

Summary Report of the ARF ISG on Confidence Building Measures Beijing, 6-8 March, 1997

Introduction

1. Pursuant to the agreement at the Third Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Jakarta, Indonesia, 23 July 1996, the Inter-Sessional Support Group (ISG) on Confidence Building Measures, co-chaired by China and the Philippines, held a meeting in Beijing, China on 6-8 March, 1997. The Meeting was attended by all the ARF participants, and most members had defense officials in their respective delegations. During the Meeting the participants visited a Chinese military unit and watched military drills.
2. The ISG Beijing Meeting was conducted in the consistent ARF spirit of dialogue and consensus, focusing on common ground. The participants had lively and productive discussions in a frank and cordial atmosphere. They found the process very helpful for enhancing understanding and trust among the participants.
3. Given the improved security environment of the Asia-Pacific region, the participants reiterated the importance of strengthening dialogue and cooperation with a view to safeguarding lasting peace and stability in the region. The participants explored the various confidence building measures and reached broad agreements. They saw ARF dialogues as a useful process to consolidate the security and stability of the region and agreed to continue the process on the basis of respecting the sovereignty and security interests of all the members, and according to the principle of starting from easier ones, voluntary participation and consensus building. The Meeting marked a step forward in the CBM discussions of the ARF.
4. The agenda of the Meeting is attached as Annex A, the program of activities as Annex B, the list of delegates as annex C, and the list of ARF contact points as Annex D.

Summary of the key points discussed

Agenda item 1: Exchange of views on regional security Environment and security perceptions

5. The Meeting agreed that the overall security environment in the Asia-Pacific region continues to improve. The region is witnessing a unique period of general peace. Economic development has become a focus of all countries. The rapid economic growth and wide-spread prosperity have laid a solid foundation for political stability in the region. Expanding regional economic and trade interactions have woven a strong safety net for countries in the Asia-Pacific. The emphasis on dialogue and cooperation is gaining momentum, and the trend is contributing to maintaining security through peaceful means, such as consultations and cooperation. It was noted that stable relations among the major countries in the region could contribute to regional stability.
6. Some delegates mentioned that there still exist challenges in the region, such as unresolved territorial disputes and the situation in the Korean Peninsula. A number of member countries expressed serious concern over certain nuclear safety issues especially the transboundary movement of radioactive wastes which may affect the security and environmental safety of the region concerned. The Meeting welcomed the efforts of the countries concerned to ensure stability in the South China Sea and to continue the efforts for peaceful solution to the disputes. Some other transnational issues that may affect future security of the region were mentioned, such as environmental pollution, depletion of resources, drug trafficking and illegal immigration.
7. In view of the rich diversity of the region, it was the view of the participants that efforts to maintain regional security should be based on the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, and such principles

relevant to the region as peaceful coexistence, amity and cooperation among states, respect for national sovereignty, peaceful solution of disputes among nations and the comprehensive view of security.

Agenda item 2: Exchange of information on regional CBM cooperation

8. The participants informed the Meeting of their respective defense contacts and CBM activities. The Meeting agreed that such exchanges of information have been useful to promote confidence and understanding among ARF members. They welcomed the submission of the papers by several countries on their defense contacts.

9. The Meeting noted that a number of confidence building arrangements or agreements made over the years in the region have exerted positive influence on regional peace and stability. In this context, the Meeting positively noted the signing of the Shanghai Agreement between the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China and the agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India Border Areas. The Meeting encouraged ARF participants to continue pursuing bilateral and subregional measures suited to their needs and applicable to their specific conditions to advance mutual trust and confidence in a gradual and incremental manner. The participants agreed that ARF activities in confidence building represent an important regional effort which should be enhanced and deepened to maintain regional peace and stability.

Agenda item 3: Exchange of views on defense policies

10. The participants exchanged views on their respective defense policies. Many participants also submitted defense policy statements, which contained, among others, their defense doctrine, military thinking and military strategy. The Meeting continued to encourage the regular publication of defense white papers or similar papers by ARF participants on a voluntary basis. The Meeting agreed that continued exchanges on this subject will contribute to growing transparency and this be conducive to regional peace and stability.

11. The participants also expressed appreciation to the Co-Chairmen for the Compendium of various papers submitted at the previous ISG CBM meetings. Papers submitted to the Beijing Meeting will be compiled by the Co-Chairmen.

Agenda item 4: Exchange of views on defense conversion programs

12. The Meeting had a useful exchange of experience in and information on defense conversion programs of several ARF members, which were seen as useful not only for promoting regional and global disarmament but also for economic development. The Meeting acknowledged the difficulties facing the countries undertaking defense conversion process and encouraged the ARF members to continue sharing Information and seeking cooperation on this activity on a voluntary basis.

Agenda item 5: Exchange of information on some of the on-going observer participation in and on-going notification of military exercises among ARF countries

13. The Meeting discussed the suggestion of implementing the notification and observation measures starting from joint military exercises (i.e. exercises by two or more countries). Other proposals were also put forward including having each ARF member consider the voluntary application of these CBMs to at least one of the exercises in which it participates. Although there was no consensus on these suggestions, the Meeting agreed to keep this matter on the agenda.

