

## Highlights of Decisions and Recommendations on the Role of the ARF Unit in the ARF Preventive Diplomacy

### Introduction

1. This paper attempts to provide an overview of past decisions and recommendations relative to the role of the ARF Unit, particularly in the implementation of ARF preventive diplomacy. First proposed in ARF Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy in 1996, the ARF Unit was finally set up in 2004 and has since been operating with a primary function to support the ARF Chair. When the issue of implementation of ARF preventive diplomacy resurfaced in view of moving the ARF process from confidence building measures to preventive diplomacy in 2005, once again the role of the ARF Unit was revisited. In this context, future expanded tasks for the ARF Unit have been proposed, not to mention strengthening the Unit as an institution.
2. The paper, first, will look at a number of past decisions and recommendations made in relevant ARF activities pertaining to the roles of the ARF Unit. The second part would highlight some of the current developments in the ARF Unit and proposes some recommendations to assist the ARF with the future implementation of ARF preventive diplomacy.

### The Roles of the ARF Unit

3. The establishment of the ARF Unit has been discussed following on the adoption of the ARF Concept Paper in 1995. In the context of implementation of preventive diplomacy, the following are among the highlights of recommendations on the possible roles of the ARF Unit in supporting ARF preventive diplomacy.

- 3.1. ARF Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy, Paris, 7-8 November 1996

The Seminar noted a number of measures to service the ARF Chair in its possible implementation of preventive diplomacy; for example, the establishment of an ARF Unit.

- 3.2. Paper on Stocktaking of the ARF Process and Recommendations, 2002

At the *ARF Inter-sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures* (ISG on CBMs) in Hanoi in 2002, Brunei Darussalam as the then ARF Chair presented an information paper on the state and future direction of the ARF process. The revised paper was endorsed by the Ministers at the 9<sup>th</sup> ARF in the same year.

The paper put forward nine recommendations including:

- To enhance the role of the ARF Chair and to assign the ASEAN Secretariat to assist the ARF Chairman in coordinating the work of the ARF;

- 3.3. ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy, Tokyo, 16-17 March 2004

The Workshop among others:

- Welcomed the agreement by ASEAN on the establishment of the ARF Unit within the ASEAN Secretariat;
- Discussed mechanisms and options regarding the Chair's role and the chair system, including "Friends of the Chair";

The following actions have been taken pursuant to the discussion:

- *ASEAN Ministerial Meeting* adopted the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the ARF Unit on 26 June 2004. The ARF Unit is fully operational since then.

#### 3.4. Terms of Reference for the Friends of the ARF Chair, 2007

The 14<sup>th</sup> ARF in 2007 adopted the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Friends of the ARF Chair. The establishment of the "Friends of the Chair" is arguably the most important development on ARF preventive diplomacy. The "Friends of the Chair" is a troika consisting of the Foreign Ministers of the immediate past and future ARF Chairing countries, and a non-ASEAN ARF country. This mechanism will assist the ARF Chair in dealing with international situations, which affect peace and security in the region, such as serving as "good offices" in times of emergency and crisis.

The TOR provides that The ARF Chair and the FOC may request the ARF Unit in the ASEAN Secretariat for any assistance within the ARF Unit's mandate.

#### 3.5. ARF Workshop on "Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Asia and Europe", Berlin, 12-14 March 2008

The Workshop recommended that further steps in the enhancement of CBMs and PD in the ARF might require the following actions:

- To strengthen the ARF Unit;
- The ARF could continue to offer good offices, for instance offer meetings of Six-Party-Talk Ministers in the margins of the ARF, and improve the sharing of experience on specific issues such as disaster relief, peace-keeping and maritime security through the ARF Unit at ASEAN Secretariat.
- Future cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) could comprise an MoU between ASEAN and OSCE Secretariats, training courses at the OSCE for the ARF Unit, joint workshops and meetings, meetings between CSCAP and OSCE track II, meeting of the ARF chair with the OSCE chair and sharing of experience on early-warning and risk reduction centre and on standardized reporting (ASO).

#### 3.6. The ARF Study on Best Practices in Preventive Diplomacy, 2007-2008

Upon the direction of the 14<sup>th</sup> ARF in Manila in August 2007, a proposal on the "Study of Best Practices and Lessons Learned by Selected International and Regional Organizations in Preventive Diplomacy" was commissioned. The support and contribution of ARF participants (Brunei, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore and the United States) to the ARF Fund in order to carry out this maiden ARF project is appreciated.

