

# **Third ARF Workshop on Enhancing Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation**

## **Background**

Vietnam, Australia and the European Union convened the two first ARF Workshops on Enhancing Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation (in Nha Trang on 18-19 January 2018 and Da Nang on 12-13 March 2019). These workshops were practical steps toward implementing the 2016 ARF Ministerial Statement on Enhancing Cooperation among Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies (MLEA). They also helped further establish the ARF as a regional forum for maritime security issues that promotes and enhances maritime domain awareness, and develops concrete and effective regional responses to maritime security challenges, as envisaged by the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement.

The first workshop found that there was significant scope and interest to advance MLEA cooperation among ARF participants. It underlined existing opportunities to further build confidence and trust by strengthening regional coordination to address emerging maritime challenges such as weapons and drugs smuggling, human trafficking, piracy and armed robbery against ships and other maritime crimes such as IUU fishing, environmental offences and biodiversity protection.

The first workshop also identified some key obstacles to enhanced MLEA cooperation, such as differing institutional arrangements at the national level, a lack of information sharing on the maritime domain, insufficient communication and consultation mechanisms, challenges in inter-agency coordination, and unresolved maritime and territorial disputes. Participants also agreed on the strong need to continue discussing these issues through the ARF framework. The second workshop took place in Da Nang on 12-13 March 2019. ARF delegates exchanged updates on various regional initiatives to enhance cooperation among maritime law enforcement agencies such as development of the national maritime single points of contact concept, regional exercises, dialogues and cooperation, the development of regional guidelines, codes and common operating principles and multilateral efforts to build good order at sea.. A key outcome from the workshop was agreement to implement the findings of the 2017 ARF Experts and Eminent Persons Working Group on Preventing and Managing Incidents at Sea, namely the development of ARF Guidelines to Prevent and Manage Incidents between Maritime Law Enforcement Units. This will be progressed through the establishment of an online ARF MLEA working group that will jointly draft a set of MLEA guidelines which would serve as a set of non-binding principles, norms and procedures for MLEA vessels interaction at sea.. The guidelines will be developed collaboratively via a virtual workgroup where all ARF partners will be able to offer their comment and input.

## **Objectives**

Vietnam, Australia and the European Union will convene a third workshop on Enhancing Regional MLEA Cooperation in Europe during the 2019-2020 ARF inter-sessional year to build on the discussions and outcomes of the first two workshops. The workshop will focus on areas identified at the Da Nang workshop in need of closer consideration by ARF members, including addressing the land-sea nexus and harnessing new technologies to assist MLEA operations. The workshop will also seek to agree a final version of the proposed ARF MLEA incident prevention and management guidelines, to be submitted to the ISG, SOM and ARF Ministerial Meeting in 2020.

### **Participants**

All ARF members are invited to send representatives from ministries/agencies with responsibility for foreign affairs, law enforcement, coast guards, judiciary, customs and border management, fisheries, maritime transport, and any other relevant issues. Participants with MLEA operational and policy responsibilities are particularly encouraged to attend. ARF Track 2 representatives with expertise in maritime law enforcement issues are also invited. Participants and speakers will be encouraged to present their views/ideas on the guidelines.

### **Reporting**

The outcomes and recommendations of the Workshop shall be reported to the ARF ISM on MS, SOM and Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

### **Administrative Arrangements**

The co-chairs will cover the costs of meeting facilities, including meals as scheduled in the program. All other costs of participation (transportation between hotel and airport, airfares, hotel accommodation, incidentals, etc.) will be the responsibility of participants.