

# **ARF Security Policy Conference**

-An Agreed Concept Paper

## **Introduction**

1. Since its inception in 1994, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has helped promote mutual trust among its participants. It has made an important contribution to the maintenance of regional peace and stability and to greater regional development and prosperity. It is now the most important official venue for multilateral political and security dialogue in the Asia Pacific region. Remarkable progress has been made in cooperation in the areas of confidence building measures, discussion on preventive diplomacy, and non-traditional security issues such as counter terrorism and transnational crimes.

2. Defence officials have taken an active part in the ARF Ministerial, SOM and inter-sessional group meetings and various confidence building measures (CBMs) activities, and convened regular meetings of the Heads of Defence Colleges/Institutes. Since July 2002, Defence Officials' Dialogue has been held on a regular basis. All these have enhanced exchanges and dialogue of defence officials among the ARF participants, and fostered the awareness of working together to safeguard regional security. The involvement of defence officials has made positive

contribution to the development of the ARF.

3. Profound changes have taken place in the situation facing the ARF as compared with that of 10 years ago. In order to adapt to the new developments, the ARF needs to develop further, and convening the ARF Security Policy Conference will contribute to the development of the ARF process.

### **Objectives**

4. The primary objectives of the ARF Security Policy Conference are as follows:

- a. To further strengthen the cooperation of confidence building measures in military sphere within the framework of the ARF and the participation of defence officials in the ARF;
- b. To open new channels of dialogue and exchanges among defence officials, diplomats as well as military academic personages, and to further increase mutual trust and understanding among the defence officials, and
- c. To further improve and substantiate the process of the ARF and keep propelling it forward.

## **Participants**

5. The participants of the Conference will include senior Defence and Security policy officials. While in principle participation will be at the level of Vice-Minister or equivalent, the specific level of participation may be decided by the ARF participants. Diplomatic officials can participate in all activities related to the Conference and they may also decide their own participation level as deemed appropriate. Personnel from Defence Colleges/Institutes and other military academies are also welcome to the Conference.

## **Relations between the ARF Security Policy Conference and the Current Defence Officials' Dialogue**

6. The ARF Security Policy Conference and the current Defence Officials' Dialogue are both component parts of the ARF. Defence officials will continue to take part in the SOM and Ministerial Meeting, as well as ISG on CBMs, and other activities of the ARF.

The ARF Security Policy Conference will be held back to back with the ARF SOM. The Defence Officials' Dialogue will be held before the Security Policy Conference during the ARF SOM. The Dialogue will also continue to be convened during the Ministerial Meeting. To ensure that the ARF Security Policy Conference builds upon the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue, one of the agenda items of the ARF Defence

Officials' Dialogue during the ISG on CBMs should be to consider issues to be discussed at the ARF Security Policy Conference.

### **Principles**

7. The ARF Security Policy Conference will abide by the following principles:

- a. The Conference will be a component of the ARF and will act in a spirit of the ARF as a political and security forum.
- b. The Conference will adhere to the principles and modalities of adopting decisions by consensus, seeking gradual progress, equal participation, and accommodating the comfort level of all participants.
- c. The discussions of the Conference should be consistent with the recognized basic international law and inter-state relations embodied, inter alia, in the United Nations Charter, and with principles established for the ARF, including respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

### **Modalities**

8. The ARF Security Policy Conference will operate in the following modalities:

- a. The Conference will be chaired by an ASEAN member.
- b. The Conference will be held back to back with the ARF SOM once a

year.

**Agenda and Chair's Summary**

9. In accordance with the usual practice of the ARF meetings, the tentative agenda for the ARF Security Policy Conference will be proposed and circulated by the Chair at least two months prior to the Conference and determined by consensus of all ARF participants. To ensure a fruitful discussion, the Chair may choose one or two themes for discussion at each Conference in consultation with all the participants. Participants may conduct free and extensive exchanges of views and ideas on fixed topics.

10. The ARF Security Policy Conference may focus on a wide range of security and defence topics which will be proposed by the Chair and determined by consensus.

11. The Conference will be informal and no binding documents will be produced. The Chair will, on the basis of consensus, produce a summary of the discussion of the Conference which will be circulated at the ARF SOM and Foreign Minister's Meeting.

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