

**CO-CHAIR'S SUMMARY REPORT OF
THE THIRD MEETING OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
EXPERTS AND EMINENT PERSONS**

Beijing, 13-15 November 2008

Introduction

1. Pursuant to the decision of the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Singapore on 24 July 2008, the 3rd Meeting of the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons was held in Beijing on 13-15 November 2008. The Meeting was co-chaired by Viet Nam and China.

2. EEPs from 12 ARF participants attended the meeting. In addition, official representatives from all ARF participants except Bangladesh, the European Union, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea were present. The Agenda of the Meeting is attached as **ANNEX A**, the Programme of Activities as **ANNEX B**, and the List of Participants as **ANNEX C**.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

3. Ambassador Duong Van Quang, President of Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam, Ambassador Ma Zhengang, President of the Chinese Institute of International Studies, as the co-chairs of the Meeting, welcomed all participants to the 3rd ARF EEPs Meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda

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

Agenda Item 3: Welcoming Remarks

5. H.E. Mr. Hu Zhengyue, Assistant Foreign Minister of China, delivered the welcoming remarks on behalf of the Chinese government. He spoke highly of the overall trend towards peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region after the end of the Cold War, which he attributed in part to such regional forums as the ARF. He hailed the ARF for having enhanced mutual trust and cultivated a new model of security cooperation in the region, stressing that such time-tested principles as decision-making by consensus, adopting a gradual and evolutionary approach, moving at a pace comfortable to all and the ASEAN playing a driving role should continue to be adhered to in the future. Noting that the region is facing ever more threats that are non-traditional in nature, he suggested that the ARF conduct more practical cooperation in such areas as disaster management, counter-terrorism, combating transnational crimes, non-proliferation and disarmament as well as energy security. Calling the EEPs the thinktank and resource persons of the ARF, he said the meeting was very timely, given the fact that this year

marked the 15th anniversary of the ARF, and voiced the hope that the EEPs would offer their valuable insights and inputs on the future development of the ARF.

6. Ambassador Duong Van Quang, President of Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam noted the roles of ARF in promoting the habit of regional dialogue amid the changing security environment. Taking this into account, ARF constantly needs to be equipped with inputs from experts that could help move the ARF process. The roles of the ARF EEPs, therefore are highly expected by the Track I officials.

Agenda Item 4: Session I: ARF's 15-Year Experience & Its Revelations

7. The Meeting noted the achievements of the ARF throughout the fifteen years of its existence. The Meeting agreed that the ARF has been an important formal governmental security dialogue in the region. The ARF has witnessed cooperation that focused on the areas of CBMs, cooperation in the areas of shared interests, i.e. non-traditional security issues, and is currently considering the implementation of preventive diplomacy and other forward thinking initiatives. ARF has helped to accelerate security cooperation in areas of common concern, promote CBMs and PD and encourage efforts toward capacity building.

8. Some participants considered the agenda of the ASEAN's security focus should be on ARF. Others highlighted the potential of ARF as a mechanism serving both ASEAN and the wider membership. The Meeting recommended that the ARF should be ASEAN-driven without relegating the roles of the non-ASEAN participating members of the ARF, focusing on security issues based on the ARF Review paper and guided by the ARF Vision Statement.

9. The Meeting acknowledged that while ARF has been working as a cooperative forum equipped with a number of tools and mechanisms, not much of these mechanisms have been used especially in the area of preventive diplomacy. The Meeting also observed that ARF has a wealth of resources of the EEPs which are not yet fully integrated to the ARF. In this respect, some proposed that the EEPs could contribute to conduct research on early warning. In view of the recent adoption of the ARF Review paper, some participants also emphasized that the EEPs could help make the ARF decision making more effective.

10. In discussing the future of ARF, the Meeting agreed that ARF is now at the critically important juncture in its history with newly emerging threats and the presence of numerous security fora in the region. Taking this into account, the ARF should consider how the ARF sees itself in the region, what principles should the ARF adhere to, how the ARF should adapt to fit into the current regional security architecture and how best to improve the ARF modalities.

11. The Meeting viewed that ARF should lead the agenda for security dialogue in the region and enhance mutual trust through dialogue on an equal footing. Some participants emphasized the need to maintain a comprehensive security approach in addressing regional security challenges. During this process, the ARF process should

be kept consensual, cognizant of the political sensitivities and recognize the many new emerging security issues that would undoubtedly arise in the future.

12. While recognizing the emerging non-traditional security threats, the Meeting agreed that ARF should keep abreast and continue to discuss the traditional security issues.

