

DRAFT CLOSING REMARKS
ARF Bio-Preparedness Table Top Exercise
13 August 2015

Let me begin by expressing our warm Filipino welcome and appreciation to all of the participants, representing nineteen member states of the ASEAN Regional Forum, who came from all over the Asia Pacific Region.

I would also like to express my appreciation to our partners in realizing this event – the United States of America, through the State Department and Pacific Command, the executive agent-Pacific Air Forces and all supporting entities such as DTRA, MARFOPAC and USARPAC.

Of course, none of these would be possible without the cooperation and synergy of our Philippine agencies, spearheaded by the Department of Health (Dr. Joel Buenaventura, Dr. Marilyn Go, Dr. Lyndon Lee Suy), Armed Forces of the Philippines, National Risk Reduction and Management Council, Bureau of Animal Industry, Bureau of Quarantine, Anti-Terrorism Council, Philippine National Police, and the University of the Philippines-Manila, among others.

Five days ago, we celebrated the 48th anniversary of an auspicious occasion, when five leaders - the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand - sat down together in the main hall of the Department of Foreign Affairs building in Bangkok, Thailand and signed a document. By virtue of that document, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was born. The five Foreign Ministers who signed it - Adam Malik of Indonesia, Narciso R.

Ramos of the Philippines (father of former Philippine president Fidel V. Ramos), Tun Abdul Razak of Malaysia (father of the current Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak), S. Rajaratnam of Singapore, and Thanat Khoman of Thailand - would subsequently be hailed as the Founding Fathers of probably the most successful inter-governmental organization in the developing world today. And the document that they signed would be known as the ASEAN Declaration. It proclaimed ASEAN as representing "the collective will of the nations of Southeast Asia to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity."

The year 2015 marks a milestone in the history of ASEAN as it pursues regional integration and builds a community. This year reminds us of our vision to become a community that would not only bring forth prosperity but more importantly, peace and stability in the region. Even as we speak, a High Level Task Force (HLTF) is working on ASEAN's Post-2015 Vision which would be launched by the end of the year. The document will provide ASEAN with a concrete roadmap for the next ten years and establish the ten-nation association as a single community, in line with its motto of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community". To become relevant and responsive, that vision must be bold, visionary, progressive, and forward looking.

The evolving regional security architecture necessitates enhanced cooperation towards traditional and non-traditional security threats, transnational crimes, addressing natural disasters, and other emerging issues. The Philippines recognizes the urgency towards building capacity among nations to address these new threats and therefore is

willing to take a more proactive role by hosting and co-chairing with like-minded dialogue partners and external parties. For the rest of the year, the Philippines will host and co-chair similar Track I activities under the ASEAN Regional Forum mechanism. We look forward to your country's participation in the said endeavors in the future.

For the past two and a half days, we have learned from subject matter experts and from each other through presentations, sharing of best practices, panel discussion, and the table top exercise; all of which were primarily designed to present recommendations to enhance and promote synergy between ARF participants as well as ASEAN Bodies on Bio-Preparedness with a focus on disaster management in response to a biological event. We also note of the senior leaders' seminar that discussed the way forward in these efforts.

These activities, along with our other regional initiatives are geared towards building a peaceful, secure, and prosperous community that is people-centered, people-oriented and people driven. A community that we envision as the Philippines take the helm in 2017 as the ASEAN Host, during the commemoration of the Golden Year of ASEAN.

Again, thank you all for your participation and we hope that you will spend the rest of your time in Manila to enjoy what we have to offer. As we say in Filipino, "Maraming salamat at hanggang sa muli," Thank you and see you in the future.