

**SPEECH TO THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM INTER-SESSIONAL
SUPPORT GROUP ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES AND
PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN SYDNEY ON 7 APRIL 2011 BY
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EXPERT AND EMINENT PERSONS**

At the 5th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons group meeting in Dili, Timor-Leste, on 27-28 January 2011, it was proposed that in an effort to create better linkages with the ARF track-one process an EEP representative brief the ARF ISG on the recommendations of the meeting. It was further proposed that this role could be performed by the ISG host country EEP representative from Australia.

A Brief History of the EEPs

The EEP group was established in 2002 as a professional resource pool to provide the ARF with research and advice on selected issues. Each member state nominated up to 5 members. However, until the Republic of Korea took the initiative to host the first meeting in June 2006, the EEPs had not been invoked either individually or collectively to advise ARF members.

The second meeting took place in the Philippines in February 2007, the third meeting was in China in November 2008, and the fourth meeting was in Indonesia in December 2009. The first three meetings were held as plenary group meetings of up to 27 countries and largely focused on establishing procedures for how the EEP group should meet and conduct itself, as well as discussing major strategic trends in the Asia-Pacific region and the historic development of confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy ideas in the ARF.

A significant breakthrough occurred with the meeting in Bali in December 2009, which in response to ARF Ministers' specific direction addressed the issue of establishing priorities for preventive diplomacy. For the first time, the EEP group split up into working groups which addressed: a) the identification of areas where preventive diplomacy initiatives could be undertaken and roles for existing ARF preventive diplomacy mechanisms; and b) the identification of information collection requirements to support preventive diplomacy. The Indonesian and New Zealand co-chairs produced a Draft Elements of a Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy, which reflected the fact that EEP representatives welcomed specific tasking from ARF Ministers on an issue that would feed directly back into the ARF process. Such tasking had been lacking in the first three meetings.

Recommendations from the 5th EEP Meeting in Dili, Timor Leste

The fifth meeting in Dili very usefully built on this approach and divided into two discussion groups on: a) specific ideas regarding regional preventive diplomacy mechanisms; and b) the future direction of the ARF in the evolving regional security architecture. This is the first time that the EEPs were able to address in two consecutive meetings specific proposals with regard to preventive diplomacy priorities. The meeting confirmed the agreement made in Bali with regard to the definition of preventive diplomacy and it agreed to cover traditional as well as non-traditional conflicts. It was also agreed that, in view of a number of emerging disputes

in the region in recent times, the commitment to preventive diplomacy needed to be further strengthened and the concrete role of the EEPs in preventive diplomacy in the ARF should be further developed.

This fifth meeting agreed to three specific preventive diplomacy proposals for consideration by Ministers for inclusion in the ARF Preventive Diplomacy Work Plan:

- A three tier proposal for an ARF role in the 2012 election in Timor Leste comprising: i) an election visitor program where East Timorese election officials could be invited to ARF member countries to observe elections or undertake specific training; ii) an EEP election observation team to participate in the mid-2012 general election; iii) a “lessons learned document” compiled by the ARF from reports of various observer groups. I understand that the Timor Leste delegation at this ISG will specifically address the implementation of this proposal.
- In view of the growing importance of maritime security issues in the region, the development was proposed of a "cooperative maritime security concept paper" considering civil-military aspects of incidents at sea and other maritime safety issues. The EEPs would begin with the drafting of a discussion paper exploring cooperative maritime security concepts by a voluntary group of EEPs with expertise on maritime security matters. It would focus on basic policy considerations, as distinct from detailed operational matters. This paper could serve as an early EEP contribution to an ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security.
- It was also proposed that the EEPs could make contributions on the issue of the ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) document by suggesting additional ways to make the ASO more substantive, allow for better comparison of data, and facilitate further analysis. It was also suggested that more ARF participants should contribute to the ASO since at present only 16 of 27 countries contribute submissions to it.

On the role of the future direction of the ARF in the evolving regional security architecture, it was noted that ARF Ministers in the ARF Vision Statement in 2009 had not foreseen the creation of the ADMM+ or the expansion of the East Asia Summit and that the ARF needed to be cognisant of these new arrangements. The Dili meeting noted that the ARF had a political and civil-military mandate, which differentiated it from the military operational focus of the ADMM+. It was also suggested that, in line with ARF annual Ministerial meetings, the ADMM+ should also be encouraged to meet annually.

It was proposed that an EEP paper could be produced consolidating the EEPs' views on the ARF's future role in the context of new developments affecting the regional architecture. The meeting noted that, in view of the growing comfort level within the ARF, its 18 year history and other comparative advantages with regard to its political expertise, that the ARF should be able to make continuing value-added contributions to the region's peace and stability. It was recognised that civilian-military interaction was one of the considerable strengths of the ARF. It was agreed that further ideas

on how to develop synergies between the ARF, ADMM+ and the expanded EAS should also be explored.

Where to from Here?

After five meetings of the ARF EEPs over the last 5 years it is time to take stock and determine whether the EEPs are playing a useful role in support of ARF Ministers' major concerns and priorities.

On the positive side, the EEP meetings have progressed from the first three very formal meetings largely discussing procedures and processes to the last two meetings in Bali and Dili where – for the first time at the specific direction of ARF Ministers – the EEPs in two consecutive meetings have discussed concrete ideas for preventive diplomacy priorities and come up with a modest number of recommendations. This shows the value of having ARF Ministerial directives to the EEPs.

Some might argue that the paucity of specific PD proposals recommended by the EEPs is perhaps a little disappointing. However, it should be understood that progress has been made and, in my view, the last two meetings have established a firm basis for further progress. Importantly, there is a growing sense of an EEP confidence in working together that has been developed now over five consecutive meetings.

A more sensitive issue that I wish to raise is the lack of continuity from several ARF countries of their EEP representative. Of course, I accept that there is perhaps a perceived need to give a range of EEPs from ARF member countries experience in the EEP process. However, it needs to be said that by having a different EEP representative each year it is my experience that there tends to be much nugatory effort revisiting issues already agreed to in previous meetings.

At the very least, EEPs who are new to the EEP process should be thoroughly briefed beforehand on the directives from ARF Ministers and on the definitions and procedures agreed by the EEPs in previous meetings. This is an important issue that I recommend ARF member countries consider seriously.

Finally, the EEPs now need further guidance from ARF Ministers about the specific recommendations arising from the fifth EEP meeting in Dili in January this year. We would also welcome additional specific tasking when ARF Ministers next meet in Bali in July, including utilisation of ARF EEPs as expert consultative resources and expanding their functions.