



SUMMARY REPORT

ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING (ARF SOM)

21 July 2020, Video Conference

INTRODUCTION

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Officials' Meeting (ARF SOM) was chaired by H.E. Mr. Nguyen Quoc Dzung, Deputy Foreign Minister and ARF SOM Leader of Viet Nam and attended by all ARF Participants as well as the ASEAN Secretariat. The List of Delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

AGENDA ITEM 1: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2. The Meeting adopted the Agenda, which appears as **ANNEX 2**.

AGENDA ITEM 2: BUSINESS ARRANGEMENTS

3. The Meeting was held via Video Conference. The Programme of Activities appears as **ANNEX 3**.

AGENDA ITEM 3: REPORT OF THE 17th ARF SECURITY POLICY CONFERENCE (ASPC), 8 JULY 2020 AND ARF DEFENCE OFFICIALS' DIALOGUE (DOD), 1 JULY 2020

4. The Meeting was briefed on the outcomes of the 17th ASPC chaired by Viet Nam on 8 July 2020 and the ARF DOD co-chaired by Viet Nam and the United States on 1 July 2020. It was noted that the ARF DOD exchanged views on the role of military medicine in responding to the challenges brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic and discussed the preparations for the 17th ASPC. Meanwhile, the 17th ASPC exchanged views on current challenges to international and regional security issues including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as challenges in the areas of

maritime security, counter terrorism, and cyber security, among others. It was further noted that the 17th ASPC discussed the proposals put forth by Viet Nam to enhance defence cooperation in the ARF and strengthen the linkage between the ARF and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus).

5. The Meeting took note on the three proposals made by Viet Nam, namely: (i) for the ARF DOD to consolidate defence and relevant security cooperation activities to be reported to the ASPC, and for the ASPC to brief the ARF Ministers directly; (ii) to enhance the coordination of activities under the ARF and the ADMM-Plus, such as the possibility of convening the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise (DiREx) back-to-back with the exercises of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (EWG on HADR); and (iii) to enhance exchange of information on defence cooperation within the ARF and the ADMM-Plus, at the level of ASPC and the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting Plus (ADSOM-Plus). While noting the merits of the proposals, some ARF Participants were of the view that such proposals could affect the main objectives of the ASPC as outlined in its Concept Paper and may also affect the current structure of the ARF. It was further noted and as such, further deliberation on the proposals is deemed necessary. In this respect, the Meeting noted that the Chair of the 17th ASPC would attend the 27th ARF as part of the Viet Nam Delegation to brief the Ministers on the progress of defence cooperation in the ARF and that the effectiveness of such a briefing could be further assessed for the possibility of continuing this modality in the future.

6. The Summary Report of the 17th ASPC and the Co-Chairs' Summary Report of the ARF DOD appear as **ANNEX 4 and ANNEX 5, respectively.**

AGENDA ITEM 4: REPORT OF THE ARF INTER-SESSIONAL SUPPORT GROUP MEETING ON CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY (ISG ON CBMs AND PD), 2 JULY 2020 AND REVIEW OF THE ARF CBMs AND PD MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR 2019-2020

7. Recalling the decision of the ARF SOM in 2019 to streamline the reporting process at the ARF SOM, the Meeting noted that Viet Nam and the United States as the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD will be delivering the outcomes of each ARF Inter-Sessional Meetings (ISMs) on behalf of its respective Co-Chairs. In this connection, the Meeting noted that most of the ARF activities and annual meetings scheduled to be held in the first half of 2020 have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that as a result, the Co-Chairs of all five ARF ISMs have proposed to extend the tenure of their co-chairmanship as follows: ISM on Maritime Security, ISM on ICTs Security and ISM on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament to be extended

until 2021; ISM on Disaster Relief to be extended until 2022; and ISM on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime to be extended until 2023.

8. With regard to the co-chairmanship for the new cycle, the Meeting acknowledged the report of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD that Indonesia, India and the United States have jointly expressed interest to co-chair the ARF ISM on Maritime Security beginning 2021 and that China had also expressed its interest as well. Additionally, it was noted that Indonesia and ROK have jointly expressed interest to co-chair the next term of the ARF ISM on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ISM on ICTs Security). In this respect, the Meeting noted that the issue of co-chairmanship for the next cycle would be further discussed at the respective ISMs in 2021. The Co-Chairs' Summary Report of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD appears as **ANNEX 6**.

