

**CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT**  
**THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM**  
**SINGAPORE, 26 JULY 1999**

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The Sixth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Singapore on 26 July 1999. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Professor S Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore. The Meeting was attended by all ARF participants. The Secretary General of ASEAN was also present. The List of Delegates is attached at Annex A.

2 The Ministers welcomed Mongolia joining the 6<sup>th</sup> ARF as a new participant.

3 The Ministers welcomed the admission of the Kingdom of Cambodia as a member of ASEAN, thereby realising the vision of ASEAN-10. They expressed confidence that ASEAN-10 will contribute to peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

**Overview of the ARF Process**

4 The Ministers expressed satisfaction that the ARF has continued to serve as the key forum for political and security dialogue and co-operation in the region. They noted that since its inception in 1994, the ARF Ministers and senior officials have become more comfortable with each other through frequent interactions at the various ARF fora. Such enhanced comfort levels have enabled ARF participants to exchange views frankly on issues of common concern, thereby encouraging greater transparency and mutual understanding. The Ministers agreed to build on these strong foundations to move the process forward so that the ARF would continue to remain relevant and able to respond to the challenges posed by the changing political and security environment of the region. The Ministers noted the useful exchange of views at the lunch gathering of senior defence officials, and welcomed the continuation of this practice at future ARF Ministerial Meetings. The Ministers further noted the constructive contributions that defence and military officials have made to the ARF process and encouraged their continued participation in all relevant ARF activities.

5 The Ministers emphasised that the ARF process will continue to develop at a pace that is comfortable to all participants and reaffirmed their

commitment to make decisions by consensus. They noted that this has contributed to steady progress being made. The Ministers emphasised the importance of confidence building to the success of the ARF and encouraged the further development of confidence building measures (CBMs). They endorsed the recommendations of the ARF Senior Officials Meeting and the ARF Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures (ISG on CBMs) to discuss the concept and principles of Preventive Diplomacy and noted the common understandings reached on the four tabled proposals relating to the overlap between CBMs and Preventive Diplomacy. The Ministers noted that this was a positive step forward. The Ministers expressed their continued support for the leading role of ASEAN in the ARF process and noted with appreciation that ASEAN would be preparing the draft paper on the concept and principles of Preventive Diplomacy for discussion among ARF members.

### **Highlights of Issues Discussed**

6 The Ministers had substantive discussions on major regional and international issues that had an impact on the regional security environment. The exchange of views was candid and focussed and helped to create better mutual understanding of the security perceptions and concerns among ARF participants.

7 The Ministers, inter alia, discussed the security implications of the regional economic and financial crisis. They noted that it had a significant economic, political and security impact on the region and agreed that the ARF should continue to pay attention to the security implications of the crisis. The Ministers also noted that co-operative regional arrangements had played an important role in containing the effects of the crisis. The Ministers recognised that the strength of the regional economy would affect regional and national resilience. In this connection, they noted that the situation had stabilised as compared to last year and that the region was now beginning to recover. Nevertheless, continued restructuring and policy reform would be necessary to sustain the recovery.

8 The Ministers agreed that stable relations among the major powers was an integral element underpinning regional stability. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the regular exchanges of visits, including at the leadership level, which have contributed to stable relations among the major powers. The Ministers stressed the importance of the major powers continuing to promote dialogue and co-operation among themselves through all available modalities, including the ARF.

9 The Ministers recognised that the state of relations among the major powers in the Asia-Pacific was affected by events in other regions. In this regard, the Ministers discussed developments in Kosovo/FRY. They were concerned with its wider implications. They expressed their deep regret over the loss of thousands of innocent lives. The Ministers reaffirmed their support for the UN Charter and respect for the basic principles of international law. In this connection, they welcomed the comprehensive political settlement of the Kosovo crisis as endorsed by the United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1244(1999) of 10 June 1999, and urged all parties involved to work closely with the UN in implementing the settlement, which will bring to an end war crimes and crimes against humanity and permit the people of Kosovo to enjoy basic human rights within Kosovo/FRY. The Ministers also expressed their deep regret over the tragic incident involving the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia in early May, which had caused the loss of innocent lives and many casualties. The Ministers extended their sympathy and condolences to the Chinese people and relatives of the victims and to all the innocent victims of the Kosovo conflict.

