We encouraged ASEAN and China to strengthen cooperation in the tourism sector by developing new strategic cooperation measures, including discussing the establishment of an ASEAN-China Tourism Ministers' Meeting mechanism in due course, and innovative ways to revitalize the tourism industry and safe international travel in line with public health measures of each country, with a view to ensuring economic recovery and people mobility, including business persons, tourists and students through available platforms, including the ASEAN-China Centre. We agreed to further leverage the role of the ACCF and noted with appreciation the on-going implementation of the ASEAN-China Young Leaders' Scholarship (ACYLS). Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also look forward to the early resumption of entry into China by international students from ASEAN Member States in line with COVID-19 prevention and control policies and under proper conditions. We looked forward to the inaugural round of the ASEAN Talk initiative through support from the ACCF, as a platform to build a creative community of inquisitive and informed youths with a keen appreciation of ASEAN and ASEAN-China developments and innovative ideas for a future-ready ASEAN.

22. We welcomed the activities to celebrate the 2021 ASEAN-China Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation, which was launched on 28 May 2021 in Beijing, China and expressed appreciation for the Messages of Congratulations from His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam as the ASEAN Chair 2021, and His Excellency Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. In this regard, we adopted the ASEAN-China Joint Statement on Enhancing Green and Sustainable Development Cooperation and welcomed the ASEAN-China High Level Forum on Green and Sustainable Development Cooperation and the ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Forum 2021 held on 25 and 26 October 2021. We agreed to extend the ASEAN-China Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation to 2022, and looked forward to strengthening exchanges and cooperation in areas such as climate change, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management, marine debris, poverty alleviation and elimination, disaster prevention and mitigation, and sustainable use of the ocean, seas and marine resources, including through the use of relevant ASEAN centres such as the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDD). We encouraged to explore possible cooperation on other sustainable development initiatives, such as the Bio-Circular Green (BCG) Economy Model, and the Belt and Road Ecological and Environment Cooperation Plan.
23. We recognised that our region is prone to natural disasters, and emphasised the need to forge closer collaboration in disaster management to support regional capacities in disaster management and emergency response. We welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN-Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) Plus China to further strengthen collaboration in disaster management and noted the successful conduct of its inaugural meeting on 14 October 2021. We emphasised the importance of enhancing ASEAN's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from future emergencies and disasters and in this regard, we encouraged for both ASEAN and China to share best practices and lessons learned, to improve the coordination of existing ASEAN processes and mechanisms, with a view to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD).
24. 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. We welcomed the adoption of the Framework of ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025), looked forward to its effective implementation that would support the important role of the ASEAN-China Environmental Cooperation Centre.
25. China took note of the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the Blue Economy. We recalled our agreement at the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-China Summit to explore partnership on Blue Economy as envisaged in the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership Vision 2030, and tasked our relevant officials to continue studying the said proposal. We welcomed the successful convening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jakarta Forum on Exploring ASEAN-China Partnership for Blue Economy.
26. We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, prosperity, 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. We underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. We noted the positive progress in the ongoing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). We welcomed the continuation of the second reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and commended the provisional agreement on the Preamble section and

the progress of negotiations on the Objectives section under the General Provisions. We recognised the importance of the negotiations through virtual platforms while physical meetings remain as the primary modality, and encouraged further progress towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We emphasised the need to 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. We stressed the importance of undertaking confidence building and preventive measures to enhance, among others, trust and confidence amongst parties, and reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

27. We discussed the situation in the South China Sea, and noted that some Leaders raised issues related to several activities and serious incidents in the area, including damage to the marine environment, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and may undermine peace, security and stability in the region. 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. We further reaffirmed the need 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 DOC that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.