

**CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT
THE TWELFTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
(ARF)**

Vientiane, 29 July 2005

1. The Twelfth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was convened on 29 July 2005 in Vientiane, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Somsavat LENGSAVAD, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR.
2. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers of all ARF Participants. The Secretary-General of ASEAN was also in attendance. The List of Delegates appears as **ANNEX I**.
3. A meeting of the defence and military officials attending the 12th ARF was also held on 28 July 2005 in Vientiane.
4. The Ministers welcomed the admission of Timor-Leste, as the 25th Participant of the ARF and took note of its expressed commitments to contribute to the attainment of the ARF's goals and to abide by and subscribe to all the decisions and statements already made by the ARF.

Overview of the ARF Process

5. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of ARF as the main multilateral political and security forum in the region and agreed to its further strengthening. The Ministers reiterated their support for ASEAN as the primary driving force of ARF and encouraged the continued cooperation and contribution of all ARF participants in moving the ARF process forward.
6. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the significant progress and the role that ARF has played in enhancing political and security dialogue and cooperation as well as confidence building in the Asia-Pacific region. The Ministers agreed to continue to observe in good faith the basic principles of decision-making by consensus and non-interference. In this regard, the Ministers reaffirmed that ARF should move forward at a pace comfortable to all.

7. The Ministers held comprehensive discussions on issues of common concern and stressed the need for the ARF to focus its deliberations on regional issues, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as international issues with regional impact. The Ministers recognized that the challenges facing the Asia Pacific region were becoming more complex and interrelated and required greater regional cooperation.

Highlights of Discussions on Regional and International Security Issues

8. The Ministers exchanged views on the tsunami disaster of 26 December 2004 and the follow-up actions taken by the concerned countries and the international community. They expressed sympathy, solidarity and support to all those affected by the earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. They welcomed the Special ASEAN Leaders Meeting in Jakarta on 6 January 2005 and its Declaration on Action to Strengthen Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Prevention on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004. They underlined the importance of ARF partners in working together in emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction as well as prevention and mitigation efforts in addressing natural disaster.
9. The Ministers welcomed the common statement of the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, 18-22 January 2005, which called for the establishment of an effective and durable tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean under the co-ordination of the United Nations which must be tailored to the specific circumstances of the Indian Ocean and the individual requirements of countries.
10. The Ministers underscored the importance of regional co-operation and co-ordination in disaster reduction and the need to co-ordinate and examine the various proposals made in Kobe and Phuket. In this respect, they welcomed the results of the Ministerial Meeting on Regional Co-operation on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements held in Phuket, Thailand on 28-29 January 2005 as well as efforts and initiatives by ARF partners in the field of early warning and disaster reduction. The Ministers welcomed the upcoming Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction to be held from 27 to 29 September 2005 in Beijing, and encouraged all Asian countries and interested countries outside Asia to participate in the Conference at the ministerial level.
11. The Ministers welcomed the idea of stand-by arrangements for disaster relief under the auspices of the United Nations, including rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the medium and long terms. They looked forward to the expeditious establishment of regional mechanisms on disaster reduction, including preparedness and mitigation and supported the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. The Ministers recognized with appreciation the contributions of donors to the relief and

expressed the urgent need for speedy delivery of assistance to affected communities. They also noted the efforts of affected countries, as national coordinators, to ensure an effective channeling and utilization of assistance in reconstruction efforts.

12. In response to this recent and tragic experience, the Ministers agreed on the reconvening of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief and Related Issues for the inter-sessional year 2005-2006 to be co-chaired by Indonesia and China.
13. The Ministers welcomed and expressed their support for the Plan of Action for the ASEAN Security Community, the Vientiane Action Programme adopted at the 10th ASEAN Summit and the ASEAN Leaders' shared vision and common values to achieve peace, stability, democracy and prosperity in the region.
14. The Ministers recognized the importance of the purpose and principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in the Southeast Asia (TAC), which can serve as a very important code of conduct governing the inter-state relations in the region and for the promotion of cooperation, amity and friendship within Southeast Asia and between ASEAN and other ARF participants. The Ministers welcomed the accession by the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation to the TAC during the 10th ASEAN Summit in November 2004 in Vientiane and by Mongolia and New Zealand during the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences on 28 July 2005 in Vientiane. The Ministers also welcomed the signing of the declaration of intent of Australia to accede to the Treaty on the same occasion.
15. The Ministers exchanged views on recent developments on the Korean Peninsula. The Ministers welcomed the resumption of the Six-Party Talks and expressed the hope that the talks would lead to a substantial progress in finding a peaceful solution acceptable to all concerned parties towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. They underlined the importance of finding a peaceful solution to the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula by engaging in dialogue to promote mutual confidence and common approach on the basis of the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty and equality.
16. The Ministers welcomed the recent resumption of the inter-Korea dialogue and expressed the hope that the dialogue would continue in accordance with June 15 North-South Joint Declaration and expressed the hope that the on-going momentum of the inter-Korean relations will be conducive to the peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and to the peaceful achievement of the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.
17. The Ministers took note of the briefing by Myanmar on the recent developments in the country, including the progress of the National

