

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT
THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
SUBANG JAYA, 27 JULY 1997

1. The Fourth ASEAN Regional Forum was held in Subang Jaya, Malaysia on 27 July 1997. The Meeting was chaired by the Honourable Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.
2. The Meeting was attended by all ARF participants. The Secretary General of ASEAN was also present. The List of Delegates is attached as ANNEX A.

OVERVIEW OF THE ARF PROCESS

3. The Ministers noted that the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has developed into an important forum for multilateral security dialogue and co-operation in the region. The process has progressed at a pace acceptable to all participants, enabling increasingly frank discussion of issues of common concern while encouraging habits of co-operation and instilling a pattern of constructive behaviour. It has played a positive role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust, promoting greater transparency as well as strengthening the commitment among participants to maintain peace and stability in the region. Recognising the diversity in the region, the Ministers reiterated the importance of maintaining the evolutionary approach adopted by the ARF process, and of taking decisions by consensus. The Ministers agreed that a strong foundation has been laid in dealing with future challenges facing the ARF. The Ministers noted that the informal discussions at the Retreat held in the course of the ARF SOM in Langkawi had enabled an open and in-depth discussions on the future direction and pace of the ARF. The Ministers also noted that the separate informal gathering at lunch during the ARF SOM of defence and other officials had encouraged greater interaction and networking among the officials concerned in the ARF.
4. The Ministers discussed a wide range of issues relevant to the question of peace and security of the region. In this context, the Ministers highlighted the following :
 - i. The overall security environment in the Asia Pacific region continues to improve. Notwithstanding the existence of certain challenges, the area remains stable and peaceful. Economic development has become the main focus of all countries. The spread of prosperity has laid a solid foundation for political stability in the region. Expanding regional economic interactions and increasing contacts among the people have woven a strong safety net for countries in the Asia Pacific. The emphasis on dialogue and co-operation is gaining momentum, and the trend is contributing to peace and security. The emerging sense of community and shared interests would stand the region in good stead in addressing the regional challenges;
 - ii. The Ministers noted that a number of confidence building arrangements or agreements made over the years have exerted positive influence on the regional security situation. The Ministers encouraged ARF participants to continue pursuing bilateral and sub regional measures suited to their needs, and applicable to their specific conditions, to, advance mutual trust and confidence in a gradual and incremental manner;
 - iii. The Ministers commended the increasingly close co-operation and mutual assistance by countries in Southeast Asia in promoting a prosperous and peaceful community of nations, including ASEAN's efforts at constructive engagement with Myanmar. In this connection, they welcomed the positive role played by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in enhancing regional peace and stability. The expansion of ASEAN membership contributes to these objectives;
 - iv. The Ministers underlined the importance of the development of positive relations, particularly among the major countries in Asia Pacific - China, Japan the Russian Federation and the United States, in sustaining stability in the region. The Ministers, in welcoming the active, full and equal participation and co-operation of all participants for a successful ARF, recognised that ASEAN continues to undertake the obligation to be the primary driving force;
 - v. The Ministers welcomed the entry into force, on 27 March 1997, of the SEANWFZ Treaty which represents an important effort of Southeast Asian states towards strengthening the security in the region and towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones globally. In this connection, the Ministers welcomed the ongoing consultations between State Parties to the

