



SUMMARY REPORT

ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING (ARF SOM)

29 June 2021, Video Conference

INTRODUCTION

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Officials' Meeting (ARF SOM) was chaired by H.E. Emaleen Abd Rahman Teo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam 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 18th ARF SECURITY POLICY CONFERENCE, 27 MAY 2021 AND THE ARF DEFENCE OFFICIALS' DIALOGUE (DOD), 20 MAY 2021

4. The Meeting was briefed on the outcomes of the 18th ASPC chaired by Brunei Darussalam on 27 May 2021 and the ARF DOD co-chaired by Brunei Darussalam and Australia on 20 May 2021. It was noted that the ARF DOD exchanged views on emerging technologies and defence establishments, as well as shared information on challenges and best practices of emerging technologies. The DOD observed that: (i) new technologies not only brought new opportunities, but also created new risks and challenges in the form of Artificial Intelligence (AI), 5G, autonomous vehicles and

green technology; (ii) As technologies innovated by militaries are entering the civilian market at a larger scale, stronger cooperation between public and private spheres as well as adoption of frameworks for the use of technology may be required; (iii) cooperation and building defence networks are essential components to ensure transparency and democratic use of AI; and (iv) there is a need to redouble efforts through multilateral cooperation to establish international standards for responsible development and application of technologies, especially in observing that the pace of technological change is accelerating faster than the development of standardised ethics and norms.

5. The Meeting took note of the exchange of views at the 18th ASPC on current challenges to regional and international security issues, including the impact of emerging technologies on defence and security as well as confidence-building measures in the respective sub-regions and the wider Asia-Pacific. The Conference highlighted the importance of multilateralism and strengthening collective efforts to address emerging security challenges such as cybersecurity and measures to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to strengthen defence sector's contribution to the implementation of the ARF Hanoi Plan of Action II 2020-2025 (HPOA II), the Meeting noted the DOD's proposal to institutionalise a standing agenda item in future ARF DODs on developments of other regional defence cooperation, such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the ADMM-Plus, among others.

6. The Summary Report of the 18th 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), 24 MAY 2021 AND REVIEW OF THE ARF CBMs AND PD MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR 2020-2021

7. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD, which reviewed the implementation of the ARF Track 1 activities in the Inter-Sessional Year (ISY) 2020-2021 including the annually held ARF meetings such as the 17th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC) on 22 April 2021, the 3rd ARF ISM on Security of and in the Use of ICTs (ICTs Security) on 28 April 2021, the 12th ARF ISM on Maritime Security (MS) on 29 April 2021, the 19th ARF ISM on Disaster Relief (DR) on 19 May 2021, and the 12th ARF ISM on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (NPD) held on 3-4 June 2021. The ISG also reviewed the progress of implementation of the ARF Work Plans on MS (2018-2020), CTTC (2019-2021), DR (2018-2020), ICTs Security, NPD, and Preventive Diplomacy. The

ISG also deliberated on proposed activities for the ISY 2021-2022, discussed the co-chairmanship of annually-convened ARF meetings and considered the implementation for the ARF HPOA II. The Co-Chairs' Summary Report of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD appears as **ANNEX 6**.

8. The Meeting endorsed the recommendations of the ISG to: (i) extend the implementation period of the ARF Work Plan on CTTC until 2022; (ii) extend Lao PDR, Canada and China's Co-Chairmanship of the ARF ISM on DR until 2022; and (iii) submit the draft ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief 2021-2023 to the 28th ARF for adoption. The Meeting further noted that in ISY 2020-2021, a total of twenty activities had been convened virtually, with an additional five activities remaining to be convened prior to the 28th ARF. The Meeting commended the respective Co-Chairs' and all ARF Participants' commitment in ensuring continuation of the ARF's work in these areas, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

5.1. List of Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022

9. The Meeting noted that some proposals of activities outlined in the draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year (ISY) 2021-2022 are still being deliberated. The Meeting also acknowledged the request of the Philippines, Australia and the US to incorporate the 3rd ARF Workshop on Aviation Security and Information Sharing into the draft List and noted that no substantive revision has been made to the concept paper of this activity since it was approved by the 25th ARF in 2018.

10. Taking into consideration the ARF practice, the Chair reiterated that proposals that do not reach consensus and/or do not have complete co-chairmanship of at least one ASEAN Member State and one non-ASEAN ARF Participant, would not be included in the List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the ISY 2021-2022 to be submitted to the 28th ARF for approval. Moving forward, the Chair urged all proponents to continue consultations on their respective proposal and requested for finalised concept papers to be submitted by 28 July 2021. The draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022 appears as **ANNEX 7**.

