

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT
THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
HANOI, 25 JULY 2001



1. The Eighth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Ha Noi, Capital of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, on 25 July 2001. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of VietNam.

2. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers of all ARF participating countries or their representatives. The Secretary-General of ASEAN was also present. The List of Delegates appears as ANNEX A.

Overview of the ARF Process

3. The Ministers recognised that during the last inter-sessional year, the ARF process continued to make progress and play an important role in maintaining peace and stability in the region, particularly in enhancing and promoting dialogue and co-operation on political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Over the past year, exchanges of views on regional and international issues have become even more candid and inclusive, in view of the full participation of all countries in the ARF's geographical footprint. In this context, the Ministers noted with satisfaction that the ARF was the key forum for participating countries to address actively and constructively key political and security issues, including newly emerged issues as a result of globalisation that have a bearing on regional peace and stability.

4. The Ministers acknowledged the contributions of the ARF to the regional peace and stability and emphasised that confidence-building is of essential importance to and remains the foundation and main thrust of the whole AR.F process. They agreed that this process be further strengthened and more confidence building measures be encouraged. The Ministers appreciated the progress in strengthening the four measures in the overlap between CBM and Preventive Diplomacy (PD) which would contribute to the enhancement of the effectiveness of the ARF process.

5. The Ministers reaffirmed that the ARF will continue to develop at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants and emphasised the importance of

ARF making decision by consensus and on the basis of non-interference into one another's internal affairs. The Ministers noted with satisfaction that the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) continued to play its leading role in the ARF and expressed their support for this continued role in the ARF process. At the same time, the Ministers noted that each ARF participant had contributed more actively to advancing the ARF process.

6. In recalling the decision of the Sixth ARF in July 1999 on the overlap between CBMs and PD and that of the Seventh ARF in July 2000 on the enhanced role of the ARF Chair, the Ministers expressed their appreciation to Viet Nam who, as the ARF Chair, had continued and expanded informal contacts with other international and regional organisations, particularly with the United Nations, the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Non-Aligned Movement. They agreed that such contacts were fruitful in promoting exchange of information and sharing of experience between ARF and these organisations and that these links should be further expanded in the future.

7. The Ministers acknowledged with satisfaction that the ARF Chair had been successful in serving as a conduit for information sharing in between ARF meetings, particularly between participants who had no bilateral diplomatic contacts, thus enabling the ARF participants to exchange information relevant to the ARF in a timely manner and on a voluntary basis. In this regard, the Ministers agreed to adopt the Paper on the Enhanced Role of ARF Chair which appears in ANNEX B and also expressed their appreciation for the excellent work done by Japan in preparing and finalising this Paper.

8. The Ministers welcomed further progress on the ARF Register of Experts/Eminent Persons to be available for use by ARF participants on the voluntary basis. The Ministers agreed to adopt the Paper on the Terms of Reference for ARF Experts/Eminent Persons which appears in ANNEX C. In this regard, they commended the excellent work done by the ISG on CBMs, particularly by the Co-Chairs of ISG-CBMs, i.e. Malaysia and the Republic of Korea, in finalising the Terms of Reference for the ARF Experts/Eminent Persons. The Ministers also encouraged the ARF participants to nominate their experts/ eminent persons for the Register on a voluntary basis with the ARF Chair serving as a focal point.

9. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to Singapore for its valuable contribution in preparing the Paper on the Concept and Principles of PD and to all ARF participants for their inputs to the Paper. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the progress in the discussion on the PD Paper in the ARF and commended the work in this regard by ISG-CBMs. The Ministers agreed to adopt the PD Paper as a snapshot of the state of current discussion on PD in the ARF and that the ISG would continue to discuss PD in the next inter-sessional year and focus on those issues where there remain divergence of views. The Paper on the Concept and Principles of PD appears in ANNEX D. Noting with satisfaction the remarkable progress in the discussion and eventual adoption of the above-mentioned papers, the Ministers recognised that these developments represent a significant step forward in the ARF process in the last inter-sessional year.

10. The Ministers commended ARF participants for their contributions to the Annual Security Outlook (ASO) on a voluntary basis and welcomed the second volume of the ARF ASO compiled without editing by the ARF Chair. Noting that the ASO could contribute to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding as well as facilitating the exchange of views among ARF participants, the Ministers agreed that the current and future ASOs would not be treated as confidential. The Ministers encouraged ARF participants to submit ASO in the coming year.

