



## SUMMARY REPORT

### THE FOURTEENTH ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM SECURITY POLICY CONFERENCE

Manila, The Philippines, 29 June 2017

1. The Fourteenth ARF Security Policy Conference (14<sup>th</sup> ASPC) was convened in Manila, The Philippines, on 29 June 2017. The Conference was chaired by Mr. Ricardo A. David, Jr., Undersecretary for Defence Policy, Department of National Defence of the Philippines.
2. Representatives of all ARF participating countries except Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste, attended the Conference. Representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat were also present. The List of Participants appears as **ANNEX 1**.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN**

3. In his Opening Remarks, the Chairman welcomed all delegates to the Philippines and viewed their participation as a commitment towards the maintenance of regional peace and stability, recalling the inaugural ASPC in 2004 with the objective to promote confidence-building measures among defence officials in the Asia-Pacific, as members share insights and experiences with each other. The Chair expressed optimism that new lessons would be derived from the 14<sup>th</sup> ASPC and that the Conference would contribute in the development of the ARF processes as the topic of revisiting regional security architecture. The Conference also provides opportunities to deliberate on issues seldom discussed in other multilateral fora including the development of reserve forces. For the first time in 14 meetings, this year's ASPC brings in subject matter experts to share their views on reserve forces development and the regional security architecture. The Chairman looked forward to a productive and fruitful discussion.

**AGENDA ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

4. The Conference adopted the Provisional Agenda, which appears as **ANNEX 2**.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES**

5. The Conference was of the view that the security situation in the Asia-Pacific remains generally stable although there are some issues which concern the region. To this end, the Conference widely supported the pursuit of a rules-based global order favourable to sustainable prosperity and stability.

6. The Conference expressed grave concern over the escalated tensions in the Korean Peninsula following numerous ballistic missile tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) since the beginning of 2017, which are seen as provocative actions to the international community and an anti-thesis of the pursuit of confidence-building measures in the ARF. The Conference supported the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, in view of non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and called for the DPRK to fully comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. The issue of deteriorating human rights situation in the DPRK was also raised, during which the Conference noted the recent incident involving the death of an American university student shortly after his release from prison in the DPRK. In securing long-term peace and stability in the region, the Conference urged all concerned parties to resume dialogue to defuse tensions.

7. The Conference acknowledged the improved situation in the South China Sea and commended the progress in concluding the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) including the adoption of the Joint Statement on the Application of Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) in the South China Sea, and more recently the finalisation of Framework on the COC in the South China Sea. The Conference reaffirmed its commitment to uphold relevant international laws in ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight in these vital sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). The Conference further encouraged all claimant States to refrain from measures and provocative behaviours that may increase tension and exhorted them to work towards durable and lasting solutions.

8. In the same vein, the Conference exchanged views on the current state of maritime security. A number of pressing issues in this area were discussed, including illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing as well as piracy. In addition, it was observed that maritime security has become more intertwined with other security threats, especially terrorism. For this reason, the Conference commended the

Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia for launching the Trilateral Maritime Cooperation on 19 June 2017 that signifies regional commitment in maintaining safe and stable seas. The need to improve international maritime security was further re-emphasised to ensure continued growth and prosperity.

9. The Conference acknowledged that the threats of terrorism, radicalism, and violent extremism continue to pose challenges to the region. The discussions were centered around topics of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), terrorism financing and the use of on-line platforms to propagate violent extremism. It was understood that as part of non-traditional security challenges, terrorism transcends borders and therefore requires collective efforts to address its root causes. The Conference also expressed condolences to victims of recent terrorist attacks in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and the United Kingdom. In this context, the Chair thanked the Conference for the support to the Philippines in these challenging times and expressed sustained efforts in strengthening and exploring counter-terrorism as well as in combating other transnational crimes in the region.

10. Other non-traditional security issues of common concern include cyber security as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR). The Conference expressed concern on the increase of global cyber-attacks, and in this connection, welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus Experts' Working Group (ADMM-Plus EWG) on Cyber Security co-chaired by the Philippines and New Zealand for the 2017-2020 cycle. Cyber security along with counter-terrorism and maritime security, are seen as areas of cooperation which can align the endeavours of the ARF and ADMM-Plus. HADR is another area which has also provided opportunities for the defence sector to contribute to the security of the daily lives of people. As disasters become more devastating, partnership between military and civilian agencies needs to be further enhanced to ensure effective HADR efforts.

11. The Conference expressed confidence in ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ADMM and ADMM-Plus and the ARF, which showcase how dialogue and practical cooperation contribute to building confidence in the Asia-Pacific. As ASEAN celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> year, ASEAN-led mechanisms and processes validate the relevance of multilateralism and regional arrangement. In this context, the Conference welcomed the annualisation of ADMM-Plus, commencing in 2018.

