

(Translation)

Be a Trustworthy and Reliable Partner for the Asian Peoples

--Speech by Premier Wen Jiabao of China at the Opening Ceremony of the 4th Foreign Ministers' Meeting of Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)

6 April 2005

Respected Prime Minister Aziz,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to attend the opening ceremony of the 4th ACD Foreign Ministers' Meeting at the invitation of Prime Minister Aziz. Asian Foreign Ministers have this annual meeting to exchange views and talk candidly, which is important for enhancing mutual understanding and Asian cooperation. On behalf of the Chinese Government, I would like to warmly congratulate the meeting and wish it a complete success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Asia has a long history with splendid cultures. Our ancestors were industrious and talented, making Asia the home of the early Chinese, Indian and Babylonian civilizations. For centuries, Asia led the world in agriculture, handicraft, water conservancy, medicine, mathematics and astronomy, making a tremendous contribution to human progress.

Asia went through untold tribulations yet showed a stunning resilience. Many Asian peoples have in their past suffered from aggression and ravage by the colonialism and imperialism, and they have won liberation and independence only after long and arduous struggles. The Asian peoples know better how precious peace is.

Asia says "No" to backwardness and presses ahead in development. Since the beginning of the second half of the last century, many Asian countries have vigorously explored development paths suitable to their national conditions, resulting in many newly industrialized countries rising to prosperity. Asia has become the world's fastest growing and most dynamic region economically.

Coming into the 21st century, Asia remains a dynamic region, facing a

historical opportunity of rejuvenation and development generally. The relaxed international situation provides Asia with a favorable external environment and its rich natural and human resources and broad market give Asia an incomparable advantage for sustained economic growth. Institutional innovation, economic restructuring and technological leapfrogging in many countries provide Asian economies with a powerful driving force for development. Regional cooperation with unique Asian characteristics is well on the upswing, which promises to upgrade Asian competitiveness as a whole.

Notwithstanding the promise it holds out, Asia is a very complicated region in the world today. There are problems left over by history, such as territorial, ethnic and religious disputes. There are also hot-spot issues, uneven economic development, terrorism, transnational crime, environment degradation, spread of infectious diseases and other new problems. The existence and interweaving of all these problems have created a serious impediment to Asia's development.

In the face of the opportunities and challenges, we the Asian countries should take up our historic responsibility and renew our joint commitment to a new Asia with peace, stability, cooperation and development.

Asia needs peace. Peace is the precondition and guarantee for well-being and prosperity. Warfares or conflicts not only cause agony and suffering to the people but waste the time and opportunity for national development. Mutual respect, dialogue on an equal footing, friendly consultation and mutual understanding and accommodation, these are rational choices when it comes to resolving disputes and conflicts. We must spare no efforts to cultivate in Asia a regional environment of peace with mutual trust and lasting stability.

Asia needs stability. Domestic stability is essential to all Asian countries. The affairs of a country should be decided by the people of that country. The international community should do more to help the country and the region to maintain its stability and give greater attention and assistance to the economically less developed countries. Developing countries in Asia have a pressing need to develop their economies, shake off poverty and backwardness, narrow the wealth gap and improve democracy and legal system so as to realize lasting stability at home.

Asia needs cooperation. Regional cooperation is all the more

important given the backdrop of the trend of economic globalization. The diversity in Asia provides ample space for inter-state cooperation. We should focus on trade and economic cooperation while moving forward mutually beneficial cooperation across the board. In such key areas as energy exploration, environmental protection, resource utilization and financial dialogue, we should establish and improve cooperation mechanisms and raise the level of cooperation steadily. We should move ahead with regional free trade arrangements step by step, properly address trade frictions and work hard to bring about a new cooperation pattern characterized by mutual complementarity, diversity and openness.

