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Brief synthesis of key points and recommendations for the way forward

ASEAN Regional Forum- seminar on preventive diplomacy
and mediation training

Brunei Darussalam 7-10 October 2014



ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM



Promoting peace and security through dialogue and cooperation in the Asia Pacific

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On the basis of the ARF concept paper of 1995, the Bali work plan and the Brunei paper, this training has been a milestone of putting the political decisions into practice moving towards preventive diplomacy and mediation. It was the first training on PD and mediation. The objectives of the Bali work plan approved by the SOM in 2011 include:

- Increase capacity and capabilities of the ARF and its participants in the area of PD
- Conduct workshops and trainings in this area
- Explore potential for mediation, facilitated dialogue and conciliation

The Wellington roundtable provided the recommendation that PD training be tailored to the Asia Pacific region covering case studies where PD has worked. As the Brunei paper points out the ARF's definition of preventive diplomacy is broad and its activities can be wide ranging. The guiding principles, which include, operating on the basis of consultation and consensus, non-coercive and voluntary in nature are essential.

During the training HE Pak Bagas Hapsoro said "For ASEAN, a stable, peaceful and prosperous Southeast Asia, indeed, the Asia-Pacific must necessarily entail an ASEAN that is at the heart of the region's dynamics – positively shaping and molding developments. Over a period of nearly half a century, ASEAN has gradually but consistently built up its capacity to pursue peace and prevent conflicts, not only in terms of conceptual, normative and institutional development but also in its real-time, on-the-ground engagement in preventing and resolving conflicts in the region. Through these home grown efforts and experiences, we have many lessons to learn and practices to share with the wider global community. In that context, for the United Nations and ASEAN, preventive diplomacy remains a key priority in its political-security agenda and a focus in its partnerships with regional organizations".

The ARF training in Brunei was aimed at increasing learning, sharing and understanding in PD and mediation. The familiarization ARF participants to this field was facilitated and together we explored some of the guiding principles, tools and skills. We raised awareness that mediation and preventive diplomacy are useful tools for preventing and resolving conflicts. It was highlighted that mediation was not interference as it was only carried out on a basis of invitation and consent to begin with and then if the parties changed their minds during the peace process, as was the case of the Mindanao process, they were also free to request a change of mediators. During the training explored the options of both external mediators such as in Aceh and Mindanao and insider mediators such as in Myanmar.

During the training we explored the benefits of mediation, facilitation and preventive diplomacy in the region by building on successful examples such as in Aceh and Mindanao. Throughout the training we had high level experts including those involved in peace processes in Aceh and Mindanao sharing their experiences, knowledge and lessons drawn. We also discussed the benefits of the support from countries in the ASEAN region to support these peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements.

Approximately 50 to 60 participants attended the training from foreign affairs and defense ministries from ARF countries and United Nations, ASEAN, European Union, key officials and mediation experts. The good attendance confirms that there is a growing commitment and willingness among ARF members in ensuring strengthened familiarity with PD. A wide array of discussions on different experiences enabled good exposure to preventive diplomacy and mediation. The evaluation forms demonstrate that the participants were extremely happy with the seminar/training.

Ideas and recommendations collected in the training on the way forward:

- Southeast Asia – ASEAN, must continue to remain a net contributor to international peace and security.
- It is important to strengthen a culture of peace. Nurture the strongest of common political will to utilize them and to address any potential for conflict in the region in a timely fashion.
- A reflection is needed on how ARF PD initiatives could be in the future
- Introduce and develop the concept of PD. The stakeholders must have the same vision and must recognize the concept and principles of PD. Make the public fully aware about the benefit on having PD in practical reality.
- Ensure understanding and consensus in the ARF on PD practice.
- Build capacities of ASEAN Regional Forum on PD and mediation.
- After 18 years on CBM there is now a desire to move forward in the stages of the process. For this it is important to keep the momentum going, demonstrate willingness in buy-in, need results on progress to be shared, need continuity and coherence.
- Organisation by different ARF member states of more seminar/trainings on mediation and prevention diplomacy for different levels, ones for junior, mid and higher level.
- Trainings should be both theoretical and practical exploring different tools
- Case studies, video clips, small group discussions, conflict analysis and role plays should be included in trainings. Practical exercises are a useful learning approach. Both inter-state and intra-state examples are needed.
- Operationalize the AIPR in an effective and sustainable manner with adequate financial and human resources and enjoy good collaboration with relevant institutions and partners
- It is important to document best practices
- Improve ASEAN Regional Forum- i.e. have a web based tool for learning and building capacity where one can better disseminate lessons. Enabling both the access and to upload relevant documents on PD and mediation.