

Non-paper as an aid to discussion

Section 1: Overview

At the 20th ARF, held in Brunei Darussalam on 2 July 2013, Ministers tasked the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) group to “assess the ARF’s progress and also provide recommendations in advancing the overall ARF process, particularly in the implementation of preventive diplomacy activities”.¹ This is the first time Ministers have tasked the EEPs to undertake a comprehensive review of the ARF.

The ARF has undertaken two previous reviews: a stocktake review in 2002 and a second in 2008. The second review was conducted as the ARF approached its 15th year and came after a period of membership expansion (Pakistan joined in 2004, Timor-Leste in 2005, Bangladesh in 2006 and Sri Lanka in 2007). Much of the 2008 review was captured by the 2009 ARF Vision Statement, which is implemented by the 2010 Hanoi Plan of Action. Members have also submitted papers with suggestions to strengthen the work of the ARF.²

This paper sets out some initial ideas for the EEPs to consider in fulfilling the Ministers’ tasking. Sections 2 and 3 of the paper conduct a brief assessment of the ARF’s progress over its 20 year history, including preventive diplomacy in the ARF. Section 4 charts a series of suggested recommendations to further the work of the ARF and which EEPs may wish to incorporate into their final report.

Section 2: Assessing the progress of the ARF over the last 20 years

The ARF’s mandate

The ARF was established in 1994. It was founded as a venue and mechanism for ministerial-level consultations and dialogue among regional states on security issues, with a focus on traditional and non-traditional security threats. Its mandate, captured in the 1995 “ARF: A Concept Paper”, projected development of the ARF through a gradual evolutionary approach across three stages: the promotion of confidence building measures; the development of preventive diplomacy mechanisms; and development of conflict-resolution mechanisms.

It was agreed in 1994 that in its initial phase the ARF should concentrate on enhancing trust and confidence among participants, thereby fostering a regional environment conducive to maintaining the peace and prosperity of the region. Having gradually established a work program of confidence building measures (CBMs) over the last twenty years, CBMs are now one of the signature activities of the ARF.

ASEAN, through its centrality and leadership, has made an important contribution in shaping the ARF’s development. Ensuring non-ASEAN members co-chair ARF activities and the ARF ISG meetings has enabled the broader ARF membership to also make significant contributions. The formalisation of the ASEAN Secretariat’s

¹ 2 July 2013, Chair’s Statement of the 20th ARF, Brunei para 34.

² For example, Japan’s 2004 “Concept Paper: Reconsidering the ARF Functioning for the Coming Decade”

institutional support for ARF meetings through the three-person ARF Unit and a dedicated website has also increased the ARF's effectiveness and efficiency.

Improvements to the ARF

Looking at recommendations made in previous reviews, the ARF has made tangible progress.

Membership: From its original 18 members, membership has settled at 27. The EEPs support continuing the moratorium on new membership applications.

Practical cooperation: The ARF has increased its level of practical cooperation. The biennial ARF disaster relief exercise (DiREx) is a notable example of this cooperation. Other examples can be found in desktop exercises and practical elements in workshops (e.g. the 2012 cyber incident response workshop).

Linkages with other regional bodies: Further to ministerial direction in 2012 and 2013, the ARF has begun establishing links with other regional bodies such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), particularly at officials' meetings.

Efforts have been made to regularise cross-briefings between ARF intersessional meetings (ISM) and the ADMM-Plus experts' working groups (EWG) on disaster management issues, maritime security and counter-terrorism. These are welcome developments. Briefings on the work of the EAS in disaster relief are taking place in the ARF ISM on disaster relief.

Better definition of focus: The 2011 Vision Statement to implement the 2010 Hanoi Plan of Action outlined the main areas of work for the ARF through to 2020.

Initiation and utilisation of the ARF's Track 1.5: The Experts and Eminent Persons group (EEPs) is in its seventh year of activity. It has provided strategic recommendations to ministers about the ARF's direction and activities.

Institutional arrangements: A three-person ARF Unit has been established within the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC). ASEC also hosts the ARF's website, including the ARF's comprehensive documents archive. Efforts are underway to deconflict the ARF and ADMM-Plus calendars.

Friends of the Chair: The ARF has formalised the concept of Friends of the Chair through the "Terms of Reference of the Friends of the ARF" (2007).

