

**REPORT OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM  
DEFENCE OFFICIALS' DIALOGUE  
KUCHING, MALAYSIA, 8 JUNE 2015**

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum Defence Officials' Dialogue (ARF DOD) was held in Kuching, Malaysia, on 8 June 2015. The Dialogue was chaired by Mr. Ahmad Nadzri bin Mohd Hassan, Undersecretary, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Defence of Malaysia. Representatives from the Ministries of Defence of all ARF participants except for Bangladesh, Mongolia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka attended the Dialogue. Representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat were also present. The List of Participants appears as **ANNEX 1**.

**AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS**

2. In his opening remarks, Mr. Ahmad Nadzri bin Mohd Hassan welcomed the delegates to the Dialogue. He called for a moment of silence in remembrance of the recent tragedies in Nepal, China and Malaysia. He recalled the discussion at the ARF DOD in Tokyo on 7 May 2015, particularly on the streamlining of the ARF DOD from three to two per year. He also highlighted that the Dialogue would be the last that Malaysia is chairing and hence looked forward for a fruitful discussion.

**AGENDA ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

3. The Dialogue adopted the Provisional Agenda which appears as **ANNEX 2**.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: MILITARIES IN THE FACE OF EXTREMISM**

4. At the outset, the Dialogue expressed condolences over the loss of lives in the earthquakes in Nepal, the cruise ship accident on the Yang Tse River in China and the recent earthquake in Mt. Kinabalu in Sabah.

5. The Dialogue shared the concerns on the rise of extremism against the background of the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq. The Dialogue exchanged experiences on the role of the armed forces in countering extremism, which include prevention, detection as well as deny and response strategies. The Dialogue also acknowledged that efforts to counter extremism require political commitment of the government at national and international levels. At the same time, the Dialogue also encouraged close collaboration between various elements of law enforcement agencies such as the militaries and the police as well as close relations with the civil societies in this context.

6. The Dialogue noted that, in most countries, counter-terrorism and counter-extremism efforts are conducted by the domestic security and intelligence

services. Some participants shared that at the national level, the military only acts at the request of civilian authorities such as the police in dealing with terrorism and extremism. This is due to the fact that the military is equipped with capabilities to conduct counter-terrorist operations such as weaponry and technologies which the civilian agencies do not possess.

7. Participants highlighted the different approaches to countering extremism, namely the hard approaches that include law enforcement and repressive actions and the soft approaches such as through rehabilitation, reintegration and deradicalisation programmes. Development of regulatory frameworks of the use of technology and legislation that deny the means for supporting terrorists, limit the participation of foreign recruits and address the root causes of extremism and terrorism were also identified among the steps undertaken. Some participants underscored the need to balance the prevention of terrorist acts with the protection of human rights and freedoms.

8. The Dialogue discussed the origin, motives, and root causes of extremism and terrorism. The different objectives and means of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in comparison of the terrorist movements instigated by Al Qaeda were identified. Participants reiterated the principle of not linking any forms of extremisms and terrorism to religion. The use of internet through social media means to recruit new members of terrorist groups and purchase of weaponries was highlighted.

9. The Dialogue noted the ongoing cooperation at the bilateral, regional and global levels on counter-terrorism and counter-extremism. In view of maintaining the cooperation level among the ARF participants, multilateral dialogue at the diplomatic front such as through the ARF should continue. It was also suggested that measures to counter terrorism and extremism be shared and synchronised among countries in the region in order to keep up with the evolution of extremism and its activities.

10. Some participants shared the progress of counter-extremism cooperation under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the trilateral cooperation between Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and China in curbing the trafficking of illicit drugs and illegal movement of people along the Mekong River and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism (ADMM-Plus EWG on CT). In view of combating ISIS, the Dialogue also noted the establishment of a coalition strategy consisting of direct military campaigns in Iraq and Syria as well as capacity-building missions through train-the-trainers programmes to strengthen the Iraqi military. This coalition is led by the United States and the United Kingdom and is participated by 62 countries including several ARF participants at the request of the Government of Iraq.