- Treaty and the Nuclear Weapon States to facilitate accession by the latter to the Protocol of the SEANWFZ Treaty;
- vi. The ministers welcomed the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention which provides for a veritable global ban on chemical weapons. The Ministers called on all states which have not ratified the Convention to do so. The Ministers expressed the hope that progress would be made in the work on the protocol dealing with compliance and verification of the Biological Weapons Convention;
 - vii. The Ministers took note that negotiations on a comprehensive treaty banning the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of anti personnel-mines will take place in Oslo in September 1997 with the intention of signing such a Treaty in Ottawa in December 1997. The Ministers also took note that the Conference on Disarmament has appointed a Special Coordinator for the issue of anti personnel landmines in an effort to find a solution to the problem. The Ministers agreed to support efforts in demining and in the removal of unexploded ordnances as well as the rehabilitation of the victims;
 - viii. The Ministers welcomed the overwhelming adoption of the CTBT which constitutes an important step in prohibiting nuclear test explosions and therefore to the enhancement of international peace and security;
 - ix. The Ministers emphasised that an approach to non-proliferation which is universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory is urgently needed if the international community is to achieve the objective of comprehensive nuclear non proliferation. The Ministers reiterated their determination to continue to contribute to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, and urged the Nuclear Weapon States to pursue vigorously negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament with the ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons;
 - x. Taking into account the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to disarmament under strict and effective international control, the Ministers stressed the importance of UNGA resolution A/Res/51/54 of 1996 which, inter alia, decided to convene its Fourth Special Session devoted to disarmament in 1999, subject to the emergence of a consensus on its objective and agendas;
 - xi. On the South China Sea, the Ministers welcomed the efforts by countries concerned to seek solutions by peaceful means in accordance with international law, the UNGLOS, and the exercise of self restraint, in the interest of maintaining peace and stability in the region. The Ministers also noted the positive contributions made by the Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in South China Sea;
 - xii. The Ministers expressed concern over the latest developments on the situation in Cambodia. They took note of assurances given by H.E. Ung Huot, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Cambodia that Cambodia welcomed ASEAN's role in helping restore political stability in Cambodia. They supported ASEAN's initiative in this regard;
 - xiii. Bearing in mind the importance of peace and security in the Korean Peninsula, the Ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the 1953 Armistice Agreement until a permanent peace regime is in place. The Ministers expressed their concern, over the impact of the food shortage in the DPRK on the security and the well being of the people. The Ministers welcomed the recent developments on the proposed four party talks which could paved the way to a permanent peace on the Peninsula. The Ministers also welcomed the progress made by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) in implementing the Agreed Framework of 1994 and reaffirmed continued support of the ARF to KEDO;
 - xiv. The Ministers discussed the transboundary movement of nuclear waste in the region. They emphasised that such transfer of nuclear waste should conform to the existing international safety standards and norms and that the international community should make all efforts to prohibit the export of nuclear waste to those countries which do not have appropriate waste treatment and storage facilities.

REPORTS OF TRACK I & II ACTIVITIES FOR THE CURRENT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (JULY 1996 - JULY 1997)

Track I Activities

5. The Ministers noted with appreciation the Reports of the Track I activities presented by the respective Co-Chairmen of the activities, namely the Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief held in Wellington on 19-20 February 1997; the Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures held in Beijing on 6-8 March 1997; the Inter-sessional Meetings on Search and Rescue Co-ordination and Co-operation held in Singapore on 26-28 March 1997; the Report of the Co-Chairmen of the ISM on Peacekeeping Operations including the Regional Workshop on Train the Trainers held in Kuala Lumpur on 10-14 March 1997 and the Seminar on Demining held in Palmerston North on 7-11 April 1997:

5.1 Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief

The Ministers recognised the benefits of the First Meeting of the ISM on Disaster Relief as a valuable confidence building measure for the ARF as well as its possible contribution towards the wider objective of enhancing co-operation in the Asia Pacific region. The Ministers agreed that continuation of the ISM on Disaster Relief for another year would further contribute towards the development of the ARF. The Ministers endorsed the list of recommendations of the First Meeting of the ISM on Disaster Relief which appears as ANNEX B.

5.2 The Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures

The Ministers noted the frank but cordial discussions at the ISG on CBMS, inter alia on the regional security environment and security perceptions, regional confidence building activities, defense policies and the comprehensive nature of security. The Ministers stressed the importance of consultation and dialogue in enhancing understanding and trust among the ARF participants and in maintaining regional stability. In this context, the Ministers recognised that the ISG on CBMs had marked a step forward in the discussions of the ARF. The Ministers also welcomed the offer by China to compile papers on CBMs submitted by ARF participants as well as the offer by the Philippines to host a Meeting of the heads of national defense college or equivalent institutions on 6-9 October, 1997. The Ministers noted new elements proposed for the work of the ISG particularly possible areas of maritime security. The Ministers endorsed the list of recommendations which appears as ANNEX C.