10 The Ministers recognised the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as a key regional instrument for strengthening security in the region. They noted that non-Southeast Asian countries, in particular the major powers, were now in the process of considering acceding to the TAG after the Second Protocol amending the TAG enters into force. This would contribute positively to the evolution of a region-wide code of conduct. The Ministers expressed support for the continuing consultations between the State Parties of the SEANWFZ (Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone) Treaty and the Nuclear Weapon States regarding the latter's accession to the Protocol of the Treaty. The Ministers noted that nuclear-weapon-free zones would contribute to the goal of comprehensive nuclear disarmament. In this regard, the Ministers also welcomed the United Nations General Assembly's resolution 53/77D of 4 December 1998 on Mongolia's International Security and Nuclear-Weapon-Free Status.

11 The Ministers welcomed the commitment of all the countries concerned to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea in accordance with the recognized principles of international law and the UNCLOS. They stressed the importance of freedom of navigation in this area. The Ministers noted that some ARF countries were concerned that there could be increased tensions. They welcomed the continued exercise of self-restraint by all sides and the positive contributions made by the

bilateral consultations between the countries concerned. They further welcomed the dialogue in the ASEAN-China Senior Officials Consultations, the regular exchange of views in the ARF, and the continuing work of the Informal Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, which have enhanced confidence building. They noted that ASEAN was working on a regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

12 The Ministers noted that developments in the Korean Peninsula remain of concern and agreed that parties involved should not adopt policies which could undermine peace and stability. They emphasised the importance of observing the 1953 Armistice Agreement. The Ministers expressed concern over the August 1998 payload launch and other missile-related activities which could heighten tensions and have serious consequences for stability in the Korean Peninsula and the region. The Ministers supported all efforts to improve relations between the DPRK and the ROK and in this connection, noted the ROK's policy aimed at establishing a regime of peaceful co-existence with the DPRK. They welcomed the recent positive developments at the Four-Party Talks and the US-DPRK negotiations on the suspected underground facility. They also reiterated support for the Four-Party Talks and reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the 1994 Agreed Framework and implementing the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) projects.

13 The Ministers emphasised the importance of systematic and progressive efforts taken by nuclear weapon states on nuclear disarmament and called on them to make further efforts towards achieving the ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons. The Ministers noted that there were strong calls for all states to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as soon as possible. As an essential measure of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the Ministers further urged the Conference on Disarmament to immediately begin and swiftly conclude negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes as a matter of priority. The Ministers called on all states to exercise restraint in the development, testing and export of ballistic missiles and other delivery means of weapons of mass destruction. The Ministers also called for a speedy and successful conclusion to the negotiations on a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The Ministers noted support for encouraging states that had tested nuclear weapons last year to exercise restraint, including by adhering to the comprehensive test ban treaty, and to revive the Lahore process.

14 The Ministers noted with appreciation the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction, and the convening of the First Meeting of the State Parties to the Convention held in Maputo on 3-7 May 1999. They also noted the early entry into force of the amended mines protocol (Protocol II) of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), and efforts being made in other bodies, including the Conference on Disarmament, to complement the Ottawa Convention by engaging key non-signatories. The Ministers noted with appreciation several unilateral moratoria on the transfer and commercial export of several categories of mines. The Ministers agreed to support initiatives to enhance international co-operation on demining, the removal of unexploded ordnance and rehabilitation of victims, and commended efforts by some ARF countries to provide training and assistance on mine clearance. In this regard, they noted the efforts by the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) and the Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC).

