

# **Declaration on Asia Cooperation**

## ***Hand in Hand for a Better Asia***

We, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other Heads of delegation from 22 member countries of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), namely, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India, the Republic of Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, the State of Kuwait, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Union of Myanmar, the Sultanate of Oman, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of the Philippines, the State of Qatar, the Republic of Singapore, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, gathered in Qingdao, China for the Third ACD Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

We note that the international situation is undergoing complex and profound changes and emphasize that peace, development and cooperation are current international order. We also note that factors adversely affecting peace and development still exist, but maintaining peace and stability, promoting development and prosperity and realising win-win cooperation represent common aspirations among Asian nations.

We acknowledge that economic globalisation and advancement of scientific and technological cooperation have increased the level of integration and interdependence among the Asian nations. We also understand that Asian nations need to work collectively to seize the opportunities and meet various challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

We recognise that Asia, the largest and most populous continent on the globe, boasts of abundant natural, human and cultural resources and stands as one of the most economically dynamic regions in the world and that the rising productivity of most Asian nations is making them more mutually dependent on each other's markets. We also recognise that all these offer vast opportunities for cooperation among Asian nations.

We recognise that diversity is a prominent feature of Asia and understand that the varying levels of development, different economic and social systems and diverse cultural heritages of Asian nations should not be an obstacle to pan-Asian cooperation, but should serve as a driving force for

such cooperation. We firmly believe that Asian nations should preserve their cultural diversity and respect each other's development models and strategies. While recognising differences and seeking common ground, we will move forward hand in hand for a closer cooperation.

We note with pleasure that Asia has been increasingly aware of the importance of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, thriving cooperation of various forms at regional and sub-regional level and multiplying regional trade arrangements. We also note that regional cooperation has greatly contributed to peace and development in Asia.

We value the contribution by regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN plus China, Japan and Republic of Korea (ROK) cooperation (10+3), ASEAN+1 (China, India, Japan, ROK), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC), the Conference of Interaction and Confidence Building Measures (CICA) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), to the enhancement of mutual trust and understanding and the promotion of regional economic cooperation and integration. We recognize that these endeavours have created a network of cooperation and laid a solid foundation for Asia-wide cooperation for the benefit of Asian peoples.

We emphasize the constructive role of ACD as an important link of all sub-regions, building upon Asia's potentials and strengths through supplementing and complementing existing cooperative frameworks. The forum provides a useful platform for dialogue and cooperation among Asian countries, based on its core values of positive thinking, inclusiveness, comfort level, as well as ACD as an informal, incremental and evolving process.

We endorse with satisfaction a number of ACD project activities over the past two years, including poverty alleviation, financial cooperation, tourism, SMEs, biotechnology, IT, energy, e-education, agriculture, strengthening legal infrastructure, standardization and environmental education, which have helped enhance an Asia-wide cooperation and served the fundamental interests of Asian peoples.

We acknowledge that Asia's economic integration is still at an initial stage and its level of cooperation has to be further strengthened. In

promoting regional integration, we believe that Asia must be outward-looking. Asia's prosperity is bound with other regions, based on equal partnership. We also recognise that the ACD is well in a position to play an important role in this regard.

In view of the above, we reaffirm our commitment to basic principles stipulated in the UN Charter, and other universally recognised international norms such as the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. We will make efforts to expand and deepen Asia cooperation in all areas under the principles of equality, reciprocity, mutual benefit and gradual progress and to build a new Asia where lasting peace and prosperity prevails. To this end, we hereby declare the following:

