

Views on Regional and International Situation

By

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Mr. Chairman!

Distinguished Delegates!

On behalf of the leadership of the Ministry of National Defence, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, I would like to express my sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. Chiang Chie Foo, the Permanent Secretary of Singapore Defence Ministry, the Chairman of the Meeting for his kind invitation to me and my delegation to attend and deliver a speech to this important event. This is a good opportunity for all ARF member countries to meet up and express their views in order to enhance mutual understanding, exchanges and cooperation in issues of mutual concerns.

Also on this occasion, on behalf of the Ministry of National Defence and the people of Vietnam, I would like to extend our deep sympathy and condolences to the Government of the Union of Myanmar and the Myanmarese people for the losses of lives and properties from the cyclone Nargis that struck the country a few days ago.

Now I would like to present some points of view on the regional and international situation as follows:

1. The year 2007, the international situation witnessed significant changes, however, peace, cooperation and development were maintained, and the struggle of world people for peace, national independence and social progress continued developing drastically. However, the international situation has seen complicated developments, religious and ethnic contradictions, territorial, natural resources disputes, influence and power struggle, terrorist activities... have been occurring here, there and everywhere. Several global issues, such as epidemic, climate change are no longer a distant prospect, but

now are existent in daily life, directly affect lives of millions of people all over the world, which requires international community to foster cooperation to jointly address them.

In 2007, the trend of polarization on international relations continued developing. Although some tensions occurred, the pattern of the relations between the major powers still was both cooperation and struggle and maintained a relative stability through mechanisms of cooperation and strategic dialogue.

Many international events happened last year showing that the use of military means, embargo, sanctions and gross intervention in international relations were not in conformity with the common tendency of the world. Promoting cooperation for mutual benefit on the basis of respecting independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as respecting for cultural diversities and religious differences is the most effective way to solve international issues in the present context.

The 2007, the world economic picture was a mixture of chances and challenges, advantages and disadvantages. However, according to a general estimate, the world economy would still be developing satisfactorily with the growth rate of 5%. However, we should be aware of and attach importance to the effects of instability of financial and stock markets, and a record oil price increase which force countries to look for a policy to prevent the danger of a crisis from occurring.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Asia-Pacific in general and Southeast Asia in particular, which is located in a strategically important position, the trend of dialogue, cooperation, linkages and association have strongly developed at various levels. A number of hot spots with dangers to cause potential conflicts still have been under control thanks to great efforts of parties concerned consistently seeking a peaceful solution through dialogue and cooperation. It can be said that the Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia still are the regions of dynamic economic development.

Nevertheless, along with positive developments, the region is facing no-small security challenges, including traditional and non-traditional challenges. Activities related to the nuclear weapon proliferation and arms race have seen increased signs. Non-traditional

security challenges such as terrorism, trans-national crime, natural disasters and infectious diseases are increasingly affecting the stability and development of each and every country. Therefore, information sharing and capability improving for co-operation become important and urgent needs to effectively cope with these challenges.

In Southeast Asia, the bilateral and multi-bilateral co-operations have seen proactive developments, becoming more effective and substantial through information sharing, co-ordinated sea patrols, oceanographic and scientific research, and hot line establishment between navies of the regional countries. Especially, with regard to the East Sea (South China Sea), Vietnam welcomes efforts by ASEAN and China in implementing DOC towards the adoption of a COC. The above - mentioned activities have made contributions to confidence building and maintaining stability in each and every member country and the region as a whole, resulting in avoidance of conflicts.

3. In November, 2007, the leaders of ASEAN member countries signed the ASEAN Charter at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore. On 6th March, 2008, Vietnam ratified the ASEAN Charter, making an important milestone towards the regional and international integration of Vietnam. Vietnam is among the earliest members to have ratified the ASEAN Charter, showing its active and strong commitments to ASEAN, and is an evidence of great significance of Vietnam's active and proactive policies on regional and international integration.

Over the past years, Vietnam has actively carried out many measures with appropriate steps to strengthen the co-operative relations with ASEAN countries in the fields of defence and security. We have simultaneously taken part in the multi-lateral co-operative activities within ASEAN to build confidence, enhance the friendship and mutual understanding between and among ASEAN armed forces through the ASEAN defence and military fora. Vietnam has supported ASEAN efforts in expanding defence and security co-operations with ASEAN's friends and dialogue partners through official and unofficial tracks.

The Vietnam People's Army has established relations and is expanding bilateral co-operations with the armed forces of all ASEAN member countries in order to maintain the regional security and

stability as well as to strengthen the friendship and solidarity with the armed forces of the region.

With regard to the ASEAN Region Forum (ARF), Vietnam has continuously further participated in more activities, and made contributions to developing ARF on track based on the agreed principles and pace, maintaining the pivotal role of ASEAN and contributions to preserving the regional peace and stability through security co-operations with intra and extra - regional countries.

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in the 2008-2009 tenure, with the diplomatic tradition in the spirit that "Vietnam wishes to befriend and a trustful partner" of all countries in the international community, Vietnam will take an active, responsible and constructive role in maintaining international security and peace, and successfully complete the important responsibilities given by the international community.

Finally, I wish the conference a great success.

And thank you!