



**CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE  
24<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM  
Manila, Philippines  
7 August 2017**

**“PARTNERING FOR CHANGE, ENGAGING THE WORLD”**

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1. The Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Manila, Philippines on 7 August 2017. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Alan Peter S. Cayetano, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.
2. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers and Representatives of all ARF participants. The Secretary-General of ASEAN was also in attendance. The list of delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

**OVERVIEW OF THE ARF PROCESS**

3. The Ministers underscored the importance of the ARF as the primary forum for constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of mutual interest and concern to the Asia-Pacific region.
4. The Ministers noted with appreciation the progress in the implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement which contributed to the region's overall efforts in effectively addressing the increasingly complex regional security challenges. In this regard, the Ministers highlighted the importance of ensuring the comprehensive implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement as well as the ARF Work Plans under the respective priorities areas within the ARF process.
5. The Ministers likewise noted with appreciation the significant progress in the evolution of the ARF's three-stage process, particularly the momentum created by implementing programmes related to preventive diplomacy (PD) since 2014, in conjunction with the strengthening of confidence building measures (CBM). The Ministers encouraged ARF participants to sustain this momentum by conducting further PD activities in accordance with the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy, consistent with the agreed definition, concept, and principles of PD as contained in the ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy adopted in 2001 and ARF Principles as reflected in the ARF Vision Statement.

6. As ASEAN celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Ministers noted the timeliness of initiating efforts to help advance the evolution of the ARF Process from confidence-building to preventive diplomacy and eventually, towards conflict resolution. The Ministers also noted that in the context of the evolving regional security architecture, it is imperative that the ARF maintains its relevance with ASEAN at its core.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSIONS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

7. The Ministers reiterated the importance of strengthening the international cooperative efforts in nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as well as in the elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles and non-proliferation of chemical weapons. In this context, some Ministers took note of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 7 July 2017. The Ministers noted the importance of preserving the Southeast Asian region as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and free of all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). The Ministers affirmed the importance of promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy that meets the norms of safety, security and non-proliferation. They took note of the ASEAN's intention to establish a formal partnership with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM) serving as focal point of coordination. The Ministers also commended the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for its unwavering efforts to implement the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) since its creation in 1997. In this regard, the Ministers congratulated the OPCW which commemorated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 26 April 2017.

8. The Ministers expressed their grave concern over recent developments in the Korean Peninsula including the most recent testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) on 4 and 28 July 2017 and previous ballistic missile launches and two nuclear tests in 2016, which have resulted in a major escalation of tensions that can affect peace and stability in the entire region and beyond. They urged the DPRK to immediately comply fully with its obligations under relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. Some Ministers reiterated their support for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner, called for the exercise of self-restraint, and underscored the importance of creating conditions conducive for dialogue to de-escalate tensions. Some Ministers emphasized the importance of addressing humanitarian concerns, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue. Some Ministers also expressed support for the initiatives to improve inter-Korean relations and to establish permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. The participants' attention were called to two proposals, namely, "double freeze and simultaneous progress" and "phase-by-phase" plan, as a possible way of addressing the situation in the Korean Peninsula.

9. The Ministers welcomed the improving maritime cooperation between ASEAN and its partner nations. They also warmly welcomed the improving cooperation between ASEAN and China and are encouraged by the completion of negotiations on a framework of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), which will facilitate the work for the conclusion of an effective COC. The Ministers recognized the benefits

that would be gained from having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and sustainable development.

10. The Ministers also took note of concerns expressed by some member states, and in this light, reaffirmed the importance of enhancing mutual trust and confidence, exercising self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoiding actions that may complicate the situation, and pursuing the peaceful resolution of disputes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law including the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining peace, stability, security and freedom of navigation and over-flight in and above the South China Sea. They also welcomed the operationalization of the Guidelines for Hotline Communications among Senior Officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of ASEAN Member States and China in Response to Maritime Emergencies in the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and look forward to the early operationalization of the other early harvest measure which is the Joint Statement on the Application of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) in the South China Sea. The Ministers underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety.