Agenda item 6: The UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNRCA)

14. General support was expressed for the UNCRA as a useful endeavor for global and regional confidence building. The Meeting called for a universal participation in the UNRCA and further encouraged ARF members that had not done so to Join the Register. Suggestions were made for enhancing the operation of the Register, possible establishment of a regional register and a regional

workshop on UNRCA, to which different views were expressed. The Meeting noted the voluntary circulation by some participants to ARF members of their UNRCA data.

Agenda item 7: Support for arms control and disarmament efforts

15. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the considerable progress made in controlling the spread and inhibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction. General support was expressed for international recognized non-proliferation and disarmament conventions, treaties and regimes, and general acknowledgment was made of the contribution of these to regional security. Attention was called to the ARF's earlier commitment to sign and ratify the major non-proliferation regimes (NPT, CTBT, BWC, CWC), and to support efforts to establish nuclear weapon free zones.

16. The Meeting discussed the issue of anti-personnel landmines, and noted the participation of several ARF members in multilateral and individual initiatives in this regard. The Meeting agreed to support efforts in demining and rehabilitation of victims.

Agenda item 8: Non-military CBMs

17. The Meeting agreed that regional security should be viewed in a comprehensive manner. The participants recognized that understanding and confidence in the region would be enhanced if non-military as well as military issues are addressed by the ARF. For this reason, while military CBMs are of primary importance, the Meeting acknowledged the growing relevance of non-military CBMs. The Meeting noted a number of issues which could be discussed under this item and agreed to explore possible Cooperation on CBMs in some of these areas. The Meeting stressed that activities in this area should have relevance to regional security and the overall objectives of the ARF, and should not detract from the traditional security issues and military CBMs of ARF nor should they duplicate other efforts.

Agenda item 9: The implementation of the agreed CBMs

18. The Meeting agreed to continue updating the list of ARF contact points of member countries.

19. The Meeting welcomed the offer of the Philippines to host a meeting of heads of national defense colleges or equivalent institutions in September 1997 in the Philippines. The Philippines expressed its intention to consult other ARF members on the possible agenda of the meeting.

Agenda item 10: Other proposed CBMs

20. Several participants proposed the discussion of a number of maritime security issues. The Meeting agreed to discuss some of these issues in the next inter-sessional period with an agenda to be refined and agreed to by the ARF participants.

21. A number of participants notified the Meeting on certain military exercises to be conducted by them this year.

Conclusion

22. The Meeting decided to convey the following Recommendations to the ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Officials Meeting (ARF SOM) to be held in May in Langkawi, Malaysia:

22.1. Exchange of views on regional security environment and security perceptions

22.1.1 In view of the rich diversity of the region, it was the view of the participants that efforts to maintain regional security should be based on the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, and such principles relevant to the region as peaceful coexistence, amity and cooperation among states, respect for national sovereignty, peaceful solution of disputes among nations and the comprehensive views of security.

22.1.2. Dialogues on regional security environment and security perceptions should be continued at the ARF ISG CBM meetings.

22.2. Exchange of information on regional CBM cooperation

The participants were encouraged to continue their bilateral and sub-regional efforts in CBM cooperation suited to their needs and specific conditions on the basis of a gradual and incremental manner.

22.3. Exchange of views on defense policies

ARF participants were encouraged to continue dialogues on defense policies and to submit papers on defense policy statement and defense contacts on voluntary basis.

22.4. Exchange of views on defense conversion program

The ARF members should continue to share information and seek cooperation on defense conversion on a voluntary basis.

22.5. Exchange of information on some of the on-going observer participation in and on-going notification of military exercise among ARF countries

The Meeting discussed the suggestion of implementing the notification and observation measures starting from joint military exercises (i.e. exercises by two or more countries). Other proposals were also put forward including having each ARF member consider the voluntary application of these CBMs to at least one of the exercises in which it participates. Although there was no consensus on these suggestions, the Meeting agreed to keep this matter on the agenda.

22.6. The UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNRCA)

General support was expressed for the UNRCA as a useful endeavor for global and regional confidence building. The Meeting called for a universal participation in the UNRCA and further encouraged ARF members that had not done so to join the Register. The Meeting noted the voluntary circulation by some participants to ARF members of their UNRCA data.

22.7. Support for arms control and disarmament efforts

22.7.1 Attention was called to the earlier ARF's commitments to sign and sign and ratify the major non proliferation regimes (NPT, CTBT, CWC, BWC), and to support efforts to establish nuclear weapon free zones.

22.7.2 The Meeting agreed to support efforts in demining and rehabilitation of victims.

22.8. Non-military CBMs

Regional security should be viewed in a comprehensive manner, and nonmilitary as well as military security aspects should be addressed by the ARF, without detracting from the traditional security issues and military CBMs or ARF nor duplicating other efforts

22.9. The implementation of the agreed CBMs

22.9.1. A meeting of heads of national defense colleges or equivalent institutions will be convened in September 1997 in the Philippines with the agenda to be developed after consultations with the other ARF members.

22.9.2. The list of ARF contact points should be updated periodically.

22.10. Other proposed CBMs

Several participants proposed the discussion of a number of maritime security issues. The Meeting agreed to discuss some of these issues in the next inter-sessional period with an agenda to be refined and agreed to by the ARF participants.

23. A system of compiling papers submitted to the Meeting by the ISG CBM Co-Chairmen should be established

24. As ARF ISG CBM has been an important process in promoting trust and understanding, the mandate for the ARF ISG CBM should be extended for another year.