Convention and expressed their concern at the pace of the democratization process. They called for the lifting of restrictions and for effective dialogue with all parties concerned. They also called for an early resumption of the visit to Myanmar by UNSG Special Representative and to continue cooperate with other relevant UN agencies.

18. The Ministers welcomed the progress made by ASEAN and China in the implementation of Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC). The Ministers emphasized the importance of confidence building and the need to explore ways and means for cooperative activities among the parties concerned in accordance with the spirit and principles of the DoC, thus creating favourable conditions for settling disputes in South China Sea peacefully. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the DoC in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in December 2004 and the establishment of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group that would oversee the implementation of the Declaration, which will convene in August 2005 in Manila, the Philippines.
19. The Ministers welcomed the presidential election in Palestine on Sunday, 9 January 2005 and later the resumption of direct dialogue between Israel and Palestine at Sharm el-Sheikh in February 2005. The Ministers look forward to a final, just and comprehensive settlement with the realization of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within secured and recognized borders, based on the Roadmap and relevant United Nations Security Resolutions.
20. The Ministers welcomed the full reassertion of the sovereignty of Iraq since June 2004. They emphasized the need to ensure substantive materialization of this sovereign state status and reaffirmed their commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Iraq. The Ministers welcomed the successful conduct of the 30 January election in Iraq and the formation of Transitional Government in accordance with UNSCR 1546. They emphasized the central role of the United Nations in the process of political transition, reconstruction and economic development as well as the establishment of rule of law and public order in the country. The Ministers welcomed the "Iraq International Conference" held in Brussels on 22 June 2005. The Ministers strongly condemned all acts of terrorism directed against innocent victims and called for the cessation of all those acts. The Ministers welcomed the United Nations Security Council's press statement in support of the continuation of the mandate of the Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) in accordance with paragraphs 4 and 12 of UNSCR 1546 and at the request of the newly elected Iraqi government.

21. The Ministers strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks in London and in Sharm el-Sheikh which caused tragic loss of lives of innocent people and property and expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims of the attacks, their families and friends. The Ministers affirmed that terrorism, irrespective of its origins, motivations or objectives, constitutes a threat to all peoples and countries, and to the common interest in ensuring peace, stability, security and economic prosperity in the region and beyond. The Ministers reaffirmed the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. Several Ministers emphasized the importance of addressing the root causes of terrorism and avoiding the identification of terrorism with any particular religion or ethnic group or nationality. The Ministers agreed that states must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism and related crime comply with all their obligations under international law and should adopt such measures in accordance with international law, in particular international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law.
22. The Ministers expressed continued support for the activities of the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC), the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) and the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA).
23. The Ministers welcomed the ARF's sustained efforts in promoting maritime safety and security and noted the four key areas for future cooperation: multilateral cooperation, operational solution to maritime safety and security, shipping and port security, and application of technology for maritime safety and security.
24. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN-Japan Joint Declaration for Cooperation in the Fight Against Terrorism at the 8th ASEAN+Japan Summit in Vientiane on 30 November 2004. The Ministers also welcomed the signing of ASEAN-Republic of Korea in Vientiane on 27 July 2005 and ASEAN-New Zealand and ASEAN-Pakistan Joint Declarations for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism on 29 July 2005.
25. The Ministers welcomed the enhancement of inter-faith dialogues aimed at promoting mutual understanding and trust among people in the region, such as the UN Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace initiated by the Philippines, Indonesia and Pakistan, the convening of the Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation in Yogyakarta and ASEM Interfaith Dialogue held in Bali, Indonesia, on 21-22 July 2005.

