

Opening Remarks
by
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on the Implementation of the DOC
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His Excellency Vice Minister Liu Zhenmin,
ASEAN Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of my ASEAN colleagues, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to His Excellency Vice Minister Liu and to the members of his delegation.

Thailand is very pleased to have this opportunity to host the 7th SOM on DOC. We hope that the tranquillity of the seas here in Pattaya will give us the right setting for our discussion today.

I can say, on behalf of my ASEAN colleagues, that we cannot emphasize enough the importance of our meetings today and tomorrow.

I think we are here sharing the same objectives. We are committed to the full and effective implementation of the DOC and we are committed to moving forward our official consultations on the COC.

This is because peace and stability in the South China Sea is important to the overall peace and stability in the region.

We recall that since our last meeting in Suzhou, we have made very significant progress.

We agreed in Suzhou that SOM will be the main vehicle for discussions on the COC.

We shared the view that the implementation of the DOC and the consultations on the COC can proceed in tandem.

We assigned the Joint Working Group (JWG) to assist SOM on the consultations on the COC.

We believed that we can and should proceed on the basis of working on the commonalities, drawing upon existing documents that have been agreed upon between ASEAN and China.

And finally, we agreed to report the progress of our work to the PMC and subsequently to the Summit.

Since our meeting in Suzhou, I think we have made further progress.

We just had the meeting of the Joint Working Group in Singapore. At that meeting, a number of important cooperative activities were initiated, such as joint exercises on search and rescue, disaster relief, and the establishment of a hotline of communication.

On the ASEAN side, we believe that we must proceed with the implementation of these cooperative activities and projects.

Here in Pattaya, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that we keep up the momentum we have achieved, continue progress, and more importantly give clear-cut guidance on the way forward.

On the part of ASEAN, we look forward to the early conclusion of the COC and the full and effective implementation of the DOC.

But of course, we are also realistic enough to realise that there are a number of issues that we have to address, but still we must begin substantive discussions on the COC.

We believe that in this process, we must be guided by clear objectives of what the COC is all about and we talked about this at our last meeting.

First, the COC is about promoting mutual confidence and trust.

Second, the COC is about avoiding incidents at sea.

Third, the COC is about managing incidents should they occur.

At the same time, as we work on the COC, it is important for us to implement measures that we have already agreed under the DOC to enhance mutual trust and confidence and create a conducive environment.

To expedite our consultations, we also think that it is important to put in place a clear-cut timetable and programme of work.

So these are our hopes and expectations for this meeting.

We are also expected to be able to report the progress of our work to the PMC and the Summit later this year.

I want to assure you that we look forward to working closely with you and colleagues to ensure fruitful and successful outcomes for the meeting today.

Thank you very much.