Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. For the first time in a century or more, the guns are virtually silent. With the exception of the Korean peninsula, there are no major sources of tension in the region. The Asia-Pacific is also the most dynamic region of the world in terms of economic growth. The centre of the world's economic gravity is shifting into the region. The main challenge of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is to sustain and enhance this peace and prosperity.

2. This is not an easy challenge. The region has experienced some of the most disastrous wars of the twentieth century. It is also a remarkably diverse region. The world's most powerful and weakest states coexist in the region. They differ significantly in levels of development. There are cultural, ethnic, religious and historical differences to overcome. Habits of cooperation are not deep-seated in the region.

3. ASEAN, therefore, has a pivotal role to play in the ARF. It has a demonstrable record of enhancing regional cooperation in the most diverse sub-
region of the **Asia-Pacific**. It has also fostered habits of cooperation and provided the catalyst for encouraging regional cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific **region**. The annual ASEAN Ministerial Meetings have contributed significantly to the positive regional environment today. There would be great hope for the Asia-Pacific if the whole region could emulate **ASEAN’S** record of enhancing the peace and prosperity of its participants.

4 But ASEAN alone cannot be the sole driving force of the **ARF**. A successful ARF requires the active participation and cooperation of all participants. To secure their commitment to the ARF **process**, all participants must perceive themselves to be **co-drivers**. ASEAN must always be sensitive to and take into account the interests and concerns of all ARF participants.

**The challenges**

5 To successfully preserve and enhance the peace and prosperity of the **region**, the ARF must dispassionately analyse the key challenges **facing** the **region**. Firstly, it should acknowledge that periods of rapid economic growth are often accompanied by significant shifts in power relations. This can lead to conflict. The ARF will have to carefully manage these transitions to preserve the peace. Secondly, the region is remarkably diverse. The ARF should recognise and accept the different approaches to peace and security and try to forge a consensual approach to security issues. Thirdly, the region has a residue of unresolved
territorial and other **differences**. Any one of these could spark a conflagration that could undermine the peace and prosperity of the **region**. Over time, the **ARF** will have to gradually defuse these potential problems.

6  It would be unwise for a young and fragile process like the ARF to tackle all these challenges simultaneously. A gradual evolutionary approach is **required**. This evolution can take place in three stages:

**Stage I:**  Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures

**Stage II:**  Development of Preventive Diplomacy Mechanisms

**Stage III:**  Development of Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms

7  The participants of the first ARF Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok in **July** 1994 agreed on "the need to develop a more predictable and constructive pattern of relations for the Asia-Pacific **region**". In its initial **phase**, the ARF should therefore concentrate on enhancing the trust and confidence amongst its participants and thereby foster a regional environment **conducive** to maintaining the peace and prosperity of the **region**.
Stage I: Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures

8 In promoting confidence-building measures, ARF participants should recognise that there are two district approaches that can be taken. Both should be used by the ARF. The first approach is the ASEAN approach. ASEAN's experience provides a valuable and proven guide for the ARF. ASEAN has succeeded in reducing tensions among its member states, promoting regional cooperation and creating a regional climate conducive to peace and prosperity without the implementation of explicit confidence-building measures. ASEAN's well-established practices of consultation and consensus (musyawarah and mufakat) have been significantly enhanced by the regular exchanges of high-level visits among ASEAN countries. This pattern of regular visits has effectively developed into a preventive diplomacy channel. In the Asian context, there is some merit to the ASEAN approach. It emphasises the need to develop trust and confidence among neighbouring states. The principles of good neighbourliness are enshrined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). One simple concrete way of expanding the ASEAN experience is to encourage the ARF participants to accede to (where possible) the TAC. It is significant that the first ARF meeting in Bangkok agreed to "endorse the purposes and principles of ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, and political and security cooperation."
9 The second approach is the one recommended by various United Nations and multilateral agencies: the implementation of concrete confidence-building measures. The first ARF meeting in Bangkok entrusted the next Chairman of the ARF, Brunei Darussalam, to study all the ideas presented by ARF participants and to also study other relevant internationally recognised norms, principles and practices. After extensive consultations, the ASEAN countries have prepared two lists of confidence-building measures. The first list (Annex A) spells out measures which can be explored and implemented by ARF participants in the immediate future. The second list (Annex B) is an indicative list of other proposals which can be explored over the medium and long-term by ARF participants and also considered in the immediate future by the Track Two process. These lists include possible preventive diplomacy and other measures.