5.2. Co-Chairs of ARF Meetings and Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022

11. On the issue of chairmanship/co-chairmanship of ARF Meetings in the ISY 2021-2022, the Meeting noted that:

- i. The 29th ARF, ARF SOM and the 19th ASPC will be chaired by Cambodia;
- ii. The ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and the ARF DOD will be co-chaired by Cambodia and China;
- iii. Indonesia, Australia, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Russia will assume the co-chairmanship of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security on a rotational basis for three years, with Indonesia, Australia and the ROK taking the first turn as Co-Chairs for the ISY 2021-2022;
- iv. Indonesia, India, the US, Cambodia and China will assume the co-chairmanship of the ARF ISM on Maritime Security for the next five years on a rotational arrangement and will jointly develop the next Work Plan on Maritime Security as well as report on its progress. Indonesia, India and the US will take up of the co-chairmanship for this ISM for the ISY 2021-2022, 2023-2024, 2025-2026 while Cambodia and China will take up the co-chairmanship for this ISM for the ISY 2022-2023, 2024-2025;
- v. The ARF ISM on NPD will be co-chaired by Thailand, Sri Lanka and the US until 2024;
- vi. The 20th ARF ISM on DR will be co-chaired by Lao PDR, Canada and China;
- vii. The 18th ARF ISM on CTTC will be co-chaired by Malaysia, the EU and New Zealand;
- viii. The 24th ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM) will be co-chaired by Malaysia and Pakistan;
- ix. The 15th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons' Meeting (EEPs) will be co-chaired by China and a yet to be identified ASEAN Member State; and
- x. The 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting will be co-chaired by Indonesia and Japan.

12. The Meeting noted that due to extenuating circumstances, creative solutions on the co-chairmanship of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security and ARF ISM on Maritime Security were explored. Noting the unprecedented nature of the arrangements and to ensure conformity with the processes and procedures of the ARF, the Meeting agreed that such arrangements are applicable only in this cycle and should not be replicated in the future nor set a new precedent in the ARF.

AGENDA ITEM 6: FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF

6.1. Implementation of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025)

13. The Meeting was pleased to note that despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, there appears to be good progress in the implementation of the HPOA II in its first year. The ASEAN Secretariat informed the Meeting that at present, the overall implementation rate stands at 11.2% with 12 out of 107 action lines successfully implemented. In undertaking the task of monitoring and assessing the implementation, it was observed that some action lines were less quantifiable and ambiguous in nature, thus posing challenges in measuring the implementation of the HPOA II. In this connection and further to the request of the ARF ISG, the ASEAN Secretariat submitted several short-term recommendations for the SOM's consideration as outlined in the Executive Summary of the Implementation of the ARF HPOA II which appears as **ANNEX 8**.

14. Taking into consideration the larger number of action lines and shorter implementation period than that of the previous HPOA, the Meeting was of the view that there is a need to exert greater effort to implement the HPOA II. In particular, the Meeting noted that strong institutional support is required to facilitate the complete implementation of the HPOA II and underlined the need to implement Section III: Institutional Enhancement. In this respect, the Meeting took note of the recommendations put forth by the ASEAN Secretariat and agreed: (i) for ARF Participants to provide the ARF Unit with input on the progress of implementation of the HPOA II; (ii) to task the ASEAN Secretariat to review the function and capacity of the ARF Unit and develop an information paper to aid discussions on this issue; (iii) to task the ARF Unit to undertake a review of the Terms of Reference of the ARF Fund and provide recommendations to ensure its effective utilisation; and (iv) to provide the ARF Unit with regular updates on the respective ARF Participants' Focal Points, ARF Directory and ARF EEPs list.

15. The Meeting took note of the suggestion of some ARF Participants for the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol to serve as a basis to contribute to a more holistic and comprehensive process of streamlining and strengthening the ARF.

AGENDA ITEM 7: PREPARATIONS FOR THE 28th ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

7.1. Provisional Agenda and Tentative Programme of the 28th ARF

16. The Meeting noted that the 28th ARF is scheduled to be convened on 6 August 2021 and that the Invitation Package, will be circulated in due course.

7.2. Outcome Documents of the 28th ARF

7.2.1. Joint Statement to Promote the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at the ARF

17. The Meeting noted that the draft Joint Statement, proposed by Brunei Darussalam and co-sponsored by Indonesia, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the ROK, Sri Lanka and the US, is intended to affirm the ARF's commitment to strengthen resilience of the youth in facing global challenges such as terrorism and violent extremism, armed conflicts and cybercrime. The Meeting expressed in-principle support towards the draft Joint Statement, noting that further inputs and comments should be submitted to the proponent by 3 July 2021.

7.2.2. ARF Statement on Preventing and Combating Cybercrime

18. The Meeting noted that the draft Statement, proposed by China and co-sponsored by Cambodia, Lao PDR and Russia, is aimed to facilitate dialogue and cooperation to further promote regional stability and security against cybercrime and to create a safe cyberspace. Noting the increasing reliance on ICTs and the need to ensure a more secure and open cyberspace, the Meeting expressed general support towards the draft Statement, which upon consensus would be submitted to the 28th ARF for adoption.

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

19. The Meeting exchanged views on the evolution of the regional security landscape amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Noting that the pandemic has severely impacted the global economy and public health, the Meeting underlined the need for stronger coordinated international response, to secure worldwide COVID-19 vaccines production and to ensure its equitable access to aid efforts in stabilising the situation and supporting worldwide public health and wellbeing.

