



CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT

14th ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM EXPERTS AND EMINENT PERSONS MEETING

6 July 2021, via videoconference

INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the decision of the 27th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held via video conference under the ASEAN chairmanship of Vietnam, on 12 September 2019, the 14th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) Meeting was held via video conference on 6 July 2021.

2. The Meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Wai Lwin Than, EEP of Myanmar and Mr. Chen Dongxiao, EEP of China, and attended by the representatives, officials and observers of all ARF Participants, with the exception of the Democratic People Republic of Korea, Papua New Guinea and Mongolia. Representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat were also in attendance. The List of delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

AGENDA ITEM 1: CO-CHAIRS' WELCOMING REMARKS

3. The Co-Chairs welcomed participants to the Meeting and recalled the last ARF EEPs Working Group Meeting, February 2019 in Japan, referring the findings and recommendations on the scope of ARF EEPs of what ARF ministers would like to see. The Co-Chairs informed regarding the proposal of EEPs' Working convened during 13th EEPs Meeting in 2019; Option (1)-ARF to continue pursuing the Confidence Building, Preventive Diplomacy & Conflict Resolution (CBM/PD/CR) Agenda with redoubled efforts, Option (2)-for the ARF to consider shifting from CBM/PD/CR emphasis on Agenda to emphasis on inclusive security cooperation agenda. The Co-Chairs called for the need to receive more comments to the Working Group's proposal in which one ASEAN Member State and two non-ASEAN Member States provided inputs. With regard to the establishment of EEPs' virtual working group, some EEPs would like to see minor adjustments while some EEPs want to keep status quo.

4. The Co-Chairs further informed that the meeting agenda included Regional Security issues mainly focuses on Regional Security Landscape and non-traditional security challenges of post COVID-19 i.e., Cyber Security. The updated Agenda appears as **ANNEX 2**.

AGENDA ITEM 2: REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARF WORK PLAN ON PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

Update on the ARF PD Work Plan

5. The ASEAN Secretariat updated the meeting on the progress of the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy including on confidence building measures activities that have been convened in the ARF in the form of workshops, seminars and symposiums on Preventive Diplomacy. The ASEAN Secretariat informed the meeting that thus far, seven out of eleven action lines in the PD Work Plan had been implemented. As an example, the ASEAN Secretariat informed that action line five has been implemented through the participation of international organizations' representatives as Speakers/resource persons in several ARF activities, i.e. a UN representative had been invited as Speaker at the 2nd ARF Workshop of Aviation Security and Information Sharing in February 2021. Additionally, the Meeting noted that the proposed Track 1 activities for the next Inter-Sessional Year are currently being deliberated by ARF Participants, before being submitted to the 28th ARF Ministerial Meeting for approval.

6. Regarding other action lines of the Work Plan such as action line 7: *Strengthen the ARF Unit in the ASEAN Secretariat by providing it with the necessary manpower, expertise and resources to support and monitor ARF activities as well as to support the ARF Chair*, the ASEAN Secretariat informed the Meeting that as part of efforts to also implement the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (HPOA II), the ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) in June 2021 agreed to task the ASEAN Secretariat to develop an information paper to review the role and capacity of ARF Unit, which currently consist of 2 staff members. It was noted that ASEAN Member States may also need to further discuss the modalities of expanding the functions of the ARF Unit. The ASEAN secretariat also informed that within Section I of the ARF HPOA II, each area of cooperation contains an action line to "utilise, where appropriate, the work of national and regional think tanks as well as ARF EEPs to assist the work of the ISM to enhance cooperation", wherein these action lines could be considered as complementary to action line 8 of the Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy.

Review of the recommendations of the 13th ARF EEPs Meeting

7. A Japanese EEP, as the Co-chair of the 13th ARF EEPs Meeting, reflecting the discussion, highlighted the need to establish a Virtual Working Group in order to further examine the EEP's future and guidelines of operations. Japan also recommended that the ARF Ministers to refresh the ARF and to consider embracing a wider and more inclusive security cooperation, while continuing to focus on CBMs, Preventive Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution. In addition, he underscored the need

for the ARF and ARF EEP to include more deliberation on the subject of Women, Peace, and Security in their future meetings.