Agenda Item 5: Session II: ARF's Confidence Building Measures-Present and Future

13. The Meeting acknowledged the importance of ARF CBMs activities and most insisted that CBMs continue to serve as the foundation of the ARF process. The Meeting agreed that CBMs have helped promote dialogue and trust in addressing traditional and non-traditional security issues. However, ARF CBMs activities have so far been focusing on information sharing. Several views regarding future CBM activities were expressed during the Meeting, among others: 1) there is risk of proliferation of meetings, therefore, the ARF CBMs should focus on areas of common concerns; 2) communication through all means should be strengthened, and a CBMs hotline should be established to promote direct contacts; 3) the ARF Unit should be strengthened, and in the future an ARF Secretariat could be considered in view of the ever-expanding ARF activities; and 4) the roles of the ASEAN Secretary-General be strengthened to include good offices roles.

14. Some participants reminded the Meeting that the ARF should implement CBMs in both traditional and non-traditional security areas. The Meeting underscored that ARF should focus more on the quality rather than quantity of the CBMs. Therefore, ARF CBMs should be aligned closely with the ARF agenda i.e. disaster relief, maritime security, counter-terrorism, while being mindful of not creating duplicative CBMs initiatives. Continued interactions of civilian-military officials in future ARF CBMs were also emphasized.

15. In terms of comprehensive security, there were suggestions that ARF CBMs should also address hard-core military security issues. Some participants regarded that military-related security issues could pose serious security problems and therefore must not be set aside.

16. The Meeting took note of the experience of other regional organizations and some case studies of CBMs implementation in bilateral relations. The Meeting learned that the limited capacity of member countries would limit the potential of implementation of CBMs and that CBMs could be successful if the countries concerned make enduring efforts.

Agenda Item 6: Session III: Preventive Diplomacy- Reality and Practice in the Asia Pacific

17. The Meeting observed that many countries in the region remained cautious of the implementation of PD. Implementation of PD has shifted from traditional to cover non-traditional security issues. While the current discourse of PD has shifted from conflict resolution paradigm, much more need to be done to focus PD efforts on responses – regional and international, to the emerging regional threats.

18. The Meeting commented broadly on the Joint Study on Best Practices on PD but did not consider the individual recommendations. The observations include the following: 1) specific recommendations require further discussion; 2) broadening the current definition of PD to conflicts both within and between states would raise sensitive issues of interference, thus future PD activities should be based on the working definition and principles of PD adopted by the ARF in 2001; 3) ARF should build PD capacity based on its extensive preparatory work undertaken by ARF so far.

19. To support the implementation of the PD Study, some participants noted that the ARF EEPs may consider performing the following roles: 1) Identify circumstances on when PD can be operationalized; 2) conduct training on PD and conflict resolution; and 3) voluntarily assist in PD negotiation process based on invitation of the concerned states.

20. The Meeting suggested that PD would not be a complicated process if the states concerned voluntarily invited other parties to involve in resolving conflicts. Some believed that in order for PD to work among the ARF participants, the most important requirement is commitment of the organization to act on PD, i.e. to recognize that PD is important and the organization is willing to move forward.

21. Among the challenges in PD identified in the discussion was to manage the gaps between international principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states with that of the principle of PD which is the offer of assistance by the third party in a conflict situation.

22. The Meeting took note that current trends have suggested that PD should deal with non-traditional security challenges and that PD should be based on non-interference, trust, and consensus. The Meeting agreed that the divergence of views in the implementation of preventive diplomacy should be resolved.

23. On the scope of the ARF PD efforts, ASEAN should decide whether ARF PD would be implemented within ASEAN or only in cases outside the ASEAN territory. In terms of the speed of PD implementation, some participants suggested that ASEAN should be open for inputs from outside ASEAN.

24. The Meeting discussed the proposed establishment of a Regional Risk Reduction Center and the establishment of a regional database to support the PD implementation. The ARF EEPs, in this regard, agreed to further study the proposal.

