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CHAIR’S STATEMENT

2019 ASEAN-ROK Think Tank Strategic Dialogue

*New Southern Policy and the Future of ASEAN-ROK Relations*

Korea National Diplomatic Academy

October 25, 2019, Seoul, Korea

1. Introduction

Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA) hosted 2019 ASEAN-ROK Think Tank Strategic Dialogue under the theme of *New Southern Policy and the Future of ASEAN-ROK Relations*, on 25 October 2019 in Seoul, Korea. Dr. Joon Hyung Kim, Chancellor of KNDA, chaired the Dialogue. Representatives from think tanks in 10 ASEAN member countries attended the Dialogue: Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) of Lao PDR, Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS Malaysia) of Malaysia, Myanmar Institute for Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) of Myanmar, Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) of Brunei Darussalam, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV) of Vietnam, The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute) of Singapore, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS Indonesia) of Indonesia, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) of Cambodia, Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS Thailand) of Thailand, and Stratbase ADR Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ADRi) of the Philippines.

Dr. Joon Hyung Kim as the Chair of the Dialogue opened the Dialogue and maintained that the Dialogue is organized in order to introduce an exchange and communication mechanism at track II level among major foreign policy think-tanks between ROK and ASEAN on a regular basis, to enhance mutual understanding of ROK and ASEAN on the current and future issues of common concern and interests in the broader context of political, security and economic developments in the region, and to provide policy suggestions and recommendations that would contribute to enhancing ASEAN-ROK strategic partnership as well as strengthening connectivity between the ROK’s New Southern Policy (NSP) and ASEAN Community building.

The Dialogue was structured thematically into four sessions: Session 1: 2019 Commemorative Summit and the Future of ROK-ASEAN Relations, Session 2: ROK-ASEAN Cooperation toward Regional Prosperity and Peace, Session 3: Enhancing People-Centered Cooperation and Public Diplomacy, and Session 4: Joint Policy Recommendations and Announcement of Chair’s Statement.

1. 2019 Commemorative Summit and the future of ROK-ASEAN relations

The Dialogue noted that 2019 marks an important milestone in ASEAN-ROK relations with 30 years of friendship, cooperation, and partnership. The 2019 Commemorative Summit is significant not only as a symbolic celebration of 30 years of ties, but also as an important diplomatic milestone for both ASEAN and ROK to build new momentum to work toward sustainable ASEAN-ROK relations for another 30 years to come.

The Dialogue noted that ROK’s new initiative toward ASEAN, New Southern Policy, which was announced by President Moon in 2017, is timely and instrumental for further strengthening and deepening ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership based on the three pillars of “People, Prosperity, and Peace.” ASEAN welcome the ROK government’s commitment towards strengthening cooperation in the region under the NSP.

The Dialogue highlighted the significance of the 2019 Commemorative Summit as follows: first, the 2019 Commemorative Summit will be an occasion to gain momentum and harness the political will of the leaders to further strengthen ASEAN-ROK cooperation; second, the Summit will mark a new level of maturity and a milestone of ASEAN-ROK relations; third, the Summit will not only take stock three decades of ASEAN-ROK relations, but also set future directions for the Strategic Partnership between the two sides in the next 5-10 years.

1. ROK-ASEAN cooperation toward regional prosperity and peace

The Dialogue acknowledged that ASEAN-Korea Strategic Partnership has immensely contributed to regional peace, stability and prosperity and that ASEAN-ROK political and security cooperation has been strengthened through ASEAN-led regional processes and arrangements such as ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)-Plus, and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

The Dialogue noted that there are strong elements of convergence in the interests, priorities of the two sides as well as challenges they face. ROK’s active support for ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN Way in the regional affairs contributes to the effectiveness of ASEAN regional mechanisms as well as ASEAN Community building efforts, and at the same time, ASEAN’s role in the Korean Peninsula issues, exemplified in the US-DPRK summit hosted by Singapore and Vietnam, also demonstrates its strong commitment to peace and stability in the area.

The Dialogue noted that changes in global and regional security landscape, in particular intensification of strategic competition and rivalry between the US and China and resulting shifts in the balance of power and policy adjustments by the two major powers, have all complicated the challenges facing regional countries like ASEAN and ROK.

In this context, the Dialogue put an emphasis on the importance and imperative of cooperation between ASEAN and ROK: to strengthen mutual trust and to foster sustained and resilient relations which can help the two sides weather the uncertainty brought about by major powers’ competition and rivalry; to promote high-quality, innovative cooperation for economic prosperity and sustainable development; and to strengthen the regional multilateral institutions and arrangements, including the ASEAN-led mechanisms, and to enhance their roles in the promotion of regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

The Dialogue noted that NSP, which aspires to promote an open, transparent, and inclusive regional rules-based order in the region, has strong resonance with ASEAN Community building efforts and the core elements of the recently adopted ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The two sides, therefore, share strong elements of convergence in the interest in maintaining regional peace, prosperity and stability.

The Dialogue noted that ROK should support ASEAN to play more active role as a broker for the peace process in the Korea Peninsula. ASEAN could play a stabilizing role in the Korean Peninsula by providing an inclusive, multilateral forum that could be seen as honest broker.