The Study recommended the following:

- To strengthen and expand the ARF Unit with an eye to the creation of an ARF Secretariat to include a General Secretary with a clearly defined role and mission.
- To have a senior official with institutional and personal credibility has proven critical to the success of PD activities.

The Study also projected the expanded role of the ARF Unit in the near, mid and long term, namely:

Near term:

- Standardize reporting requirements for confidence building measures;
- Manage the development of a Vision Statement that incorporates norms and objectives for good governance and assistance to vulnerable populations;
- Identify areas where structural PD initiatives could be undertaken. (e.g. poverty alleviation, nontraditional security, local governance training, anti-corruption programs, security sector reform, peace building, election monitoring, conflict resolution training);
- Identify partner organizations for structural PD initiatives and PD training;
- Conduct workshops on how to transition from CBMs and organize for PD;
- Identify information collection requirements to support PD;
- Serve as the functional link between the ARF and ASEAN's Troika and SG.

Mid term:

- Analysis of security-related confidence building information for early warning;
- Management of partnership agreements for implementing structural PD initiatives;
- Management of operational PD measures;
- Coordination with national-level implementation agencies;
- Conduct workshops on PD implementation;
- Manage PD training programs.

Long term:

- The establishment of an ARF Secretariat that serves as the focal point for all operational PD initiatives and the establishment of a Regional Risk Reduction Center to coordinate and to direct PD efforts.

### 3.7. Review of the ARF, 2008

The Discussion Paper on the Review of the ARF recommended that ARF should strengthen the role of the ARF Chair and the ARF Unit. The Paper proposed the following:

- The ARF Unit should be augmented with more resources, manpower, and a greater mandate to support the enhanced role of the ARF Chair and to implement expanded tasks of the ARF Unit itself.
- The ARF Unit could be tasked to submit reports to the ARF Chair of any emerging or existing security issues that may adversely affect the peace and the security of the region. In this connection, the ASEAN Secretary-General

can participate in the meeting of the Friends of the ARF Chair mechanism at the request of the ARF Chair.

### 3.8. ARF Vision Statement, 2009

- The 16<sup>th</sup> ARF adopted the ARF Vision Statement which recommends ARF to develop more advanced institutional features for ARF which could include the development of stronger secretariat support by providing necessary resources to the ARF Unit.
- In light of this, the Ministers at the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF tasked the ARF Unit to compile a list of key policy recommendations of the ARF and to work with the relevant fora in the ARF to encourage their implementation and to report to the 17<sup>th</sup> ARF of the progress in such implementation.

### 3.9. Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement, 2010

- The Plan of Action (PoA) reiterated the recommendation to strengthen the ARF Unit with a view to ensure the implementation of the earlier.

## **Current Developments and Observations**

4. When first set up, the ARF Unit was assigned with four basic tasks, namely: (1) to support the enhanced role of the ARF Chair, including interaction with other regional and international organizations, defense dialogue and Track II organization ; (2) to function as depository of ARF documents/papers and serve as the ARF's institutional memory; (3) to compile ARF registry and database; and (4) to provide secretarial works and administrative support, including serving as ARF's institutional memory.
5. The ARF Unit operates based on these functions since its inception in 2004. Over a period of time, ARF discussions have indicated expectation for an expanded role of the ARF Unit in support of the enhanced role of the ARF Chair. While the enhanced role of the ARF Chair has been identified in 2001, the modality of expanding the functions of the ARF Unit, particularly in the context of moving the ARF process to preventive diplomacy, needs to be further discussed.
6. To ensure that the ARF Unit could effectively support ARF preventive diplomacy, the ARF Work Plan of Preventive Diplomacy should specifically address the future role of the ARF Unit in preventive diplomacy. It is also critical that the projection of the future the ARF Unit should consider the availability of resources required for the Unit to take up its expanded role. Furthermore, such an expansion, should take place in an evolutionary rather than revolutionary phase with ASEAN leading the process.
7. Recognizing the importance of strengthening the ARF Unit in supporting the enhanced role of the ARF Chair, the ASEAN Secretariat has recruited two new staff members to oversee ARF matters. This has been an increase from the previous one and a half year when it had only one technical staff to serve various areas of ARF cooperation. To further strengthen the ARF Unit, ASEAN has

agreed since 2005 to open the ARF Unit in the ASEAN Secretariat for seconded staff from the ASEAN Member States to assist on ARF matters. The Secretariat would like to state that the ARF Secondment mechanism is still in place and ASEAN Member States are encouraged to support the ASEAN Secretariat through this mechanism.

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