8. The meeting noted that according to the report by ARF SOM meeting, held on 31 May 2019, the track 1 is not ready to consider the outcomes of 13th EEPs meeting and its recommendations due to the concern of one ARF participant and suggested to continue the discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 3: REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

3.1 Regional Security Landscape

9. EEP Vietnam informed the meeting that emerging/ existing of traditional and non-traditional security challenges impact the peace and stability of the region, major power rivalry caused many more complexes to the security environment of the countries in the Asia Pacific. He pointed out five main challenges to the regional security, including the continuing tensions in the regional flashpoints, the competition among big powers, the Covid-19 pandemic, other urgent non-traditional security issues, and domestic crisis. EEP Vietnam expressed the concerns over the tensions in the region. At the same time, EEP Vietnam was of the view that disputes in the South China Sea need to be managed properly to enhance maritime security and safety, as well as the regional peace and stability. He also raised with regard to the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus for Myanmar. Among the non-traditional issues, the COVID-19 pandemic is the worst challenge in the region as it slow down economic development, creating social problems such as poverty and unemployment leading to the instability. He also informed that given the increasing competition between the major powers and the abovementioned challenges, ARF needs to strengthen its role as a key mechanism for confidence building and practical cooperation among the countries' participants.

10. A Sri Lankan EEP presented the meeting that the potential of new multilateral security architecture in the region post COVID-19, and whether it could be a challenge to the ASEAN Centrality. Sri Lanka also informed that the need for boosting the works of CBMs and PD for ASEAN as well as ASEAN-led mechanisms.

11. A United States EEP underscored that EEPs should strongly support the ASEAN's five-point consensus regarding Myanmar political developments. He informed the meeting that despite of power competitiveness, economic tensions among major countries and other emerging threats and challenges, there is the opportunity for greater cooperation to respond COVID-19 pandemic.

12. An Indonesian EEP highlighted the essence of the ASEAN-Outlook on the Indo Pacific. Indonesia informed with regard to the growing relevance of ARF in

coping with the challenges faced by the region and ARF participating countries as South East Asia Region is shared by every power. Indonesia further underscored that ASEAN have the five-point consensus, the whole package to address regarding Myanmar and ARF should not be a platform to solve all emerging issues.

13. A Russian EEP informed that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the region to a qualitatively new situation. Due to the pandemic, there are unprecedented overlaps in the areas of “chronic” regional security issues, transnational security threats, the rise of regional rivalries and the emerging sings of competition between inclusive multilateral frameworks like ASEAN-led regional frameworks and mini-lateral frameworks like Quad and Quad Plus. Russia also underscored the need for ARF to be ready for a redefined version of globalization and regionalization.

14. A Chinese EEP reported the meeting that the diversity of regional countries could not fit solely with the model of one country, every country has the right to explore the development path suited to its national conditions, which should be respected and not interfered. As COVID-19 makes all countries as the victims, he also urged all ARF Participants to strengthen cooperation on COVID-19, economic recovery and sustainable development, and collectively tackle emerging issues such as climate change which cannot be fixed by only one country.

15. A Brunei representative explained the priorities and key deliverables of the ASEAN Chair including response to COVID-19. Brunei Darussalam also briefed the meeting on the progress of cooperative works of ASEAN under various platforms while updating the recent developments of situations on Myanmar and South China Sea including the Code of Conduct for South China Sea (COC).

16. A Canadian EEP urged ARF EEPs to support and promote the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda as the WPS is a cross-cutting Agenda connecting with a number of issues including terrorism.

3.2 NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES POST COVID-19

Cyber Security

17. A Singaporean EEP highlighted the importance of tackling the challenge of cybersecurity collectively, and in a sustained, holistic and coordinated manner. Singapore suggested the meeting that there is the need to collectively facilitate an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyber space; to strengthen regional cyber resilience through Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) protection; to work together to enhance security for operational technology (OT), and Internet of Things (IOT), especially given how fast these technologies are evolving and the distinctive threats and risks they pose.

