

**CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY REPORT  
OF THE  
ARF DEFENCE DIALOGUE**

**23 JULY 2008  
SINGAPORE**

**Introduction**

1. In conjunction with the 15<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ARF Defence Dialogue (ARF DD) was held in Singapore on 23 July 2008. The Dialogue meeting was chaired by the Brigadier-General Gary Ang, Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Defence. The Meeting was attended by ARF members from Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, US and Vietnam as well as the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat. The list of delegates is at **Annex A**.

**Item 1: Welcome Remarks**

2. In his opening remarks, the Chair welcomed the participants to the ARF Defence Dialogue and noted that the Defence Dialogue provided a good opportunity for the defence officials to exchange views on regional security and defence outlook and to discuss issues of mutual concern. The Chair recalled that the defence officials had fruitful exchanges during the ARF Defence Dialogue and the ARF Security Policy Conference that Singapore hosted on 7 and 8 May respectively, where pertinent security issues affecting the region and emerging security challenges were discussed. The Chair highlighted that the open and inclusive membership of the ARF could facilitate constructive dialogue and practical cooperation on current and emerging security issues amongst the ARF defence establishments and expressed hope for another round of constructive and productive exchanges.

**Item 2: Adoption of Agenda**

3. The meeting considered and adopted the Agenda, which is at **Annex B**.

### **Item 3: Challenges to Security in the Asia-Pacific**

4. The Meeting exchanged views on the security challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region, and noted that the security situation remained relatively stable which had promoted economic growth and development. The traditional flashpoints and hotspots such as the nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula and Iran, and territorial disputes in the South China Sea, the security situations in South Asia, Middle East and the South Pacific have been largely kept in check. The Meeting also underscored the importance of the ARF as one of the key multilateral political and security forums in addressing security issues concerning the region, and thereby contributing to the enhancement of regional peace and stability.

5. The Meeting expressed its appreciation for the positive steps taken by the DPRK towards disablement of the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon and hoped that a verification mechanism would be established soon. The Meeting stressed that the verifiable denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula is essential in maintaining peace and security for the region and expressed its support for the Six Party Talks as an important mechanism in resolving the nuclear and outstanding issues of concern.

6. The Meeting also recognised that while traditional flashpoints and hotspots were kept in check, peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific should not be taken for granted. The Asia-Pacific region was made up of countries with different races, religions, political ideologies and levels of economic development. We must be vigilant that these differences did not undermine the peace and prosperity that the region currently enjoyed.

7. The Meeting noted that the region continued to face a range of non-traditional and transnational security challenges such as terrorism and maritime security as well as illegal transportation and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that were posed by non-state actors. In addition, the region had to deal with the implications of the spread of infectious diseases as well as the damage by natural disasters. The Meeting noted the importance to build collective responsibilities if we were to address these security challenges more effectively. In this regard, Thailand informed the Meeting that it would join the Malacca Strait Patrol by end of 2008.

8. The Meeting acknowledged that the global agenda today covered new security challenges. The Meeting also noted that issues such as energy and

food security had begun to adopt a strategic focus, and increasingly the defence establishments of ARF countries might have to deal with the new security challenges even if they were traditionally non-defence issues. In this regard, the Meeting agreed that the ARF would provide a useful platform where some of these issues could be further discussed.

9. The various papers submitted by the discussants, namely Myanmar and New Zealand are at **Annexes C and D** respectively.

**Item 4: Moving from Dialogue to Practical Cooperation: Regional Efforts to Enhance HADR**

10. The Meeting expressed their condolences to the people of Myanmar and China for the massive damage and extensive loss of lives suffered as a result of Cyclone Nargis and the earthquake in Sichuan, China.

11. The Meeting acknowledged that since the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004, the region has undertaken numerous efforts to strengthen capacities in dealing with natural disasters. The 14<sup>th</sup> ARF in Manila last year adopted the ARF General Guidelines on Disaster Relief Cooperation. In this respect, the Meeting noted the good work done by the Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief in enhancing regional cooperation in HADR. The Meeting welcomed the progress made in the development of an ARF Strategic Guidance for HADR, including an ARF Standby Arrangement. The Meeting also welcomed the ARF Tabletop Exercise that Australia and Indonesia co-hosted in May 2008 as an important step towards enhancing concrete cooperation in this area. The Meeting further welcomed the Philippines and the US' intention to co-host an ARF Disaster Relief Exercise, termed Voluntary Demonstration of Response, in 2009.

12. Recognising that many ARF countries were in a region prone to natural disasters, the Meeting noted the importance and need for the ARF to intensify its cooperation in this area and to move beyond dialogue and to build practical cooperation. The Meeting further noted that the armed forces on their own would not have the full capacities to deal with disaster relief operations and would need to work closely together with other civilian agencies. The operational procedures that the ARF was working on would facilitate better understanding and cooperation among ARF defence establishments and civilian agencies tasked with relief efforts.

13. Apart from enhancing regional efforts to strengthen national and regional capacities in addressing HADR, the Meeting recalled that it was important to respect norms of behaviour and principles for cooperation in disaster relief operations. These principles included that the affected country has the primary responsibility to respond to disasters occurring within its territory in a prompt and effective manner; where needed, the affected country shall facilitate external assistance from other countries and international organisations in its HADR efforts to achieve the objective of prompt and effective disaster management and relief; and that external assistance shall be provided with the consent of the affected country, and the HADR efforts should be under its overall control and supervision.

14. The various papers submitted by the discussants, namely Australia, China, Japan, Pakistan and the Republic of Korea are at **Annexes E, F, G, H and I.**

**Item 5: Any Other Matters**

15. The Meeting was briefed by both Cambodia and Thailand on the situation in the area around the Temple of Preah Vihear. The Meeting urged both countries to exercise utmost restraint and resolve this issue amicably.

16. The Meeting welcomed Thailand as the incoming Chair of ASEAN and the ARF. Congratulating Singapore for her successful Chairmanship of ASEAN and the ARF, Thailand highlighted that it would build on the good work achieved by Singapore and the previous Chairs to continue laying the foundation for enhancing confidence building and dialogues on issues of mutual concern.

**Item 6: Closing Remarks**

17. In his closing remarks, the Chair expressed his appreciation to the participants for their active participation and valuable insights which had contributed to an engaging and successful meeting. The Chair highlighted that we needed to take a broader perspective on security cooperation as the region continued to be confronted by an array of security challenges that were non-traditional and transnational in nature. In this respect, the regional security architecture needed to be open and inclusive. Countries within and outside the region can bring perspectives, expertise and even resources to bear on enhancing regional security.

18. The Meeting was also informed by the Chair that Singapore and the Republic of Korea would co-host the ARF ISG on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (CBMs and PD) for the intersessional year 2008-2009, in Singapore tentatively on 8-10 October 2008. The agenda for the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD would be circulated in due course.

19. The meeting thanked the Government of Singapore for the generous hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for the ARF Defence Dialogue.

\*\*\*\*\*