AGENDA ITEM 5: CONSIDERATION AND ENDORSEMENT OF ARF CBMs AND PD INITIATIVES

5.1. List of Track I Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021

9. The Meeting noted that as per the practice in the ARF, activities which were not convened in the current Inter-Sessional Year will be carried-over to the next Inter-Sessional Year. On this note, the Meeting considered the List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021 and acknowledged Myanmar's interest to co-chair the proposed ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy for Sustaining Peace with China and that Cambodia will be co-sponsoring the Terminology in the field of Security of and in the use of information and communication technologies proposed by Russia. China also expressed its interest to co-chair the ARF Workshop on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes with Russia and Viet Nam, and the ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions with the United States and Thailand. The Meeting also exchanged views on some of the newly proposed activities and noted that taking into consideration the divergent comments expressed, further deliberation on the proposals may be needed. Moving forward, the Chair requested for the proponents of each proposal to inform the Chair and the ARF Unit regarding the confirmation of co-chairmanship and status of their proposals by 5 August 2020. The draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021 appear as **ANNEX 7**.

5.2. Co-Chairs of ARF Meetings and Activities for the Next Inter-Sessional Year

10. Whilst noting that the co-chairmanship period of the ARF ISMs on Maritime Security, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, and ICTs Security are set to expire this

year, the Meeting endorsed the request of the respective Co-Chairs to extend the tenure of their co-chairmanship by one year, taking into account that the respective meetings were unable to be convened in the current Inter-Sessional Year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same vein, the Meeting also noted the proposed extension of co-chairmanship by the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on Disaster Relief until 2022 and the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime until 2023. Additionally, it was further noted that Myanmar and China will co-chair the 14th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons' Meeting (EEPs) while Indonesia and Japan will co-chair the 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting in the Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021. With regard to the ARF DiREx, the Meeting took note that this biennial activity was last convened in 2015 and no ARF Participant has expressed interest to take up co-chairmanship of this activity since then.

11. Brunei Darussalam as the incoming Co-Chair of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and ARF DOD, informed the Meeting that it is currently in the process of identifying a non-ASEAN co-chair and that further information on the schedule will be shared in due course. The Meeting also noted that the 24th ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM) will be co-chaired by Pakistan and a yet to be identified ASEAN Member State. The Meeting further noted Cambodia's interest to take up the co-chairmanship of the ARF ISM on Maritime Security together with China in the next cycle as well as Russia's interest to join Indonesia and ROK as co-chairs of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security in the next period. Taking into account the number of interests expressed, the Meeting noted that the issue of co-chairmanship for the next cycle would be further discussed in the next Inter-Sessional Year.

AGENDA ITEM 6: FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF

6.1. Update on the Implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement

12. The ASEAN Secretariat briefed the Meeting on the status of Implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement (HPOA) which was adopted in 2010. Intended to serve as policy guidance for the ARF to develop and implement concrete and practical projects and activities until 2020, the Meeting was pleased to note that the overall implementation rate of the HPOA currently stands at 62.16%. The Meeting further noted that the majority of action lines under Section I on Areas of Cooperation, which consist of six priority areas, have been implemented. Meanwhile, 4 action lines under Section II on CBMs and PD remained pending, and 5 action lines under Section III on Institutional Enhancement have been implemented. The ASEAN Secretariat further informed the Meeting that in undertaking the task of monitoring and measuring the implementation of the HPOA, challenges were

encountered due to the unclear language of the action lines, insufficient expertise in the subject matter, and the lack of information as well as limited human resources. The Matrix on the Status of Implementation of the HPOA appears as **ANNEX 8**.

6.2. ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025)

13. The Meeting was updated on the development of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action (HPOA) II for the period of 2020-2025, which is envisioned to provide direction and guidance to ensure the ARF continues to enhance its effectiveness and maintain its relevance in the evolving regional security architecture. Taking into account the lessons learnt from the first HPOA, the Meeting noted that the HPOA II was developed with the view of including more practical, action-oriented and measurable action lines and to minimise duplication of efforts with other ASEAN-led mechanisms. The Meeting endorsed the HPOA II, which would subsequently be submitted to the 27th ARF for adoption.

