

ASEAN, China To Proceed To Next Level Of Negotiations On Establishment Of CoC - Anifah Aman
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 31 (Bernama) -- ASEAN and China have agreed to proceed to the next stage of negotiations towards the establishment of the Code of Conduct (CoC) for the South China Sea territorial disputes.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said ASEAN and China's senior officials who met recently had also agreed to negotiate on the framework, structure, elements as well as address difficult and complicated issues relating to the CoC.

"This is an important progress with regard to the CoC," he told reporters at the 48th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM) media briefing at the Putra World Trade Centre, here today.

He said the meeting had also considered several proposals to address rising tensions among claimant countries, and the need to operationalise relevant paragraphs of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC).

Anifah said: "While we proceed with the implementation of the DoC and work expeditiously towards the establishment of the CoC, recent developments have raised tension and eroded trust and confidence among parties.

These developments, he said, must be addressed to ensure that peace, stability and security in the South China Sea were not adversely affected.

He alluded to a particular paragraph in the DoC which calls for self-restraint in the conduct of activities that may complicate or escalate tensions.

Other proposals put forward at the meeting held in Tianjin, China on July 29 included reciprocal freezing of all provocative activities and clarification of claims in accordance with international law, he added.

"In this connection, I would like to say that it's imperative that all parties handle their differences peacefully and constructively.

"At the end of the day, what we want is a lasting peace, stability and security in the South China Sea," he noted.

Anifah stressed that it was important that the South China Sea remained a sea of peace and prosperity, while any developments towards the possibility of increasing militarisation must be avoided.

On the 48th AMM, Anifah said a total of 27 countries would be involved in the series of

meetings from tomorrow until Aug 6.

Apart from the AMM, other meetings scheduled to take place at PWTC are the Post Ministerial Conference Session (PMC) with ASEAN dialogue partners, 16th ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers Meeting, 5th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the 22nd ASEAN Regional Forum.

"During the 48th AMM's plenary session, the ministers will discuss mainly the establishment of the ASEAN Community and progress on ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision.

"During the retreat, the ministers will exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual concern, including regional architecture and ASEAN's external relations," he said.

He said the PMC would discuss mainly the current status of the dialogue relations and its future direction as well as international and regional issues.

On the 16th ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers Meeting with China, Japan and South Korea, Anifah said focus would be on various areas of cooperation between the 13 countries, including progress towards the conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement and the collaboration on projects under the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity.

He added that this year's 5th East Asia Summit (EAS) Foreign Ministers' Meeting, would see the full participation of the foreign ministers of all 18 countries involved.

This year, he said, marked the 10th anniversary of the EAS that was established at Malaysia's behest during our chairmanship in 2005.

"Taking advantage of the occasion, Malaysia is spearheading discussions on strengthening the EAS and making it even more effective going forward," he said.

Aside from the meetings, the ASEAN foreign ministers are scheduled to call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on Aug 4.

The 48th AMM will be preceded by the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting (ASEAN SOM) and the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (ASEAN CPR).

A joint communique would be issued at the end of the 48th AMM, Anifah said, adding that the foreign ministers of Norway and Turkey had been invited to attend the opening and closing sessions of the AMM as guests of Malaysia, the current chair of ASEAN.

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