

As prepared for delivery

**STATEMENT BY VIET NAM'S DELEGATION
AT THE ARF INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING ON MARITIME SECURITY**

(Seoul, 18-19 April 2013)

---000---

Mr. Co-Chairs,

Distinguished delegates,

First of all, allow me, on behalf of Viet Nam's delegation, to express our appreciation to the Co-Chairs for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality extended to us. I am confident that under your able co-chairmanship, the meeting will be successful.

It has been long recognized that maritime security is crucial to a vibrant and resilient region. Therefore, the regional countries have been making efforts in strengthening cooperation in this area, including through the multilateral approaches. We are pleased to note the progress in cooperation on maritime security within the framework of the ARF, particularly through the implementation of the Work Plan on Maritime Security. We also note that cooperation for maritime security under other regional fora such as the ADMM Plus, the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and the Expanded AMF is also thriving. We recognize the importance of an effective coordination among these fora to improve synergy for regional cooperation in this important area.

For maritime cooperation in the region to develop further, it is essential for all countries to abide by the fundamental principles and shared norms of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, as well as the ones as enshrined in the regional arrangements, such as the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the ASEAN Statement on Six-point Principles on the South China Sea.

Mr. Co-Chairs,

Distinguished delegates,

In this context, we would like to share with you our perspective on the challenges to maritime security in the Gulf of Thailand and some of our experience in addressing them.

First, smuggling.

In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in the smuggling activities in the Gulf of Thailand. The smuggling goods are various, including gasoline, cigarette, automobile spare parts, and consumer goods. Smugglers use cargo ships and boats to transport them into Viet Nam. The

smuggling activities have caused negative effects on Viet Nam's economy. More seriously, they have become an important source of financing for the organized crime groups in Viet Nam.

Second, illegal fishing.

In spite of much effort by all the countries concerned, illegal fishing remains a serious challenge. In our view, effort has to be focused on addressing the root causes of the situation. They include better management of fishery resources, better education and awareness raising for fisherman, while countries concerned could enhance joint patrol activities as well as cooperation in managing the fishery resources.

At the same time, it is also important that the law enforcement agencies must handle the illegal fishing cases properly and on the humanitarian ground. We believe that it is a widely recognized norm that in no circumstance that force should be used against fisherman, be it in the Gulf of Thailand or other seas in the region and world over.

Third, pollution of maritime environment.

Maritime environment pollution in the Gulf of Thailand is a transnational issue that no country alone can address. This requires cooperative effort at the regional level. Over the recent years, cooperation in safeguarding maritime environment in the region and the Gulf of Thailand in particular has been a high priority, both in ASEAN and among the countries concerned.

One of the most serious challenges is oil-spill. As many busy international sea lanes go through the Gulf of Thailand, the risk of oil spill is very high. From 2007 to 2009, there were 12 large-scale oil-spill incidents. In many cases, the cause could not be identified; therefore, no one was held responsible and no compensation was made. To address the challenge, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Thailand have adopted the joint declaration and the 2009-2015 framework programme for cooperation on preparedness and response to oil spill incident. On the other hand, it is a fact that the countries concerned do not have sufficient legal and technical capabilities to monitor, track, and identify causes of oil spills and thus holding the ones responsible.

Fourth, sea piracy.

In recent years, piracy has become a constant threat to maritime security. While the number of incidents is on downward trend (as pointed out by Mr. Endo from ReCAAP ISC this morning), the risk in the Gulf of Thailand is still high, particularly when the number of ships going through the region continues to increase.

In this regard, the regional countries should strengthen further cooperation to counter piracy, including under the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). As for Viet Nam, Viet Nam Marine Police is a leading agency

in this area. Since its establishment in 1998, Viet Nam Marine Police has been actively engaging in the regional efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea. Viet Nam Maritime Police has been assigned as the Viet Nam Focal Point of the ReCAAP Information Sharing Center, which, like other centers in the region, operates around the clock to perform mandates and functions as assigned. The most recent case occurred last November. Upon the information received from Singapore's Information Fusion Center as well as other information centers about a Malaysia-flagged ship being attacked by pirates around 50 nautical miles off the shore of Viet Nam, Viet Nam Maritime Police responded quickly, surrounded the ship and arrested all 11 pirates, safely securing the ships and cargos. The lessons learned from this incident is that prompt information sharing, effective preparedness and quick response of law enforcement agencies are key to success.

Mr. Co-Chairs,

Distinguished delegates,

In view of the transnational nature of these four challenges, the regional countries have strengthened regional cooperation for effective responses. This involves not only the countries concerned such as Viet Nam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand, but also countries outside the region. This reflects that maritime security and safety in the region are the common concern and interests of all countries. The cooperative activities include the training courses for officers and annual meetings at the expert and commander levels.

To foster cooperation, the relevant law enforcement agencies of the countries concerned are working on a set of bilateral arrangements, which hopefully could be finalized at the commander level meeting to be held in Viet Nam this September. In the following years, we will work on multilateral arrangements in practical cooperation, such as joint patrols, search and rescue, oil spill cleanup and antipiracy etc

We are committed to work closely together with other countries to ensure maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Thailand and the region over.

Thank you./.