11. Noting the importance of the participation of defence and military officials in the ARF process, the Ministers welcomed the contribution of greater and active interaction among defence and military officials towards the promotion of mutual understanding. In this regard, the Ministers agreed to endorse the recommendation by the ARF SOM that Defence Officials Luncheon be included as a regular feature of the ISG.

Highlights of Issues Discussed

12. The Ministers had in-depth and extensive discussions on the political and security situation in the Asia-Pacific since the Seventh ARF in July 2000, particularly on the major developments that affect the regional security environment. Conducted in the ARF traditional open and candid atmosphere, the exchange of views among the Ministers was very substantive and focussed, thus helping create better understanding of the security perceptions and concerns among ARF participants.

13. The Ministers shared the views that on the whole, the situation in the Asia-Pacific region remained relatively stable. The Ministers noted that despite certain challenges and uncertainties, and differences in political and strategic perceptions, the region continues to enjoy peace and stability. The Ministers acknowledged the importance of peaceful and stable relations between major powers as key to regional peace and security, and believed that the major powers would continue their efforts to improve and develop their relations so as to contribute to (he maintenance of peace and stability in the region.

14. The Ministers exchanged views on the accelerated globalisation and were of the view that under the multi-faceted impacts of globalisation as well as those of technologies, economic security is fast becoming a major concern of all nations, both developing and developed alike. They particularly noted with concern the widening gap between developed and developing countries. In this regards, the Ministers echoed the determination by the world Heads of State and Government expressed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration to "create an environment - at the national and global levels alike - which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty."

15. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the recent positive development of overall situation on the Korean Peninsula, including increased dialogue and co-operation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) following the North-South Summit on June 15, 2000 in Pyongyang. They further encouraged both the DPRK and the ROK to build on the success of the Summit to continue the peace process and emphasised the importance of holding the second Inter-Korean Summit with a view to establishing lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. The Ministers also took note of the DPRK's position concerning the DPRK-US Agreed Framework of 1994. They welcomed continued efforts by the international community to contribute to the above endeavours, including the recent visit by H.E. Mr. Goran Persson, the President-in-Office of the European Council and Prime Minister of Sweden, to both the DPRK and the ROK. The Ministers were of the view that outstanding security and humanitarian issues would be addressed through increased dialogues. The Ministers appreciated the active participation by (be DPRK in ARI⁷ activities in the last year urn! Considered this a contribution towards strengthening the ARI⁷ process and advancing the cause of regional peace and security.

16. The Ministers noted that the situation in Southeast Asia on the whole has been peaceful and stable. The Ministers exchanged views on the recent developments in the South China Sea and welcomed the progress in the consultations between ASEAN and China to develop a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. The Ministers encouraged the continued exercise of self-restraint by all countries concerned and the promotion of confidence-building measures in this area, and welcomed the commitment of countries concerned to resolve disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the recognised principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), as well as to ensure the freedom of navigation in the area.

17. The Ministers noted that the 4¹¹ ASEAN Informal Summit (AIS) held in Singapore in November 2000 was one of the most significant events that had taken place in the region since the ARF7. At the Summit, the ASEAN leaders agreed on the need to address ASEAN's cohesion as that would be an important factor for stability in the region. They also agreed to push forward proposals that would enable closer integration and help reduce the development gap within ASEAN. Another key outcome of the Summit was the decision by the ASEAN leaders and the leaders of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea to start moving towards closer East Asia co-operation. The Ministers shared the views by the ASEANH 3 leaders that a gradual approach towards closer East Asian Co-operation would contribute to the peace, stability and prosperity of the region. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the creation of the East Asia Study Group (EASG) in March 2001 to promote East Asia co-operation.

18. The Ministers recognised the purposes and principles contained in the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in Southeast Asia (TAG) as a basis for the promotion of co-operation, amity and friendship within Southeast Asia and between ASEAN and ASEAN's Dialogue Partners and other ARF participants. The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the High Council of TAC by the ASEAN member countries at the 34th AMM in July 2001 in Ha Noi. They noted the consideration by non-Southeast Asian countries to accede to the TAG.

