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**A STUDY ON HONG KONG IN THE REGION:
ROLE, ISSUES AND STRATEGIES**

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HONG KONG'S BRIDGING ROLE IN CHINA AND ASEAN: A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL APPROACH

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I. Purpose

This report aims to provide a review of developments in each of these areas against the backdrop of a general trend towards wider and deeper integration within ASEAN+1 and ASEAN+3 zones. With this review in place, the report will then propose a number of policy recommendations for future actions for the HKSARG to consider in order to maximise its potential benefits from these areas.

II. Background: From ASEAN+1 to the China-ASEAN Closer Economic Cooperation Agreement

1991 could be seen as a watershed in China's relations with ASEAN. By 1991, all ASEAN members had established or re-established diplomatic ties with Beijing. Also in 1991, China was for the first time invited to attend the 24th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Kuala Lumpur, and became a consultative partner of ASEAN and began to attend the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC). Since then, China-ASEAN relations have undergone profound changes. At the 29th AMM in Jakarta in 1996, ASEAN upgraded China from a Consultative Partner to full Dialogue Partner status. As ASEAN expanded its membership to include Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997 and Cambodia in 1999, China worked with the grouping to improve the status of ASEAN. In 1997, leaders from ASEAN countries and China held the first informal summit in Kuala Lumpur to officially recognise the ASEAN+1 (China) process while adopting the strategy of "good neighbourliness" and "mutual trust" to strengthen and expand existing China-ASEAN ties in the 21st century.

In the meantime, a larger new mechanism of regional consultation was established, which includes three main Northeast Asian states of China, Japan and

South Korea and ten ASEAN members to jointly create the ASEAN+3. It is this core dialogue mechanism that is at the heart of an emerging East Asian Community. Together with other multilateral consulting mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting, and ASEAN+3, the ASEAN+1 process have been playing a leading role in promoting regional economic integration and cooperation.

China-ASEAN relations improved even further after 1997. Beijing's decision not to devalue the Renminbi during the Asian financial crisis amid international pressure and the multi-billion-dollar financial assistance to Southeast Asian and Asian nations won the admiration of ASEAN countries. The signing of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in 2002 between China and ASEAN worked to further ease territorial disputes and paved the way for joint exploration in the area. More importantly, deepening economic interdependency in the region helped elevate ASEAN-China partnership to a new level of cooperation and integration. This cumulated in the landmark conclusion of the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in 2002, which provides for the establishment of a China-ASEAN Free Trade Area.

Entering the new century, China-ASEAN relations have been gradually moving from "dialogue cooperation" to "institutionalised cooperation", and the China-ASEAN relationship has rapidly widened and deepened. While initially economically oriented, the range of issues covered by the China-ASEAN dialogue mechanism have gradually expanded from economic issues to include almost every policy area. Apart from the regional security and trade, currently ten priority areas have been identified to be cooperated between China and ASEAN countries, namely, agriculture, information and communication technology (ICT), human resource development, two-way investment, Mekong River Basin development, transportation, energy, culture, tourism and public health.¹ The expansion of China-ASEAN cooperation has also been deepened to include provincial (Yunnan, Guangxi, Guangdong, in particular) and municipal ties (Nanning, Kunming, Shanghai), as well as linkages between civil society groups (chambers of commerce), thinktanks (East Asian Forum and the Network of East Asian Thinktanks – NEAT) as well as individuals (eminent persons groups). During the China-ASEAN Commemorative

¹ "Joint Statement of ASEAN-China Commemorative Summit Towards An Enhanced ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership", 30 October 2006, Nanning, China. <http://www.aseansec.org/China-Com-Summit.Doc>.

Summit held at Nanning in October 2006, ASEAN and Chinese leaders pledged in their joint statement that they will not only continue to cement and strengthen existing political and security ties, but also expand socio-cultural cooperation. In addition, at the 10th China-ASEAN Summit in Cebu of the Philippines in January 2007, ASEAN and China signed an agreement on Trade in Services of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. This accord will liberalise sectors ranging from tourism, financial services and telecoms to energy and computers. It also grants services suppliers easier market access and national treatment in specified sectors or sub-sectors. Without doubt, intensified economic ties will generate sustainable development and prosperity and user in peace in the region.²

The China-ASEAN dialogue process has thus been defining the key parameters of the Japan-ASEAN and, South Korean-ASEAN relations. In other words, if ASEAN+3 is at the heart of an East Asian Community and the China-ASEAN relationship is at the centre of ASEAN+3, then key developments in this dialogue have the potential to directly shape Hong Kong's economic and social ties with the rest of Asia.

