

## **Thailand's Contribution to ARF Security Outlook 2013**

### **A. Global Outlook**

1. The overall global security outlook appears to be largely stable despite conflicts and disputes taking place in some regions, and ongoing non-traditional challenges to security. These conflicts and disputes, however, have not been on a scale that would threaten global security. Moreover, the ongoing economic difficulties in some regions are being addressed to the extent that forecasts for economic growth have improved. These economic challenges so far have had limited impact on the Asia-Pacific. Nevertheless, as reflected in demonstrations and protests in the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America, sections of the public, driven by socio-economic and political concerns, have been demanding for change. These are domestic issues which, if left unaddressed, could have further impact on the developments in the respective regions.

2. The worsening conflict in Syria has resulted in tragic loss and immense humanitarian consequences and brought about instability to the neighboring countries and the Middle East. Attacks on innocent civilians, especially on women and children, have been occurring on an almost daily basis. The conflict can be protracted and potentially widened in scope, unless the key powers and concerned parties can agree to bring about a peaceful solution, based on the interests of the Syrian people.

3. More frequent and severe natural disasters directly affect global human security. However, a positive development is the rise in international cooperation which enhances governments' collective ability to provide timely, effective, and coordinated humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. As weather-related natural disasters are linked to climate change, concerted action is also required to mitigate changes in global temperature. Erratic and extreme weather also affects water resources, which impact agricultural productivity and hence the world's food security. Protecting food security will require enhanced regional and global cooperation.

4. Terrorism remains a grave concern, despite the falling number of terrorist attacks around the world. The counter-terrorism community has been successful at improving intelligence exchange/gathering and forging closer cooperation. More effective border security, along with applications of de-radicalization strategies, also have played a role in stemming terrorist activities. Nevertheless, challenges remain in the form of homegrown terrorists and extremist groups and individuals. Recent terrorist attacks by lone operators have shown to have the same capacity to cause extensive disruption and damage on the same scale as those by organized groups.

5. The continuing trend of enhanced regional and multilateral cooperation through regional and multilateral arrangements and institutions has helped address many of the global security challenges. This has also been complemented by the continued dialogue and cooperation being promoted by important countries that have an impact on global security, such as the Summit between China and Russia earlier this year, and more recently the Summit between China and the United States. Such developments should also have as positive consequences on regional security and stability in the Asia-Pacific.

## **B. Regional Outlook**

6. The Asia-Pacific region has been generally free from major conflicts, although areas of tension and disputes continue to cause concern and require close monitoring. In general terms, the situation in the Asia-Pacific can be described as having positive geo-economic trends but with continuing challenges in geo-politics. How these two trends interact and are managed by the region will determine the future direction of the Asia-Pacific situation.

7. Despite the economic challenges and weak recovery in other regions, the the Asia-Pacific region enjoying economic growth of around 5.7 percent this year, with forecasts for such growth to continue at around 6 percent according to the IMF. These positive geo-economic trends provide a firm foundation for promoting regional peace and security.

8. The geo-political trends reflect, however, a number of challenges. From the Korean Peninsula to the South China Sea and other maritime areas, we have witnessed continuing tensions and disputes. Such trends are counter-balanced by increasing interdependence in the region and the development of regional architecture, institutions and arrangements to help manage such challenges. In view of the rising expectation for the Asia-Pacific to be an engine of the global economy and bring more prosperity to the region, it is thus more important than ever to maintain a regional environment of peace and stability.

### The ASEAN Community as a Force for Regional Stability and Security

9. The promotion of peace and stability in ASEAN is a key part of the process towards the establishment of an ASEAN Community in 2015. The effort to build an inclusive and transparent ASEAN-centered regional architecture has led to greater cooperation within ASEAN and with external parties to enhance peace, security, and stability in the region. Overall, ASEAN and its partners is promoting better coordination and cooperation to respond more rapidly and effectively to both traditional and non-traditional security threats, in line with the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint. In addition, ASEAN is developing preventive diplomacy in Southeast Asia and in the wider Asia-Pacific

region through the ARF, as an instrument to promote regional stability and contain disputes. Ultimately, ASEAN's contributions to regional stability and security are through the following:

(1) promoting a **culture of sustained cooperation and dialogue** within the Asia-Pacific, as called for in the ARF Vision Statement and Plan of Action, in order to build confidence and address shared security challenges in the region,

(2) creating **mutually acceptable norms and regional codes of conduct**, building on the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, that will promote constructive action and avoid aggressive or provocative action in region, and

(3) **building space and a credible platform for dialogue and consultations**, either collectively or for parties concerned, through an inclusive and transparent ASEAN-centered regional arrangements like the ARF, in order to exercise preventive diplomacy and prevent escalation of tensions.