15 The Ministers discussed transboundary problems that could have a significant impact on regional security. They recognised that the illegal accumulation of small arms and light weapons posed a threat to peace and security in many regions and urged the international community to focus its attention to this problem. In view of the international conference to be convened by the UN no later than 2001, the Ministers called on member states to increase their efforts so as to enable the UN to play its leading role in dealing with the problem. The Ministers noted with concern the problem of piracy in the region and recognised that there is a need for cooperative approaches to deal with this problem. They also noted the problem of illegal migration.

### **Track I and II Activities for the Current and Next Inter-sessional Years**

16 The Ministers noted with satisfaction the successful implementation of numerous Track I and II activities for the current inter-sessional year (July 1998-July 1999). The Ministers noted the following major Track I activities:

- (a) Co-Chairmen's Summary Report of the two meetings of the Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures in Honolulu on 4-6 November 1998 and Bangkok on 3-5 March 1999 (Annex B)
- (b) Co-Chairmen's Report of the Intersessional Meeting on Disaster Relief in Moscow on 11-13 April 1999 (Annex C).

- (c) ARF Experts Group Meeting on Disaster Relief on 29 January 1999 in Bangkok.

17 The Ministers commended the work of the ISG on CBMs and the ISM on Disaster Relief in furthering the ARF process. They endorsed the recommendations as contained in the above-mentioned reports and agreed that the ISM on Disaster Relief and the ISG on CBMs should continue their work for another year. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the offers by Vietnam and Russia to co-chair the ISM on Disaster Relief and by Singapore and Japan to co-chair the ISG on CBMs for the next intersessional year. The Ministers also welcomed the production of the Annual Security Outlook (ASO) by individual participants on a voluntary basis at the Track I level for compilation without any editing by the ARF Chairman and noted that maritime co-operation would be included in the agenda of future ISG on CBMs.

18 The Ministers also noted that the following Track I activities took place under the auspices of the ESG on CBMs :

- (a) Seminar on the Production of Defence Policy Documents in Canberra on 31 August - 2 September 1998.
- (b) Second ARF Meeting of Heads of Defence Colleges and Institutions, in Seoul on 8-10 September 1998.
- (c) Symposium on Tropical Hygiene and Prevention and Treatment of Tropical Infectious Diseases, in Beijing on 25-27 November 1998.
- (d) ARF Professional Development Programme in Washington D.C. on 18-23 April 1999.

19 The Ministers further noted that the following Track I activities took place under the auspices of the ISM on Peacekeeping Operations :

- (a) Workshop of Approaches to Training for Peacekeeping in Dublin on 19-23 October 1998.
- (b) Training Course on Modern Peacekeeping Operations in Tokyo on 22-26 March 1999.

- 20 The Ministers also took note of the following Track II activities:
- (a) ARF Workshop on Disaster Management in Bangkok on 25-28 January 1998.
  - (b) CSCAP Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy in Bangkok on 28 Feb-2 March 1999.
  - (c) Conference on "*Towards Comprehensive Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific*" in Vladivostok on 25-27 April 1999.

The Ministers endorsed the programme of work for the next inter-sessional year (July 1999-July 2000) as contained in Annex D.

### **Future Direction of the ARF Process**

21 The Ministers confirmed that the ARF is a framework for political and security dialogue and cooperation in the region and that its discussions and activities should be focused on issues which would have significant impact on regional security. The Ministers agreed that ASEAN would remain the driving force of the ARF process and that the ARF would maintain its evolutionary approach as the process progresses from confidence building to preventive diplomacy and, as an eventual goal, the elaboration of approaches to conflict resolution. The ARF process will continue to move at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants on the basis of consensus. The Ministers recognised the importance of CBMs in enhancing confidence and trust among ARF members and agreed that the ARF should further develop and deepen co-operation on CBMs among ARF members. They recognized that various efforts at confidence-building would have an important role in facilitating the ARF process.

22 The Ministers also requested the ISG on CBMs to further explore the overlap between CBMs and Preventive Diplomacy for the next inter-sessional year, focussing *inter alia*, on the development of the concept and principles of preventive diplomacy. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the offer by ASEAN to prepare a paper on the concept and principles of Preventive Diplomacy for consideration by the ARF SOM at its next meeting.