

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

**18 MAY 2009
PHUKET, THAILAND**

Introduction

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum Defence Officials' Dialogue (ARF DoD) was held on 18 May 2009 in Phuket, Thailand. The Meeting was chaired by General Viddhavat Rajatanun, Director-General of the Office of Policy and Planning, Ministry of Defence, Kingdom of Thailand.

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

Item 1: Welcome Remarks

3. The Chair welcomed and expressed his gratitude to all the delegates attending the ARF DoD, which was held back-to-back with the ASEAN Regional Forum Security Policy Conference (ASPC), preceding the ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Officials' Meeting (ARF SOM). The Chair also reiterated that the defence officials' involvement in the ARF process had grown considerably over the years, given the fact that the ARF DoD structure originated as an informal luncheon in 1997. Judging from a widening participation of the ARF countries, the ARF DoD has continued to make considerable progress. The official venues had allowed the defence officials to engage and contribute more effectively in moving along the ARF process.

Item 2: Adoption of Agenda

4. The Meeting adopted the Agenda which appears as **ANNEX B**.

Item 3: Military Response to Non-Traditional Security Threats

5. The Meeting underlined the importance of the strengthening of cooperation and collective measures in the Asia-Pacific region to effectively cope with non-traditional security threats namely global economic crisis, food and energy shortage, large-scale natural disaster, transnational crime, terrorism, maritime security, pandemic diseases, proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction, environmental degradation as well as drugs trafficking, people smuggling, and human trafficking. In this regard, the ARF was considered to be the important mechanism that would help

facilitate cooperation and coordination in the region in response to non-traditional security challenges.

6. The Meeting exchanged views on the lessons learnt and significant role of the military in addressing non-traditional security issues such as Influenza A(H1N1), SARS in 2003, Tsunami in 2004, piracy in the Malacca Straits and piracy in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia and other threats as well. Given rising non-traditional security challenges, the role that the military could play had expanded significantly over the years.

7. The Meeting noted that the region needed to include a wide range of stakeholders and that it was important to utilise not only a whole-of-government approach but also a whole-of-society approach. In this regard, ASEAN defence establishments' attempt to engage the civil society organisations in regional efforts on non-traditional security challenges should be acknowledged. The Meeting further noted that education was a critical component of a whole-of-society approach in combating non-traditional security threats in the Asia-Pacific region.

8. The Meeting noted that the ARF Voluntary Demonstration of Response (VDR), co-hosted by the United States and the Philippines on 4-8 May 2009, had served as a concrete contribution to building capacity for transnational security cooperation in important cooperation areas including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

9. The presentations given by the lead discussants, namely, Laos, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore are at **ANNEXES C, D, E, and F.**

Item 4: Optimising Defence Capability in response to Non-Traditional Security Threats during the Global Economic Crisis

10. The Meeting underlined the urgent need to address the current global economic crisis issue as it posed a serious threat to the Asia-Pacific region particularly on its impact on the defence capability in response to non-traditional security threats. The Meeting also recognised that despite the economic downturn, the military continued to play a significant role in addressing security issues particularly in areas such as terrorism, transnational crime, peacekeeping, pandemic disease, climate change, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and maritime security. The military needed to continuously prepare itself for the extended missions. Hence, it was crucial that countries in the Asia-Pacific region maintained high level of defence efficiency while carefully observing defence expenditures.

11. The Meeting noted that it was important to utilise the limited budget efficiently through promoting rational and efficient defence acquisition such as an active use of commercial goods and technologies, cost reduction procurements. In addition, the Meeting also recognised that regional and international cooperation was a key to effectively responding to non-traditional security threats.

12. The presentations given by the lead discussants, namely, Japan, and the Republic of Korea are at **ANNEXES G and H.**

Item 5: Other Matters

13. The Meeting was informed by Thailand that the next ARF DoD would be held on 22 July 2009 in Thailand in conjunction with the 16th ARF Ministers' Meeting.

Item 6: Closing Remarks

14. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the participants' contribution to the Meeting. The Chair also reiterated the importance of the defence activities within the ARF framework, aimed at strengthening regional cooperation to tackle security challenges, as well as to promote peace, security and stability in the region. The Meeting thanked the Ministry of Defence, Kingdom of Thailand, for the excellent arrangements made for the ARF DoD.
