

**6th ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security
(6th ARF ISM on MS)
22-23 May 2014, Bali, Indonesia**

Thailand's Country Statement

I wish to begin by thanking the Co-Chairs for organizing this important Inter-sessional Meeting on Maritime Security and our Indonesian hosts for this hospitality.

Maritime security has become a pressing issue for the Asia-Pacific. It is part of the broader challenge posed by maritime issues of common concern which include maritime safety and maritime connectivity. To address maritime security effectively, we therefore need to promote cooperation across a broad range of maritime issues.

First, a number of maritime areas remain areas of tension and potential flashpoints. A number of factors have brought this about. These include overlapping claims in maritime areas to different perceptions of trends regarding naval modernization to growing competition among major interested powers in maritime areas. To address these challenges, it is important to renew efforts to build trust and confidence. This is the value of this ISM. We should look for effective confidence building measures (CBMs), promote transparency measures and develop shared rules of procedure, norms and values that would reduce the likelihood of confrontation in maritime areas.

Second, we need to promote maritime cooperation in the broader sense because the maritime realm remains a vital component of the Asia-Pacific's prosperity. Maritime connectivity, for example, is an important component of ASEAN's connectivity strategy to promote growth and development. Safe sea lines of communication (SLOCs) are important to sustain maritime commerce and ensure access to sources of food and energy, thus contributing to sustainable food and energy security. That is why ASEAN attaches great importance to plans such as the Integrated and Competitive Maritime Transport in ASEAN and an ASEAN Single Shipping market

Third, maritime areas are the place where many transnational challenges occur. Maritime routes are still used by many to pursue transnational crimes including trafficking in persons, drug trafficking and arms smuggling. Illegal migration by sea also poses challenges to recipient and transit states in the region. Our region also faces other non-traditional security challenges as well as the environmental degradation and natural disasters. These challenges are transboundary in nature and can only be addressed by our firm collaboration in tackling them, through effective SOPs in areas such as search and rescue, intelligence sharing and developing enhanced maritime domain awareness.

Thailand's regional and international commitment

We fully support international efforts in ensuring maritime security through various frameworks and fora in the region. In addition to this ISM, we actively support efforts in the ADMM Plus Expert Working Group on Maritime Security, in the ASEAN Maritime Forum and Expanded AMF, and in the Western naval Pacific Symposium. Indeed, Thailand joins others in welcoming the approval of the Code of Unplanned Encounter at Sea (CUES) during the 14th Western Pacific Navel Symposium in Qingdao, China, 21-25 April 2014.

At the global level, Thailand fulfills its obligations as a State Party to UNCLOS 82 as a responsible member of the international community. Thailand is also firmly committed to implementing the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) under the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), and is currently working on the accession to the 1974 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR).

On Safety in Navigation and Piracy

In the Malacca Straits, Thailand, as a coastal state, has participated in the Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrols since September 2008 and has joined the air patrol known as “Eyes in the Sky” since January 2009. Both operations have contributed significantly to the improvement of overall maritime safety and security in the area.

The piracy incidents off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden remain a major cause of concern. During 2008-2013, eight Thai vessels and ships have been hijacked by Somali pirates, with one fishing vessel and four Thai seafarers still under capture. In this regard, the Royal Thai Government dispatched the Royal Thai Navy’s Counter-Piracy Task Unit (RTN CPTU) to join the anti-Somali piracy operation under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) during September 2010-January 2011 and July-November 2011. In May 2013, the Cabinet approved the assignment of RTN officer as the commander of CTF 151. The new commander and 15 other officers will serve their duties during 1 September – 30 November 2014.

On transnational crimes and enhanced maritime domain awareness

Cross border issues and non-traditional security threats require joint efforts to tackle. Coordination, information sharing and intelligence exchange are key. At the national level, given the various aspects of maritime security, the Thai-Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center (Thai – MECC) was established since 1997 to be the center of all maritime affairs and to coordinate activities. Furthermore, the Royal Thai Navy has taken a range of measures to form maritime information sharing linkages between and among the different agencies and take part to develop bilateral and multilateral mechanisms by working closely with overseas information sharing Initiatives such as Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia, Malacca Straits Patrol Information Sharing, and Maritime Safety and Security Information System with United States Navy, and Open and Analyzed Shipping Information System with Republic of Singapore Navy, and liaison at Combined Maritime Forces HQ, Bahrain.

Thailand wishes to voice our support for the development of “enhanced maritime domain awareness” in the Asia-Pacific region. This will be realized through active coordination of information and intelligence amongst maritime centers throughout the region, as well as explore how to best make use of the proposed ARF Transnational Threat Information Sharing Centre (ATTIC).

On South China Sea

Peace and stability in the South China Sea is an important element of peace and stability in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific. The overlapping maritime claims need to be addressed peacefully, through consultations and negotiations between and among the Claimant States, on the basis of international law including UNCLOS 1982 and mutual trust. At the same time, it is important to nurture an atmosphere of trust and confidence that will be conducive to

enhanced cooperation in the South China Sea. As country-coordinator for ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, Thailand is working with all Parties to promote effective implementation of the DOC (Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea) and the early conclusion of the COC (Code of Conduct). We also hope that all parties concerned will exercise self-restraint and avoid actions that would undermine peace and stability in the area.

This would help ensure that the South China Sea will be an important contributor to the growing Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and China. ASEAN and China just held productive consultations in Pattaya this April and we ask the international community to support ASEAN and China in these constructive efforts to promote trust and to prevent and manage incidents. This year, we will have 2 SOMs and 3 JWG on DOC. The next JWG is to be hosted by Indonesia in June. Thailand will host the 8th SOM back-to-back with the 12th JWG later in October.

On IUU fishing and ARF Work Plan

Thailand shares the view that cooperation is needed to ensure that fishing practices are in compliance with international law and standards to have minimal negative impacts on marine environment. In line with this, Thailand has implemented social measures to raise public awareness on marine environment protection as well as to promote sustainability in local fishing communities. Furthermore, the Department of Fisheries has set up the Catch Certification Scheme, including Fishing Logbook, as part of the measures against IUU Fishing.

IUU fishing is indeed major issue covering political, security, regional, economic and environmental concerns, which merit closer cooperation amongst all parties. That is why in ASEAN, for example, it is being dealt with in a holistic and comprehensive manner through the ASEAN Fisheries Consultative Forum. And that is why, on a bilateral basis, Thailand extends its full cooperation to addressing the shared challenge of IUU fishing, as we are also victims of it in our EEZ. But the question remains as to whether IUU fishing should be approached as a solely maritime security issue, and whether it should be a primary issue in the context of the ARF ISM on Maritime Security, considering the many other maritime security challenges that the Asia-Pacific region is facing. And indeed, there are illegal activities on many other maritime resources, not just fisheries, which are of no less concern to the international community.

So while we have no objections to a dialogue on IUU fishing, in Thailand's view, the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security should continue to focus on the three priorities, namely, information/intelligence exchange, CBMs, and Capacity Building of maritime law enforcement. We believe this comprehensive approach will also help address the challenge of IUU fishing as well as other maritime challenges.

Thank you.