26. The Ministers stated that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery vehicles remain a serious security challenge of our time and the most dangerous one as they might fall into terrorist hands. In this connection, the Ministers urged all the states to sign and conclude the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and to provide for its early entry into force. They underlined the necessity to continue strengthening the international legal foundation in combating terrorism and spoke in favour of an adoption without delay of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. The Ministers noted that the adoption by the UN Security Council of the Resolution 1540 signifies the world community's efforts in preventing proliferation of WMD to non-state actors. In this respect, they expressed their support to the efforts of the Committee 1540 and called upon all States to ensure effective and full implementation of the Resolution.
27. The Ministers of the States Parties to NPT, reconfirming the validity of the Treaty as a cornerstone of the global stability and security, expressed the need of undertaking further efforts to strengthen NPT bearing in mind the discussions at the 2005 Review Conference and agreed to make further efforts to strengthen compliance with and enforcement of all provisions of the Treaty. The Ministers reiterated their continued support for the important role of the NPT in preventing nuclear proliferation and promoting nuclear disarmament as well as peaceful use of nuclear energy.
28. The Ministers called for the maintenance of existing moratorium on nuclear testing. They reaffirmed their support for the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapons-free zones (NWFZs) established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the regions concerned and emphasized the contribution of such zones to enhancing global and regional peace and security. They further reaffirmed the importance of continued consultation on the Protocol of the SEANWFZ Treaty between the nuclear weapon states and the parties to the Treaty.
29. The Ministers noted the importance of all countries in the region taking effective measures to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.
30. The Ministers were concerned about problems caused by people smuggling and trafficking. They welcomed ongoing practical cooperation under the Bali Process on People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime to develop national and regional capacities to combat people smuggling and trafficking.

31. The Ministers shared their concerns about highly pathogenic avian influenza and recognized its growing threat to both human and animal health as well as to the broader security of the region. The Ministers expressed the importance of conducting robust surveillance and continued, immediate and transparent reporting of avian influenza cases in affected countries to ensure that avian influenza does not become the next influenza pandemic. The Ministers also underscored the importance of developing national pandemic influenza preparedness plans.
32. The Ministers stressed the necessity of comprehensively reforming the United Nations with a view to strengthening and enhancing its representativeness, transparency and effectiveness.
33. The Ministers attached importance to effective leadership of the United Nations to address the needs and aspiration of all people, particularly those in the developing world. They noted that the Asian-African Ministerial Meeting in Jakarta in April 2005 generally felt that it would be the turn of the Asian region to occupy the post of the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG), which will become vacant upon expiry of the term of the current UNSG at the end of 2006. In this regard, the Ministers were informed of ASEAN's strong support for the ASEAN candidate from Thailand, Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, for this important post.

Review Activities of the Current Inter-sessional Year (July 2004-July 2005)

34. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the success of Track I and Track II activities that have taken place during the current inter-sessional year (July 2004-July 2005). They commended the work of the ARF Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures (ISG on CBMs), co-chaired by Cambodia and the European Union, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 26-28 October 2004 and in Potsdam, Germany, 21-23 February 2005. The Ministers noted the summary report of the co-chairs and endorsed its recommendations. The Co-Chairs' Reports appears as **ANNEX II**.
35. The Ministers welcomed the contributions made by defence officials in the ARF process. In this regard, they were pleased with the outcomes of the First ASEAN Regional Forum Security Policy Conference (ASPC) Chaired by Indonesia and hosted by China in Beijing on 4-6 November 2004 and the Second ASPC chaired and hosted by Laos in Vientiane on 18-19 May 2005. They noted with satisfaction that the high-level interaction among the ARF defence policy officials contributed further to building confidence and fostering mutual understanding, thus contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

