



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

PRESS RELEASE

Phnom Penh - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia (MFA.IC) organized the ASEAN-China Seminar on the Role of Youth in Practical Maritime Cooperation in the South China Sea on 15 – 16 December 2017 in Siem Reap province. Over 70 youths and representatives from ASEAN Member States, China and the ASEAN Secretariat attended the Seminar.

This Seminar was convened to strengthen the existing momentum of ASEAN-China youth cooperation, and to provide youth with a platform for dialogue and exchange of their view on practical maritime cooperation in the South China Sea. The deliberation among youths during the Seminar focused on three important topics namely (1) Promoting ASEAN-China Youth Cooperation for Sustainable Development in the South China Sea; (2) Roles of Youth in Exploring Practical Maritime Cooperation: Maritime Environmental Protection and Promotion of Marine Scientific Researches; and (3) People-to-People Connectivity: Building Mutual Trust and Confidence among Youth of ASEAN Member States and China.

At the Opening Ceremony, Ms. He Xiangqi, Deputy Director-General of Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China underscored the significance of youth as they represent the future and hope, and will provide endless impetus in consolidating and deepening friendship among ASEAN Member States and China.

H.E. Mr. Luy David, Secretary of State of the MFA.IC, emphasized that the "Asian Century" will enable ASEAN-China youth to actively contribute to regional socio-economic development, as youths are symbol of hope. For common aspirations in the South China Sea to be realized, collective efforts from every stakeholder in the society and youths are required. These actions underlie the real spirit of cooperation and partnership that must take root among youths, the core forces of development in the future. It was expected that youthful vigour and fresh insights of youth from the Seminar could assist in elucidating new and effective means for practical maritime cooperation in order to address emerging challenges in the South China Sea as a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation. These contributions would also further enhance the Strategic Dialogue Partnership of ASEAN and China.

The Seminar produced key suggestions and recommendations which include i) to strengthen regional cooperation, especially with regard to the sharing of information, technology, best practices, and experiences on marine environmental protection; ii) to establish the relevance and applicability of specific frameworks such as the concept of blue economy, marine protected areas (MPAs) and marine innovation index; iii) to promote people-to-people connectivity through education, cultural exchange, social activities and sustainable tourism practices; and iv) to finance youth practical maritime cooperation projects by capitalizing on available funds but not limited to Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Silk Road Fund and 21st Maritime Silk Road. Moreover, all youth representatives agreed that mutual trust and maritime cooperation are intertwined and can be pushed forward for cooperation over common interests to attain win-win cooperation.

H.E. Mr. Kan Pharidh, Under-Secretary of State of the MFA.IC, stressed in his Closing Remarks the importance of better trust and confidence between ASEAN Member States and China that both sides need to create synergy and make effective efforts to narrow the misperception gap. Further cooperation should be extended towards the grass-roots level, people-to-people connectivity, and especially among youths. He also reminded the Seminar that in terms of a sustainable marine economic development, it is imperative that the opportunities should be encouraged and be given to youths to take part in marine environment protection. He concluded that this Seminar offered valuable insights and concrete suggestions from the youth and helped refine the cooperation spirit.

The Summary and key recommendations of this Seminar will later be submitted to the 23th ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in South China Sea (JWG-DOC) in February 2018 in Viet Nam. *g.f*

Phnom Penh, 19 December 2017