10 Given the delicacy of many of the subjects being considered by the ARF, there is merit in moving the ARF process along two tracks. Track One activities will be carried out by ARF governments. Track Two activities will be carried out by strategic institutes and non-government organisations in the region. However, the two tracks should not diverge significantly. To be meaningful and relevant, the Track Two activities should be sensitive to the interests and concerns of ARF participants and, while moving a few steps ahead, always ensure that its activities enjoy the consensual support of ARF participants. It will be impossible to achieve total unanimity of views on Track Two activities. But Track Two activities should always be guided by the mainstream point of view in the ARF.
Over time, these Track Two activities should result in the creation of a sense of community among officials, academics and media personalities who participate in such activities. This group of ARF eminent citizens or intellectuals could also develop over time shared perceptions of key security issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Apart from the Korean peninsula, there are no major sources of tension in the region. But there remains a residue of unresolved territorial and other disputes that could be sources of tension or conflict. If the ARF is to become, over time, a meaningful vehicle to enhance the peace and prosperity of the region, it will have to demonstrate that it is a relevant instrument to be used in the event that a new crisis or problem emerges. The first ARF meeting in Bangkok demonstrated this by taking a stand on the Korean issue at the very first meeting. This was a signal that the ARF is ready to address any challenge to the peace and security of the region.

Over time, the ARF must develop its own mechanisms to carry out preventive diplomacy and conflict-resolution. In doing so, the ARF will face unique challenges. There are no established roads or procedures for it to follow. The ARF participants agree that given the different conditions prevailing in the
Asia-Pacific region, the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) does not represent an appropriate model for the ARK. Nor should its methods and instruments be absorbed automatically by the ARF.

13 Some suggestions for preventive diplomacy measures are spelled out in Annexes A and B. Without a high degree of confidence among ARF participants, it is unlikely that they will agree to the establishment of mechanisms which are perceived to be intrusive and/or autonomous. This is a political reality the ARF should recognise. However, it would be useful in the initial phase for the Track Two process to consider and investigate a variety of preventive diplomacy and conflict-resolution mechanisms. A good start was made with the three workshops organised by the International Studies Centre (Thailand) and Institute of Policy Studies (Singapore) on ASEAN-UN Cooperation for Peace and Preventive Diplomacy.

of ARF activities

14 There shall be an annual ARF Ministerial Meeting in an ASEAN capital just after the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. The host country will chair the meeting. The incoming Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee will chair all inter-sessional Track One activities of the ARF.
15 While the chairmanship and host of Track Two activities will vary according to the venue and subject matter of the activities, each Track Two activity shall report to the ARF through the prevailing Chairman of the Track One activities, who will also have the responsibility of coordinating both Track One and Track Two activities.

16 In the initial phase of the ARF, no institutionalisation is expected. Nor should a Secretariat be established in the near future. ASEAN shall be the repository of all ARF documents and information and provide the necessary support to sustain ARF activities.

17 The participants of the ARF shall comprise the ASEAN member states, the observers, and consultative and dialogue partners of ASEAN. The introduction of new participants should be decided by the ASEAN member states, in consultation with other ARF participants. ASEAN should ensure that the introduction of a new participant reflects the consensus of ARF participants on the admission of new members.

18 The rules of procedure of ARF meetings shall be based on prevailing ASEAN norms and practices. Decisions should be made by consensus after careful and extensive consultations. No voting will take place. In the initial phase, no Secretariat shall be established. In accordance with prevailing ASEAN practices,
the Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee shall provide the secretarial support and coordinate ARF activities.

19 The ARF should also progress at a pace comfortable to all participants. The ARF should not move "too fast for those who want to go slow and not too slow for those who want to go fast".

**Conclusion**

20 It would be fatal for ARF participants to assume that the success of the ARF can be taken for granted. ASEAN has had an attractive track record of being relatively successful in most of its key activities. This success was the result of hard work and careful adherence to the rule of consensus. The ARF participants will have to work equally hard and be equally sensitive to ensure that the ARF process stays on track.