20. It was observed that the pandemic has accelerated digital transformation and increased reliance on technological tools such as the internet, which inadvertently exacerbate the emergence of new threats as well as existing challenges. The Meeting noted that there has been an increase of misuse of cyberspace, wherein criminal and terrorist groups have taken advantage of the cyber sphere to expose vulnerable sectors to radical ideologies, transfer of resources, and other malicious activities such as identity theft, phishing, ransomware and attacks on critical infrastructures. On this

note, the Meeting underlined the importance of enhancing regional and multilateral cooperation in order to build a peaceful, secure and open cyberspace.

21. Noting that the complexities of maritime security challenges require cooperation at various levels, the Meeting underlined the significance of the ARF as a platform to facilitate dialogue and looked forward to the convening of workshops and activities to further promote exchanges of information and sharing of best practices. The Meeting further reiterated the importance of maintaining the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and prosperity, and stressed the need to continue efforts to promote maritime cooperation in the region. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea. Some ARF Participants expressed serious concerns over the developments in the South China Sea and urged all parties to exercise self-restraint, refrain from undertaking actions that could escalate tension and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Meeting was encouraged to note that despite setbacks caused by the pandemic, the 19th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (SOM-DOC) held in June 2021 in Chongqing had agreed to resume textual negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). The Meeting further underscored the need to foster constructive dialogues and looked forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC, that is consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

22. The Meeting exchanged views on the situation in the Korean Peninsula and underlined the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in achieving complete denuclearisation and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean peninsula. The Meeting expressed appreciation towards the continuous efforts to strive for the resumption of dialogue. The Meeting noted the importance of the full implementation of relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and encouraged all parties to refrain from actions that could escalate tensions. Moving forward, the Meeting expressed hope of resuming constructive dialogue. Some ARF Participants also highlighted the importance of ensuring complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Some ARF Participants emphasised the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

23. With regard to developments in Myanmar, the Meeting expressed hope for a de-escalation of tensions and look forward to the concrete and swift implementation of the Five Point Consensus as agreed at the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting in Jakarta in April 2021. The Meeting also heard calls for the release of political detainees including foreigners. The Meeting noted that early and effective delivery of humanitarian

assistance and essential supplies to respond to COVID-19 in Myanmar through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), should be ensured. The Meeting further expressed continuous support towards ASEAN's efforts to bring the peaceful solution in Myanmar. On Rakhine State, the Meeting recognised the process of the implementation of the recommendations made under the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA).

24. The Meeting also exchanged views on other relevant regional and international security issues such as the rise of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism and transnational crimes. In this regard, some ARF Participants emphasized the importance of the ARF as a consensus-based inter-governmental platform to facilitate constructive dialogue and foster mutual trust through confidence-building measures and underlined that cooperation among all Participants should be strengthened to effectively address these challenges.

AGENDA ITEM 9: OTHER MATTERS

9.1. ARF Annual Security Outlook 2021

25. The Meeting noted that the 2021 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) would be issued at the 28th ARF and that contributions should be submitted to the Chair by 7 July 2021.

CLOSING REMARKS

26. The Chair thanked all ARF participants for their active participation and productive discussion which have contributed to the success of the Meeting. The Chair was pleased to note that despite the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic, cooperation in the ARF continues to progress, which demonstrates the ARF Participants' commitment in moving the ARF process forward. The Chair also looked forward to continuous consultations and cooperation among all ARF Participants to ensure the success of the 28th ARF in August.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

27. The Meeting expressed appreciation to Brunei Darussalam for its effective chairmanship and excellent arrangements made for the virtual Meeting and commended all ARF Participants for its continued commitment in moving the ARF process forward.

ISSUES REQUIRING FOLLOW-UP ACTION

No.	Key Decision/Issues	Timeline	Follow-up By
1.	To institutionalise a standing agenda in future ARF DODs	2022 onwards	Future Co-Chairs
2.	To submit the final draft ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief 2021-2023 to the 28 th ARF for adoption	28 th ARF	Co-Chairs of ARF ISM on DR
3.	To confirm co-chairmanship and finalise concept papers of proposed activities for the ISY 2021-2022	28 July 2021	Proponents of activities
4.	To seek an ASEAN Co-Chair for the 15 th ARF EEPs	Prior to the 28 th ARF	China, interested AMS
5.	To finalise the draft ARF Joint Statement to Promote the Youth, Peace, Security Agenda at the ARF	28 July 2021	Proponent and Co-Sponsors of the draft Joint Statement
6.	To finalise the draft ARF Statement on Preventing and Combating Cybercrime	28 July 2021	Proponent and Co-Sponsors of the draft Statement
7.	Provide input to the implementation of the HPOA II	Ongoing	ARF Participants
8.	To review the TOR of the ARF Fund	Prior to ARF SOM 2022	ARF Unit
9.	To develop an information paper on the function and role of the ARF Unit	Prior to ARF SOM 2022	ARF Unit
10.	Provide updates on ARF Focal Points' List, ARF EEPs List and ARF Directory	Ongoing	ARF Participants
11.	To submit contributions to the 2021 ARF Annual Security Outlook	7 July 2021	ARF Participants

