

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuanketkeow
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
Co-Chair of the 20th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultation
22 April 2014
Pattaya City, Thailand**

Your Excellency Vice Minister Liu Zhenmin,
Excellencies,
ASEAN Colleagues,

- **Good morning and welcome all distinguished colleagues** to the 20th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultation.
- I would in particular like to extend my **warmest welcome to Vice Minister Liu and** members of his **delegation** to Thailand and to Pattaya.
- It is a **distinct privilege to** have the opportunity **to co-chair** this meeting with Vice Minister Liu.
- Our meeting today is an important one because it is being held after ASEAN and China celebrated the **10th anniversary of our strategic partnership last year.**
- We should therefore strive to **carry forward the commitments and implement the agreements** that our Leaders made during the ASEAN-China Summit in Brunei last year.
- We should use this opportunity to **set the direction for our future cooperation and elevate our relationship onto a higher plane** as we enter the second decade of strategic partnership.
- On our part, ASEAN very much **welcomes statements made by the current Chinese leadership, particularly Prime Minister Li Keqiang, affirming that ASEAN has always been a top priority** in China's foreign policy and that ASEAN is an important partner for China in the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the region.
- For ASEAN too, China has always been **a natural and major partner, bilaterally, regionally and internationally.**

- In setting the direction for the future, I wish to **highlight the following points:**
- **First**, we should ensure that the ASEAN-China partnership continues to be **forward-looking**. We should work together to keep exploring new opportunities and strengthen our cooperation in mutually beneficial areas.
- This meeting will be a **good opportunity for us to discuss many important proposals made by China during last year's Summit**, all of which reflect the importance China attaches to ASEAN.
- **Second**, we should ensure that this partnership will **continue to be relevant in the context of the changing strategic landscape and the new challenges that confront us** in the region.
- We **welcome the emergence of China as a major power** committed to the promotion of the peace, stability and prosperity of this region and beyond.
- We **welcome the ongoing reforms** being undertaken by the Chinese Government which will **open up new opportunities** for regional growth and development.
- We also welcome the **commitment by China to support ASEAN Centrality**. And we believe that a **strong, proactive and cohesive ASEAN** will certainly benefit China and provide the anchor for regional peace and stability.
- Together, our **partnership** provides a **strong pillar for regional peace and prosperity** and will become even more important in the years ahead.
- **Third**, as ours is a **mature partnership**, we should have confidence in our ability to **manage any challenges or differences** that may arise from time to time.
- The success of our meeting yesterday on the issue of the South China Sea reflects our **common determination to always keep in mind the bigger picture and manage whatever issues that should emerge between us in a way that will not allow any one issue to define the broader relationship** between ASEAN and China.
- Our **partnership** is **deeply-rooted, multi-faceted and dynamic**, as evident in the wide range of issues on our agenda that we will be taking up today. I am **confident** that **we will have a very productive and successful meeting** today.
- I now give the floor to my Co-chair, His Excellency Vice Minister Liu Zhenmin of China, to deliver his opening remarks.