

NON PAPER

FOR THE ARF SOM ON 10 JUNE 2015 (KUCHING, MALAYSIA)

Agenda item 10.2: Streamlining the ARF DoD and ARF ISG on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (TBC)

The ARF ISG on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in May 2015 in Tokyo discussed the proposal to reduce the number of ISG meetings from currently 2 to 1 (while noting the decision by the DOD to reduce the number of DOD meetings from currently 3 to either 2). Both suggestions stem from the recommendations by the High Level Task Force on Strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat and Reviewing the ASEAN Organs.

The EU believes that the efficient use of scarce human and financial resources and the avoidance of duplication with other fora such as the ADMM-Plus meetings are legitimate and shared objectives. However, the EU highly values the exchanges that take place at the ARF DOD and ISG meetings and the civ-mil link that holding the DOD and ISGs back to back to each other allows, which is another reason for keeping the number of ISG meetings to 2 per year (ie in line with the new number of DOD meetings).

Rather than aiming for swift decisions on a possible reduction of meetings, the EU proposes the following measures to improve the agenda management of these meetings in an effort to make them even more productive:

- Firstly, there should be a clearer distinction between the role the various DOD and ISG meetings play in the annual ARF calendar: the EU believes that the ISG in Spring should maintain its role as a "clearing house" for the future oriented discussion on work plans and new initiatives ahead of the ARF SOM in June and Ministerial later on; therefore, the relevant ISMs should take place before the spring ISG. By contrast, the autumn ISG should be used to take stock of past activities and to engage into in-depth discussions above the experts' level on horizontal issues (such as preventive diplomacy) and the conclusions that can be drawn from these past activities;
- Secondly, the EU would suggest that the Exchange of Views on Regional and International Issues should be structured (by themes or regions) in order to allow for a real exchange of views instead of delegations reading out prepared statements
- Lastly, a written procedure for certain agenda (sub-) items should be considered in those cases where substantial discussions are not expected (for ex reports on meetings already held) to save time for more forward looking agenda items (future events, ARF work plans etc).
- If these reforms prove successful at the ISG level, they could by analogy also be applied to other ARF meetings (ISM, SOM etc)

Background:

1. Report on ISG discussion on the subject matter in May 2015

Under agenda item 8.3 MY introduced the ASEAN proposal to reduce the number of ISG's from 2 to 1 as part of the wider effort to cut and streamline meetings in ASEAN-led processes. The previous day the DOD had agreed to reduce the number of meetings from 3 to 2. The EU argued for sticking to 2 to keep parallel/link with DOD and above all make meetings more interesting and productive by better agenda management (written procedures; have real discussion on regional issues not just statements etc). Japan supported as did Russia but THY, SGP and IDN all reiterated their support for ASEAN proposal as part of a broader recommendation made by the ASEAN HLTF on streamlining meetings...During the meeting of the like-minded US, ROK, AUS and NZ had all expressed support for the concept of having better/more rewarding meetings instead of simply fewer, but they stayed silent in plenary. The Chair concluded there wasn't consensus on the proposal and that it would be discussed at the SOM.

2. Report on DOD discussion on the subject matter in May 2015

6. The Co-Chairs recalled the discussions of the previous ARF DOD in Melaka on streamlining the ARF DOD meetings as recommended by the High Level Task Force on Strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat and Reviewing the ASEAN Organs. Several options to streamline the ARF DOD were suggested, namely: 1) to reduce the frequency of the ARF DOD from three to two including retaining the ARF DOD held back-to-back with the ARF ISG on CBMs PD; 2) to reduce the frequency from three to one while retaining the ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC); and 3) to align the number of the ARF DOD with the number of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD. The Dialogue noted the Co-Chairs' suggestion to reduce the ARF DOD from three to two and the ASPC should be maintained due to its importance. However, the timing of convening the two ARF DODs would be determined only after the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD has conducted its deliberations on the number of ISGs to be held in a year.

7. The Dialogue exchanged views on the need to streamline the ARF DOD in light of the growing number of ASEAN defence-related meetings and activities particularly under the framework of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). The proliferation of defence-related meetings and activities has created additional burdens on financial and personnel resources of both ARF and ADMM-Plus participating countries. The Dialogue recalled the decision of the ASEAN Defence Ministers at the 9th ADMM in Langkawi on 16 March 2015 to streamline and improve the work processes of different security platforms for more economical and efficient outcomes.

8. The Dialogue was of the view that both the ARF and the ADMM-Plus have distinct advantages and potentials. The ARF should continue to facilitate more inclusive dialogue on policy matters as well as promote civil-military cooperation while the ADMM-Plus should continue to promote and conduct military-to-military dialogue and practical cooperation. In this regard, the Dialogue noted several suggestions to enhance the work of the ARF DOD and to avoid duplication between the ARF and the ADMM-Plus, including:

- The ARF DOD could propose concrete programmes and activities for the endorsement of the ARF SOM;
- The role of the ASEAN Chair in ensuring that there is no duplication of efforts in the ARF and the ADMM Plus and in developing constructive communication channels between both mechanisms particularly in the development of the ARF and ADMM-Plus agendas;
- The role of the ASEAN Secretariat in facilitating information-sharing between the ARF and the ADMM-Plus; and
- The need for ARF and the ADMM-Plus to enhance coordination and arrangements particularly on issues of common concern. For example, ARF and ADMM-Plus meetings on similar topics could be convened back-to-back in the same venue.

9. The Dialogue was of the view that the current cross-briefings between the ARF and the ADMM-Plus on similar topics have enabled both fora to benefit from each other in addressing security issues of common concern. In this context, continued cross-briefings would enable the ARF DOD to maintain its level of engagement despite the reduction of frequency. The Dialogue also noted the suggestion for the ARF DOD to complement the ADMM-Plus especially in strengthening civil-military coordination and enhancing multi-agency coordination.

10. The Dialogue recognised that not all ARF participants are members of the ADMM-Plus and that for these participants the ARF DOD is the only venue for sharing defence and security experiences. In light of the increased cooperation in this context, some participants commented that further streamlining of the ARF DOD from three to two could very well undermine the cooperative efforts achieved so far.

11. Malaysia, China, European Union, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea and New Zealand presented their views to the Dialogue. Their interventions appear as ANNEXES ... to