11. The Ministers also noted the need to strengthen international and regional cooperation and constructive dialogue on maritime security, maritime safety, protection of the marine environment, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and other crimes at sea, through the ARF and other ASEAN led-mechanisms such as the AMF and EAMF, ADMM, ADMM- Plus, and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). The Ministers further noted the importance of enhancing cooperation among maritime law enforcement agencies, such as capacity building assistance, joint exercises, information sharing including Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and other related initiatives. They looked forward to the Seventh AMF and the Fifth EAMF to be held in Jakarta later this year.

12. The Ministers condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and expressed their deepest condolences to the victims and their families, as well as to the people and governments that have been targeted. Recalling the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism (ACCT), they reaffirmed strong commitment to enhance cooperation and undertake effective measures in countering terrorism which covers the prevention and suppression of terrorist acts on the basis of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (GCTS). They stressed the need to address conditions conducive to terrorism and the spread of terrorist ideology, including through the terrorist use of Internet and social media, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolution, 2354 (2017) in support of a comprehensive international framework on countering terrorist propaganda.

13. The Ministers reiterated the need for a comprehensive, just, and sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East region. We urged both sides to actively take positive steps to allow for negotiations to gain traction and work together towards the resumption of negotiations to achieve an enduring peace. We fully support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for an independent State of Palestine with the realisation of two states,

Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

14. The Ministers welcomed the signing by the ASEAN Leaders of the “ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region” at the 28th ASEAN Summit in Vientiane. Consistent with the said Declaration, the Ministers reaffirmed the importance of harnessing the individual and collective strengths of different sectors and stakeholders in ASEAN to effectively respond to disasters inside and outside the region. They recognised that the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) remains as the main regional policy backbone and common platform for the implementation of One ASEAN, One Response, and that the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) is the primary coordinating agency on disaster management and emergency response and recognised the role of the AHA Centre, at a later stage, in enabling ASEAN to respond to disasters outside the region, as well as to promote the implementation of internationally adopted principles and standards related to disaster risk reduction, including the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

15. Mindful that addressing climate change and reducing disaster risks are essential to promoting sustainable development in the region, the Ministers noted the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on climate change in November last year and called for further progress in the ongoing negotiations related to the implementation of the Agreement. The Ministers welcomed the holding of the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and efforts to implement the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

## **REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES OF THE CURRENT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2016-2017)**

16. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the implementation of ARF Track 1 activities for the inter-sessional year of 2016-2017 which has contributed significantly in promoting constructive dialogue and fostering cooperation among ARF participants on security issues of common concern in the region. The Ministers commended the work of the ARF Senior Officials’ Meeting (ARF SOM) held in Manila on 24 May 2017 and the ARF Inter-Sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ARF ISG on CBMs and PD), co-chaired by the Philippines and Canada in Ottawa on 11-12 May 2017. The Ministers noted the reports and endorsed the recommendations made in the reports which appear as **ANNEXES 2** and **3**, respectively.

17. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of enhancing defense and security cooperation in the ARF in further strengthening regional civil-military cooperation and coordination, and to complement the work of the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). In this regard, the Ministers appreciated the contributions of defense officials to the ARF process and endorsed the recommendations of the ARF Defence Officials’ Dialogue (DOD) in May in Ottawa and the 14<sup>th</sup> ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) in June in Manila to streamline and synergize the ARF DOD and ASPC into the ARF Defence and Security Policy Conference (ADSPC), which will be

the forum for ARF defence establishments at the senior officials' level. The reports of the ARF DOD and the 14<sup>th</sup> ASPC appear as **ANNEXES 4** and **5**, respectively. The ARF defence establishments are hereby encouraged to sustain discussions and determine the modalities of the ADSPC.