Asia needs development. Most Asian countries are underdeveloped, with the combined poor population making up two thirds of the world's total. To accelerate economic development and social progress is the strong desire of the Asian peoples and also a major task before all Asian countries. If Asia succeeds in achieving development and improving the living standards of its peoples, this is, in itself, a monumental contribution to the whole world. A truly Asian century will never materialize unless Asia develops as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China is a member of Asia. The Chinese people, like other Asian peoples, love peace, cherish stability, seek cooperation and commit to development. After years of probing forward, we have already found a development path suited to China's national conditions. It is a path of modernization with Chinese characteristics, a path of peaceful development.

By sticking to domestic reforms, removing the institutional barriers to productive forces and establishing a market economy system, we have succeeded in bringing out the maximum enthusiasm and creativity in the Chinese people. By sticking to opening up, participating in international economic cooperation and absorbing the achievements of new revolution in world science and technology, we have succeeded in upgrading the level of industrialization at home and closing the gap with the developed countries. In coping with the big challenges in resources and environment, China has made positive progress by mainly relying on its own efforts, while engaging in mutually beneficial cooperation with others, thus not causing trouble to others. And by adhering to the independent foreign policy of peace and strengthening good-neighborliness and friendship with other countries, we have

succeeded in securing an external environment favorable to our domestic development. The path of peaceful development is determined, essentially, by the objective requirement of our modernization drive. Following such a path over the past 20 years and more has not only enabled us to achieve development, but also generated opportunities to other Asian countries while promoting peace and development around the world.

It is with sincerity and firmness that China adheres to the path of peaceful development. No matter how international climate might change, the Chinese people will always be a trustworthy and reliable partner for the Asian peoples. Some people are worried that a stronger and more developed China will pose a threat to other countries. Such a worry is completely misplaced for the following reasons:

-----First, we will continue to concentrate ourselves on addressing domestic concerns. China is still a developing country with a per capita GDP slightly over US\$1,000, ranking well behind the 100th place in the world. We still have a very long way to go before China is modernized. Even if we become stronger and more developed, we will not stand in the way of others, still less become a threat to others. China will never seek hegemony!

-----Second, we will continue to broaden and deepen our economic cooperation with other Asian countries. Countries, large or small, rich or poor, are all our equal partners, and mutual benefit and win-win results are the goal we are dedicated to. China supports the role of Asia-based regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms and works hard to enhance political trust, deepen trade and economic cooperation, expand cultural exchanges, and strengthen security dialogue with other Asian countries, with a view to making greater contribution to Asian cooperation in all fields.

-----Third, we will continue to appropriately handle the issues left over by history. Adhering to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and stepping up dialogue and consultation contribute to removing sticking points, increasing common understanding, and arriving at a proper settlement of the issues left over by history. Through consultations on an equal footing, mutual understanding and mutual accommodation, China has resolved the land boundary issue, which is left over by history, with most of its neighbors. We have reached agreement with some countries on the issue of having joint development in the South China Sea in accordance with the principle of shelving differences and

going in for joint development. The Chinese Government will unswervingly pursue its policy of building good-neighborly relationships and partnerships with its neighbors and make solid efforts to improve and develop the friendly relations with other Asian countries.

-----Fourth, we will continue to play a constructive role in regional affairs. China is a responsible country, having done its share in fending off the Asian financial crisis, combating the SARS epidemic and providing relief in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami. In the future, we will continue to uphold justice, champion fairness and protect the rights and interests of developing countries. With respect to maintaining economic security and combating major natural disasters, we will, as always, give our support and assistance. China's assistance to other countries to the best of its ability is sincere and selfless, with no conditions attached.

-----Fifth, we will continue to support Asia in keeping its door open to the outside world. Our successful development has benefited from our policy of opening up. This is why we always believe that Asia should be open to the outside world while striving for development. Asian cooperation is not exclusive, nor is it targeted against any third party. China wishes to join the rest of Asia in welcoming the participation of all countries and organizations in the world in Asia's development and their positive roles in this process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 21st century sets the stage for Asia to accomplish great deeds. Asia's expectation hinges on its peace, stability, cooperation and development. Such a promising goal requires all of us the Asian countries to make tireless efforts. Let us work together with one heart to give Asia a still better future it deserves!

Thank you.