1. To intensify political dialogue and enhance mutual trust. Asian nations should resolve their disputes or discords through dialogue, with a view to preserving peace and security through cooperation. We will enhance cooperation and coordination on international and regional issues and work to create a harmonious and stable environment in the region.
2. To enhance economic cooperation and promote regional integration process. While taking an active part in the new round of WTO negotiations, we will vigorously develop intra-regional trade, promote investment activity for bilateral and regional economic development, complement each other's resources needs, and encourage regional trade arrangements.
3. To promote sustainable development of agriculture and to ensure food security and food safety as well as to promote Asia's balanced development. In view of Asia's predominantly agricultural economy of most developing Asian nations, we will intensify dialogues on agricultural policies and practical agricultural techniques. Asian nations should also encourage cooperation in human resources, agricultural research and development, poverty alleviation, rural development, disaster prevention and post-disaster restoration to further develop their agriculture and rural economy.
4. To promote financial stability, particularly through the development of a sound and solid financial infrastructure. We will seek to implement the *Chiang Mai Declaration* on Asian Bond Market Development adopted by the Second ACD Ministers' Meeting in June 2003, including the future establishment of Asian bond fund which will invest in local currency denominated bonds, strengthen financial

market information sharing, develop capital markets and support efforts to facilitate regional investments.

5. To boost cooperation in Information Technology (IT) and bridge the digital divide within Asia and between Asia and the world. We will endeavour to elevate Asia's overall level of science and technology, cooperate in ensuring cyber and information security and enhance cooperation in the standardisation, R&D and marketing of information and communication technologies, as well as promoting transfer of technology. We will encourage cooperation among telecommunication companies and software developers.
6. To promote energy cooperation that will help sustain the region's economic and social development. We will step up collaboration to ensure security of energy supply at reasonable costs acceptable for both producers and consumers, and with due consideration of the environment. We will, based on Qingdao Initiative, facilitate joint undertakings that will enhance research and development on energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, alternative fuels and energy infrastructure networks such as oil storage systems, regional energy transport and power interconnections and will also improve investment climate and encourage the private sector's participation in the region's energy development.
7. To give full play to Asia's advantage as the cradle of ancient civilizations, facilitate inter-cultural exchanges and advance dialogues among different civilizations. We will take feasible measures to foster cultural exchanges within Asian nations and make these exchanges a stepping stone for increasing Asian culture's influence throughout the world. Asian culture and art events will be promoted to deepen Asian's mutual understanding of each other's culture.
8. To step up tourism cooperation. We will make full use of Asia's diverse and colourful tourism resources and promote Asia's tourism industry in a sustainable and environmentally sound manner and make travel into and within Asia easier and more efficient. We will facilitate the development of each other's tourism and travel facilities, encourage our nationals to visit each other's tourist destinations, and jointly promote Asia's diverse and colourful tourism resources to the rest of the world.
9. To work together to build a green Asia. We will seek to raise awareness of and cooperate on environmental protection concerns

while addressing the legitimate demands of economic and social development, and reinforce cooperation in anti-pollution, forestry protection, water resources utilisation and management, marine eco-system protection, climate change, bio-diversity and environment education in order to strike a proper balance between economic, social development and environmental protection.

10. To strengthen cooperation in public health and improve disease control and prevention. We will endeavour to make full use of existing international frameworks in order to establish a regional disease/epidemic database and emergency medical assistance system, collaborate in laboratory diagnostic capability and capacity and advance the study of traditional medicines. Each country may designate one or more of relevant institutions to coordinate such cooperation.

1. To strengthen media cooperation. With a view to promoting mutual understanding among Asian peoples, we will advocate regular contacts and exchanges among Asian media practitioners and encourage a fair, objective and comprehensive coverage of news or other events in each other's countries. We will facilitate cooperation in media industries so as to make Asia's voice better heard in the world.

12. To enhance exchanges and cooperation among the public, private and academic sectors of Asia. We will encourage the activities of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) and other academic institutions in ACD member countries and jointly draw up a blueprint for future Asia cooperation.

13. To promote a sense of community among Asian people. We will enhance dialogue and understanding through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges with our strong belief that it is ultimately the peoples of Asia who will sow the seeds for peaceful coexistence and mutual prosperity in the region.

It is our conviction that Asia's peace, stability and prosperity depend on concerted endeavours among Asian nations. Asia cooperation based on respect for diversity, tolerance and greater openness will significantly contribute to peace, stability and prosperity of the world.

Adopted on 22 June 2004 in Qingdao, China.