

**ASEAN Regional Forum
6th Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security
Bali, Indonesia 22 – 23 May 2014**

U.S. Statement

Co-Chairs, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United States would like to thank the Government of Indonesia for its warm hospitality and for hosting this year's Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security. The United States values its participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum, and is especially grateful to have had the opportunity to co-chair this ISM with our Indonesian and South Korean partners for the past three inter-sessional years.

The Importance of Maritime Security in Asia

We all share common maritime security interests, including preserving freedom and safety of navigation, unimpeded lawful commerce, peace and security, managing marine resources, and protecting the marine environment. However, maintaining maritime security is a complex task, as the security of the region's waters are fraught with countless threats and challenges, such as marine

environmental pollution, natural disasters, piracy, and illicit trafficking of persons, wildlife, drugs, and commercial goods, which necessitate regional cooperation.

Regional Cooperation on Maritime Security

The ARF ISM on Maritime Security has created a dedicated space to discuss mutual challenges in a constructive and collaborative manner. The United States has witnessed first-hand the outstanding spirit of cooperation and leadership of fellow co-chairs Brunei, China, Japan and Singapore on our series of Marine Environment Workshops held in March.

As pointed out by our ASEAN partners, there are 11 ASEAN mechanisms that deal with maritime-related issues – which is a clear sign that maritime issues are integral to this region and that ASEAN has embraced a serious and comprehensive approach to managing them. The ASEAN Maritime Forum offers strategic guidance to other ASEAN sectoral bodies on maritime issues, and is an example of ASEAN’s effective and proactive approach to handling these collective challenges.

The Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum has met twice since 2012, and has created a venue for dialogue partners and ASEAN member states to discuss key areas of concern, such as freedom of navigation, maritime cooperation, and protection of the marine environment.

As an initiative of the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, the Philippines and the United States established the Expanded ASEAN Seafarer Training on Counter-Piracy program, and Japan and Australia are also poised to expand this program to address issues beyond piracy, such as marine environmental awareness.

Other regional and sub-regional efforts to increase awareness and promote cooperation in the maritime domain include: the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security; the Western Pacific Naval Symposium that recently agreed on a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, which the United States is already implementing and encourages others to implement as well; the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum; the Gulf of Thailand Initiative; the Coral Triangle Initiative; and ReCAAP, which the United States has provided formal notice of its intent to accede.

Maritime Disputes

However, all of these great efforts to improve regional maritime capacity, increase security, and enhance connectivity, are being upstaged by the deeply concerning tensions arising from maritime and territorial disputes in the Asia-Pacific region, where the imposition of competing regulations by different countries over disputed territory and associated maritime areas and airspace is raising tensions and increasing the risk of confrontation.

Chinese Oil Rig Operations. China's recent decision to introduce an oil rig accompanied by numerous government vessels in waters disputed with Vietnam is provocative and raises tensions. This unilateral action appears to be part of a broader pattern of Chinese behavior to advance its claims over disputed territory in a manner that undermines peace and stability in the region.

We are very concerned about dangerous conduct and intimidation by vessels operating in this area. This incident is occurring in waters claimed by Vietnam and China near those islands, and highlights the need for claimants to clarify their claims in accordance with international law, and to reach a shared understanding on appropriate behavior and activities in disputed areas. We call on all parties to

conduct themselves in a safe and professional manner, preserve freedom of navigation and other lawful uses of the sea, and exercise restraint. We welcome ongoing talks between Vietnam and China to de-escalate tensions.

Support for Peaceful Means to Resolve Disputes. The United States reaffirms its support for the exercise of peaceful means to resolve maritime disputes in the South China Sea without fear of any form of retaliation, including intimidation or coercion. On March 30, the Republic of the Philippines submitted a memorial filing in its arbitration case concerning maritime disputes in the South China Sea arising under the Law of the Sea Convention. Regardless of the results of this arbitration proceeding, we call on all parties to refrain from taking unilateral actions that are escalatory and destabilizing, to clarify their respective maritime and territorial claims in accordance with international law, and to commit to the peaceful management and resolution of disputes.

Building ARF's Capacity to Respond to Maritime Security Challenges

As the region is confronted with increasingly complex maritime security challenges, the need for an effective, action-based and solutions-oriented regional security mechanism becomes more urgent. The ARF has responded and seeks to

implement further its foundational principles that call for the development of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution capabilities. It is our responsibility to work together in the Maritime Security ISM to ensure this evolution of the ARF is reflected in our cooperative efforts under the Maritime Security Pillar.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I'd like to underscore that the region is making great strides to increase effective and positive cooperation on maritime security. Efforts to develop the ARF into an action-based, solutions-oriented regional security body are ongoing and must be integrated into the maritime security pillar of the ARF, where so many of the region's security challenges reside.

The United States is greatly appreciative of the opportunity to participate and contribute to the advancement of the Maritime Security Pillar of the ARF, and looks forward to continuing its support and working collaboratively with other ARF participants as a co-chair during the next ISM cycle.