III. Social Cooperation and Exchanges between China and ASEAN

One of the newer areas for cooperation between China and ASEAN has been social and cultural issues. Since late 2004, China and ASEAN have been actively seeking new forms of socio-cultural engagement. Currently there are three main dialogues in this area: China-ASEAN Ministers on Culture and the Arts, China-ASEAN Tourism Ministers and the China-ASEAN Ministers for Youth Affairs. There are also number of spin-off processes, such as the China-ASEAN Young Business Leaders' Summit and the China-ASEAN meetings on Social Welfare and Development. In the meantime, a number of new initiatives and programmes have been launched by both sides, including encouraging greater cooperation between institutions of secondary and higher education; increasing youth exchanges by initiating the China-ASEAN Young Leaders Conference, China-ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Association and China-ASEAN Young Civil Servants' Exchange Programme as flagship projects; launching a prestigious China-ASEAN Scholarship;

² For a detailed account of and discussion on the China-ASEAN relations over the past two decades, see Alice D. Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia". *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (July-August 2003), pp. 622-647; Saw Swee-Hock, Sheng Lijun and Chin Kin Wah eds., *ASEAN-China Relations: Realities and Prospects*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005; Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang eds., *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005; Lai Hongyi and Lim Tin Seng eds., *Harmony and Development: ASEAN-China Relations*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2007.

promoting scholarly exchanges; supporting the Hanoi-based Centre for ASEAN and China Studies;³ enhancing greater contacts between media personnel, academics and Track II institutions, parliamentarians and civil society; supporting the activities of the ASEAN Foundation in promoting greater people-to-people interaction; cooperating in public health to address the challenges of emerging infectious diseases.

To facilitate the development of and integration within ASEAN, a special fund named the ASEAN Development Fund was established in Vientiane on 26 July 2005, and China contributed USD1 million to it while donating another USD1 million for the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) projects, aiming at further promoting the bilateral cooperation in the social and economic areas.⁴

3.1. Social Welfare and Development

While the ASEAN community has actively promoted social welfare and development among ten member states since 2000, its cooperation with China in this field had not been kicked off until December 2004 when the 5th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development was held. During the first working meeting, both sides agreed that the focus should be on promoting a community of caring societies, the care of the elderly and the disabled, and human resource development in the social sector.

3.2. Public Health

Pandemic diseases such as SARS, H5N1 (avian influenza) and the current Influenza A (H1N1) have been increasingly posing a threat to public health in the region. To cope with the threat of pandemic influenza, ASEAN and its three East Asian dialogue countries have responded quickly and worked closely with each other to address and control the disease. Such a regional cooperation has mainly been conducted through a number of institutional mechanisms and coordination

³ “Centre for ASEAN and China Studies Established in Vietnam”, 20 December 2005, Xinhua Net, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200512/20/eng20051220_229531.html; “Centre for ASEAN-China Studies Established”, 21 December 2005, Radio The Voice of Vietnam, <http://english.vovnews.vn/Home/Centre-for-ASEANChina-Studies-established/200512/39320.vov>.

⁴ “Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Development Fund”, Vientiane, 26 July 2005. <http://www.aseansec.org/17577.htm>. “Joint Statement of ASEAN-China Commemorative Summit Towards An Enhanced ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership”, 30 October 2006, Nanning, China. *Ibid.*

arrangements with the assistance from international organisations such as the WHO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

At regional level, two ministerial level ASEAN bodies in the animal and human health sectors, namely: ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) and ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM), have directed their respective senior officials, working groups and experts (i.e. ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Livestock (ASWGL) and ASEAN Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Task Force from the animal health sector, and the Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD) and ASEAN Expert Group on Communicable Diseases (AEGCD) from the public health sector), to formulate a coordinated multi-agency and multi-sectoral approach to prevent, control, and eradicate any potential threat in the region.⁵

At the 4th Meeting of the AMAF+3 held on 8 October 2004 in Yangon, China expressed its support for the establishment of the HPAI Taskforce and for the sharing of experiences and expertise in HPAI control. A work plan for the control and eradication of HPAI in the region detailing 14 proposed projects requiring an estimated total funding of USD94,762,000 was prepared at the meeting, and as a result, the ASEAN Animal Health Trust Fund was established with pledged contributions by all the countries involved.

On the public health sector, the ASEAN+3 Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Programme was endorsed in April 2004. It was designed with inputs from WHO. The National Centre of Epidemiology and Population Health at the Australian National University (ANU) and the Australian Bio-security Cooperative Research Centre for Emerging Infectious Disease have worked with the ASEAN Secretariat and health ministries in each ASEAN Member Country to implement the Phase I of the Programme; while China, Japan and South Korea participated by offering relevant expertise. The Programme focused on the following areas of collaboration between the ASEAN+3 countries:⁶

- i. Improvement of institutional capacity of ASEAN to coordinate and manage effective implementation of the program (coordinated by the ASEAN Secretariat);

⁵ ASEAN Secretariat: "ASEAN Response to Combat Avian Influenza", <http://www.aseansec.org/18392.htm>.

⁶ ASEAN Secretariat: "ASEAN Response to Combat Avian Influenza", *Ibid*.

- ii. Improvement of capacity of the ASEAN Disease Surveillance Network to meet the needs of ASEAN member countries in Emerging Infectious Disease Surveillance, Preparedness and Response (coordinated by Indonesia);
- iii. Improvement of capacity of national and regional laboratories in routine diagnostics, laboratory-based surveillance, preparedness and rapid response (coordinated by Malaysia);
- iv. Improvement of national and regional capacity in epidemiological surveillance, preparedness, early warning of outbreaks and rapid response to emerging infections (coordinated by Thailand).