5.3 Inter-Sessional Meeting on Search and Rescue Co-ordination and Co-operation

The Ministers endorsed the Report of the Second ISM on SAR and, in particular, the List of Principles and Objectives for Search and Rescue Co-operation and Co-ordination which appears as ANNEX D.

5.4 Inter-Sessional Meeting on Peacekeeping Operations

The Ministers endorsed the Report of the Co-Chairmen of the ISM on Peacekeeping Operations which appears as ANNEX E. The Ministers also took note of the Report of the Workshop on Train the Trainers and the Seminar on Demining which were convened to implement the specific recommendations of the ISM on PKO and endorsed the recommendations of the Workshop and Seminar which appear as ANNEXES F & G with the understanding that these activities could proceed without the formal extension of the ISM on PKO.

Track II Activities

6. The Ministers took note of the written Reports prepared by the Chairmen of the Track II Seminars, namely on Preventive Diplomacy convened in Paris in November 1996, co-sponsored by l'Institut Francais des Relations Internationales and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) of Indonesia and on Non-Proliferation convened in Jakarta in December 1996, co-sponsored by CSIS of Indonesia, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik of Germany and Australian National University which appear as ANNEXES H & I respectively.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (JULY 1997-JULY 1998)

Track I Activities

7. Pursuant to the recommendation of the ISM on Disaster Relief, the Ministers agreed that this ISM continue to be co-chaired by New Zealand and Thailand for another year. The Ministers welcomed the offer of Thailand to host the next ISM on Disaster Relief in early 1998. Similarly, the Ministers agreed to extend the ISG on CBMs for another year and welcomed the offer of Brunei Darussalam and Australia to co-chair the next ISG on CBMS. On the ISM for SAR, the Ministers welcomed the offer of Singapore to conduct an annual SAR Training Course for ARF participants, and to convene a SAR Conference in December 1997 for SAR planners and officials. In the area of PKO, the Ministers welcomed the offer by European Union to host a follow-up Workshop on Approaches to Training for Peacekeeping Operations in Ireland in the first half of 1998.

8. In agreeing to the extension of the mandate of the various inter-sessional activities, the Ministers directed that each ISM/ISG undertake a comprehensive review of all proposals which have been agreed upon but had not been implemented to date.

Track II Activities

9. The Ministers welcomed the proposal for a Track II Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy to be co-sponsored by the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies of Singapore, Institute of International Affairs of Singapore and the International Institute of Strategic Studies of the United Kingdom to be held in Singapore, 9-11 September 1997.

Other Issues

10. Recalling the decision of the 3rd ARF that the 4th ARF consider the question of drug trafficking and other related transnational issues such as economic crimes, including money laundering, the Ministers agreed that such issues would be more appropriately addressed, at this time, at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences.
11. The Ministers noted the continuing interests shown by a number of countries to participate in the ARF. In this regard, the Ministers agreed that the next ARF SOM begin consideration of the applications on the basis of the guiding principles and criteria agreed to at the 3rd ARF.

FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF PROCESS

12. The Ministers agreed that the evolutionary approach to the development of the ARF process and the practice of taking decisions by consensus shall be maintained, taking into consideration the interests of all ARF participants and, at the same time, demonstrating the continued consolidation of the process through increased activities in relevant areas.
13. The Ministers held a useful exchange of views on the future direction of the ARF process and in this connection, on the relationship between confidence building and preventive diplomacy. It recalled that the 2nd ARF had agreed that where subject matters at Stage I and Stage II overlap, such matters can proceed in tandem with Stage I. The Ministers agreed to request the ISG on CBMs to identify such matters and ways and means of addressing them while maintaining the focus on CBMS.