18. The Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the following meetings:
- a. 9<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS), co-chaired by the Philippines, US and Japan, in Tokyo on 8-9 February 2017;
  - b. 9<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ISM on NPD), co-chaired by Malaysia, Canada and New Zealand, in Auckland on 8-9 March 2017;
  - c. 16<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR), co-chaired by Thailand and the Republic of Korea, in Bangkok on 3 April 2017;
  - d. 15<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC), co-chaired by Indonesia and India, in Semarang on 6-7 April 2017;
  - e. 11<sup>th</sup> ARF Experts and Eminent Persons Meeting (EEPs), co-chaired by Viet Nam and Australia, in Canberra on 28 February- 1 March 2017; and
  - f. 20<sup>th</sup> ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM), held in New Delhi, India on 5-8 October 2016.

The reports of these meetings appear as **ANNEXES 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11** respectively.

19. The Ministers also noted with satisfaction, the successful conduct of the following ARF Track 1 Activities in the inter-sessional year 2016-2017 and encouraged officials to implement appropriate outcomes and recommendations:

- a. ARF Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy in Non-Traditional Security Issues, held in Nanjing, China on 20-23 November 2016;
- b. ARF Workshop on Emergency Management of Marine Hazards in the Asia-Pacific Region, held in Beijing, China on 6-8 December 2016;
- c. ARF Workshop on Medium- to Long-Term Support for Victims of Terrorism, held in Manila, Philippines on 7-8 February 2017;
- d. ARF Workshop on Mainstreaming the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the ARF Region, held in Brussels, Belgium on 15-16 February 2017;
- e. ARF Workshop on the Establishment of the ARF Transnational Threat Information-sharing Centre (ATTIC), held in Bangkok, Thailand on 6-7 March 2017;
- f. ARF Workshop on Trafficking in Persons, held in Semarang, Indonesia on 4-5 April 2017;
- g. ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy in a Post-Conflict Environment, held in Dili, Timor Leste on 18-20 April 2017;
- h. ARF Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy and Early Warning Systems, held in Yangon, Myanmar on 19-21 June 2017;
- i. ARF Workshop on Best Practices in Implementing Safety of Navigation Instruments, held in Manila, Philippines on 11-12 July 2017;
- j. ARF Workshop on Countering On-line Extremist Messaging, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 19-20 July 2017; and

- k. ARF Workshop on Earthquake Emergency Response and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Capacity Building, held in Beijing, China on 25-27 July 2017.

## **PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2017-2018)**

20. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment in continuing to promote confidence building measures (CBMs) while at the same time developing PD tools and expertise suited to the needs of the region. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the convening of PD-related activities in the next inter-sessional year 2017-2018.

21. The Ministers welcomed Singapore and New Zealand as the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and ARF DOD for the inter-sessional year 2017-2018.

22. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the implementation of activities in ARF ISM on DR, on CTTC, on MS and on NPD in the previous inter-sessional year 2016-2017. In this context, the Ministers welcomed and looked forward for Thailand and the Republic of Korea to continue co-chairing the 17<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on DR; Viet Nam, Australia, and the European Union to co-chair the ARF ISM on MS for 2017-2020; Indonesia, Japan and the Republic of Korea to co-chair the ARF ISM on NPD for 2017-2020. The Ministers encouraged ASEAN and Non-ASEAN ARF participants to consider co-chairing the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on CTTC in the inter-sessional year 2018-2019 and the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (DiREx). The Ministers also welcomed the Philippines and Japan as Co-Chairs of the 21<sup>st</sup> ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM).

23. The Ministers welcomed the proposal co-sponsored by Malaysia, Singapore and Japan for the establishment of a new Inter-sessional Meeting on the Security of and in the Use of Information Communications Technology (ISM on ICTs Security), based on the recognition of the importance of addressing the increasing number of issues related to security of and in the use of ICTs. The Ministers were informed of the interest of Malaysia, Japan and Singapore to co-chair the ARF ISM on ICTs Security.

24. The Ministers commended the work of the ARF EEPs in advancing the ARF process through their discussions and recommendations. In this regard, the Ministers noted the recommendations made by the ARF EEPs at their 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting in Canberra. The Ministers welcomed Viet Nam and Japan as the Co-Chairs of the 12<sup>th</sup> ARF EPPs Meeting for the inter-sessional year 2017-2018.

