

**REPORT  
OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM DEFENCE DIALOGUE**

**7 MAY 2008  
SINGAPORE**

**Introduction**

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum Defence Dialogue was held in Singapore on 7 May 2008. The Meeting was chaired by BG Gary Ang, Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Defence, Singapore

2. The Meeting was attended by Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United States, Vietnam as well as the ASEAN Secretariat. The list of delegates is at **Annex A**.

**Item 1: Welcome Remarks**

3. The Chair welcomed all the ARF defence officials and the ASEAN Secretariat to the ARF Defence Dialogue in Singapore. The Chair recalled that interactions amongst the ARF defence officials had evolved significantly over the years. The ARF defence engagement started informally with a luncheon in 1997; the defence officials now have official platforms like the ARF Defence Dialogue and the ARF Security Policy Conference for engagements. The Chair further noted that interactions and engagement amongst the ARF defence officials had contributed to confidence building as well as mutual understanding. This had allowed the ARF to undertake more defence-related CBMs and activities, as well as to move towards greater practical cooperation. The Chair noted that greater cooperation amongst the ARF defence establishments would enhance the ARF's capacity to address the range of security challenges facing the region.

**Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda**

4. The Meeting considered and adopted the Agenda, which is at **Annex B**.

**Item 3: Efforts in Combating Terrorism and Other Non-Traditional Security Issues**

5. The Meeting thanked Australia, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines for sharing their efforts in combating terrorism and other non-traditional security issues. The briefings are attached as Annex C, Annex D, and Annex E.

6. Participants to the Meeting reiterated their commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations as no country could be free from the threat of terrorism. Participants also agreed on the continued utility of measures such as depriving terrorists of financing through anti-money laundering legislation, strengthening border security, and document management security. The Meeting also underscored the need for capacity building through joint training and information sharing in order to deal more effectively with the terrorist threat.

7. Notwithstanding the relatively successful efforts in combating terrorism, the Meeting agreed that challenges continued to exist. Participants pointed to the need to address the root causes or conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This would entail a sustainable strategy to win the hearts and minds of the people. To this end, the Meeting reiterated the importance of nation-building measures such as the provision of basic economic and social services, the importance of good governance and institution-building, the necessity of achieving national political consensus through reconciliation and negotiation, and the importance of national will. This would allow the problem of terrorism to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

8. The Meeting also exchanged views on ongoing national, regional and international initiatives aimed at combating terrorism, and agreed that international and regional cooperation continued to be important and useful in tackling the threat. Timely sharing of information and intelligence was noted as key to thwarting the plans of terrorists. In addition, the Meeting reaffirmed the need to strengthen the mechanisms for consequence management in the event of a terrorist attack. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed the ongoing efforts of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime. The Meeting also reaffirmed the important role that the ARF could play in this area. The Meeting further noted that the Three-Year Working Programme of the ASEAN Defence

Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) had identified counter-terrorism as a priority area for cooperation.

9. Other non-traditional security challenges identified by the Meeting included maritime security, peace keeping/peace-building, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the spread of pandemic and infectious diseases, energy and food security. The meeting noted the need for disaster relief preparedness, especially considering the recurrent natural disasters that have been taking place in the region destroying human lives in huge numbers and causing severe damage to the economy.

#### **Item 4: Regional Efforts to Enhance Maritime Security**

10. The Meeting thanked India, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore for sharing their efforts to enhance maritime security. The briefings are attached as **Annex F** and **Annex G**.

11. The Meeting welcomed the ARF's continued focus and dialogue on the issue of maritime security. The Meeting noted the ARF had made significant progress in the area of maritime security. In addition to a series of maritime security-related CBMs, seminars and workshops, the Meeting welcomed the ARF Maritime Security Shore Exercise in Singapore on 22-23 January 2007 as the first operational activity undertaken by the ARF. The Meeting looked forward to the development of other concrete and practical activities in the future. The Meeting further welcomed Indonesia's proposal to establish an Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security as a means to strengthen the ARF's cooperation in enhancing regional maritime security.

12. The Meeting exchanged views on maritime security cooperation and shared the view that cooperation should be guided by three broad principles – that the primary responsibility for maritime security lied with the littoral states; that the international community, such as the International Maritime Organisation as well as user states, had a useful role to play to enhance maritime security; and that any cooperative measures undertaken should be respectful of international law and territorial sovereignty and integrity.

13. In this regard, the Meeting noted that incidents of piracy in the region and the Strait of Malacca had decreased substantially in recent years, in large part due to cooperation among the littoral states under the framework of the Malacca Strait Patrol.

14. The Meeting also reiterated the value of timely information sharing so as to enhance maritime domain awareness. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed the role of the Information Sharing Centre established under the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in providing a key platform on which regional cooperation could be forged. The Meeting also noted that other professional forums like the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) provided a valuable platform for discussions and forging practical cooperation to enhance regional security.

15. Notwithstanding the decrease in the incidents of piracy and armed robberies attacks, the Meeting stressed the need to build capacity so that we could better address the maritime security challenges. The Meeting also noted the importance of forging partnerships and the need for overlapping bilateral and multilateral approaches to enhancing the regional maritime security.

**Item 5: Any Other Matters**

16. The Meeting noted the briefing by Malaysia on the outcomes of the ARF Seminar on Anti-Personnel Landmines that it co-hosted with the European Union in Penang from 8-10 April 2008. The Meeting was also informed by Indonesia of the outcomes of the Indonesia-Australia co-hosted ARF Desktop Exercise on Disaster Relief that was held in Jakarta from 1-2 May 2008. The reports are at **Annex H** and **Annex I** respectively.

17. The Meeting was informed by Singapore that the next ARF Defence Dialogue would be held on 23 July 2008 in Singapore in conjunction with the 15<sup>th</sup> ARF Ministers' Meeting. The agenda, programme of the next ARF Defence Dialogue, as well as the invitation, would be circulated in due course.

18. The Meeting was also briefed by Singapore that a visit to the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosives (CBRE) Training Village would be held in the afternoon of 7 May 2008. In line with the theme of the Meeting, the participants would be shown a demonstration of the SAF's counter-terrorist and unconventional threat operations by the SAF Commandos and SAF Combat Engineers.

## **Item 6: Closing Remarks**

19. In his closing remarks, the Chair, on behalf of all the ARF Defence Dialogue participants, expressed the Meeting's deepest sympathies and condolences to the people and government of Myanmar for the extensive damage and great loss of lives caused by Cyclone Nargis. The Chair noted that this was another major disaster for the region after the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004. The Chair further noted that the disaster in Myanmar had underscored the need for the ARF to enhance its cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

20. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the ARF defence officials for sharing their views on the two main topics of counter-terrorism and maritime security. The Chair noted that the views expressed were insightful, and would allow each of us as an individual country and as a region, to address these security challenges in a more effective manner. The Meeting thanked the government of Singapore for the excellent arrangements made for the ARF Defence Dialogue.

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