

**ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Statement on
Enhancing Cooperation among Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies**

We, the Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Participants, gather today on the occasion of the 23rd ARF Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 26 July 2016 in Vientiane, Laos.

ACKNOWLEDGING that peace, security and stability at sea including the safety and security of sea lines of communication are vital to prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and the world;

REAFFIRMING our commitment to develop concrete and effective regional responses to maritime security challenges and other maritime challenges as stated in the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement and the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security (2015-2017);

CONCERNED about growing maritime challenges that may affect peace and stability in the region;

RECOGNISING the important role of the maritime law enforcement agencies as the first responders and front-line actors in addressing those challenges;

EMPHASISING the need to enhance cooperation among maritime law enforcement agencies with a view to promoting trust and confidence, and strengthening capacity and coordination, thus dealing more effectively with common maritime security challenges and other maritime challenges;

RECOGNISING that a maritime regime in the region based on international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that sets out a legal order for peaceful use of the seas and oceans, has facilitated our region's impressive economic growth;

COMMITTED to upholding the principles of international law, including those enshrined in the UN Charter and other relevant international instruments in the conduct of activities by law enforcement agencies and in the conduct of cooperation activities among them;

REITERATING the need and importance of promoting trust and confidence and exercising self-restraint by all parties and the collective endeavor to

maintain peace, stability, safety and security in all seas and oceans in the region;

EMPHASISING the importance of promoting maritime cooperation through dialogue and cooperation, using opportunities to address common challenges on maritime issues through relevant international and regional mechanisms including ASEAN-led mechanisms;

WELCOMING the on-going work of the ARF and other ASEAN related bodies such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting, the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus, the ASEAN Maritime Forum, the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, the East Asia Summit, as well as the ASEAN-EU High Level Dialogue on Maritime Security Cooperation;

NOTING the efforts of other regional mechanisms such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) and the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM);

DO HEREBY ENCOURAGE members of the ARF to promote concrete and practical cooperation between their respective Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies of the ARF participants, including by:

1. Actively cooperating, including through sharing experience and building capacity in implementing international instruments on safety of navigation such as the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS);
2. Sharing experience and best practices in managing incidents at sea and dealing with maritime security challenges;
3. Sharing experience and best practices in handling fishing vessels of other countries and their crews;
4. Continuing existing activities, including joint coordinated patrols, intelligence and information exchange, and exercises to combat piracy, armed robbery against ships at sea and other transnational crimes, and exploring new areas of possible cooperation in order to help promote safe and secure sea

lines of communication, enhanced maritime connectivity and maritime tourism;

5. Building regional capacity through training and workshop aimed at combating piracy and armed robbery against ships at sea, such as the Expanded ASEAN Seafarer Training (EAST);

6. Working to ensure that the region is a safe region for the exercise of freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, in accordance with international law; and

7. Implementing the recommendation contained in paragraph 7 of the 2009 ARF Vision Statement, including developing codes of conduct, guidelines, common standard operating procedures and best practices along with standby arrangements, effective interoperable collective responses and enhanced capability including through joint exercises in specific areas of activity agreeable to all Participants.

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