11. Canada, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and Australia presented their views on this topic. The presentations appear as **ANNEXES 3-6**.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: MILITARY AS PEACEKEEPERS**

12. The Dialogue discussed the military roles in peacekeeping operations, the challenges in peacekeeping missions and the future of the peacekeeping. The Dialogue recognised the evolution of peacekeeping operations from simple, single missions into complex, multidimensional and multifaceted operations involving both military and civilian personnel.

13. The Dialogue noted the challenges of peacekeeping operations. At the national level, countries have been facing the challenges of limited budget for trainings, the process of recruitment of troops for deployment and the force activation for new missions. At the operational level during peacekeeping missions, participants identified the challenges of political sensitivities, protection of civilians, the adjustments in the operation areas, environmental challenges such as bad weather, limited cultural familiarities, different understanding of the conflict among various levels of force structure, coordination to understand the different military doctrines, competitions among offers for defence postures and models to be observed in an operation, the lack of basic infrastructures in the mission area, technological challenges and difficulties to maintain neutral image to protect civilians and humanitarian assistance operating in the mission.

14. The Dialogue underscored the importance of trainings of peacekeeping forces and the development of peacekeeping capabilities particularly at the regional level. Some participants shared their national experience in pre-deployment trainings. The Dialogue observed that participation in multinational peacekeeping operations as well as joint exercises have contributed to developing the capabilities of peacekeepers. The need for exchange of peacekeeping materials and review of international guidelines was also recognised as essential for future peacekeeping operations.

15. To prepare the peacekeepers to meet the challenges in the mission, the Dialogue recognised the values of sharing of experiences on logistic cooperation through multilateral dialogue. The Dialogue took note of the existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks and initiatives for peacekeeping operations cooperation, including bilateral initiatives such as the Pirab Jabiru exercise organised by Thailand and Australia and multilateral arrangements such as the ADMM-Plus EWG on Peacekeeping Operations (PKO). The Dialogue underscored that multilateral engagement in peacekeeping operations provide benefits other than capacity building, namely networking among contributing countries and confidence building among militaries through dialogue and practical military cooperation.

16. The Dialogue discussed that peacekeeping is not an end in itself; it is rather a beginning of a new process of peace building. In some peacekeeping operations, the need for peacekeepers to assist in development of national armed forces and police is a crucial step to sustain peace.

17. The Dialogue noted ASEAN's efforts to develop its peacekeeping force capabilities. The Dialogue welcomed Viet Nam's first participation in the United Nations peacekeeping missions in 2014 and its current deployment of peacekeeping personnel in South Sudan and Central Africa. In May 2015, Viet Nam inaugurated the construction of the facility for the national peacekeeping training centre to train forces for international peacekeeping missions.

18. Australia, Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Timor Leste, Viet Nam, European Union and Thailand presented their views on this topic. The presentations appear as **ANNEXES 7-11**.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: VOLUNTARY BRIEFING AND OTHER MATTERS**

19. The Dialogue noted the briefing by the United States on the Rohingya situation in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The United States maintained its commitment to work with countries in the region in addressing the challenge of illegal migration. The United States called for a long-term solution to address this challenge and encouraged ASEAN and the ARF participants to be part of the solution. It was observed that this situation has magnified the importance of a concerted effort to deal with humanitarian crises in the region.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 6: CLOSING REMARKS**

20. In his closing remarks, Mr. Ahmad Nadzri bin Mohd Hassan summarised the outcomes of the discussion. He underscored that the Dialogue has allowed all ARF participants to learn from each other the aspiration, challenges and the way forward on issues of common concerns. As Malaysia is handing over the ARF chairmanship to Lao PDR, he extended his best wishes for the ARF DOD chairmanship.

21. The Dialogue expressed appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for the excellent arrangements and the warm hospitality extended to all ARF participants.

■ ■ ■