

**Malaysia Working Closely With ASEAN On DOC, COC At Ninth ASEAN-China SOM Discussion
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TIANJIN, July 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia are working closely with other ASEAN countries on discussions to implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in South China Sea (DOC) and the formation of the Conduct in South China Sea (COC) here today, said Foreign Ministry Secretary-general Datuk Othman Hashim.

"We are deliberating on what Asean and China had achieved so far, what need to be done for the future and for the (48th ASEAN Foreign Ministers') meeting in August," he told Malaysian journalists after attending the ninth Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) on the Implementation of the DOC here, Wednesday.

Describing the meeting as a very constructive one and being held in a good atmosphere, he said both Asean and China have been working hard and making progress on the implementation of DOC as well as the formation of COC.

"But we must keep on the momentum," he said, reiterating Malaysia has been working together with other ASEAN countries. The suggestions are not (made) by us, this is not only for Malaysia, but for ASEAN," Othman, who led a Malaysian delegation said when asked what Malaysia had suggested during the meeting.

Today's meeting was co-chaired by China's Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin and Thailand's Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Noppadon Theppitak. Meanwhile, Liu described the meeting as a fruitful one and the delegations had discussed the implementation of DOC and the formation of COC in a candid and friendly atmosphere.

Since ASEAN-China strategic partnership had been established for 12 years and 2016 would mark the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, he expressed confidence that the relations between China and ASEAN would continue growing over the years, regardless of trade, investment, maritime, education or cultural industries.

Describing ASEAN as China's friendly neighbour, Liu said the South China Sea disputes would not affect both sides' cooperation as certain mechanism, including the establishment of DOC was aimed to solve the South China Sea issue.

"We have the confidence and are able to jointly maintain peace and stability, as well as protect the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea with ASEAN members," he said.

He believed the current challenges in the South China Sea would be temporary and both sides possessed bright prospects for a long term cooperation.

Calling the recent dispute over maritime rights and reefs in South China Sea as not a dispute between China and ASEAN, Liu reiterated China resolutely opposed the

intervention of certain "unnecessary nations" in the South China Sea issue, as well as countries which criticised China's action in the disputed waters.

Earlier, it was reported that Japan would consider joining its ally, the United States in conducting patrols in South China Sea.

"Some difficulty was created by external factors, but I have reminded all parties to not worry because we have confidence of solving the current issue," he added.

Noppadon pointed out that ASEAN and China need to double their efforts to enhance mutual trust and confidence in order to achieve a more robust ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership.

"Through our common determination and good faith, we can, and must turn obstacles into opportunities, by committing to the full and effective implementation of DOC, in tandem with the COC consultations," he added.

The 10 ASEAN member nations, comprising Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, signed the DOC with China in 2002 to maintain peace and stability in South China Sea.

China and several ASEAN countries, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei have overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea and China has always preferred to solve the disputes through direct and bilateral negotiations with each of the claimant states.

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