

(As delivered)  
**Welcoming Remarks  
of  
General Boonsrang Niumpradit  
ARF EEP of the Kingdom of Thailand  
at the  
5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
ASEAN Regional Forum Experts and Eminent Persons  
27 January 2011, Dili, Timor-Leste**

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**Your Excellency Foreign Minister Dr. Zacarias Albano da Costa,  
Your Excellency Co-Chair Director-General Marciano da Silva,  
Distinguished Experts and Eminent Persons,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honour for me to be back here in Timor Leste -- a place of which I have many fond memories.

Much may have changed since I was last here ten years ago.

But if there is one thing that remains unchanged, it is the pride and perseverance of the Timor-Leste people which have been instrumental in making this wonderful country achieve such great progress in so little time.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to Timor-Leste for the honor and trust bestowed upon me to co-chair this meeting, and for the warm hospitality accorded to all of us here.

This Meeting is indeed historic.

It is the first ARF meeting to be held in Timor-Leste, reflecting this country's commitment to playing its part in promoting greater trust and confidence in our region.

To this, I extend the commendations and appreciation from my delegation, the sentiments of which, I am sure, is shared by all of us here.

Reflecting the spirit behind the ARF Vision Statement and the Hanoi Plan of Action to implement the Vision Statement, the convening of this historic meeting in Dili is a manifestation of Timor Leste's forward-looking policy of supporting the ARF's efforts to become more relevant in the emerging regional architecture.

For one of the newest ARF participants like Timor-Leste to be taking a proactive role in this regard is something that deserves our full support.

The focus of the Meeting on preventive diplomacy and the future of the ARF is timely. The two issues are linked. Preventive diplomacy will have an important influence on the future direction that the ARF may take.

With the world evolving and with non-traditional threats increasing against a backdrop of new challenges in the region, the ARF is increasingly recognizing the importance of "Preventive Diplomacy" as an important tool in tackling new threats and promoting peace and security in our region.

Indeed, as the ARF plans to adopt a Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy this year, we are honoured that many experts and eminent persons are present here, including many familiar faces since our last meeting in Bali, to help take our important task forward.

This evolution of the ARF towards Stage 2 of preventive diplomacy coincides also with ASEAN solidifying its efforts to move closer to becoming an ASEAN Community and to promoting an ASEAN-centered regional architecture.

In this context, it would be no surprise if dynamics within the ASEAN Community and within the ARF will interact with one another more and more, helping shape the direction of both entities.

I hope that all of us will put on our thinking caps and help brainstorm on how we can contribute ideas that will take forward preventive diplomacy in the ARF and thereby shape the future direction of the ARF.

I look forward to a fruitful discussion with all participants.

And thank you again, Timor-Leste, for hosting this important and historic ARF meeting.

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