Apart from regional efforts, China organised a number of international seminars and conferences from 2006 to 2008 to discuss strategies for vaccination of humans against influenza virus, including China-French Symposium on Avian Flu among Humans, China-ASEAN Seminar on Avian Flu Control, China-Russian Conference on Communicable Diseases, and the First China-Korean Forum on Communicable Diseases. In January 2006, together with EU Council and the World Bank, Chinese government organised an international fundraising conference in Beijing to cope with the pandemic influenza. Currently, Chinese government provides assistance to neighbouring ASEAN countries such as Laos and Myanmar in the construction of epidemic monitoring stations, provision of equipment, technology and training, and in return, getting information about avian flu outbreaks should they occur in Southeast Asia.

Alarmed by the rapid spread of human-to-human of the influenza (H1N1) virus in various countries of the world, an urgent ASEAN+3 Health Ministers Special Meeting was held in Bangkok on 8 May 2009 to discuss any mitigation and immediate appropriate responses. At the working meeting, health ministers from ASEAN+3 countries pledged their commitment to fully implement the following measures while fostering close collaborations in the region:

- i. Ensuring sufficient and prompt sharing of data and information on epidemic situation, establishing hotlines among national health authorities for effective responses among countries;

- ii. Establishing joint outbreak investigation and joint response teams across countries, where appropriate and upon request;
- iii. Enhancing laboratory support for the investigation and confirmation of Influenza A H1N1 and researches;
- iv. Strengthening collaborative researches on influenza including biomedical, clinical, health systems and policy researches in order to generate evidence for effective policy intervention in responses to the epidemics, through active participation in the current regional collaborative research networks such as the ASEAN+3 Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Programme of the ASEAN Secretariat, the Mekong Basin Diseases Surveillance network (MBDS) and the Asian Partnership on Emerging Infectious Diseases Research (APAIR/APEIR).

3.3. Youth

The First China-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth was held in Beijing from 29 to 30 September 2004, which laid a solid foundation for the close bilateral working relations in this field. Eight areas were proposed by both sides for joint actions as follows:⁷

- i. Foster and promote greater awareness and understanding of ASEAN and China among the youth through regular focused exchanges which would serve as a viable mechanism to share experiences, address shared challenges/concerns and identify and implement appropriate solutions;
- ii. Share knowledge and experiences among the concerned agencies and institutions in ASEAN and China on existing training programmes and policies to ensure the youth are provided with the necessary industry relevant skills training and education to find gainful employment or means of self-employment;
- iii. Facilitate and encourage public-private partnerships that emphasise investing in the youth, thus creating conducive environments for employment and self-employment opportunities for the youth;

⁷ “Beijing Declaration of the Ministers Responsible for Youth of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the People’s Republic of China of ASEAN-China Cooperation on Youth”, 29 September 2004, Beijing. <http://www.aseansec.org/ASEANChinaYouth.pdf>.

- iv. Facilitate access to credit, markets and business development opportunities, including the establishment of institutions, mechanisms and structures, for ASEAN and Chinese young entrepreneurs;
- v. Strengthen exchange and cooperation between ASEAN and Chinese young entrepreneurs through joint training programmes for youth in business development and entrepreneurial skills;
- vi. Foster greater collaboration with non-governmental and community based organisations to identify the needs of young women and disadvantaged and differently-abled youth (including rural youth as well as out-of-school youth) to access relevant education, training and employment opportunities; and
- vii. Identify priority activities undertaken by the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY) on ASEAN youth leadership development, and skills training, among other relevant priorities, for joint implementation with China, so as to strengthen exchange and cooperation between ASEAN and Chinese youth in various fields such as human resources development, information and communication technology, culture, education, environmental protection, agriculture, and volunteer services.

Three years later, the First ASEAN+3 Ministerial Meeting on Youth was held in Singapore in April 2007. At this inaugural regional meeting, ministers from China, Japan, South Korea and ASEAN countries expressed their commitment towards youth while proposing three main targets to be achieved:⁸

- i. to provide youth with opportunities, resources and support to develop self-confident, educated, resourceful and compassionate youth who are able to achieve their full potential and make contributions to their communities;
- ii. to promote youth engagement by encouraging youth voice at policy- and decision-making platforms and youth initiation of, participation in and leadership of youth programmes and initiatives;

⁸ “Joint Ministerial Statement of the First ASEAN+3 Ministerial Meeting on Youth (1st AMMY+3)”, Singapore, 27 April 2007, <http://www.aseansec.org/20655.htm>.

- iii. to underscore the importance of peace, understanding and solidarity in the region and to promote greater understanding, idea exchange and unity through active participation in youth exchange and youth development programmes.