Agenda Item 7: Session IV: Non-Traditional Security Cooperation – Key Areas & ARF Role

| 24-25. In discussing the definition of non-traditional security issues, the Meeting noted that the characteristics of non-traditional security issues are as follows: 1) prompted by non-state actors; 2) unprecedented; 3) cannot be entirely prevented. The Meeting agreed ARF could focus PD efforts on the following non-traditional security issues namely disaster management, nuclear proliferation and terrorism particularly nuclear or bio-terrorism. There was also discussion on nuclear safety in view of the plans a number of countries have to embark on a nuclear power program..

| 25-26. The Meeting was of the view that in the future, ARF should focus on the areas that are currently discussed under the four ISMs framework, namely counter-terrorism, disaster relief, maritime security and non-proliferation. ARF should also be mindful of initiatives undertaken in other fora and that ARF should have added value in its work on non-traditional security issues.

| 26-27. Another aspect highlighted by the participants was cooperation with non-government actors and other parties. On this note, the utilization of military assets in pursuing activities in non-traditional security issues and the cooperation with other international agencies should be looked at when issues such as disaster relief is discussed.

Agenda Item 8: Session V: EEPs Role in the ARF

| 27-28. The Meeting deliberated on how the ARF EEPs could make a more valuable contribution to the ARF process. They recalled the recommendations put forward by the Inaugural Meeting of the ARF EEPs in Jeju Island in 2006 and noted the need for stronger links between Track 1 and the EEPs in terms of following up of the EEP recommendations.

| 28-29. The Meeting discussed the possibility of ARF EEPs to meet more often, perhaps twice a year in a smaller group to brainstorm among experts on specific areas, e.g. former Ambassadors on preventive diplomacy and meetings of experts on strategy, to provide venue for more informal discussion. On the other hand, the Meeting also observed that the ARF EEPs should be a supra-working advisory body that is set up to provide vision and advice to the Track I. Therefore, the EEPs should be careful not to create an institutionalized ARF EEPs, particularly in light of the proliferation of ARF activities from time to time.

| 29-30. In view of the limited resource of the ARF EEPs, the ARF Chair may consider generating ideas on how to focus the roles of the EEPs. There were expectations that in the future, the ARF EEPs to have specific assignments to discuss during its deliberation, rather than discuss general matters as it did in the first three ARF EEPs meetings.

~~30-31.~~ ASEAN Secretariat touched on the issue of possible roles of the ARF Unit to facilitate the linkage between the ARF EEPs and the ARF itself. In response to the discussion on the general discussion of the ARF EEPs, ASEAN Secretariat reiterated that the initial mandate of the ARF EEPs is to provide advice to the ARF. In this respect, the ASEAN Secretariat would bring to the attention of the ARF Chair the recommendation of giving specific assignments to the EEPs. A possible future assignment for the ARF EEPs to deliberate might be improving the ARF Annual Security Outlook and providing input into the Vision Statement.

~~31-32.~~ The Meeting took note of the following recommendations:

- A. For the ARF EEPs to be regularly updated on the progress of the ARF. In this regard, the Meeting requested the assistance of the ARF Unit to update the ARF EEPs on the follow-up of the proposals and initiatives proposed in various ARF meetings;
- B. For the ARF to consider the feasibility of establishing small open-ended working groups to deliberate specific issues of interest to the ARF. In this manner, the individual expertise of EEPs can be tapped;
- C. Strengthen linkages among the ARF EEPs in terms of a network with the assistance of the ARF Unit by regularly circulating the list of EEPs.
- D. For the ARF EEPs meeting to be a forum mainly for the EEPs themselves. In noting that although the presence of government officials to the EEPs meeting is important, unless the EEPs themselves attend the meeting, the uniqueness and usefulness of the EEPs meeting will diminish;
- E. Publicize the works of the EEPs;
- F. Organize ARF EEPs lecture in universities in the region to promote regional integration.
- G. In view of the implementation of ARF CBMs, the ARF EEPs could play role of the practical solution on ARF CBMs implementation, particularly in developing ARF early warning mechanisms.

Agenda Item 9: ARF Vision Statement

~~32-33.~~ The Meeting discussed the possible elements to include in the ARF Vision Statement. The Meeting took note of the following comments:

- A. For the Vision Statement to outline the goals of the ARF.
- B. Include the idea of developing ARF early warning mechanism.

- C. Keep the Vision Statement clear and concise with a follow-on document such as blueprint to implement the Vision Statement;
- D. Make reference to the existing ASEAN/ARF documents, e.g. ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

| 33-34. Thailand suggested options on how the ARF EEPs could provide their comments. Thailand offered to host a small EEPs working group to focus on the preparation of the ARF Vision Statement. Alternatively, the ARF EEPs could send their inputs to Thailand via regular communication channels.

Closing remarks

| 34-35. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the Co-Chairs for facilitating a frank and open discussion. The Meeting also thanked the Government of the People's Republic of China for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to all participants of the Meeting.