18. A Canadian EEP informed the meeting that misinformation and disinformation warfare, and cyber-attacks present a significant risk to the region, especially apparent in the COVID-19 era resulting malicious cyber threats to the health sector as well as the theft of intellectual property. While taking note of the necessity to have cyber security and resilience, Canada further underlined that the cooperation among states and international organizations is vital to beat destabilizing behaviour taking into account of public attribution of responsibility of what Canada has engaged with some international partners. Additionally, Canada highlighted the importance of building capacity to a more secured and resilient cyber space and suggested international advisory panel including ARF EEPs to contribute to the cyber issues by promoting dialogues.

19. A Japanese EEP briefed about three major trends in cyber space, the first one is growing new interface or the bulk of vulnerabilities from phone devices/ IOT used in our daily life to the cyber chains of enterprises in the region in account of cyber inconsistency, secondly, the most serious threat of Ransomware attacks in past two years that among ¼ cases (companies) paid Ransom to get back their data, the final trend is concern over critical infrastructure (including gas, electric grids, nuclear power plants, transportation, health care and banking) exposed with the risk of cyber-attacks. Japan also informed the meeting that the robust cooperation among countries in sharing of best practices of lessons learned from past experiences as well as the monitoring of cyber issues in the region, should be done in ARF process.

20. A Chinese EEP also acknowledged that cyber security in digital age is not only the matter of national security but international security matter. ARF could play a crucial role in engaging multilateral platforms such as UN as well as in exchanging of strategies and policies of members and partners. China also informed the meeting that cooperation in cyber security will help in building confidence and trust among ARF Participants. The EEP expressed China's willingness to work together with ARF Participants in some areas such as cyber capacity building and the path to the safe and secure cross-walk for data localization. He also highlighted that public attribution of cyber-attacks i.e. a technique of supporting to find the evidence in cyber issues, need to be prudent not to cause political disputes with some countries.

21. A Russian EEP reported the meeting that the Terminology adopted by the first track ARF discussions - namely "Security of and in the Use of ICTs, should be used at the expert level instead of the term cybersecurity. The term cybersecurity reflects only technical aspects, while the terminology "Security of and in the Use of ICTs, implies a more comprehensive approach and reflects technical and political aspects of the ICTs security. Russia urged that within the framework of the ARF, it is necessary to continue working on developments and further elaboration the rules, norms, and principles of responsible states' behaviour in the global information sphere. Russia supported the idea of Chinese EEP, presented as public attribution of cyber-attacks must be carried out with caution and prudence.

22. An Indian EEP underscored that capacity building, monitoring and data security are important in the field of cyber security. India reported the meeting that India has been implementing digital public goods under the COVID-19 scenarios and also called for free, open and inclusive order in the region which is based upon the respect for sovereignty, integrity and territory of all countries in the context of ASEAN Centrality as regional cooperative architecture.

23. A Republic of Korea EEP informed the meeting that dealing with cyber-insecurity is hard because it blurs the boundaries between state and private actors, and between geopolitics and crime. He also highlighted that norms of behaviour could help to contain the risk of cross-border cyber crime.

Additional Discussions on the Agenda Item 2 - Review of the Implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy and Agenda Item 3 - Regional Security Issues

24. Chinese EEPs discussed on Agenda Items 2 and 3, emphasizing ARF EEPs is crucial for the ARF's future in the context of complicated regional security, there is the need to firmly support the ASEAN Centrality in the region and support ASEAN's greater role in building an open and inclusive regional architecture. China acknowledged the ASEAN's constructive role for recent political development in Myanmar. China suggested that EEPs should set out the norms and principles to define for emerging non-traditional security issues in the region including cyber challenges.

25. A Pakistanis Representative informed the meeting that asymmetry and unavailability of COVID-19 vaccines make the countries hardship resulting major economic-security issues in some countries face. Pakistan encouraged the participants to address the vaccine issues globally and collectively without politicizing these issues.

26. She made the comment that there is the need to clarify about Quad that in 2017, Quad members made a number of agreements including intelligence, communication and security etc., causing the potential of insecurity to many of Asian countries. Japan explained that Quad is not a forum to introduce logic of confrontation, rather, an attempt to uphold a desirable regional order and norms.