In conjunction with the annual China-ASEAN Expo to be held in Nanning, Guangxi, the first China-ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Forum co-organised by the All-China Youth Federation and the Guangxi Provincial Youth Federation was held on 20-25 October 2008 in Nanning in response to the proposal of establishing a China-ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Association (CAYEA). The forum brought together a large number of young entrepreneurs and representatives of relevant governmental and NGOs from ASEAN member states and China. The China's Secretariat for CAYEA was set up on 21 October 2008 in Nanning and the representative office for ASEAN is expected to be established in early 2009.⁹ The Nanning Declaration of the China-ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs was issued on 21 October 2008, indicating that both sides will be endeavouring to further the commitment relevant to China-ASEAN cooperation on youth by seeking to strengthen the existing friendly exchanges and cooperation between the Chinese and ASEAN young entrepreneurs.¹⁰

3.4. Tourism

One of the most rapidly developed areas in the regional social cooperation over the past decade has been tourism. According to the statistics released by ASEAN Secretariat, international tourist arrivals in ASEAN Plus Three (APT) countries in 2007 recorded more than 99 million arrivals with 14.6 percent growth compared to 2006. Intra-APT travel accounted for 61 percent of total arrivals in APT countries. China, Japan and ROK are important source markets for ASEAN as more than 10 million arrivals arrived in ASEAN Member Countries in 2007, while ASEAN sent more than 4.8 million visitors to China, Japan and South Korea.

During the ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+1 Summits held on 20 November 2007 in Singapore, leaders expressed their full support to the implementation of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan (2007-2017) to deepen cooperation over the next decade. Particularly on tourism, the APT shall pursue the promotion of the

⁹ "China-ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Forum", <http://www.aseansec.org/Bulletin-Oct-08.htm#Article-1>.

¹⁰ "Nanning Declaration Passed at 1st China-ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Forum", 2 November 2008, Nanning Municipal Government, <http://english.nanning.gov.cn/n725531/n751804/n752331/n819950/3310469.html>; "ASEAN Bulletin", October 2008, <http://www.aseansec.org/Bulletin-Oct-08.htm>; "Nanning Declaration of the China-ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Forum", <http://www.aseansec.org/22041.htm>.

development of quality tourism and forging concrete collaboration in cultural and eco-tourism, cruise tourism, youth exchange, manpower development, joint tourism marketing and promotion, and quality assurance, as well as safety measures for tourists.

At the ASEAN+1 Summit held in Singapore in November 2007, leaders tasked their ministers and senior officials to expeditiously work towards a fully liberalised air services regime between ASEAN and China. The ministers in turn tasked the tourism officials to support their counterparts in the Transport Ministry to realise the goal of air liberalisation. Meanwhile, the ASEAN-China Summit examined ways to promote tourism between ASEAN and China and encouraged both sides to speed up the proposed MOU on Establishing the ASEAN-China Centre to promote bilateral tourism. On the other hand, China helped ASEAN in its promotion of ASEAN Cruise Tourism by providing booths to ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat at China International Travel Mart (CITM) 2006, 2007 and 2008 in Shanghai.¹¹

What needs to be particularly noted is the new development in mainland Southeast Asia countries and their neighbouring Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi in terms of the tourism cooperation, especially Vietnam. Vietnam has taken full advantage of its relations with international organisations and ASEAN to develop and carry out tourism projects. The country developed new transnational tours by road, river, and air with the aim to attract more Chinese tourists with a combination of cultural and historic sites.

Vietnam's tourism industry as a whole is particularly benefiting from two tourism-related regional projects: the Economic West-East Corridor (EWEC) and the transnational Singapore-Vietnam-South China Railways Route. The two projects have received government approval and have been granted funding from international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank. The EWEC project is designed to narrow the disparity of development in the poor regions of Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The EWEC will run through the EWEC project countries and link the Bay of Bengal with the Eastern Sea, paving the way for the exchange of trade between ports as well as for the development of tourism in these countries. In addition, the corridor's highway network will be designed to reach

¹¹ "Joint Media Statement of the Seventh Meeting of ASEAN, China, Japan and Republic of Korea Tourism Ministers", Bangkok, 22 January 2008. <http://www.aseansec.org/21347.htm>.

numerous cultural and natural tourist sites in EWEC countries, including places recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as world heritage sites. These will include sites in Vietnam such as the cluster of royal tombs in the ancient imperial city of Hue, Ha Long Bay, Hoi An, and My Son Stupa.

To support overland tours among Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, the three countries agreed to organise a meeting for their authorised agencies to discuss ways of coordinating with each other at checkpoints so as to make entry-exit activities more convenient for travellers. Meanwhile, leaders of ASEAN countries gave the green light to a project on a railway route running from Singapore to southern China via Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. The railway will form part of an infrastructure system, serving as an important transport route similar to the one developed in the South-North Economic Corridor. The project will aid other infrastructure projects such as transport corridors through countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam), and trans-Asian highway routes, thus creating a diverse transport network in Southeast Asia and Asia. The railway project will assist ASEAN's common goal of greater trade integration, especially in trade and tourism relations with China.

