

SUMMARY REPORT
ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM DEFENCE OFFICIALS' DIALOGUE
LUANG PRABANG, LAO PDR, 5 MAY 2016

1. The ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue was held in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, on 5 May 2016. The Dialogue was chaired by LTC Feuangxay Milakong, Director of ASEAN Political and Security Division, Foreign Relations Department, Ministry of National Defence of Lao PDR.

2. Representatives of the Ministry of Defence from 21 out of 27 ARF participants attended the Dialogue. Representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat were also present. The List of Participants appears as **ANNEX 1**.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS

3. In his opening remarks, LTC Feuangxay Milakong expressed his sympathies and condolences to the victims and families of recent disasters in Japan, India and Russia. He observed that the region is facing multiple security challenges, such as natural disasters, terrorism, maritime security and cyber security, which cannot be handled by one country by itself. He emphasised that ARF participants have important roles to play in addressing these challenges. He outlined agenda of the meeting, which would focus on two important topics, namely civil-military cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) and regional cyber security challenges. He looked forward to the active, robust and constructive contributions from all participants to the discussions so that mutual understanding and confidence building could be achieved. His opening remarks appear as **ANNEX 2**.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

4. The Dialogue adopted the Provisional Agenda which appears as **ANNEX 3**.

AGENDA ITEM 3: CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION ON HADR

5. The Dialogue observed that the military often plays an important role in providing first response to disasters and in participating in recovery and reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, military personnel possesses the training and capability to deploy rapidly and act as pioneers in opening up areas affected by disasters to allow entry of humanitarian aid. On the other hand, the large scale of disasters often requires the combined efforts of civilian and military agencies. The Dialogue viewed that civil-military coordination on HADR is essential since it would enable the effective distribution of the combined assets and prevents duplication of efforts which could cost time and money.

6. The Dialogue reaffirmed that all HADR initiatives should be guided the basic humanitarian principles, namely: humanity (saving human lives and reduce or eliminate suffering whenever found); impartiality/justice (provision of humanitarian assistance

without discrimination or prejudice); neutrality (not to take sides especially in a conflict zones); and independence (provision of humanitarian assistance free from the influence of government policies or other interests).

7. The Dialogue took note of how technology has advanced to a point where it can be utilised to predict the onset of catastrophes through the understanding of natural disaster cycles. In this regard, the Dialogue expressed support for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) and its functions as the operational arm of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and as a technology-based hub of HADR activities in the ASEAN region.

8. The Dialogue shared experiences and lessons learned from civil-military and military-to-military cooperation and coordination in HADR and search-and-rescue (SAR) operations in Japan, the Philippines, Nepal, Myanmar, China, Haiti, Malaysia and Indonesia. Some of the lessons learned include the importance of establishing good coordination mechanisms such as the Multi-National Coordination Centre (MNCC) and opportunities to enhance interoperability among military personnel.

9. The Dialogue discussed national legislation which provides the legal background for deployment of civilian and military personnel to overseas HADR operations and national agencies, which coordinate disaster relief and response for both domestic and overseas HADR operations. Some participants shared information on regional HADR arrangements such as the Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific and the FRANZ agreement between France, Australia and New Zealand to provide relief operations against cyclones and other natural disasters in the South Pacific.

10. The Dialogue recalled the Chairman's Statement of the 21st ARF which stressed that civil-military cooperation and coordination were crucial for effective disaster relief and response and supported practical engagement among military and other agencies through the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx). In this context, the Dialogue noted the suggestion for the ARF to consider ways to work together with other HADR arrangements and mechanisms.

11. Some participants commented on whether the current paradigm of deploying military assets in HADR operations as a last resort could be revised considering that military personnel is often the first responder and that HADR operations almost always have a military component. The Dialogue noted the suggestion of including civil organisations in the planning and preparation phase of international HADR operations in order to strengthen civil-military coordination.

12. The Dialogue was briefed on the activities of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group (EWG) on HADR including the EWG on HADR Work Plan 2014-2017 and the draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on MNCC, which would be tested at the ADMM-Plus HADR and Military Medicine Exercise (AMHEx) in Thailand in September

2016. The Dialogue commended the work of Lao PDR and Japan as the current Co-Chairs of the EWG on HADR and noted that Malaysia and the United States will co-chair the EWG on HADR for the next cycle of 2017-2020.

13. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Republic of Korea, Myanmar, New Zealand, Cambodia, Singapore, European Union, the Philippines and the United States presented their views to the Dialogue. Their interventions appear as **ANNEXES 4 TO 6**.

AGENDA ITEM 4: REGIONAL CYBER SECURITY CHALLENGES

14. The Dialogue recognised that many countries are increasing its dependence on the internet and on cyberspace in the past decade. In military affairs, cyberspace has become the fifth domain after land, maritime, air and space, and it has also become a crucial force enabler and multiplier. This increase of dependency on cyberspace has generated a similar increase in threats from cyberspace. The Dialogue identified several common threats emanating from cyberspace, such as cyber attacks against national communications systems or power grids, illegal access to restricted or classified information, and the use of cyberspace by terrorist actors to spread extremist ideology. Some participants also highlighted in particular the danger from "hybrid threats" in which terrorist actors use the internet to organise, plan and conduct terror attacks.

15. The Dialogue recognised that cyber threats are often transboundary in nature, are very difficult to attribute, and involve both state and non-state actors. The structure of the internet and the networks connected to it means that many defence systems are tightly linked to the public and private infrastructure. The Dialogue viewed that cyber security should be a whole-of-government endeavour and should also involve the private sector that are directly involved in developing information and communication technologies (ICTs) infrastructure. The Dialogue noted that several ARF participants have developed national strategies in addressing and managing cyber threats.

16. The Dialogue viewed that cyber security is a collective problem requiring a collective response. In this context, the Dialogue emphasised that ASEAN as a whole and the ARF in particular could play a major role in contributing towards building the capabilities of its participants and strengthening the security of the region. The ARF should continue to conduct activities in order to enhance the expertise, raise awareness on cyber threats, and promote transparency and confidence building on states' cyber activities.

17. The Dialogue took note of several suggestions on addressing cyber threats, including establishing a permanent coordinating mechanism; establishing a robust ASEAN Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT); creating a cyber security hub of excellence; increasing public awareness on cyber threats; enhancing defence and law enforcement cooperation on cyber security; and coming to an agreement on a common position of responsible state behaviour. In this regard, participants recalled the 2012 Mactan Cebu Declaration on Connected ASEAN: Enabling Aspirations which was

adopted at the 12th ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting (TELMIN) in November 2012.

18. The Dialogue noted that a new EWG on Cyber Security under the ambit of the ADMM-Plus has been endorsed, to be co-chaired by the Philippines and New Zealand. The EWG on Cyber Security is intended to promote practical and effective cooperation among ADMM-Plus countries to enhance capacity in protecting the region's cyberspace and address challenges to cyber security.

19. Brunei, Canada, India, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Republic of Korea and European Union presented their views to the Dialogue. Their interventions appear as **ANNEXES 7 TO 13**.

AGENDA ITEM 5: OTHER MATTERS

20. There were no discussions under this agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 7: CLOSING REMARKS BY CO-CHAIRS

21. In his closing remarks, LTC Feuangxay Milakong summarised the discussions of the Dialogue and thanked all participants for their active contributions and support to the successful conduct of the Dialogue.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

22. The Dialogue expressed appreciation to the Government of Lao PDR for the excellent arrangements and the warm hospitality extended to all ARF participants.

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