

**Singapore Intervention**  
**5<sup>th</sup> ARF EEPs Meeting, Dili, Timor Leste, 27-28 January 2011**

The ASEAN Regional Forum's founding concept document, the 1995 ARF Concept Paper had identified a three-stage process:

- (i) Confidence Building Measures;
- (ii) Preventive Diplomacy;
- (iii) Conflict.

Resolution for the ARF to develop a more predictable and constructive pattern of relations for the Asia-Pacific.

The region that we live and operate in is remarkably diverse and the developments that occur within the global environment impact our security and strategic concerns as well. The ARF has conducted itself well over the years in the areas of confidence-building, with members actively hosting and participating in various seminars and workshops.

In addition, high-level meetings have also served as a conduit for frank interaction between Ministers and Senior Officials of ARF Member Countries, which subsequently led to greater levels of comfort with each other.

It was with a view of the progress made, and the challenges which lie ahead of us, that prompted our Foreign Ministers to task our Colleagues at the Foreign Ministries at 16th ARF in 2009 to begin work on the ARF Preventive Diplomacy Work Plan.

In the first draft of the Preventive Diplomacy Work Plan which we had circulated at the ARF ISG held in Bali, Indonesia in Dec 2010, Singapore has built on previous ARF documents on the subject, as well as incorporated the recommendations of the ARF EEPs and the CSCA Study on Preventive Diplomacy. The Work Plan will focus on –

- (i) Enhancing CBMs and capacity building efforts;
- (ii) Developing mechanisms to identify potential regional flashpoints and;
- (iii) Developing a menu of optional and voluntary dispute settlement mechanisms.

It is important to note that despite the increased mutual trust that countries now share with one another, there remain challenges to regional peace and prosperity.

Moving ahead, Preventive Diplomacy can play an important role even as the regional architecture continues to evolve. The principles, from the ARF's agreed definition of Preventive Diplomacy in 2001, note that PD could help

- (i) Prevent disputes and conflicts from arising;
- (ii) Prevent disputes and conflicts from escalating to armed confrontation;
- (iii) Minimize the impact of such disputes on the region, and they will continue to be relevant.

The application of Preventive Diplomacy Mechanisms should be subject to certain principles, and be based on consultation and consensus. Recourse to the various PD mechanisms would be voluntary, and subject to the agreement of all parties involved in the dispute. This is in line with the principles of non-interference, respect of sovereignty and consensus as the basis of the ASEAN way.

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