Good offices arrangements: Guidance for the ARF Chair was provided through the "Enhanced Role of the ARF Chair" (2001), including on possible exercising of its good offices.

But some challenges remain

After 20 years, like any forum, the ARF continues to adjust and fine-tune its operations. Some of the issues identified in the 2008 review endure. Despite some

improvements, the ARF still makes limited use of practical cooperation measures (e.g. table-top exercises, training exercises). The ARF also has only one decision making opportunity per year – the ministerial meeting – which limits the ARF’s ability to respond quickly to urgent issues and developments.

More broadly, the ARF’s greatest success – creating a regular space for ministers to discuss regional security issues where none existed before – has also fostered the development of other regional organisations – APEC, the EAS, the ADMM-Plus, ASEAN+3 and ASEM. While each has its own priorities and programs of activities, they often cover common themes and challenges, thereby increasing risks of duplication and underlining the need for better coordination.

So we continue to ask: how do we ensure the ARF continues to serve the interests of its members in a peaceful and stable region? We think the answer should be found in how the ARF distinguishes itself from, while complimenting the work of, other elements of the region’s architecture. Retaining sufficient flexibility to incorporate emerging security issues such as space security and cyber security into its existing confidence building work is one such way. However, it is increasingly important that the ARF also move ahead with preventive diplomacy, with a view towards eventually engaging in conflict resolution.

Section 3: Preventive diplomacy in the ARF

Preventive diplomacy has long been a part of the ARF’s deliberations. A set of guiding principles on preventive diplomacy was adopted in 2001. A 2008 study on preventive diplomacy by CSIS and RSIS³ informed members’ drafting of the 2009 ARF Vision Statement and the 2010 Hanoi Plan of Action. However, it was ministers’ endorsement of the first ARF work plan on preventive diplomacy in 2011 that formally – and finally – marked the ARF’s evolution to its second stage.

Two activities have been held under the work plan: a high-level seminar on preventive diplomacy, co-chaired by the EU and Indonesia in November 2011 and an election observer mission to Timor Leste’s parliamentary elections in 2012. A third activity, an ARF roundtable on preventive diplomacy training, is scheduled for 20-21 March 2014 in Wellington. Discussions on preventive diplomacy have also continued in Track One and Track Two meetings and in 2013, ministers endorsed “Concept Paper on Moving towards Preventive Diplomacy” as a guideline for the conduct of preventive diplomacy.

As we look back on this initial phase, two broad themes emerge. First, it is clear the pace and scope of preventive diplomacy activity in the ARF needs to increase. The 2011 work plan needs to be populated with activities in order to give it – and the original 1995 mandate of the ARF – effect. The March roundtable in Wellington has the potential to generate ideas for further preventive diplomacy initiatives, including through examination and discussion of the consolidated ARF member responses to the questionnaire on preventive diplomacy.⁴ The roundtable will also be a useful

³ “Joint Study on Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Preventive Diplomacy” conducted by the Pacific Forum CSIS and the S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies, funded by the ASEAN Secretariat, 2008

⁴ Circulated by the ARF Unit, email dated 16 December 2013.

sounding board for the work of the EEPs. The EEPs look forward to incorporating elements of the roundtable discussions into its work.

Second, ARF members place significant value and importance on region-specific practice. ARF members are clear that the focus of their work should be the development and practice of preventive diplomacy in their region. Still, there is acknowledgement that some valuable lessons-learned can be gained from examining the preventive diplomacy experiences of other regions. With this in mind, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade recently commissioned a short literature review on preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention from the University of Birmingham. Australia will make this available to the ARF EEPs and to Track One officials.

Section 4: Possible recommendations

4.1 Recommendations relating to ARF policy and process

- i. *Streamline ARF meetings:* In implementing the recommendations of the 2008 review, and in light of increasing meeting loads, the ARF should further streamline some of its meetings.

Holding one ISG meeting per cycle (February/March) instead of two, would consolidate the ARF's workload and encourage proposals for the next ARF cycle be tabled in a timely manner. This would also synchronise better with many members' funding cycles. Most of the preparatory work currently done at the first ISG in order to allow early familiarisation and consultation of proposals could be done electronically by members via the secure part of the ARF website and by electronic distribution through the ARF Unit.

The ISG co-chairing arrangements should remain in place with an ASEAN and a non-ASEAN. The co-chairs would decide where to hold the annual ISG.

The ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD) process was recently pared back from four meetings a year to three. Should there be one ISG per cycle, it would make sense to then only have one officials' level DOD per cycle. The ARF Security Policy Conference and the DOD associated with the ARF Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) should be retained.

- ii. *Including more practical elements:* Where appropriate, ARF activities should continue to include practical elements in their design such as desktop exercises, discussion groups or simulations.
- iii. *Devolve some issues to the ISG and SOM:* By delegating some issues to senior officials and officials, it could speed up decision making and reaction times. Some of the issues and dialogue between the Track One and the Track Two/Track 1.5 bodies could be done at this level.
- iv. *Ongoing specific direction from Track 1 to Track 2:* Through the SOM and Ministerial Chair's statements, Track One has the opportunity to provide

specific guidance to the ARF's Track 2 organisations, including ISIS and CSCAP on topics and issues of interest in the ARF Track 1.

Ministers should encourage ISIS and CSCAP to provide electronic copies of each study group's report to the ARF Unit for distribution to the ARF Track1 membership and inclusion on the public page of the ARF's website .

- v. *Continue to task the EEPs:* Ministers should continue to provide specific tasking to the EEPs group. The EEPs group should take on responsibility for proposing one or more possible preventive diplomacy activities each year, for example, a "Lessons Learned Publication" (recommended below at 4.2.iv).
- vi. *Annual Security Outlook (ASO):* Encourage countries to include a section on their practice of preventive diplomacy in their contribution to the Annual Security Outlook and recommend electronic distribution of the ASO by the ARF Unit to CSCAP members.

4.2 Recommendations relating to the ARF and preventive diplomacy

- i. *Increase pace and scope of the ARF's preventive diplomacy work:* The ARF should increase the pace and scope of its practical work on preventive diplomacy in order to implement the 2011 work plan and meet its original mandate. Track One officials should, as a matter of course at each ISG, introduce a range of possible preventive diplomacy projects.
- ii. *Preventive diplomacy as a theme:* Preventive diplomacy should also, where possible, be used as an approach within the ARF's existing work on disaster relief, maritime security, peacekeeping etc.
- iii. *Begin dialogue with other regional organisations on preventive diplomacy:* the ARF is encouraged to develop ongoing dialogue with other regional organisations that practice preventive diplomacy, particularly the ASEAN Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution and the UN Department of Political Affairs (Jakarta). The Institute and/or the UN DPA could be invited to attend ARF preventive diplomacy activities. The Institute and/or the UN DPA could be invited to brief the ARF SOM on their work.
- iv. *Lessons learned publication:* consider compiling a "lessons learned" ARF publication on preventive diplomacy, drawn from contributions from ARF members. Experiences could be regional, sub-region, trilateral, bilateral or even internal. Organisations with a regional focus could also be invited to share their lessons learned (eg. Myanmar Peace Centre, UN DPA (Jakarta), the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation).
- v. *Use existing ARF mechanisms in a preventive diplomacy context:* further to the 2001 "Enhanced Role of the ARF Chair", the ARF Chair could seek EEPs views and recommendations on issues of relevance to their expertise.

As a preventive diplomacy tool, the ARF Chair could also task the EEPs to provide views and ideas on practical steps the ARF Chair could take to exercise its “good offices”, in accordance with the 2007 Terms of Reference.

- vi. *Further examination of regional mechanisms:* ARF members should be encouraged to take up CSCAP’s offer to undertake a study on what a risk reduction centre might look like.⁵

The EEPs should also express support for CSCAP’s proposal to conduct a review of existing regional early-warning systems.

- vii. *1.5 track symposium on preventive diplomacy:* New Zealand’s proposal for a high-level 1.5 track symposium on regional preventive diplomacy practice in the region for 2014-15⁶ is supported. This would be a useful mechanism to spark further discussion and identify possible opportunities for how preventive diplomacy could be practiced in the region.
- viii. *Retain current institutional arrangements:* current ARF practice sees implementation of the 2011 preventive diplomacy work plan as the responsibility of the ARF ISG co-chairs.

⁵ Chair’s statement, CSCAP Preventive Diplomacy Study Group on Preventive Diplomacy, 8-9 December 2013, Yangon

⁶ Circulated by the ARF Unit, email dated 16 December 2013