

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF ASEAN MEMBER STATES AND CHINA ON THE FULL AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE CONDUCT OF PARTIES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

We, the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States and the People's Republic of China met in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, on 25 July 2016.

RECOGNISING that maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea region serves the fundamental interests of ASEAN Member States and China ("the Parties") as well as the international community;

REAFFIRMING that the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) is a milestone document that embodies the collective commitment of the Parties to promote peace, stability, mutual trust and confidence in the region, in accordance with the UN Charter and universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);

REAFFIRMING the importance and role of the DOC in maintaining peace and stability in the region;

COMMITTED to the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety and working substantively towards the early adoption of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) based on consensus;

RECALLING the Joint Statement of the 15th ASEAN-China Summit on the 10th Anniversary of the DOC adopted in 2012;

HEREBY state the following:

1. The Parties reaffirm their respect for and commitment to the freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea as provided for by the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.
2. The Parties concerned undertake to resolve their territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force, through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS;

3. The Parties undertake to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability including, among others, refraining from action of inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays, and other features and to handle their differences in a constructive manner.
4. The Parties may explore or undertake cooperative activities, in fields such as navigation safety, search and rescue, marine scientific research, environmental protection, and combating transnational crimes at sea.
5. The Parties encourage other countries to respect the principles contained in the DOC.
6. The Parties concerned reaffirm that the adoption of a code of conduct in the South China Sea would further promote peace and stability in the region and agree to work, on the basis of consensus, towards the eventual attainment of this objective.

.