21 **The** ARF must be accepted as a "sui generis" organisation. It has no established precedents to follow. A great deal of innovation and ingenuity will be required to keep the ARF moving forward while at the same time ensure that it enjoys the support of its diverse participants. This is a major challenge both for the ASEAN countries and other ARF participants. The UN Secretary-General’s "Agenda for Peace" has recognised that "just as no two regions or situations are the same, so the design of cooperative work and its division of labour must adjust to
the realities of each case with flexibility and creativity. This is particularly good advice for the ARF.
ANNEX A

I  CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

Principles

1. The development of a set of basic principles to ensure a common understanding and approach to interstate relations in the region; and
2. Adoption of comprehensive approaches to security.

Transparency

3. Dialogue on security perceptions, including voluntary statements of defence policy positions;
4. Defence Publications such as Defence White Papers or equivalent documents as considered necessary by respective governments;
5. Participation in UN Conventional Anns Register;
6. Enhanced contacts, including high level visits and recreational activities;
7. Exchanges between military academies, staff colleges and training; observers at military exercises, on a voluntary basis; and
8. Annual seminar for defence officials and military officers on selected international security issues.

II  PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

1. Develop a set of guidelines for the peaceful settlement of disputes, taking into account the principles in the UN Charter and the TAC;
2. Promote the recognition and acceptance of the purposes and principles of the TAC and its provisions for the pacific settlement of disputes, as endorsed by the UNGA in Resolution 47/53 (B) on 9 December 1992; and
3. Seek the endorsement of other countries for the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea in order to strengthen its political and moral effect (as endorsed by the Programme of Action for ZOPFAN).

III  NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL

Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANWFZ).
IV PEACEKEEPING

1 Seminars/Workshops on peacekeeping issues; and
2 Exchange of information and experience relating to UN Peacekeeping Operations.

MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION

Disaster Prevention.
IV PEACEKEEPING

Explore the possibility of establishing a peacekeeping centre.

MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION

1 A multilateral agreement on the avoidance of naval incidents that apply to both local and external navies;
2 Sea Level/Climate Monitoring System;
3 Establishment of an ASEAN Relief and Assistance Force and a Maritime Safety (or Surveillance) Unit to look after the safety of the waters in the region;
4 Conventions on the Marine Environment
   Dumping of Toxic Wastes
   Land-based Sources of Marine Pollution;
5 Maritime surveillance; and
6 Explore the idea of joint marine scientific research.
ANNEX B

I  CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

1  Further exploration of a Regional Arms Register;
2  Regional security studies centre/coordination of existing security studies activities;
3  Maritime information data bases;
4  Cooperative approaches to sea lines of communication, beginning with exchanges of information and training in such areas as search and rescue, piracy and drug control;
5  Mechanism to mobilise relief assistance in the event of natural disasters;
6  Establishment of zones of cooperation in areas such as the South China Sea;
7  Systems of prior notification of major military deployments that have region-wide application; and
8  Encourage arms manufacturers and suppliers to disclose the destination of their arms exports.

II  PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

1  Explore and devise ways and means to prevent conflict;
2  Explore the idea of appointing Special Representatives, in consultation with ARF members, to undertake fact-finding missions, at the request of the parties involved to an issue, and to offer their good offices, as necessary; and
3  Explore the idea of establishing a Regional Risk Reduction Centre as suggested by the UN Secretary-General in his Agenda For Peace and as commended by UNGA Resolution 47/120 (see section IV, operative para 4). Such a centre could serve as a data base for the exchange of information.

III  NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL

A regional or sub-regional arrangement agreeing not to acquire or deploy ballistic missiles.
IV PEACEKEEPING

Explore the possibility of establishing a peacekeeping centre.

MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION

1. A multilateral agreement on the avoidance of naval incidents that apply to both local and external navies;
2. Sea Level/Climate Monitoring System;
3. Establishment of an ASEAN Relief and Assistance Force and a Maritime Safety (or Surveillance) Unit to look after the safety of the waters in the region;
4. Conventions on the Marine Environment
   - Dumping of Toxic Wastes
   - Land-based Sources of Marine Pollution;
5. Maritime surveillance; and
6. Explore the idea of joint marine scientific research.