19. The Ministers welcomed the progress regarding the implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) as a contribution to global efforts to curb the proliferation of nuclear

weapons. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the continued progress made in the consultation between the State Parties to the SEANWFZ Treaty and the Nuclear Weapon States regarding the latter's accession to the Protocol to the Treaty. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the progress made at the recent Direct Dialogue between the State Parties and the Nuclear Weapon States held in Ha Noi in May 2001. The Ministers welcomed the P5 Joint Statement concerning security assurances for Mongolia and support the Nuclear -Weapon Free Status of Mongolia

20. The Ministers welcomed the election of President Megawati Soekarnoputri in Indonesia which had been conducted in a democratic constitutional and peaceful manner. The Ministers expressed the hope that this orderly and peaceful transition would lead to political stability and accelerated economic recovery in Indonesia. They reiterated support for the territorial integrity and political unity of Indonesia. The Ministers believed that the stability and prosperity of Indonesia would contribute positively to the peace, stability and prosperity of the region.

21. The Ministers noted the co-operation between East Timor and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and reiterated the need for the support of international community including ASEAN to play an active role in the nation building efforts of East Timor up to and beyond the territory's independence. They supported the efforts to resolve the problem of East Timorese refugees in East Nusa Tenggara province in a comprehensive manner in order to ensure peace and harmony of all Timorese. They welcomed the plan to hold election for the Constituent Assembly on 30 August 2001.

22. The Ministers welcomed the encouraging developments in Myanmar, the process of national reconciliation in particular. The Ministers expressed appreciation for the efforts in this regard by the Government of the Union of Myanmar, as well as those of ASEAN, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Myanmar, the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General.

23. The Ministers noted the situation in Fiji and Solomon Islands, welcomed positive developments towards a resolution of the Bougainville conflict and expressed the hope for positive outcome of the Fijian elections to be held in August 2001 and the efforts of the International Peace Monitoring Team in Solomon Islands.

24. The Ministers discussed issues relating to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery as well as the implications of missile defence systems. They noted expressions of support for the Nuclear

Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. The Ministers also took note of the call for all states to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to accede to the NPT. The Ministers urged all states to maintain existing moratoria on nuclear testing. They also took note of the call made in the NPT Review Conference Final Document on the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. The Ministers further emphasised the importance of systematic and progressive efforts by Nuclear Weapon States on nuclear disarmament and called on all states to work towards the objective of total elimination of nuclear weapons.

25. The Ministers expressed their hope that the Protocol strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) would be finalised before the 5th BTWC Review Conference and urged all countries to speedily conclude their negotiations on the said Protocol.

26. The Ministers recognised that the transnational crimes could not only have potentially serious impacts on regional peace and stability, but also pose a threat to the national economic development and social well-being of all states. In this regard, they noted the serious implications of drug production and trafficking and underscored the need to address this critical issue and other transnational crimes such as piracy, illegal migration, illicit trafficking of small arms, money laundering, terrorism, and cyber crime. The Ministers underlined the importance of greater bilateral, regional and international co-operative efforts in this regard.

27. The Ministers welcomed the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols and encouraged ARF participating countries to sign and ratify them soon. The Ministers expressed their supports for results of the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in all its aspects which was held in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001 and believed

ARF participants would promote the regional co-operation pursuant to the UN Programme of Action on SALW. In this context, the Ministers noted the Australian proposal for an ART Declaration on small arms.

Reports of Track I and II Activities for the Current Inter-sessional Year (July 2000- July 2001)

Track I

28. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the successful implementation of Track I and II activities during the 2000-2001 inter-sessional year. They noted in particular the Co-Chairmen's Summary Report of the Meetings of the ARF Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence-building Measures (ISG on CBMs), co-chaired by the Republic of Korea and Malaysia, held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea 1-3 November 2000 and in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 18-20 April 2001 (ANNEX E). The Ministers commended the work of the ISG on CBMs in contributing to the advancement of the ARF process and endorsed the recommendations contained in the above-mentioned report.

