

**CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY  
REPORT OF  
THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM  
EXPERTS AND EMINENT PERSONS  
BANGKOK, THAILAND, 1 – 3 FEBRUARY 2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Pursuant to the decision of the 18<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Bali, Indonesia, on 23 July 2011, the Sixth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 1 – 3 February 2012. The Meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Panitan Wattanayagorn, EEP of Thailand, and Dr. Ralph Cossa, EEP of the United States.
2. The Meeting was attended by EEPs and representatives from all ARF Participants. Representatives from the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat were also present. The list of delegates is attached in **Annex 1**.

## **OPENING SESSION**

3. At the Opening Ceremony, Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana, Acting Director-General of ASEAN Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, delivered his opening remarks reiterating that the adoption of the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy last July by ARF Ministers was the important step in moving towards Phase Two of the ARF and encouraged EEPs to actively discuss how the ARF can actually implement PD measures. He also encouraged the Meeting to discuss the relationship of the ARF in the context of new developments in the regional architecture with the EAS and ADMM-Plus. The welcoming remarks appear as **Annex 2**.

## **CLOSED SESSION**

4. The Meeting was convened in plenary session to discuss the agenda items “Preventive Diplomacy”, “Regional Architecture and Future Direction of the ARF” and Other Matters”. The agenda of the Meeting appears as **Annex 3**.
5. Various papers were distributed to stimulate the discussions. These include documents previously distributed in the ARF such as “ARF Work Plan on

Preventive Diplomacy”, “Joint Study on Best Practices and Lesson Learned in Preventive Diplomacy”, “Speech to the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Sydney on 7 April 2011” which appear as Annexes 4, 5 and 6 respectively. In addition, new papers were circulated including “Preventive Diplomacy: Conclusions and Recommendation, Comprehensive Summary of Timor-Leste’s Election Process”, “Non-Paper: Some Ideas on the Relationship Between the Regional Architecture and Preventive Diplomacy”, and “Working Paper: Concept Paper ARF Election Observer Initiative”. These appear as **Annexes 7, 8 and 9** respectively.

6. The Meeting was also convened in a break out session, with one session comprising EEPs only, and the other session comprising non-EEPs. It was felt that having the EEPs meet by themselves facilitated brainstorming on the key issues and development of concrete recommendations, as per the intent of the ARF when it established the EEPs.
7. The key recommendations of the Meetings are as follows:
  - 7.1 **Progress on PD** The Meeting underlined the importance of the ARF moving forward on preventive diplomacy, building on the ARF Work Plan on PD.
  - 7.2 **Fact Finding Missions** Consistent with the ARF Work Plan and the principle contained therein, ARF participants should be encouraged to explore fact finding missions to examine issues of common concern. In this connection, the EEPs could seek to identify possible issues of common concern that would benefit from fact-finding missions, bearing in mind that such missions would require the consent of all parties concerned. Furthermore, compositions of such fact-finding missions would be developed by the Chair in consultations with ARF participants.
  - 7.3 **Standardized Annual Security Outlook** ARF participants were encouraged to make submissions to the standardized Annual Security Outlooks (ASO) and consider making such drafts available to their respective EEPs prior to these submissions. Following publication of the ASO, EEPs could be utilized to analyze and critique the relevant parts of

the ASO, especially in the area of current and emerging security challenges. In addition, a small number of EEPs would be encouraged to volunteer to analyze and critique the ASO and provide observations to the next EEP Meeting.

- 7.4 **Flashpoints Identification** Drawing upon the ASO analysis, and consistent with the ARF Work Plan and other relevant ARF principles, EEPs could be utilized to identify potential flashpoints for instability in the region that would be discussed at the next meeting of the EEPs. Once flashpoints have been identified, specific EEPs would be tasked to lead the discussions on such flashpoints. They would focus on the possible role of CBMs and PD to help avoid escalation of confrontation or the risk of conflict.
- 7.5 **Regional Risk Reduction Centres** The utility of a regional risk reduction centers was recognized but it was generally felt that such a centre would be premature at this stage. For such a centre to be successful, it would need access to relevant information and data from ARF participants and adequate funding. The Meeting was informed that ASEAN was developing an Institute for Peace and Reconciliation which could contribute to risk reduction.
- 7.6 **Code of Conduct in the South China Sea** The Meeting welcomed ongoing efforts between ASEAN and China to develop a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea as called for in the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, and underscored the importance of reaching agreement on a Code of Conduct as soon as possible which would also contribute to preventive diplomacy in the region. The Meeting also noted some countries' view that the Code of Code shall be a legally-binding document.
- 7.7 **Enhanced Interaction between EEPs and ARF Track One** The Meeting suggested that EEPs be invited to attend ARF Meetings at the ISG and ISM levels.
- 7.8 **Improving the ARF** The Meeting recognized that the expanded East Asia Summit (EAS) and the development of the ASEAN Defense

Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) had made it more urgent for the ARF to define its role more clearly. Suggestions to improve the ARF include more effective sharing of information within the ARF, strengthening the role of ARF Unit through greater resources, and considering convening an ARF Summit.

- 7.9 **Interaction Between the EAS, ARF and ADMM Plus** Although there was general acceptance of the need to have constructive interaction between the EAS, ARF and ADMM Plus, there were different views on modalities for such interaction. The Meeting recognized the high degree of overlap between the work of the ARF and the ADMM Plus. While recognizing the evolutionary nature of the regional security architecture, to reduce this overlap, a suggestion was made that channels of communication be established between the two fora such as in areas where their work programmes coincide, including exchange of documentation and findings. One way to achieve this is to convene joint workshops between the ARF and ADMM Plus on issues of common interest such as disaster management. It was also suggested that the ADMM Plus could focus more on hard security issues such as safety and security of sea lines of communication and consider meeting annually.

7.10 **ARF Electoral Capacity Building Programme for Timor-Leste**

EEPs welcome Timor-Leste's decision to invite an ARF observer team and encourage all member states to send representatives, to include where possible, at least one EEP representative. Questions remain regarding the selection process, training, and reporting requirements. Nonetheless there was general support for EEPs participation in the ARF Observer Mission. The ARF is encouraged to first clarify its intentions to send a team and, if so, to then more clearly define the scope and modalities of its election monitoring effort and member countries are encouraged to select, in addition to EEPs, individuals with some election monitoring experience. The EU confirms its readiness to share information and possibly engage in formal training on methodological points with the ARF observer team.

- 7.11 **EEPs Retreat** The Meeting recommended that future meetings should also be convened in retreat format, comprising only of EEPs and encouraging free-flow discussion, in order to facilitate the development of ideas for the ARF.
- 7.12 **EEPs Communication during the Inter-sessional Period** The Meeting agreed that EEPs should be able to continue their work during the inter-sessional period and maintain their communications through e-mail or other means as appropriate.
8. The Meeting noted that the Co-Chairs Summary Report would be submitted to the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD through the appropriate channels.
9. The Meeting noted that the Co-Chairs of the next meeting would be designated in due course. The benefits of having Thailand co-chair back-to-back meetings was duly noted and it was suggested that Co-Chairs serve for two overlapping terms with the United States Co-Chairing next year's meeting with a new ASEAN co-chair who would then co-chair the 2014 meeting with a new non-ASEAN Co-Chair, and so forth.
10. The EEPs request clarification from the ARF about who qualifies as an EEP. It was our understanding that there were specific lists of individuals from each country and that members would not be serving government officials.
11. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the Co-Chairs for facilitating a frank and open discussion. The Meeting also thanked the Governments of the Kingdom of Thailand and the United States for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to all participants.