10. ASEAN has shown its ability to express its collective view to regional security challenges. It has voiced concern on the testing of nuclear weapons by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 12 February 2013. A denuclearized, stable and economically vibrant Korean Peninsula is in everyone's interests. Reduction of tensions, resumption of dialogue including the inter-Korean dialogue, and reconvening of the Six Party Talks are all important elements towards achieving this goal. The ARF can be an important forum to help facilitate this. As a Non-Nuclear Weapon State under the NPT and a State Party to and Depositary State of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), Thailand strictly adheres to all three pillars of the NPT regime and supports implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1540 and 1977. The proliferation of nuclear weapons will remain a threat to long term regional peace and stability. In this connection, ASEAN and the Nuclear Weapon States under the NPT need to continue their consultations in order to have the NWS accede to the Protocol to the SEANFWZ Treaty. Thailand also attaches importance to regional and global cooperation to address the threat posed by other weapons of mass destruction in accordance with its international obligations and ASEAN's commitment to make Southeast Asia a region free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

11. As one of the world's most economically dynamic regions, threats to safe and secure maritime trade remain a serious concern. In the Malacca Straits, cooperation through frameworks such as the Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrol (MSCP), the Eyes in the Sky Patrol and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) have contributed to the substantial decrease in the number of reported attacks in recent years. According to the ReCAAP Piracy and Armed Robbery in Asia Annual Report for January-December 2012, the overall reported incidents in Asia, especially in the Malacca Straits and South China Sea, have declined compared to

the same period in 2011. In 2012, a total of 132 cases were reported compared to 167 cases in 2011. Nonetheless, the figure in 2012 was still higher than those in 2008 and 2009. There is also concern of threats of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Indian Ocean as a result of continuing challenges in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. Concerned states thus have a shared responsibility to continue their surveillance as the region's economic prosperity depends on these vital marine trading routes.

12. Overlapping maritime boundary claims and disputes between countries in the region, if not managed effectively, could pose a serious challenge to ASEAN unity and economic vitality, to the security of the Asia-Pacific region and to enhanced maritime connectivity with underpins the region's economic growth. The claims and disputes should be resolved by the parties directly concerned through dialogue and peaceful means, in accordance with the relevant principles of international law. As the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations Coordinator, Thailand urges all countries concerned to implement the Declaration on the Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). It is imperative that the discussion on the Code of Conduct (COC) continues. This will help improve the trust and confidence underpinning regional cooperation for maritime safety and security.

13. As ASEAN moves toward becoming a Community in 2015, the regional will become more inter-connected. Free movement of people, goods, and services is the basis for regional prosperity, but also has inherent risks. With greater connectivity, non-traditional security threats will become even more pervasive. Transnational crimes will likely evolve to more complex forms. Improved connectivity necessitates better intelligence exchange and more stringent security control within ASEAN to effectively deal with cross-border challenges, especially in the forms of transnational crime and terrorism.

14. Trafficking in persons is a persistent region-wide problem. Several ASEAN countries are the source, transit point, and destination of trafficking in persons, especially in women and children. ASEAN countries can better address this problem through the development of the Regional Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (RPA) and an ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP).

15. Narcotic drugs production and trafficking still remain a major source of income for transnational criminal groups in the region. To combat transnational crime and meet the goal of a Drug-Free ASEAN in 2015, countries must make progress in the implementation of the ASEAN Work Plan on Combating Illicit Drug Production, Trafficking and Use (2009-2015).

16. The increased frequency and severity of natural disasters demand better coordination of disaster management policies and measures at the regional and global levels. Countries must constantly work to enhance cooperation in early

warning to the provision of appropriate, adequate, need-based and timely emergency response and humanitarian assistance. Cooperation in disaster relief under the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus Expert Working Group, the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-sessional Meeting (ARF ISM) on Disaster Relief, and the biannual ARF Disaster Relief Exercise is essential to improve ASEAN Member States' individual and collective capacity to meet this unpredictable challenge.

