

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

**Opening Remarks by Christian Castro
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Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to our host Indonesia for its outstanding hospitality and all the hard work that has gone into preparing for this meeting.

As a co-chair for all six Maritime Security Inter-Sessional Meetings, Indonesia has played an instrumental role in advancing this very important pillar of the ARF, so it is only appropriate that they close out the last ISM of this co-chairmanship cycle as the host.

During this cycle, we addressed key issues on maritime security – including Inter-agency and multilateral civil maritime law enforcement cooperation, International Ship and Port Security, and the protection of the marine environment. These ISMs have also enabled us to exchange views and best practices on maritime security, thereby contributing to greater transparency and instilling confidence among participants.

I would like to point out that despite the ongoing tensions in the South China Sea, we are all here today to discuss maritime security—an issue that has risen to the forefront of security concerns in Asia – which demonstrates our collective

commitment to improving the security of this region's maritime domain through a constructive and positive mechanism supported by the ARF.

On the occasion of the 6th ISM on Maritime Security, we are reminded of our responsibility to assess ARF's progression toward an action-based, solutions-oriented regional security body. Along with confidence building, it is critical that we develop the ARF's capacity to respond to regional security challenges and potential crises through preventive diplomacy and resolution of conflicts. The urgency of this task cannot be overstated; we see the need for this capability today, in areas like the South China Sea. However, until this body can take more action, it is vital that participants adhere to its foundational principles.

This meeting is also being held following the recent tragic incidents resulting from the loss of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 and its passengers and the sinking of the Sewol and the loss of many lives off the coast of South Korea. The topics we will cover over the next day and a half are relevant to the ongoing challenges this region faces and I encourage all participants to take part in these discussions with a goal of improving regional security cooperation and supporting ARF's overarching effort to increase its preventive diplomacy capability.

Thank you.