

ANNEX F

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Further Enhancing ARF Potential in Dealing with Non-traditional Security Challenges to the Region

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset I would like to echo speakers before me and thank you for the warm welcome, generous hospitality and excellent arrangements for our meetings today.

Mr. Chairman,

The concept of security has undergone a change in the 21st century. We can no longer view security in narrow military terms. Non-military threats or non-traditional security challenges such as international terrorism, maritime security and piracy, disaster relief, clandestine proliferation of WMDs, pandemics, narcotics have all assumed greater salience. It is said that the process of globalization has led to the globalization of vulnerability; we can no longer take comfort in distance. The challenges before us are transnational and trans-regional; addressing these challenges requires cooperation and collaboration.

For over a decade and a half, we have in the ARF discussed regional security issues in a setting that consists of a diverse group of countries. We have all benefited greatly from this experience. The ARF has been particularly successful in encouraging confidence building and exchange of views and sharing of perspectives in non-traditional security challenges. Beginning from the Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief set up in 1997, today we have enlarged the basket of issues covered in the ISMs to counter-terrorism, maritime security and disarmament and non-proliferation. On other issues as well we have held seminars and meetings, including on peacekeeping and pandemics. India has worked closely in cooperation with our ASEAN partners to host seminars and training programmes on maritime security and peacekeeping.

The exercises, meetings and seminars on non-traditional security issues have led to greater comfort levels among ARF members, including defence officials. The DOD presentations yesterday highlighted the significant progress made by the ARF, particularly in the area of disaster relief. The first field exercise in ARF, the Voluntary Demonstration of Response in Disaster Relief, was held in May last year and another exercise is planned for next year. Cooperative mechanisms like ReCAAP have been helpful in reducing incidents of piracy in Malacca Straits. ReCAAP's information sharing mechanism has been most useful. On counter-terrorism, we have sought to understand the issue in its entirety and exchanged views on how we can tackle this menace.

Against this background, we believe we are well poised to realize the direction given by our Ministers in the Vision Statement of making the ARF "an action-oriented mechanism that develops concrete and effective responses" to the common non-traditional security challenges confronting the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Chairman,

India believes that the existing mechanisms within the ARF offer us a good platform on which to strengthen functional cooperation among ARF members on non-traditional security issues. On some issues, like disaster relief and maritime security, the ISMs have moved towards practical activities, including field exercises on disaster relief. We require effective follow up on the discussions and recommendations of these activities. Similarly, the first meeting of the ISM on non-proliferation and disarmament held in Beijing last July has enabled us to address an issue which remains vital to enduring global security. The lessons learnt from successful examples of cooperation in ARF and in other relevant organizations such as ReCAAP could be used as case studies for application in other contexts.

The task before us will be to tap the ARF's potential in the realm of capacity building, sharing best practices, developing standard operating procedures, information sharing, strengthening international legal frameworks etc. We could also consider listing our capabilities in areas such as disaster relief so that in case of an emergency valuable time is not lost in sourcing men, material and equipment.

We need to be flexible to be able to respond to address new and emerging non-traditional security challenges that are of importance to ARF members. We could deliberate on cooperative actions on issues such as energy security, food security, cybersecurity and pandemics which are of concern to all ARF members. However, we should also exercise caution in not proliferating activities and meetings and overburdening our agenda. We could look for creative ideas on how to address new issues within the existing mechanisms of ISG and ISMs. For instance, on energy security issues, given the large number of offshore oil-rigs and wells in the ARF members, we could consider ways to cooperate through information and experience sharing to address accidents on offshore oil rigs or deep ocean oil-wells.

Lastly, ARF could realize its true potential in tackling non-traditional security issues only with the involvement of a broad cross-section of officials and agencies. The deliberations in this inter-sessional period on the rearrangement of ARF Defence Officials' Dialogues have been useful in this context. The closer alignment of the DODs and the ASPC with the main track of meetings would help in synergizing the work of foreign officials and defence officials.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me underline the importance of building trust and confidence in the success of our approach to address security issues in a forum with such diversity as ARF. Our work on non-traditional security challenges like disaster relief demonstrates that difficult and sensitive issues could be tackled through a gradual process whose foundation lies in confidence building. We continue to support ASEAN's centrality and ARF's tradition of placing value on dialogue, consensus and development at a pace comfortable to all. I am confident that we would be able to further enhance our cooperation on non-traditional security issues to achieve our shared objectives of peace, prosperity, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