29. The Ministers also noted that the following Track I activities took place under the auspices of the ISG on CBMs:

29.1. Combined Humanitarian Assistance Response Training (CHART) in Singapore in August 2000;

29.2. Fourth Meeting of Heads of Defence Colleges, Universities and Institutions in China in September 2000;

29.3. Seminar on Defence Conversion Co-operation in Beijing in September 2000 as well as the establishment of the ARF Regional Maritime Information Center (ARF-RMIC);

29.4. Seminar on Approaches to Confidence Building in Helsinki in October 2000;

29.5. Workshop on Anti-Piracy in Mumbai in October 2000;

29.6. ARF CBMs Seminar on Conventional Weapons in Phnom Penh in February 2001 ; and

29.7. Seminar on Civil-Military Co-operation in Peacekeeping Operations in Seoul in May 2001.

29.8. Workshop on Environmentally Sound Management of Shipboard Generated Waste in Washington in June 2001

30. The Ministers endorsed the following proposals on the implementation of CBM activities as Basket 1 CMBs in the next inter-sessional year:

30.1. Japan's proposal to host the 5th ARF Meeting of the Heads of Defense Colleges/Institutions in late August to early September 2001;

30.2 Thailand's proposal to host the 2nd Seminar on the Law of Armed Conflict : "the relevance of the Law of Armed Conflict to Peacekeeping" in Bangkok on 7-10 August 2001 ;

30.3. US and Brunei's proposal to host a workshop for Mid-level ARF Civilian and Defense Officials on Preventive Diplomacy in September 2001;

30.4 Vietnam's proposal to host a Seminar on Economic Security for Asia-Pacific in the First Decades of 21st Century on 26-28 February 2002 ;

30.5 Russia's proposal to host the 6th ARF Meeting of the Heads of Defense Colleges/Institution in 2002 ; and

30.6. Canada's proposal for an ARF Peacekeeping Seminar to be co-sponsored with India and Malaysia in March 2002.

Track II

31. The Ministers took note of the CSCAP Maritime Co-operation Working Group Meetings in the Philippines, China and Malaysia in 2000-2001 inter-sessional year and the CSCAP's draft Memorandum on a Common Understanding of the Law of the Sea in the Asia-Pacific; the 8th Meeting of CSCAP Working Group on Transnational Crime and the 9th Meeting of CSCAP Working Group on Comprehensive and Co-operative Security. The Ministers also noted that informal contacts between ARF Chair and Track II for a could provide important inputs for discussions at Track I level.

32. The Ministers welcomed efforts made by ASEAN and Russia relating to Pacific Concord and encouraged them to continue their consultations.

Programme of Work for the Next Inter-sessional Year (July 2001 - July 2002)

33. The Ministers agreed that the ISG on CBMs continue their work and welcomed the offers by Viet Nam and the Republic of India to co-chair the ISG on CBMs in the next inter-sessional year,

34. While noting that the Expert Group Meetings on transnational crime (EGMs) in the inter-sessional year 2000-2001 had generally been useful in helping the ARF to address transnational crimes, the Ministers endorsed the recommendation of the ARF SOM and ISG on CBMs that those transnational crimes could be discussed in alternative formats such as ad-hoc workshops, seminars or symposia.

Future Direction of the ARF Process

35. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to further develop the ARF as an effective forum for dialogue and co-operation on political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. While reiterating that the ARF continue to follow an evolutionary approach in its development from Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures to Development of Preventive Diplomacy (PD) to elaboration of approaches to conflict, the Ministers agreed that the ARF continues to move at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants and on the basis of consensus. They expressed their continued support for ASEAN's role as the driving force in the ARF process.

36. The Ministers emphasised the importance of confidence-building as the foundation and the primary focus of the whole ARF process. The Ministers also agreed that while moving towards PD, the ARF should continue to strengthen its confidence-building process so as to substantially enhance mutual trust, confidence and understanding as well as co-operation among the ARF participants. They concurred that these efforts would lay a firm ground for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific as well as for the next stages of the ARF. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress made in the discussion on the concept and principles of PD within the ARF's context based on the Paper on

ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy. In this regard, the Ministers requested the ISG on CMBs to intensify its efforts in discussing PD, focusing on those areas where there remained divergence of views and submit recommendations to ARF SOM and ARF Ministers at their next meetings.

37. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress in exploring the overlap between CBMs and PD and strengthening of the four CBM/PD overlap proposals already agreed upon, namely the adoption of the paper on an enhanced role of the ARF Chair and the paper on the ARF Register of Experts/Eminent Persons, the Annual Security Outlook, and voluntary background briefing on regional security issues. The Ministers agreed that the ARF continues its work on these measures as well as on further exploring the overlap between CBMs and PD.