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China vows to make South China Sea safe

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China expects friendly cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to make the South China Sea safe, a Foreign Ministry official said Thursday.

Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin made the remarks during an international seminar on implementing the Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and maintaining the navigational freedom and security of the sea.

The seminar was held from Dec. 14 to 15 in Haikou, capital of Hainan province.

"Politically mutual trust and pragmatic cooperation have been strengthened between China and ASEAN countries," Liu Zhenmin said, adding that each side's economy and social development have been promoted.

As an important pathway for China's foreign trade and energy transportation, the navigational freedom and security of the South China Sea is critical for the country's economy and opening up.

China continually insists that each country's navigational and flight freedom in the South China Sea area under the international law should be fully guaranteed, Liu said.

China also vows to make joint efforts with others to participate in international cooperation on regional offshore safety, Liu said.

Pitono Purnomo, Indonesia's ambassador of its Foreign Affairs Ministry, said the seminar reflects the determination of China and ASEAN to increase mutual understanding and cooperation.

"ASEAN countries will push the cooperative projects under the framework of the DOC with China," Purnomo said.

Nearly 60 officials and scholars from China and ASEAN countries participated in the seminar.

During the seminar, the representatives discussed the current situation in the South China Sea. It was widely accepted that navigational security has been effectively maintained.

However, they agreed that technological devices and cooperation remain weak in face of the threats of piracy and transnational crime. The engineering maintenance of the shipping channel should also be strengthened.

The seminar demonstrates that China and ASEAN countries have the ability and wisdom to maintain the navigational freedom and security of the South China Sea and boost regional prosperity and stability, the representatives noted.

China and the ASEAN countries signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in 2002.