

**STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE  
FIFTH ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM  
MANILA, 27 JULY 1998**

1. The Fifth ASEAN Regional Forum convened in Manila on 27 July 1998. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Domingo L. Siazon, Jr., Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines. The Meeting was attended by all ARF participants, including the Secretary General of ASEAN. The List of Delegates is attached as **Annex A**.

**ARF Membership**

2. The Ministers considered the results of the consultations conducted by the Chairman and the recommendations of the ARF Senior Officials Meeting in Manila on 20-22 May 1998 on the interest by a number of countries to participate in the ARF.

3. Having been guided by the principles and criteria of commitment and geographic relevance agreed to at the Third ARF on the admission of new participants, the Ministers welcomed Mongolia as a new participant in the ARF. The Ministers also welcomed Mongolia's commitment to help achieve the ARF's key goals and to fully abide by and respect the decisions and statements already made by the ARF.

4. With the addition of Mongolia in the ARF, the Ministers agreed to allow the ARF to consolidate as a group and to develop an efficient process of cooperation.

**Overview of the ARF Process**

5. The Ministers expressed satisfaction on the continued development of the ARF as an important forum for dialogue on political and security concerns in the region. The Ministers recognized the significant contribution of the ARF to the establishment of a strong foundation of trust and confidence among its participants, which would be essential in confronting the existing uncertainties in the Asia-Pacific region. The Ministers noted that the ARF process had contributed to the achievement of greater transparency and mutual understanding in the region, which had instilled among its participants a high sense of collective commitment to regional peace and stability. The Ministers

agreed that the ARF should continue its steady progress to successfully carry through its goals in the face of even greater challenges in the future. The Ministers agreed that the full support of all ARF participants to the ARF's evolutionary, step-by-step development and its approach to decision-making by consensus had contributed to the ARF's resiliency as a viable regional forum for political and security dialogue, encouraged open and frank discussions among ARF participants, and fostered the habit of cooperation and of resolutely working together to address common concerns. The Ministers recognized that the ARF had been living up to its potential and to the important role it had been envisioned to play in further strengthening the foundations for regional peace and stability. The Ministers commended ASEAN for its important contribution to the ARF process and expressed their support to ASEAN's continuing role as the primary driving force of the ARF.

6. The Ministers noted the positive outcome of the informal gathering at lunch of senior defense and military officials in Langkawi in 1997 and welcomed the continuation of this practice at the ARF Ministerial Meeting. The Ministers recognized that defense and military officials had a constructive contribution to the work and activities of the ARF and encouraged greater interaction and networking among these officials in the ARF. In this regard, the Ministers encouraged the active participation of defense and military officials at appropriate levels in all relevant ARF activities.

7. The Ministers noted that the ARF had maintained its approach to security concerns in a comprehensive manner. They welcomed the fact that while the focus of the ARF was on core military and defense-related issues, the ARF also addressed non-military issues, which would have a significant impact on regional security.

8. The Ministers expressed satisfaction on the progress in developing a range of regional, sub-regional and bilateral exchanges on regional security perceptions. The Ministers noted that these exchanges had also encouraged a rapid increase in the number of bilateral regional security dialogues between ARF participants. The Ministers emphasized the importance of exchanges on regional security perceptions in the overall objectives of the ARF and agreed that these should continue at the Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures, at the ARF SOM, and at the annual meeting of the Ministers. At the sub-regional level, the Ministers welcomed the Agreements

on Confidence Building reached among China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and between China and India. The Ministers also welcomed the security dialogues in various ASEAN meetings and among Northeast Asian countries at various Track II forums. The Ministers also noted with appreciation the security dialogue that takes place in CSCAP and other non-ARF Track II forums.

### **Review of the Regional Security Environment and Exchange of Views on Security Perceptions**

9. The Ministers conducted an extensive discussion and exchange of views on security perceptions and on a wide range of issues on the regional security environment.

10. The Ministers expressed the view that the region had continued to benefit from peace and stability in spite of the current regional economic slowdown and the presence of potential sources of conflict. The Ministers noted that increased interaction and dialogue as well as enhanced cooperation among the countries in the region had contributed to the present favorable security situation. The Ministers believed that the security outlook in the region remained positive as this was underpinned by the relative economic growth of the countries in the region, the increasing trade and investments links and high levels of economic interdependency among them.