36. The Ministers noted the report of Thailand and Canada as Co-Chairs of the Third Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC), which was held in Bangkok, on 6-8 April 2005, and endorsed its recommendations. The Co-Chairs' Report appears as **ANNEX III**.
37. The Ministers adopted the ARF Statement on Information Sharing and Intelligence Exchange and Document Integrity and Security in Enhancing Cooperation to Combat Terrorism and Other Transnational Crimes, as recommended by the ISM on CTTC. The Statement which appears as **ANNEX IV** expressed the ARF participants' determination to enhance cooperation in combating terrorism and transnational crimes through information sharing, intelligence exchange and the promotion of document integrity and security. The Ministers welcomed Brunei Darussalam and China's offer to co-chair the next ISM on CTTC in 2006 in China.
38. The Ministers noted the following activities, which were completed in inter-sessional year 2004/2005:
- 8th ARF Meeting of the Heads of Defence Colleges/Institutions, Singapore, 1-3 September 2004.
 - ARF Workshop on Alternative Development, Kunming, China, 7-8 September 2004.
 - ARF Workshop on Maritime Security, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 22-24 September 2004.
 - ARF Seminar on Cyber Terrorism, Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, 13-15 October 2004.
 - ARF CBM on Regional Cooperation in Maritime Security, Singapore, 2-4 March 2005.
 - ARF Seminar on Enhancing cooperation in the field of non-traditional security issues, Hainan, China, 7-8 March 2005.
 - ARF CBM Workshop on Peace Arrangements Ensuring Stability and Security in the Region, including Civil-Military Cooperation, Tokyo, Japan, 22-23 March 2005.
 - ARF Workshop on Evolving Changes in the Security Perceptions of ARF Countries, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 21-22 June 2005.

Programme of Work for the Next Inter-sessional Year

39. The Ministers agreed that the ISG on CBMs continue its work and welcomed the offer of the Philippines and the United States to co-chair the ISG on CBMs

and Preventive Diplomacy in the next inter-sessional year. The Ministers also noted that the first ISG on CBMs and PD will be held in Honolulu, the United States on 17-19 October 2005 and the second meeting will be held in the Philippines in first quarter of 2006.

40. The Ministers reaffirmed the procedure that all proposed ARF activities should first be discussed at the ISG/ISM level and agreed at ARF-SOM. The Ministers approved the work program for the next inter-sessional year (July 2005–July 2006) as in **ANNEX V**.

Future Direction of the ARF Process

41. The Ministers agreed to continue the implementation of the Nine Recommendations of the Stocktaking of the ARF process, which was adopted in Brunei Darussalam on 31 July 2000. The Ministers agreed to extend further cooperation and support for the ARF Chair in carrying out the mandates outlined in the paper on the Enhanced Role of the ARF Chair.
42. We welcomed the ARF's progress towards Preventive Diplomacy (PD). In this regard, the Ministers agreed to establish the Inter-Sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ISG on CBMs and PD) to replace the present Inter-Sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures. The Ministers recalled the importance of the adopted Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy in guiding the ARF in its actions and works in Preventive Diplomacy and looked forward to the development of concrete measures in PD.
43. The Ministers decided to formulate the standard operating procedures for the ARF Chair to perform its enhanced role. The Meeting also agreed to establish "Friends of the Chair" in the ARF, and welcomed the Philippines' offer to draft the terms of reference for this concept with the understanding that such an ad-hoc group shall have an advisory role to assist the ARF Chair and be flexible in terms of its membership.
44. The Ministers agreed on the continued publication of the ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) to promote transparency as well as confidence building among ARF participants and welcomed the sixth volume of the ASO.
45. The Ministers agreed to convene a meeting of the ARF EEPs during the Inter-sessional year 2005/2006 in line with the Guidelines for the Operation of the ARF EEPs. The Ministers noted that the regularly updated Registry of EEPs is available on the ARFNet.

46. The Ministers emphasized the need to continue strengthening ties with other regional and international security organizations as well as linkages between Track I and Track II.
47. The Ministers commended the ARF Unit in assisting the ARF Chair and in developing the ARF's institutional memory, including through the regularly updated Matrix of ARF Decisions and their Status, which is made available on the ARFNet, and the development of the ARF Internet homepage and virtual communications network at www.aseanregionalforum.org. The Ministers acknowledged the assistance that some ARF participants were extending to the ARF Unit and encouraged others to do the same.
48. The Ministers adopted the Terms of Reference for the Establishment of the ARF Fund, which appears as **ANNEX VI**, for the purpose of implementing projects, activities, and decisions of the ARF.
49. The Ministers noted that application to participate in the ARF would be considered on a case-by-case basis. In this connection, they welcomed and agreed to ASEAN's consensus on the admission of Bangladesh as the 26th participant in the ARF, which would be officiated during the 13th ARF.
50. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the open dialogue regarding the progress of the ARF process and committed to further advancing the ARF process towards the preventive diplomacy stage and beyond, on the basis of consensus and at a pace comfortable to all, while continuing to build mutual confidence and trust among its participants.

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