17. Addressing the challenge of extremism and intolerance is necessary if the Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific are to remain a region where diversity and tolerance is protected and respected. Enhanced cooperation, including in education, to promote a culture of respect for diversity and tolerance, and take collective action to tackle extremism, should be promoted.

### **C. Individual National Defense Policies**

18. Thailand's national defense policy is based mainly on self-defense, with the ultimate goal of safeguarding the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation, as well as supporting Thailand's national security policy. Our approach is to develop and maintain a comprehensive national-preparedness capacity to combat both traditional and nontraditional security threats, with the effective cooperation between all relevant civilian and military agencies.

19. The Royal Thai Armed Forces are encouraged to foster friendly relations with their counterparts of neighboring countries, as a basis for mutual confidence and trust. In the effort to promote military cooperation, the Thai military regularly participates in regional cooperation framework such as ADMM and ADMM-Plus. Every year Thailand hosts Cobra Gold, one of the world's premier multi-national defense exercises. About 13,000 servicemen and women from 7 countries (Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States) participated in Cobra Gold 2013.

20. With regard to non-traditional security threats, the Thai Government has prioritized anti-drug and anti-trafficking in person policies, with an emphasis on prevention and strict enforcement of the law while at the same time respecting the basic rights of individuals. During times of humanitarian emergencies and large-scale natural disasters, the military has a special role in supporting civilian agencies in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

21. For the fiscal year 2013, a budget of 6.016 billion US dollars is allocated for military expenditure. This is an increase of 7.10% from the budget of the previous year. It is equivalent to 1.44% of Thailand's national GDP.

## **D. National Contributions to Promoting Regional Stability**

22. At the 19<sup>th</sup> ARF Ministerial Meeting held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the ARF Ministers welcomed the proposal of Thailand and the Republic of Korea as co-chairs of the ARF Disaster-Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx) 2013, which was subsequently held in Cha-am, Phetchaburi Province in Thailand on 7-11 May 2013. The ARF DiREx is widely recognized as landmark event in improving the capacity of the region's disaster response mechanisms in a multinational operation. ARF DiREx 2013 aims to enhance regional and affected nation's civilian – military (civ-mil) coordination, cooperation, effectiveness, and response to a disaster.

23. Thailand has been an active contributor to peace-keeping and peace-building efforts around the world and in the region, including our participation in African-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), and United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). At regional level, Thailand supports the initiative of the ADMM as a means to enhance coordination, share information and best practices as well as conduct joint training exercises in order to increase the capacities of ASEAN members in the area of peacekeeping. Thailand sees a need to establish an ASEAN Peacekeeping Center Network among ASEAN Member States, to promote and enhance cooperation among the armed forces through sharing experiences, expertise, and greater collaboration on the basis of mutual respect. Toward this end, Thailand hosted the Inaugural Meeting of the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Center Network on 4-7 September 2012.

24. In August 2012, Thailand joined the UN's Global Marketplace for Civilian Capacities (CAPMATCH), an online platform aimed to better match the demand and supply of specialized civilian capacities for countries emerging from conflict. Thailand is listed as a provider country, offering experience and expertise in the areas of development and economic revitalization for post-conflict countries.

25. To emphasize our ongoing effort to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, Thailand joined the Proliferation Security Initiative on 16 November 2012 and continues to actively participate in other multilateral efforts such as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Thailand also attaches similar importance to addressing the challenge posed by other weapons of mass destruction and in May 2013, Thailand co-hosted with the United States the 2nd ARF CBM Seminar on Implementation of UNSCR 1540.

26. As a current member of the Board of Governor of IAEA, Thailand attaches great importance to the issues of nuclear safety, security and safeguards at the international, regional and national levels. Following Thailand's initiative announced at the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit, ASEAN has endorsed in its Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty (2013-

2017) the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM). The objective of ASEANTOM is to enhance regulatory activities and further strengthen nuclear safety, security and safeguards in ASEAN, which will help prevent illicit trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials. The idea of this Network was first welcomed by ASEAN Leaders at the 20th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh in April 2012, which will be developed further.

