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PRIME NEWS

'Resolve disputes peacefully'

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VOICE OF ACCORD: Asean framework Code of Conduct to form basis for leaders to find solution to maritime disputes

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DATUK Seri Najib Razak yesterday joined other Asean leaders in discussing the overlapping claims of the South China Sea, which saw all of them agreeing that a framework on the Code of Conduct (COC) for the maritime disputed waters be finalised before China is engaged.

Malaysia, in its intervention, stated its position that territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the waters be resolved peacefully through existing mechanisms as provided for under the international law.

Speaking to journalists after the Asean leaders' retreat at the end of the two-day Asean Summit which started on Tuesday, Najib said the COC, as an Asean framework, could form the basis for leaders to find a solution to the disputes.

"We took into consideration that China signed the DOC (Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea) 10 years ago, but Asean is still finalising the details of the COC.

"China has agreed to discuss with Asean first. This is positive as we are looking for a peaceful resolution to overcome the disputes. Once we settle within Asean, we will then discuss with China," Najib added.

Reiterating the importance of DOC as a milestone document signed between China and Asean, the leaders also reaffirmed their strong commitment to work closely with China to ensure effective and full implementation of the DOC.

The COC is envisioned to be a

legally binding document aimed at preventing small incidents in the South China Sea from escalating into bigger conflicts that could draw in world powers, like the United States.

Asean member countries Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, along with non-members China and Taiwan, have overlapping claims in the South China Sea, a conduit for more than one-third of the world's seaborne trade and half its traffic in oil and gas.

On the exchange of views on regional and international issues, Najib said the leaders welcomed the successful holding of the recently-concluded by-elections in Myanmar.

"The leaders reaffirmed their full support for the Myanmar government's on-going effort in the democratisation and political reconciliation process and reiterated their calls for the international community to recognise and support the developments in Myanmar.

"They also urged the international community to lift the economic sanctions imposed on Myanmar and agreed for the calls to be reflected in the chairman's statement of the 20th Asean Summit."

Najib and other leaders also expressed support for Myanmar to hold the Asean chairmanship in 2014.

"Malaysia, in its intervention, highlighted that the current development in Myanmar clearly showed the Asean approach is producing positive results."

This would be conveyed to the United Kingdom prime minister who will be visiting Malaysia on April 12.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking to journalists after the Asean leaders' retreat at the end of the two-day Asean Summit in Cambodia yesterday. With him is **Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman**. Bernama pic

On the situation in the Korean Peninsula, Najib said the leaders reaffirmed their support for all efforts to denuclearise the country in a peaceful manner.

"They urged all parties concerned to exercise self-restraint and not undertake any steps that could lead to escalation of tensions."

Najib also said the leaders called on all parties to respect the United

Nations Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874 and called for the early resumption of the six-party talks for peace, security and stability in the Korean Peninsula.

"All parties should explore all possibilities to engage in a peaceful dialogue which would lead to creating an atmosphere of trust and confidence among all parties involved."

He said leaders strongly urged all

parties in the peninsula to avoid taking any provocative actions, because armed conflict would bring wide-ranging implications, not only to the North-East Asia region, but also to the rest of the world.

The leaders also adopted a joint statement on the sixth summit of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand growth triangle (IMI-GT) and endorsed the Implementation Blueprint for 2012 to 2016.