On the other hand, the railway route will link Singapore with Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Hat Yai, Bangkok and Sa Kaew in Thailand, Poi Pet and Phnom Penh in Cambodia, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang City in Vietnam, and Kunming in China. The route will bring benefits not only to the trade and transport services of these countries but also to the promotion of trans-tourism tours among China and ASEAN countries. Vietnam's tourism administration plans to attract more tourists from ASEAN and China. VAT deputy general director Pham Tu pointed out that his agency has made plans to speed up its promotion campaign themed "Vietnam - a new destination in the 21st century".

In addition, the Vietnamese tourism administration has planned to upgrade infrastructure, including traffic systems, and build large tourist complexes with recreation and entertainment centres. The State Tourism Steering Board has encouraged close coordination between the travel agencies and civil aviation with other relevant government ministries, such as Foreign Affairs; Public Security; Defence; Culture and Information; Trade; Transport and Communications. All these efforts are aimed at creating a friendly and safe environment for tourists while ensuring high economic efficiency. Vietnam Airlines has also contributed to opening Vietnamese tourism to the world by cooperating with foreign partners to open a large number of direct flights. Thai Airways, for example, has opened direct flights from Bangkok to central Da Nang city, providing easy access to three UNESCO-recognised

World Heritage Sites: the old imperial citadel of Hue, the ancient town of Hoi An, and My Son Temple. Meanwhile, Vietnam Airlines has opened direct flights to Vietnam from Singapore, Taiwan and the Chinese cities of Shanghai, Kunming and Beijing.¹²

China has on the other hand actively promoted the tourism cooperation with neighbouring mainland Southeast Asian countries, the two southwest provinces Yunnan and Guangxi in particular. According to the statistics released by the government authorities, more than 6.5 million tourists travelling between ASEAN and China were recorded in 2005. Of them, around 3 million were from ASEAN member countries. Meanwhile, a similar size of PRC tourists would choose Southeast Asia as their first stop of overseas travel.¹³ At the provincial level, 2003 saw more than 270,000 tourists from ASEAN visiting Yunnan, making Southeast Asian tourists the largest international arrivals in the province. In Guangxi, local tourism figures show that around 400,000 ASEAN tourists visited this province in 2006, growing 13 percent year-on-year. In other words, 40 percent international tourists were from ASEAN. In the meantime, more than 100,000 mainland tourists travelled to Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia in 2006 via the newly built shipping line plying between Guangxi's Beihai Harbour and Vietnam's Ha Long Bay everyday.¹⁴

Four major regional tourism zones or products targeted at the ASEAN market are being conceived or promoted by China's southwest provinces with the support from the Beijing authorities and the Asian Development Bank, namely: A). The Lancang River-Mekong River Tourism Zone; B). The Pan-Tonkin Bay Tourism Zone; C). Cross-border Tour along the Guangxi-Vietnam border; and D). China-Thai Elite Tour. All of these tourism zones and products are being jointly developed by China's provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan and Thailand.¹⁵

In addition, a grand tourism plan is being put into effect by the Hainan provincial government to turn the Island into a brand new international tourist attraction. On 5 March 2008, the State Council formally approved what the Hainan

¹² "Vietnam tourism drive targets ASEAN, China", <http://www.atimes.com/se-asia/DD06Ae03.html>.

¹³ Quoted in 張周來, "跨國旅遊將成中國與東盟相連的紐帶", 2006年11月3日, 新華網廣西頻道。 <http://www.gxxinhuanet.com>.

¹⁴ 梁思奇, "去年廣西接待東盟遊客 40 萬人次 增長 13%", 2007年5月6日, 新華網廣西頻道。 <http://www.gxxinhuanet.com>.

¹⁵ 何莉環、楊清震, "10+1 框架下中國西南民族地區與東盟的旅遊合作分析", 《廣西大學學報》, 2008年2月, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 6-12.

government requested to build up an international tourist island in the province, aiming at attracting more international tourists to spend their vacation in Hainan.¹⁶ In fact, currently a huge number of Russian and South Korean tourists can be seen on the beach of Sanya. Some of them already purchased their own villas and houses there.

3.5. Education and Human Resource Development

The bilateral exchanges and cooperation in education and human resource development have developed rapidly since 2002 when the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) was signed. China has so far signed bilateral education cooperation agreements with Singapore, Laos, Thailand and Indonesia. It is estimated that around 60,000 Chinese students are currently studying in ASEAN, mainly in Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. 2007 alone, for example, saw more than 124,000 Chinese students studying in different universities of Southeast Asia. On the other hand, around 3,000 students from Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are studying in the 16 universities of Yunnan. While many teachers have been sent to teach Chinese language and culture in ASEAN with a focus on the mainland Southeast Asian countries, a number of teaching and training centres and institutes targeted at ASEAN students have recently been established in southwest provinces such as Yunnan, Guangxi and Guizhou, including the ASEAN International College, the Lancang—Mekong River Sub-regional Human Resource Development Centre, Centre for ASEAN Studies, and School of International Language Training. To attract ASEAN students to study in Yunnan, the Yunnan provincial government has particularly set up the ASEAN Scholarship, which has been increased from RMB1.8 million yuan in 2003 to RMB7.20 million yuan in 2008. Meanwhile, a set of regulations aimed at ASEAN student management were drafted by the Yunnan government, which is the first of its kind policy in China. In addition, Chinese thinktanks suggested local authorities to further the bilateral cooperation in education and human resource by establishing a number of transnational research institutes and training centres, aiming at jointly training students from ASEAN and China.¹⁷