27. A representative of Bangladesh informed the meeting that there is the need for effort to address the refugee issues who migrated from Rakhine to Bangladesh.

AGENDA ITEM 4: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 14th ARF EEPs MEETING

28. The United States EEP commented that the 2019 EEP Chairmen's Report had not been submitted to the Ministers and the proposal to establish a virtual working group for examination of the future focus, role, and relevance of the EEPs

had not been tabled or approved. He further suggested that the ARF Unit establish a repository for EEP statements, recommendations, and memorandum, including the findings of previous virtual working groups.

29. The meeting noted Chair's (Myanmar) intervention that one-member state objected to raising the last EEPs' recommendations to the ARF Ministers as any review of the ARFs scope of cooperation would undermine the ARF's regional mandate. In this connection, Singaporean EEP was the view of that as the ARF had agreed to transition towards the Preventive Diplomacy (PD) phase, it was timely to raise the issue again to the ARF Ministers. Singapore recommended to renew and refresh the ARF and consider embracing a wider and more inclusive security cooperation, to establish the virtual working group to further examine and make recommendations regarding the EEPs future focus, role and relevance. Singapore also encouraged the EEPs to work on issues related to women, peace and security in future meetings, which did not need the approval by the ARF Ministers.

30. An EU EEP supported Singapore's recommendations under Agenda Item 4.

31. A Russian EEP suggested that the usage of the term "Cyber Security" should be consistent with the usage "Security of and in the Use ICTs" and need to seek consensus for this topic prior to the meeting.

32. Vietnamese EEP suggested that among the challenges, COVID-19, Maritime Security and Cyber Security are crucial and, need the discussions and measures to implement the ARF Hanoi Plan of Action II and the ARF work Plan of CBMs and PD.

33. With regard to the proposed establishment of the virtual working group, the ASEAN Secretariat informed the Meeting on the processes and procedures of the ARF, wherein such proposals and recommendations are to be submitted to the ARF SOM for consideration and upon endorsement, submitted to the ARF Ministers for approval. The ASEAN Secretariat also underlined that an ASEAN Co-Chair for the 15th ARF EEPs must be identified prior to the 28th ARF Ministerial Meeting, so as to ensure that the 15th ARF EEPs could be included in the draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022 to be approved by the 28th ARF.

AGENDA ITEM 5: CONCLUDING SESSION

Co-Chairs' Summary

34. The Meeting appreciated the active participation by the ARF EEPs and other representatives, and the diverse interpretation of Regional Security Landscape including traditional, non-traditional and combined (both traditional and non-traditional) security challenges. The meeting also took note all meaningful

recommendations that some participants suggested to refresh ARF EEPs, some recommended to resubmit EEPs' proposals to Track-1.

Dates and Venue of the 15th EEPs Meeting

35. China and one ASEAN Member State will co-chair 15th EEPs meeting and it is expected that 15th EEPs Meeting will be convened in-person or online in early next year, hopefully between March and May 2022. China welcomed ASEAN Member State to co-chair the next EEPs meeting.

Co-Chairs' Closing Remarks

36. The Co-Chairs thanked all participants for the productive discussion and active participation in the Meeting. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the Co-Chairs for convening the meeting under the challenging conditions posed by COVID-19. The Co-Chairs also informed that the finalized Co-Chairs Summary report along with the recommendations by EEPs will be circulated in due course.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the key recommendations of the 14th ARF EEP Meeting:

- (i) To establish a virtual working group to further examine and make recommendations regarding the EEPs' future focus, role and relevance;
- (ii) To establish a repository for EEP statements, recommendations, and memorandum, including the findings of previous virtual working groups;
- (iii) To consider embracing a wider and more inclusive definition of security cooperation., EEPs expressed an interest to work on issues related to women, peace and security in future meetings and believed this was a subject which could be taken up by the EEPs without the need for approval by the ARF Ministers.
- (iv) The recommendations from the 13th ARF EEPs meeting should be forwarded to the Ministers, with a footnote from the lone dissenter if desired. Feedback should be requested.

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