The Dialogue noted that Mekong sub-region is one important cornerstone in ROK’s active role in the region. Policy coordination between ROK-ASEAN as well as ROK and other stakeholders in Mekong cooperation will help narrow developmental gaps within ASEAN member countries. ROK can prioritize areas where it has knowledge and advantages such as trade and investment, capacity building, human resource development, economic regulation and management, infrastructure development, and information technology.

1. Enhancement of people-centered cooperation and public diplomacy

The Dialogue noted that ASEAN-ROK socio-cultural cooperation has strengthened through an emphasis on people-to-people exchange, a key pillar of ASEAN-ROK relations. Various projects have promoted closer cultural cooperation and people-to-people ties, such as ASEAN-Korea Youth Exchange, ASEAN-ROK Media People Exchanges Programme, and ASEAN Culture House. ASEAN Leaders welcomed the ROK’s commitment to increase two-way people-to-people exchanges to 15 million by 2020.

The Dialogue urged that there needs to be greater awareness and understanding between ASEAN and ROK, and that public diplomacy, in this regard, can play an important role. Outreach programs have to take place targeting audiences at all levels, i.e., media, academics, opinion-leaders on the one hand and youths, artists, students and the general public on the other. Efforts need to be made, such as providing the necessary platform, or creating a positive environment. More attention should be given to the ASEAN residents in Korea, and Korean residents in ASEAN who can play a greater role in connecting the peoples and bridging the two regions.

1. Joint policy recommendations

The Dialogue emphasized that the Leaders at the Summit should set a concrete roadmap and a clear timeline for identifying and implementing impactful projects in order to advance trade and investment cooperation, to build a closer community between ASEAN and ROK, and to enhance cooperation in security and defence

The Dialogue proposed priorities of the Summit as follows: first, the Leaders should reiterate joint commitment to further deepening of ASEAN-ROK relations, as well as to regional and global peace, stability and prosperity; second, the Leaders should review ASEAN-ROK relations over the last 30 years both in terms of accomplishments and limitations in the implementation of the Plan of Action for the 2016- 2020 period; third, the Leaders should define key objectives and future directions of ASEAN-ROK relations, in particular, by laying a roadmap for the Plan of Action in 2021-2025; fourth, the Leaders should set a common long-term vision of ASEAN-ROK relations between ASEAN countries and ROK.

Some of the important policy recommendations that the Dialogue put forth to the Leaders of 2019 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit are as follows:

Peace:

* To garner mutual support in political and security issues which are of interest of ASEAN and ROK and strive to form a common voice at multilateral forums;
* To reiterate support for an inclusive, open and transparent international rules-based order based on respect for international law and sovereignty as well as the principles of Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.
* To reiterate ROK’s support ASEAN Centrality and endorsement of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).
* To widen the scope of exchanges and collaboration in the realm of strategy and security through regular strategic/security dialogues at all levels and tracks, including academic ones
* To consider new initiatives such as establishment of peace parks in ASEAN countries and ROK, collaboration in de-mining action, defense capacity building and intelligence sharing between and among defense forces of ROK and ASEAN countries.

Prosperity:

* To reiterate support for free trade and economic liberalization, and commitment to realizing substantive and expeditious conclusion to the negotiations to establish the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
* To explore opportunities for expansion of trade relations and diversify markets for ROK’s goods in ASEAN countries based on the complementary nature of economic structure between ASEAN and ROK.
* To mutually facilitate access for ASEAN and ROK investors to the respective markets, and cooperate in innovative sectors, research and development (R&D), and promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
* To expand cooperation in information-communication technology (ICT) with a vision of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and cyber security, and conduct joint connectivity projects in the framework of ROK’s Global Infrastructure Fund and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC).
* To advance ROK’s initiatives on Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund, particularly in the areas of water resource management, energy, environment and climate change, etc.
* To establish mechanism for sharing knowledge and expertise in urban planning for realization of ASEAN Smart Cities Network.

People:

* To establish wide-ranging channels for people-to-people relations and facilitate exchanges through tourism, business and labor cooperation.
* To facilitate exchanges on social policies and best-practice sharing between governmental agencies of ASEAN countries and ROK on a wide range of areas such as healthcare, education, environment, youth, gender issues, aging population, disaster relief, among others.
* To enhance knowledge-oriented exchanges by organizing ASEAN-ROK people-to-people networks in various areas, promoting academic activities, providing resources for Korean studies and ASEAN studies in ROK and ASEAN through scholarships and training programs, joint research projects and publications.
* To collaborate in human resource development for the age of Industrial Revolution 4.0., and to promote youth exchanges and dialogues among next–generation experts and leaders.

1. Next Step

The Dialogue acknowledged that ASEAN-ROK Think Tank Strategic Dialogue could become an important platform to serve as an exchange and communication mechanism at track II level between ASEAN and ROK and to provide policy suggestions and recommendations that would contribute to enhancing ASEAN-ROK strategic partnership

The Dialogue agreed that the participating institutions in ASEAN and ROK need to develop the Dialogue to become a regular event rested on a rotating basis in the future, and welcomed and appreciated the willingness of Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam to host the Dialogue in 2020.

Participating institutions expressed appreciation that KNDA initiated and hosted the Dialogue this year in Seoul, Korea.

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