At the First Great Mekong Sub-regional Summit held in 2002, Phnom Penh, China expressed its strong support to the human resource development in the bilateral relations by setting up the China-ASEAN Cooperation Fund. Kunming as a result was assigned by the Chinese central government to be responsible for the regional human resource training and development. In November 2004, while attending the ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+1 Summits, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao announced that

¹⁶ 徐建偉，「海南國際旅遊島建設初探」，《商場現代化》，No. 564, January 2009, pp. 202-203.

¹⁷ 馮用軍，「云南面向東盟高等教育國際化戰略的前期研究」，《東南亞縱橫》，No. 3, 2008, pp. 71-74.

Chinese government decided to donate another USD500 million to the China-ASEAN Cooperation Fund to develop language teaching, medical assistance and agricultural technology promotion in ASEAN. On top of that, a new fund named Asian Regional Cooperation Fund amounting to USD1,500 million is to be set up by China to particularly facilitate the human resource cooperation and development. Chinese government has organised a number of workshops and training courses for the Great Mekong Sub-regional member countries since 2005. Of them, The Phnom Penh Training Programme lectured by Chinese experts alone has trained more than 900 ASEAN government officials.¹⁸

The First China-ASEAN Education Exchange and Cooperation Week was held on 26-31 July 2008 in Guiyang, Guizhou province. It was co-organised by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Guizhou provincial government and ASEAN Secretariat with participants from 65 universities of Southeast Asia, China and Australia. Aside from the China-ASEAN Education Exhibition and the Exhibition for China's Education Resources, The First China-ASEAN University President Forum and the China-ASEAN High Education Roundtable were also organised as major events of the Week. More than 400 delegates from UNESCO and universities of China and Southeast Asia participated in these events. As a consequence, it was decided at the meeting to jointly set up the China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Committee to guide and promote bilateral exchanges and cooperation. In addition, 55 cooperation agreements or MOU were signed between 21 Chinese universities and 17 of their counterparts from ASEAN. What is important is that it was announced at the meeting to set up the China-ASEAN Scholarship to encourage the bilateral education exchange and cooperation.¹⁹

In the meantime, China has increasingly become aware of the urgent need in developing its relationship with ASEAN. Large number of expertises in Southeast Asian languages and accounting sector are needed as few people in China nowadays are familiar with the accounting regulations and requirements of ASEAN countries. To quickly equip government organisations with necessary expertises, for example, 50 interpreters have been sent to accept intensive training in Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia by the Guangxi government since 2004. On the

¹⁸ 王士錄，"中國—東盟的人才交流與合作"，《南寧職業技術學院學報》，Vol. 13, No. 6, 2008, colour pages inserted into the journal and no page number is shown.

¹⁹ 段風華，"中國—東盟教育周：中國與東盟教育交流新干線"，《神州學人》，No. 9, 2008, pp. 18-19.

other hand, the Chinese government authorities asked universities to quickly and particularly train students targeted at the ASEAN market.²⁰

3.6. Women

Gender has gradually become one of the key areas in the China-ASEAN cooperation and exchanges. Currently the emphasis has been given to encourage and help women entrepreneurs and their enterprises. On 18-20 October 2008, the First China-ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Forum was held in Liuzhou of Guangxi with more than 370 female entrepreneurs, government officials, diplomats and scholars from ASEAN and China attended the event. It was decided at the meeting that this Forum will continue be held on a regular basis.²¹

3.7. Transnational Crime

Five mechanisms for regional law enforcement cooperation have been built up since November 2002, including ASEAN+3 Anti-transnational Crime Ministerial Meeting, ASEAN+1 Anti-transnational Crime Informal Ministerial Meeting, China-ASEAN Chief Procurators Meeting (which HKSAR and Macau SAR have been involved as part of the PRC delegation), China-ASEAN Anti-Drug Trafficking Mechanism, and China-ASEAN Maritime Security Mechanism which was formed in December 2005 in Guangzhou. In addition, the past few years have seen the operation of a number of forums and workshops in this field, such as China-ASEAN Legal Cooperation and Development Forum for Senior Officials, China-ASEAN Legal Forum, as well as China-ASEAN Anti-Transnational Crime Workshop.²²

A bilateral cooperation agreement on non-traditional security was signed between China and ASEAN in November 2002. Crimes such as drug trafficking, illegal migration including women and children trafficking, piracy, terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundry, international economic crime and cyber crime are listed in the agreement as mutually concerned issues. Of them, anti-transnational crime has

²⁰ 李保嬋，「淺談高校對東盟會計人才的培養」，《財會研究》，No. 12, 2008, pp. 44-46; 楊倫超，「論面向東盟培養外向型高級人才的策略」，《東南亞縱橫》，No. 10, 2008, pp. 57-59; 范偉、唐擁軍，「廣西—東盟高等教育國際化戰略思路」，《東南亞縱橫》，No. 11, 2003, pp. 19-22; 莫光政，「適應中國—東盟自由貿易區發展需要的國際型人才培養的戰略構想」，《東南亞縱橫》，No. 9, 2007, pp. 28-32.

