

Chairman's Statement
14th Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Ministerial Meeting
9 - 10 March 2016, Bangkok, Kingdom of Thailand

The Government of the Kingdom of Thailand hosted the 14th Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Ministerial Meeting, with the theme “ACD – The Way Forward”, on 9 - 10 March 2016 in Bangkok. The Meeting was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

The Meeting was attended by Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other Heads of Delegation of the Member States of the ACD, namely, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; the Kingdom of Bahrain; the People's Republic of Bangladesh; the Kingdom of Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam; the Kingdom of Cambodia; the People's Republic of China; the Republic of India; the Republic of Indonesia; the Islamic Republic of Iran; Japan; the Republic of Kazakhstan; the Republic of Korea; the State of Kuwait; the Kyrgyz Republic; the Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Mongolia; the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; Nepal; the Sultanate of Oman; the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; the Republic of the Philippines; the State of Qatar; the Russian Federation; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the Republic of Singapore; the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; the Republic of Tajikistan; the Kingdom of Thailand; the Republic of Turkey; the United Arab Emirates; the Republic of Uzbekistan; and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

The Meeting was opened by His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.), Prime Minister of Thailand, who delivered an inaugural statement reiterating Thailand's commitment to the role of the ACD Chair and Coordinator as part of the country's aspirations to be a constructive player and a bridge builder in regional and global affairs such as 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He also reiterated the enormous potential of the ACD in enhancing pan-Asian cooperation and hoped that the 14th ACD Ministerial Meeting will build a new momentum for the ACD, charting a course towards a successful 2nd ACD Summit in Bangkok that delivers genuine benefits for the people of Asia.

In his welcoming remarks, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand highlighted the importance of reinvigorating the ACD while remaining focused on combining the diverse strengths of ACD Member States which was a collective determination from the very beginning. He proposed that ACD Member States together develop a renewed common vision that encapsulates Asia's shared economic and social aspirations, set against the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, he emphasized the need to reinforce and refocus the ACD's Core Elements in the lead up to Thailand's hosting of the 2nd ACD Summit and beyond.

The ACD Ministers welcomed Nepal as the 34th Member State of the ACD and expressed confidence that Nepal's addition to the ACD would add value, as well as boost the international credibility of the ACD as the most diverse dialogue of the Asian region.

The Ministers thereafter held a retreat in a friendly atmosphere that encouraged dynamic interaction among them. Developments and challenges facing the ACD process were discussed emerging with a clear determination to reengage and combine the strengths of ACD Member States once again to recharge the ACD.

Outcomes of Ministers' Retreat

1. The ACD Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the ACD and its original guiding principles as a top-down, continuously evolving forum in which ACD Leaders and Ministers could gather informally to exchange ideas and experiences on pan-Asian cooperation, while respecting the comfort level among participants. The ACD Ministers were of the view that the ACD must also retain its core values in order to complement other existing mechanisms.

2. The ACD Ministers adopted the theme “ACD – The Way Forward” as guidance and discussed the proposed four interrelated elements, which are: (i) Asian community building; (ii) regional economic integration and multidimensional connectivity; (iii) inclusive and sustainable development; and, (iv) ACD mechanism enhancement.

3. With regard to building an Asian community as a region of progress and shared prosperity, underpinned by inclusive and sustainable development, the ACD Ministers decided in principle to work on the draft concept paper on ACD Vision for Asia Cooperation 2030 with the objective to arrive at a draft ACD Vision to be endorsed at the 2nd ACD Summit.

4. The ACD Ministers were of the view that further elaboration on the draft Road Map for ACD Regional Connectivity is needed so that it could be utilized to guide and suggest connectivity projects that are feasible and can be jointly implemented by ACD Member States. This would enhance both the hardware and software connectivity of the region in anticipation of a fast growing Asian economy at the center of the global economy.

5. The Dialogue reiterated the significance of promoting inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and was determined to advance the sharing of knowledge, science, technology and innovation that are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. In this connection, Thailand shared the “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP)” with participants as one of the home grown approaches to attaining sustainable development.

6. The ACD Ministers supported the proposal to enhance the ACD mechanisms by consolidating the ACD 20 areas of cooperation into the following 6 priority pillars: (i) Connectivity; (ii) Science, Technology and Innovation; (iii) Education and Human Resource Development; (iv) Interrelation of Food, Energy and Water Security; (v) Culture and Tourism; and, (vi) Promoting Approaches to Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

7. The ACD Ministers extended their appreciation to the State of Kuwait for supporting the operation of the ACD Provisional Secretariat. The ad hoc financial support of other Member States on voluntary basis was also appreciated. The meeting expressed appreciation to the State of Kuwait and acknowledged the circulated information regarding Kuwait's support in upgrading from a provisional to a permanent secretariat and to continue to support personnel cost and administrative expenses of the permanent secretariat. The ACD Ministers also decided to revitalize the High-level Study Group and mandated it to study

and report on the mechanism of the permanent secretariat to all ACD leaders for their consideration at the 2nd ACD Summit for approval.

8. The ACD Ministers took note of the proposal by the State of Kuwait for the mobilization of USD 2 billion for the establishment of the ACD Development Fund. The ACD Ministers deeply appreciate Kuwait's pledge of USD 300 million for initial contribution and invite further pledges of voluntary contribution from the Member States. The ACD Ministers called for experts to meet and discuss the establishment, options, mechanism and structure of the proposed fund.

9. The ACD Ministers affirmed that the role of the private sector and academia in the ACD are crucial for inclusive cooperation of the ACD. They took note of the Provisional Secretariat's proposal to establish an ACD Business Forum and expand academic cooperation in order to create new ACD business networks and enhance the capacity of education, the knowledge-based economy, innovation and creativity in Asia.

9.1 The Meeting supported Thailand's proposal to substantiate the ACD's further path through a platform of essential businesses in the same sector/cluster, including businesses that are complementary to each other in similar value chain across ACD countries.

9.2 The Meeting took note of the upcoming ACD Business Conference & Young Entrepreneur Innovation Summit on 17-18 May 2016 in Fuzhou, The People's Republic of China. In this connection, the Secretary General urged ACD Member States to send representatives to participate in the said meeting.

9.3 The ACD Ministers acknowledged with appreciation the co-hosting of the ACD High-Level Meeting on Asia Academic Cooperation by Siam University and Asia e-University. They also agreed with the proposal to establish the ACD University Network (ACD-UN) and the ACD University Network Coordination Committee (ACD-UNCC). The Meeting urged Secretary General to continue working with ACD-UNCC to finalize Asia Credit Transfer System.

10. The ACD Ministers appreciated and thanked the Government of the United Arab Emirates for its generous offer to chair the ACD for the term 2016 – 2017 and to host the 15th ACD Ministerial Meeting on "Abu Dhabi, Capital of Sustainable Energy" during January 2017. The Chairmanship will be passed on to the U.A.E. during the ACD Foreign Minister's Breakfast Meeting on the side lines of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2016.

11. The ACD Ministers expressed their appreciation for the important institutional support role of the Secretary General of the ACD Provisional Secretariat and his staff.

12. The ACD Ministers extended their gratitude to Thailand as ACD Chair and Coordinator for hosting the 14th ACD Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok. They also welcomed Thailand's proposal to host the 2nd ACD Summit tentatively scheduled for October 2016 in Bangkok.

Bangkok, Thailand
10 March 2016