6.3. Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol

14. Recalling the view of the 26th ARF in August 2019 on the need to improve the working methods of the ARF, the Meeting noted that ASEAN Member States are currently in the process of developing the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol, which will serve as a basic guideline to ensure that all ARF activities are conducted in a consistent and standardised manner. The Meeting reaffirmed ASEAN's role as the driving force of the ARF and noted that the Guide is intended to clarify the roles, functions, modalities and reporting line of all ARF mechanisms as well as to clarify the processes and procedures of key issues such as admission of new Participants, proposals for activities and Statements, and protocols of hosting ARF meetings. It was further emphasised that the Guide is developed on the basis of existing processes and procedures stipulated in previously adopted documents such as the Concept Paper of the ARF. The Meeting noted that the Guide will be submitted to the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) for approval and will be shared with the 27th ARF for notation. While a concern was expressed that the Guide would be introduced within the ARF without consensus among all ARF Participants, the Chair clarified that the draft Guide would be circulated for comments and suggestion from all ARF Participants.

AGENDA ITEM 7: PREPARATION FOR THE 27th ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

7.1. Provisional Agenda and Programme of the 27th ARF

15. The Meeting noted that the 27th ARF is scheduled to be convened in mid-September 2020 and that further details, including the Invitation Package and information regarding the format of the 27th ARF, will be conveyed in due course.

7.2. Outcome Documents of the 27th ARF

7.2.1. ARF Statement on Enhancing Cooperation to Prevent and Respond to Infectious Disease Outbreaks

16. The Meeting noted that the draft Statement, co-sponsored by Viet Nam and New Zealand, aimed to reaffirm the ARF's commitment to enhance regional and international cooperation to prevent and respond to emerging non-traditional challenges and major infectious disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting expressed in-principle support towards the draft and noted that further input and comments may be submitted to the proponent by 5 August 2020.

7.2.2. ARF Statement on the Treatment of Children Recruited and Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Group

17. The Meeting was updated on the draft Statement, co-sponsored by Indonesia, the EU, and New Zealand, which is intended to promote and foster cooperation to counter and combat terrorism in all its forms, including recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist group, and to protect children from exposure to violence. The Meeting expressed in-principle support on the draft Statement whilst noting that further comments to the draft may be submitted to the proponents by 30 July 2020. An opinion was expressed that the term "violent extremist group" was not commonly used in international documents.

7.2.3. ARF Statement on Maintaining Security in Digital Economy

18. The Meeting was briefed on the draft Statement, proposed by China, which aims to underline the need to promote cooperation and enhance capacity building in order to build a peaceful, secure and open cyberspace and facilitate security of digital economy. Taking into account the divergent views expressed, the Meeting noted that further input and comments will be submitted to the proponent and that information on the status and co-sponsorship of the draft should be submitted to the Chair by 5 August 2020.

7.2.4. ARF Statement on Countering Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism

19. The Meeting noted that the draft Statement, proposed by the EU, is intended to reaffirm the commitment to address the threat of terrorism, emphasising on the need of an integrated approach to counter money laundering and financing of terrorism. The

Meeting noted that further inputs would be provided to the draft Statement and that information on the status and co-sponsorship of the draft should be submitted to the Chair by 5 August 2020.

AGENDA ITEM 8: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

20. The Meeting expressed grave concerns on the global scale disruption and complexities brought about by the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognising that the pandemic has affected every sector, the Meeting was of the view that the current vulnerabilities could potentially be exploited and thus exacerbate security threats and challenges in the region. In this connection, the Meeting underlined the need to strengthen multi-faceted collective efforts to combat the pandemic and prevent future outbreaks, including through increasing transparency as well as enhancing exchange of information and sharing of best practices. It was further highlighted that considering the transboundary nature of the pandemic, concerted global response is essential to enhance research and capacities to develop vaccines and to ensure its equitable access. Some ARF Participants reaffirmed their strong support for the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). They emphasised the importance of the regional COVID-19 recovery agenda being underpinned by the principles set out in the Outlook, including openness, inclusivity, respect for international law and ASEAN centrality. Some ARF Participants highlighted the importance of supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of ASEAN-led mechanisms in dealing with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and in preventing and responding to the spread of communicable and emerging infectious diseases in the future. The respective efforts of other ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the East Asia Summit and ADMM-Plus, were welcomed in this regard.

