

8 October 2018

Dear Premier Li,

On behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and as Chair of ASEAN, I am pleased to extend our most heartfelt congratulations to the Government of the People's Republic of China on the auspicious occasion of the 15th anniversary of the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, which was established on 8 October 2003.

ASEAN and China share a strong, substantial and mutually-beneficial relationship. China was the first ASEAN dialogue partner to establish a strategic partnership with ASEAN, the first to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, and the first to conclude a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with ASEAN. Over the past fifteen years, the ASEAN-China strategic partnership has broadened and deepened significantly across the political-security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars.

Economic ties, which continue to be a central plank in our cooperation, have grown from strength to strength. China has been ASEAN's top trading partner for eight consecutive years. China is also ASEAN's third largest source of Foreign Direct Investment. We realised the ASEAN-China FTA (ACFTA) in 2010 and upgraded it in 2015. The ACFTA has played a significant role in ASEAN's economic integration. ASEAN and China have also worked closely together to expedite negotiations on the Regional

Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and share the same commitment to substantially conclude negotiations by the end of this year. Our people-to-people exchanges have also grown rapidly, with two-way tourist arrivals exceeding 30 million in 2016. To bring our regions even closer, both sides are exploring ways to enhance connectivity through synergies between the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and China's "Belt and Road" Initiative. We are also working towards the full liberalisation of the ASEAN-China Air Transport Agreement.

Both sides have also made strides towards deepening mutual trust, confidence and understanding. ASEAN and China adopted the Framework of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) in 2017, and announced the agreement on a Single Draft COC Negotiating Text earlier this year. Our defence establishments have consistently engaged in dialogue and practical cooperation to enhance mutual trust and confidence, including through the ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise this year. Underlying our close cooperation is a shared belief that a peaceful and stable region serves the interest of both ASEAN and China.

I look forward to the adoption of the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership Vision 2030 statement at the 21st ASEAN-China Summit in November in Singapore. The Statement will chart the strategic direction of our cooperation going forward. We will also mark a successful conclusion to the "ASEAN-China Year of Innovation", which has driven our search for new areas of collaboration such as Fintech, E-Commerce and Smart Cities.

On behalf of ASEAN, I would like to take this opportunity to thank China for its continued support for ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN's community-building efforts. I would also like to thank you for your personal efforts in advancing ASEAN-China relations. I look forward to welcoming you to Singapore this November, and to continue working with ASEAN and Chinese colleagues to bring ASEAN-China relations to greater heights.

Yours sincerely,

LEE HSIEN LOONG

His Excellency Li Keqiang
Premier of the State Council
People's Republic of China