

## **United States: Views on Maritime Security**

### **ASEAN Regional Forum Security Policy Conference (ASPC)**

#### **Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 25 May 2012**

- Mr. Chairman, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for inviting me to share U.S. views on maritime security, which is an important issue for the United States, as it is for all littoral nations, and even more broadly, for all nations engaged in the global economy.
- First I want to commend all the discussants on their excellent and practical presentations.
- As background references I would like to reiterate the Hanoi Plan of Action and the relevant areas on Maritime Security as pointed out by our colleague from Australia.
- Additionally, I would also want to point out the 2011-2015 Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership which is the basis for U.S. agencies engaging with ASEAN on various areas of cooperation including Maritime Security.
- Delegates at the first meeting of the ADMM-Plus Experts Working Group on Maritime Security, held in Perth, heard diverse views about what maritime security should encompass for the purposes of that forum.
- There is clearly much that we basically agree on within the general maritime framework, including basic concerns such as safety at sea, piracy, fisheries conservation, maritime search and rescue, and maritime law enforcement capacity. These are areas where we are most likely to find mutually agreeable space for confidence building measures.
- In addition to these shared concerns, there is a body of customary international law, such as is reflected in the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which reflects ways in which we fundamentally agree on how to access and use the maritime domain.
- At this point allow me to reiterate a portion of Secretary of State Clinton's statement during her testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations earlier this week, "Joining the Law of the Sea Convention is a top priority for the United States. The Convention, which sets forth a comprehensive legal framework governing uses of the oceans, protects and advances a broad range of U.S. interests, including U.S. national security and economic interests. Past Administrations (Republican and Democratic), the U.S. military, and relevant industry and other groups all strongly support joining the Convention."
- In addition, existing protocols ensure we have a common approach to safety at sea. The 1972 International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) set the basic maritime rules of the road, and coming out of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium is the voluntary Code for Unalerted Encounters at Sea (CUES), an excellent tool used by many of the countries represented here today.

- It is important that regional forums are appropriate places to discuss these issues, both the areas where we have common ground and where there are differences of opinion.
- And I would add that we should follow the guidance of the ASEAN Regional Forum foreign ministers, who in Bali in July underscored the importance of enhancing the linkages between Track I and Track II forums. This is the way to harness the creative thinking of subject matter experts in crafting solutions to our common problems, including how best to address maritime issues together.
- Maritime security is an important mission set, and the United States is working bilaterally with many partners in the Asia Pacific region to build capabilities and habits of cooperation.
- It is not just a bilateral issue, however, but a multilateral one, and to build habits of multilateral cooperation we need multilateral approaches and activities.
- From a defense perspective, we welcome ASEAN's progress in developing the ASEAN Political-Security pillar within the greater ASEAN Community project—this is a great venue for ASEAN to demonstrate cooperative regional leadership.
- The initiatives under the ASEAN Political-Security blueprint include several directly or indirectly dealing with maritime security, and we encourage ASEAN to continue working to promote maritime cooperation, including in the defense arena.
- The ASEAN Maritime Forum initiated last year by Indonesia is an excellent example of this. The United States is pleased that leaders at the East Asia Summit reacted positively to the proposal to convene an expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum back-to-back with future meetings. We look forward to engaging with the ASEAN Maritime Forum, and will be prepared to attend and to participate in a constructive manner, and to listen to priorities expressed by our regional friends.
- Just as the ASEAN Maritime Forum brings diverse maritime issues under one umbrella, the United States is taking a 'whole-of-government' approach to our maritime engagement in Southeast Asia. I would like to emphasize the common approach between the Departments of Defense and State in this regard.
- President Obama introduced the Southeast Asia Maritime Partnership while he was in Bali last November. This is the comprehensive, strategic framework we are developing to guide U.S. bilateral and regional maritime security assistance activities.
- The Southeast Asia Maritime Partnership is based on the categories in the U.S. Maritime Security Sector Reform guide published last year. It aims to enhance the capabilities and capacity of regional states to manage domestic and regional maritime security affairs more effectively and to address shared maritime security challenges by encouraging region-wide cooperation.
- The Defense Department participated in the last ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security, hosted by Malaysia, and making progress on a work plan and timeline. We look forward to participating in future activities as well

because we want the Working Groups to succeed in firmly establishing the ADMM-Plus track as a productive and action-oriented venue for defense cooperation.

- Speaking of action-oriented, the adoption of the ASEAN Regional Forum Work Plan on Maritime Security in July in Bali is an excellent step forward. As I mentioned earlier, my State Department colleagues in partnership with Indonesia and the Republic of Korea will be co-hosting the ASEAN Regional Forum Intersessional Support Group on Maritime Security scheduled in San Francisco on 14 and 15 June.
- It will be important to ensure that these two maritime security venues are synchronized and undertake complementary rather than repetitive efforts as has been recognized by and continue to be addressed by both the ARF and ADMM-Plus Senior Officials.
- In sum, there is a lot to be optimistic about where regional maritime security cooperation is concerned. We have a number of opportunities coming up in 2012 to make progress, and the United States Department of Defense will be fully engaged with you in this cooperative effort.