

## **DECLARATION FOR A DECADE OF COASTAL AND MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA (2017-2027)**

**We**, the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN Member States, and the People's Republic of China, on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-China Summit in the Philippines and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) met in Manila, Philippines, on 13 November 2017;

**Recalling** the obligations of Governments under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and relevant international instruments, UN resolutions and other efforts to preserve and protect the coastal and marine environment and resources;

**Further recalling** cooperation to achieve the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal Number 14, Life Below Water, to promote conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources;

**Reaffirming** the regional commitments demonstrated in the Joint Statement of the 19th ASEAN-China Summit to Commemorate the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations (2016) and the Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States and China on the Full and Effective Implementation of the DOC (2016);

**Recognizing** the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2016-2020) and the significant and important progress that ASEAN and China have made towards the implementation of these instruments will contribute to a peaceful, stable, friendly relations and good neighborliness between ASEAN and China;

**Affirming** the commitment of Governments under the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), particularly on undertaking cooperative activities on marine environmental protection;

**Recognizing** that the preservation and sustainable management of the coastal and marine environment is vital to the economic well-being and enhanced quality of life of the peoples of ASEAN Member States and China;

**Noting** that the current environmental situation in the South China Sea requires collective attention and action to protect the marine ecosystem and biodiversity, in particular on vulnerable marine ecosystems and their physical and biogenic structure, including coral reefs, cold water habitats, hydrothermal vents and seamounts, of certain human activities;

**Emphasizing** the need to promote responsible fishing practices, environmentally friendly fishing methods, and combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF), to ensure sustainable fishery resources and achieve food security;

**Noting** that pending a comprehensive and durable settlement of territorial and jurisdictional disputes, the parties concerned may explore or undertake relevant cooperative activities, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the UNCLOS 1982, without prejudice to the positions of the concerned parties to the dispute;

**Noting** that a precautionary and ecosystem-based approach based on the best available science in marine resources management to ensure its rational and sustainable development could be applied as appropriate;

**Noting** that coordinated and cooperative regional efforts are essential for the scientific conservation and management of marine resources and environment, biodiversity, and coastal zone of the ecosystem of the South China Sea;

**Acknowledging** that conservation of endangered and migratory wildlife species warrants cooperation from countries within the region where such species spend any part of their life cycle;

**Reiterating** the need to continue developing and sustaining environmentally-friendly mechanisms to mitigate the effects of climate change and transboundary marine environmental pollution and degradation;

**Recognizing** the significance of the sustainable management and conservation of fresh water eco-systems such as lakes and rivers, wetlands, and adjacent estuaries along coastal areas in the overall health of the marine environment;

**Further recognizing** the importance of protecting the South China Sea as a natural resource base for economic and social development for the present and future generations and recognising the benefits that would be gained from having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and prosperity;

**HEREBY DECLARE THE FOLLOWING:**

1. That **2017-2027** is a **Decade for the Protection of Coastal and Marine Environment in the South China Sea**.
2. That the Governments of the ASEAN Member States and China are committed to meet the aspirations of this Declaration.