21. The Meeting exchanged views on the situation on the Korean Peninsula and stressed the importance of continued peaceful dialogue and diplomatic solutions among all parties concerned toward the realisation of lasting peace and stability in the denuclearised Korean Peninsula. Some ARF Participants called for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, some Participants also raised the issue of dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction as well as ballistic missiles of all ranges. The Meeting noted the importance of the full implementation of the relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. Some ARF Participants further noted that efforts have been undertaken to strengthen inter-Korean relations and looked forward to the full and expeditious implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration, the Pyongyang Joint Declaration between the leaders of the ROK and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Joint Statement by the US and DPRK Leaders. Some ARF Participants emphasised the

importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the early resolution of the abductions issue.

22. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining peace, stability, security, safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea. Some ARF Participants expressed concerns about recent developments in the South China Sea, including the land reclamations, serious incidents and activities in the area that have eroded trust and confidence, increased tension and may undermine peace, security and stability in the region. Meanwhile, some ARF Participants expressed an opinion that this situation in the South China Sea had been relatively peaceful and stable over the past year due to joint efforts by various parties. The Meeting noted that whilst divergent views and disagreements in international relations are inevitable, efforts must be undertaken to preserve peace, stability and security in the region. In this regard, the Meeting emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of activities by claimants and all the other states that would complicate or escalate disputes, as well as the peaceful resolution of disputes, without the use or threat to use force, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Meeting underscored the importance of full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in its entirety. The Meeting noted the progress of the substantive negotiations towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) and looked forward to the early resumption of its negotiation. Several ARF Participants also called for the COC to be consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

23. The Meeting noted the update on the current situation in Rakhine State and welcomed the operationalisation of the Ad-Hoc Support Team of the ASEAN Secretariat in facilitating the implementation of the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) as well as the identified priority projects. Noting that the situation has been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Meeting stressed that enhanced effort is needed for a comprehensive and durable solution to address the root causes of the issue and to create a conducive environment so that the affected communities to rebuild their lives, including through the implementation of the recommendations of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. The Meeting also underscored the importance of facilitating the voluntary return of displaced persons in a safe, secure and dignified manner.

24. The Meeting also touched upon other pertinent regional and international security issues. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged all relevant parties to refrain from actions that may exacerbate the situation and underlined the need to promote mutual trust in view of ensuring peace and stability. The Meeting also emphasised on the need to strengthen cooperation in responding to emerging security challenges

such as terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, transnational crime, and ICTs security. On this note, the Meeting was of the view that the ARF continues to provide an inclusive platform to foster dialogue, promote trust and confidence building on the basis of mutual respect and spirit of solidarity. Moving forward, the Meeting reaffirmed the commitment to continue strengthening constructive dialogue and cooperation to address common security challenges in the region.

AGENDA ITEM 9: OTHER MATTERS

9.1. ARF Annual Security Outlook 2020

25. The Meeting noted that the 2020 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) would be issued at the 27th ARF and that ARF Participants are invited to submit their contributions to the Chair by 3 August 2020.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

26. The Chair expressed appreciation to all ARF Participants for the active participation and support extended to Viet Nam as the Chair of the ARF, which have contributed to the success of the Meeting. The Chair also looked forward to the progress of pending issues during the period leading up to the 27th ARF.

ISSUES REQUIRING FOLLOW-UP ACTION

No.	Key Decision/Issues	Timeline	Follow-up By
1.	Confirmation of co-chairmanship and finalisation of Concept Papers for proposed activities for the ARF Inter-Sessional Year (ISY) 2020-2021.	5 August 2020	Proponents of the activities
2.	To finalise the pending draft ARF Statements for the ARF ISY 2020-2021.	5 August 2020	Co-Sponsors of the draft Statements
3.	To compile the updated List of ARF Track-1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021 based on information received from ARF Participants.	Prior to the 27 th ARF	ARF Chair and ARF Unit