²¹ 「創新發展合作共贏—記廣西柳州中國東盟女企業家創業論壇會主題思想」，《今日財富》，No. 10, 2008, p. 68.

²² 王君祥，「中國東盟打擊跨國犯罪刑事合作機制探討」，《河北法學》，Vol. 26, No. 12, Dec. 2008, pp. 173-179.

been the priority in the agenda of law enforcement cooperation. On 15-18 August 2005, the First ASEAN+3 Policing Exchange and Cooperation Workshop among Capital Police was held in Beijing. A formal consensus was reached and expressed in the Beijing Declaration for Consolidating Capital Police Cooperation in ASEAN+3, which includes a nine-point consensus.²³ Shortly afterwards, China's Ministry of Public Securities organised a number of training programmes to train ASEAN law enforcement officials. In 2006, the Yunnan Police College provided a special training course on anti-drug trafficking for police officials from Myanmar and Laos.²⁴

IV. Cultural Cooperation and Exchanges between China and ASEAN

4.1. Cultural Forum

The China-ASEAN Cultural Industry Forum was established in 2005 and the latest one was held in Nanning, Guangxi, on 28-29 October 2008 with the theme "Exchanges and Cooperation: Towards a Win-Win Solution". The annual forum was attended by government officials, academics, and entrepreneurs in the cultural sector from China and ASEAN member states. Aside from discussions, participants were guided to visit a number of model enterprises of China's cultural industry in Guangxi.²⁵

4.2. Media

It is interesting to note that a special event with a focus on bilateral TV cooperation was held in Kunming, Yunnan province, from 18 to 21 December 2007. Apart from dozens of state-owned TV companies from China and ASEAN, and the Russian TV delegation, TV companies from HKSAR were also invited to participate, which is a healthy and encouraging trend. The 2007 China-ASEAN TV Cooperation Summit was the first successful effort of its kind in the area of cultural cooperation. A joint declaration was released at the meeting while lots of bilateral cooperation

²³ "東盟及中日韓首都警察在京探討加強合作", <http://big5.cri.cn/gate/big5/gb.cri.cn/1321/2005/08/16/1568@662896.htm>.

²⁴ 姚川, "非傳統安全視野下中國與東盟警務合作機制研究", 《東南亞縱橫》, No. 2, 2008, pp. 60-63.

²⁵ "China-ASEAN Cultural Industry Forum". <http://www.aseansec.org/Bulletin-Oct-08.htm#Article-1>.

agreements were signed among different national TV companies. It was decided that such a TV cooperation forum will continue be held in Yunnan.²⁶

On the other hand, the Guangxi Radio for Foreign Broadcasting has particularly produced Vietnamese language programme and everyday it broadcasts 8 hours in Vietnamese and 2 hours in Cantonese, covering the whole territories of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and part of Thailand. It also established friendly working relationship with Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City Radio Station and the Thailand National Radio to regularly exchange programmes.²⁷

4.3. *Expo and Performance*

Every year, the Guangxi and Yunnan provincial governments would organise different expos or folk arts performances in ASEAN countries. In May 2007, for example, a cultural event named 2007 Malaysian-Guangxi Cultural Ship was organised in Kuala Lumpur to show the folk paintings, custom and performing arts to the local Malay society.

4.4. *Information and Communication Technology*

Information is another new area identified to be developed in the China-ASEAN relations. The ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information and their China counterpart signed a Memorandum of Understanding on information and media cooperation on 16 October 2008 in Nanning, China. At the meeting, the ASEAN and China ministers proposed ways to enhance cooperation in the information sector.

Closed related is the cooperation in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). The 1st China-ASEAN ICT Week was held in three main cities of China (Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen) in 2005, while the 2nd event was held in Penang, Malaysia in 2006. The latest one was held in Nanning, Guangxi on 21 to 25 October 2008. At the 3rd ICT Ministerial Forum attended by ICT ministers and high level officials from both sides, the ICT ministers affirmed the need to further strengthen cooperation on, among others, ICT infrastructure, network security, rural communication and human resources development. Both sides also agreed to support the completion of two key documents on network security and telecommunication universal services. Other events that convened during the 3rd ICT Week were the

²⁶ 蔞君，”加強電視合作促進共同發展：2007 中國—東盟電視合作峰會在春城昆明舉行”，《當地電視》，No. 1, 2008, pp. 31-32; “2007 中國—東盟電視合作峰會閉幕”，云南日報網，21st December 2007, <http://www.yndaily.com>.

²⁷ “門泊東盟萬里船—廣西東盟博覽會對外傳播回顧”，《對外傳播》，No. 1, 2009, p. 49.