25. The Ministers reaffirmed that the approval of all proposed ARF activities, work plans, statements, and concept papers need to follow established procedures of the ARF. That is, they need to be discussed at the ISM/ISG level and endorsed at the ARF SOM before they are elevated for the consideration of the ARF Ministers. In this regard, the Ministers approved the List of Track 1 Activities for the Inter-sessional Year 2017-2018 which appears as **ANNEX 12**.

26. The Ministers adopted the following documents which appear as **ANNEXES 13** and **14**:

- a. ARF Statement on Enhancing Cooperation in Addressing and Countering the Drug Problem; and

- b. ARF Statement on Cooperation to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing.

## **FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF PROCESS**

27. The Ministers welcomed Singapore as the Chair of the 25<sup>th</sup> ARF, beginning 1 January 2018.

28. The Ministers reaffirmed the key role of the Hanoi Plan of Action (POA) in the implementation of the ARF Vision Statement in guiding the ARF to become a more 'action-oriented' forum at a pace that is comfortable to all ARF participants. The Ministers noted the suggestion to review and update the POA to move forward with its implementation, particularly on the action lines that have yet to be implemented and for all ARF participants to continue working together to realise the ARF Vision Statement by 2020. The Ministers commended the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat for its efforts in preparing the Matrix of Status of Implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action and in highlighting the implementation rates of the action lines. The Matrix appears as **ANNEX 15**.

29. The Ministers highlighted the importance of promoting complementarities between the ARF and other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ADMM-Plus, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) and strengthening civil-military cooperation and coordination within the ARF Process. As such, the Ministers reiterated their call for relevant officials to discuss practical steps to ensure better coordination and synergy among efforts among the various mechanisms with the view of enhancing complementarity of initiatives and avoiding straining of resources and unnecessary duplication of efforts. In this regard, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to streamline and rationalise meetings and activities to include platforms of dialogues for the defence sector under the ARF such as the ARF DOD and the ASPC.

30. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of strengthening partnerships between Track 1 and Track 2 organisations such as the Network of ASEAN Defence Institutes (NADI), Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and the ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS), in order to add value to the ARF Process including through the publication of CSCAP Security Outlook and various memoranda for the consideration of Track 1 officials.

31. The Ministers encouraged the involvement of ARF EEPs as well as Track 2 Officials at the relevant ARF meetings or activities. The Ministers also encouraged the convening of Track 1.5 initiatives, particularly on areas relating to PD and conflict resolution, which could serve as an exploratory approach in discussing complex political and security issues in support of the role of the ARF as the primary platform for dialogue and consultation.

32. The Ministers recognised challenges to security of ICTs as an issue that transcends national borders and, as such, needs to be addressed through joint regional and sub-regional efforts. They recommended that as the ARF moved ahead with its efforts to tackle issues of the security of ICTs, related activities should focus on building confidence and enhancing the practical and technical aspects of cooperation, and should coordinate with and complement the efforts on ICT Security Initiatives undertaken by other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN

Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting (TELMIN), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus), and ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC). In this regard, they endorsed the Concept Paper to Establish the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on ICTs Security. The Concept Paper appears as **ANNEX 16**.

33. The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat in supporting the 24<sup>th</sup> ARF Chair, Co-Chairs of ARF ISMs and other ARF endorsed meetings and activities. The Ministers noted the Matrix of ARF Decisions and Their Status 1994-2017, which is regularly updated and has been a useful document in charting the ARF's progress through the years. The Matrix appears as **ANNEX 17**.

34. The Ministers welcomed the publication of the ARF Annual Security Outlook (ARF ASO) 2017 and acknowledged its importance as an essential document in fostering trust and mutual understanding through transparency and confidence building among ARF participants. To this end, they called for greater participation from ARF participants through regular contributions in the succeeding ARF ASO publications.

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