27. Thailand supports international efforts on confidence building measures (CBMs). Thailand regularly submits reports on international transfer of conventional arms as well as small arms and light weapons under the UN Register on Conventional Arms (UNROCA) and the annual report on military expenditures to the UN Secretary-General and is exploring with ASEAN Member States to develop similar arrangements within ASEAN.

28. Thailand has been doing its part to protect and safeguard Sea Lines of Communication in Southeast Asia and beyond. We have been participating in the Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrol since September 2008 and the Eyes in the Sky air patrol since January 2009. The Royal Thai Navy joined the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in 2010 to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea in international waters of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf. In 2012, Thailand for the first time assumed command of CTF 151, one of three taskforces under control of the CMF. CTF 151 is tasked to deter, disrupt and suppress piracy, protect maritime vessels and secure freedom of navigation in the 1.1 million square miles of international waters in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin. These actions are necessary to prevent spilling over of piracy and armed robbery at sea into the Indian Ocean which is adjacent to the Straits of Malacca.

29. In the area of nontraditional security threats, transnational crimes and international terrorism will likely become even more serious challenges for ASEAN countries as the region becomes more inter-connected. Thailand places great emphasis to tackle transnational crimes, particularly the scourge of drugs, trafficking in person, economic and cyber crimes. In June 2012, Thailand hosted a workshop on “Cross-border Management: a Key to Efficient ASEAN Connectivity.” In September 2012, Thailand hosted the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (12<sup>th</sup> SOMTC) to address these issues. We co-hosted with Australia a workshop on the implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) for the Bali Process Countries in December 2012.

30. Drug control and suppression are on the Royal Thai Government’s national agenda. We are committed to strengthening regional cooperation and to coordinate regional measures in the fight against illicit production, distribution, trafficking, smuggling, and abuse of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Thailand hosted the first Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters in August 2012, which produced tangible results to be followed up by Member States.

31. Trafficking in persons is a serious concern for Thailand, a country that receives large number of migrant workers from neighboring countries. Thailand has put in place improved measures, in cooperation with neighboring countries, to facilitate legal/ document workers and prevent trafficking in persons. Thailand is working with ASEAN Member States to develop the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons at the same time as the Regional Plan of Action. Thailand also actively participates in the Bali Process, working with our partners to find viable long-term solution to illegal migration, people smuggling, and trafficking in persons in the region.

32. Thailand is committed to strengthening regional cooperation on counterterrorism, with an emphasis on intelligence exchange and capacity building. Terrorists and transnational criminals are increasingly resorting to cyber and economic crimes to fund activities. To this end, Thailand has been improving our Anti-Money Laundering/ Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/ CFT) regime to meet the standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). As a result, Thailand has been removed from the FATF's Public Statement in February 2013.

33. Thailand also seeks to support enhanced regional and international efforts to promote cybersecurity. Thailand has just hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams or FIRST in 2013 and has established a National Cybersecurity Committee to coordinate cybersecurity measures at the national level and to promote cooperation at the regional and global levels.

#### **E. Role of the ARF**

34. Thailand reaffirms the importance it attaches to the ARF as a premier forum for dialogue and cooperation to promote peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region, and its central role in the evolving regional security architecture. ARF Track I activities continue to define cooperation that enhances mutual trust and confidence underlying interdependence in the region. Activities in the four priority areas: counter-terrorism and transitional crime, disaster relief, maritime security, and non-proliferation and disarmament have evolved to keep up with new challenges of the time, in particular non-traditional security challenges, and keep the ARF relevant.

35. Two of the fundamental challenges facing the ARF and its relevance to the region are (1) how to improve synergies between the ARF and other entities such as the EAS and ADMM Plus and (2) how to move the ARF towards preventive diplomacy or PD at a pace comfortable to all. These should be some of the priorities of the ARF in the next few years. To support the ARF's deliberations on these two important challenges, ARF participants should enlist the help of Track II such as the CSCAP. Furthermore, the ARF should continue to enhance its

dialogue and interaction with other regional security organizations such as the OSCE and SCO, for example. The goal is to develop new ideas on how to advance preventive diplomacy as well as strengthen cooperation of ARF priority issues.

36. Progress of the ARF will depend on its ability to become a more active action-oriented forum. Through multilateral cooperation, development of greater mutual trust and confidence, and effective coordination with other regional entities that deal with security issues, the ARF can remain ASEAN-driven yet inclusive mechanism in the preservation of peace, stability, and security in the region.

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