Radio Spectrum Monitoring Workshop, ICT Business Forum and a technical visit to Nanning's Emergency Response teams.²⁸

V. Hong Kong's Bridging Role in the Social and Cultural Exchanges between China and ASEAN

As discussed, exchanges and collaborations in social and cultural dimensions are vibrant and have developed rapidly between China and ASEAN. Though such a trend is important in terms of regional cooperation and integration, it needs to be clearly pointed out that the priority on the agenda of ASEAN+3 has always been trade, finance, investment, as well as regional security. As admitted by a senior diplomat in Beijing, currently understanding and cooperation in the political and economic fields are still the main concerns of regional countries, the social and cultural exchanges could only play a complementary role in facilitating the formation of an East Asian Community.

Hong Kong is geographically adjacent to Southeast Asia and has been a gateway for Southeast Asian peoples and commodities to the Chinese mainland over the past 170 years. Nevertheless, such a bridging role played by Hong Kong has to some extent gradually been reduced since the handover in 1997, especially in Hong Kong's involvement in the regional affairs, which is not a healthy development if Hong Kong wishes to maintain her unique status in the region. Since Hong Kong is not allowed by the central government to directly participate in the regional dialogue mechanisms to discuss political and economic arrangements as an independent member, the social and cultural exchanges and cooperation in the region or between China and ASEAN could be an ideal area for Hong Kong to play a bridging role as it is not that sensitive. Through promoting the regional social and cultural understanding, such as organising a number of cultural events and social forums every year in Hong Kong, HKSARG could demonstrate to both the central government and the international community that Hong Kong is still quite active in the regional affairs and such a bridging role cannot be replaced or relinquished, which in turn would considerably enhance Hong Kong's status in the region. Moreover, while being actively involved in the regional social and cultural exchanges, young generations of local society could be exposed to and gradually become familiar with different

²⁸ "3rd China-ASEAN ICT Week Convenes in Nanning, China", 27 October 2008. <http://www.aseansec.org/Bulletin-Oct-08.htm#Article-1>.

cultures of Southeast Asia and mainland China, which is good for Hong Kong as it helps maintain her cultural uniqueness.

VI. Policy Recommendations

6.1. HKSARG Should Try to be Part of the PRC Delegation

The above account on the recent development of social and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and ASEAN has clearly shown that HKSARG has largely been marginalised, if not completely shut out from the regional dialogues and diplomatic negotiations among sovereign states. How could the HKSARG resolve this problem while best protect its existing benefit? My private discussions with a number of senior government officials at the ministerial level in Beijing show that the central government would never allow the HKSARG to enjoy the APEC model anymore. The game rule has been changed since the sovereignty handover in 1997. Unless the HKSARG agrees to send senior officials to join the PRC delegation as part of the team, Hong Kong would have no chance to be formally involved in the official regional dialogue or negotiations. Consequently, HKSAR has always been passive in dealing with its foreign (not diplomatic) affairs. It is thus strongly recommended the HKSARG to give up its old policy by joining the PRC official delegation while officially giving a report to the leadership at Zhongnanhai. Only in such a way could HKSAR be more closely involved in the regional affairs, which in turn would bring more benefit to Hong Kong.

6.2. Establishing the Hong Kong-ASEAN Scholarship

HKSARG has recently concluded a bilateral education cooperation and exchange MOU with Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training, which is an encouraging sign to show the effort and progress made by the government in this regard. On the other hand, the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (RGC) has recently decided to establish the Hong Kong Ph.D. Fellowship Scheme, aiming at attracting 135 the best and brightest students every year from overseas to pursue their higher degrees in Hong Kong's institutions. Given that both Singapore and Chinese government have for years allocated a large sum of fund as scholarship to attract ASEAN students to study in their universities, it is thus recommended HKSARG to establish the Hong Kong-ASEAN scholarship to particularly encourage ASEAN students to pursue their undergraduate degrees at universities of Hong Kong. Each country of the 10 ASEAN members could be provided one quota annually, if possible.

6.3. Closer Cooperation between HKSAR and ASEAN in Tourism

Bilateral China-ASEAN travel and the regional tourism cooperation have been increased rapidly over the past decade. It is recommended that the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the Tourism Commission not only cast their eyes on the tourists of Pearl River Delta or those of big cities of mainland China, but move one step beyond the border by actively joining the China-ASEAN tourism cooperation activities. Apart from sending delegates to attend such events, the tourism authorities of HKSAR could also consider to organise regional or world forum on a regular basis and invite relevant organisations and companies from different countries of the world to attend it, which could further enhance Hong Kong's status in the regional tourism cooperation mechanism.

6.4. Encouraging Exchanges and Cooperation between Policy Think-tanks, Business Organisations, and Community-based Organisations

One of the key dimensions in promoting the bilateral social and cultural exchanges is to encourage exchanges and cooperation between policy think-tanks, business organisations, community-based organisations. It is recommended that the HKSARG identifies a number of themes or topics to be explored and discussed, and each year a number of social and cultural events, such as policy workshops on regional affairs, investment and trade expos, cultural and folk shows, regional TV and movie festival, conference on regional cooperation in education or on aging, as well as youth leader summer camp could be organised in Hong Kong.