**AGENDA ITEM 4: RESERVE FORCE DEVELOPMENT**

12. The Conference discussed the development of reserve forces and its contributions to the defence and security sector. It was observed that reserve forces play a complementary role and in a number of countries, form the core of armed forces. In that sense, the Conference acknowledged that reserve forces have been able to tap into a diverse range of background, expertise and knowledge of the military, and that in itself is an economical force multiplier. Moreover, reserve forces serve as an essential link between the military and the public.

13. The Conference further noted that reserve forces have yet to meet their operational potential, particularly with regard to the changing security situation. To this end, their roles have been gradually expanded to assume greater responsibilities and higher positions of command. New roles assigned to reserve forces today include areas of Light Urban Search and Rescue, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defence, combat capabilities, cyber operations, naval security and intelligence operators, and linguists. Reserve forces have also been actively involved in HADR and counter-terrorism to protect people's lives and maintain social order.

14. The Conference understood that there are areas for improvement in the pursuit of operational readiness of reserve forces. First, links between active and reserve components need to be enhanced considering the cultural differences between the two. The Conference noted that a new and agile service model is being implemented to support transition and align benefit between full and part-time services. Second, more trainings and exposure to international affairs for reserve forces are deemed necessary. In relation to this, it was observed that more overseas deployment and select expeditionary roles are now being made accessible to reserve forces. Suggestion was also made to promote cooperation among reserve forces at the regional level, i.e. through the United States' State Partnership Program (SPP) which partners the US' National Guard with foreign militaries worldwide. The Conference further noted that there are enduring concepts to maintain capable and flexible reserve forces, namely: building, equipping, training, employing and sustaining effective reserves. The Conference observed that for reserve forces to be sustainable, strong support basis from both servicemen and the public are imperative.

15. The Philippines, Singapore, Canada, China, and the United States presented their views in the Conference. The presentations of the Philippines, Singapore, Canada, and the United States appear as **ANNEXES 3, 4, 5, and 6**, respectively.

**AGENDA ITEM 5: REVISITING THE REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE**

16. The Conference deliberated on the evolving regional security architecture and agreed that ASEAN must remain as the driving force. The Conference recognised the contribution of the ARF to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific through its confidence-building measures. As a continuation of previous discussions during the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD) in Ottawa, Canada on 10 May 2017 and ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) in Manila, the Philippines, on 22 May 2017, the Conference further critically evaluated the existing platforms and examined the proposed streamlining and rationalising of the ARF DOD and the ASPC.

17. The Conference took note that the number of meetings has significantly increased. Streamlining is necessary since most of defence cooperation platforms in the ASEAN-led mechanisms utilise the same resources.

18. It was highlighted during the session that there is a need to strike a balance between having a platform within the ARF for defense officials to engage in dialogue but not too many given human and financial resources considerations. Along this line, the Philippines proposed to synergise the ARF DOD and ASPC into the ARF Defense and Security Policy Conference (ADSPC), which will be the forum for ARF defense establishments at the senior officials' level. A number of participants expressed their support for synergising the ASPC and the ARF DOD, with none expressing reservation on the idea of integrating the two dialogue mechanisms. On the question of specific modalities of any integration, including reporting chains, the Philippines conveyed that such would be further discussed.

19. The linkages with other cooperative ASEAN-led mechanisms need to be improved for operationalisation of what has been discussed in the many meetings and to avoid redundancy. Defense platforms within the ARF should produce, among others, concrete papers on Best Practices, Lessons Learnt, Codes of Conduct, and exchange of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be adopted by all ASEAN partners. Another important consideration is how to keep all partners engaged, as ARF participating countries share common interests.

20. The Philippines, Thailand, Australia, Russia, and the European Union presented their views to the Conference. The presentations of the Philippines, Australia, and the European Union appear as **ANNEXES 7, 8,** and **9,** respectively.

**AGENDA ITEM 6: CLOSING REMARKS**

21. In his Closing Remarks, Undersecretary David expressed appreciation for the active participation of all delegations, and was pleased to note that the Conference gained useful insights on regional and international security issues, reserve forces

development and regional security architecture. With regard to the situation in the Korean Peninsula, the Chair expressed hope that acceptable solutions would soon be reached as the issue affects the stability of the region. Further, it was acknowledged that the inclusive nature of the ASPC has been able to facilitate exchanges of views on the future direction of the ARF. The Closing Remarks appears as **ANNEX 10**.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

22. The Conference thanked the Government of the Philippines for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality made for the Conference.

## ISSUES TO BE FOLLOWED UP

No.	Key Decision/Issues	Timeline	Follow-up By
1.	Consolidation of position of the ARF's defence sector pertaining to the proposal to integrate/synergise the ARF DOD and the ASPC	Before the 24 <sup>th</sup> ARF in August 2017	ARF Chair and ARF Participants