11. The Ministers discussed extensively the prevailing financial situation in the region. They were encouraged by initial signs of progress toward financial stability in the Asian region. The Ministers welcomed the various individual, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures that were undertaken to restore financial stability. They reaffirmed their support for the Manila Framework, which emphasizes a shared global responsibility in restoring stability in the region. The Ministers noted the constructive role of international financial institutions in restoring this stability and agreed on the need to support efforts to strengthen the international monetary system. They expressed optimism that, as the affected economies implement the necessary structural reforms, confidence would increasingly return. The Ministers expressed full confidence that the economies of East Asia would eventually regain their position as among the fastest-growing economies in the world. Noting the interdependence among Asian economies, they welcomed the assurances of Japan that it will

revitalize its economy as well as the assurances of China that the value of the yuan will be maintained.

12. While recognizing the need for structural reforms in restoring confidence, the Ministers called for a balanced approach in addressing the socio-economic impact of such reforms, particularly its impact on the less privileged sectors of society. They noted that certain aspects of the regional financial crisis could impact on the peace and security of the region and agreed that the ARF would have an important role to play in addressing these effects. The Ministers agreed that the current Asian economic difficulties should not undermine the process of ARF and other regional security dialogues and cooperation.

13. The Ministers underlined the fact that the state of relations among the major powers would always have a significant impact on the region as a whole. The Ministers stressed that it would be important for these countries to stay the course of constructive relationship among them. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the efforts that had been undertaken to develop constructive strategic relationships among the major powers through exchange of visits and regular meetings between and among their respective Heads of State/Government. The Ministers also welcomed other bilateral meetings between the Heads of State/Government of ARF countries and the summit meetings held between the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN and the Heads of State/Government of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea in Kuala Lumpur on 14-16 December 1997. The Ministers noted that these meetings would have long-lasting positive impact on the stability and economic development of the region.

14. The Ministers welcomed the resumption of official dialogue between South and North Korea in Beijing and the launching of the Four-Party Talks Peace Process on the Korean Peninsula in Geneva. The Ministers emphasized the vital importance of the inter-Korean dialogue in promoting reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas. The Ministers also reaffirmed the importance of observing the 1953 Armistice Agreement. The Ministers reiterated their full and continued support for the talks and the KEDO project to help establish a durable peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and promote global nuclear non-proliferation. In view of the current financial difficulties that the KEDO is facing, the Ministers called for more international contribution to this organization.

15. The Ministers welcomed the commitment of all the countries concerned to the peaceful settlement of the dispute on the South China Sea, in accordance with the recognized principles of international law, including the UNCLOS. The Ministers expressed satisfaction on the continued exercise of self-restraint by all the countries concerned and noted the positive contributions made by the bilateral consultations between the countries concerned, the dialogue in the ASEAN-China Senior Officials Consultations, the regular exchange of views in the ARF, and the continuing work of the Informal Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea.

16. The Ministers declared ARF's strong support for the efforts of ASEAN and the "Friends of Cambodia" in helping restore political stability and the climate of peace in Cambodia. They agreed that the holding of free, fair and credible elections was an important step towards enhancing peace and stability in Cambodia. The Ministers welcomed the huge voter turn-out in the 26 July 1998 elections and the initial reports that the voting process was generally peaceful. They expressed the hope that the next stages of counting ballots and the proclamation of the winners would also be peaceful and orderly. In this regard, they acknowledged the work of international observers who monitored the electoral process under United Nations' coordination.

17. The Ministers noted with appreciation the conclusion of the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines to ban the use, stockpile, production, and transfer of anti-personnel mines and for their destruction. The Ministers also welcomed the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to re-appoint a Special Coordinator on landmines and efforts to bring into force the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) amended mines protocol (Protocol II). They also agreed to support initiatives to enhance international cooperation on demining, removal of unexploded ordnances, and victims' assistance toward the goal of "zero victims". The Ministers also welcomed offers by some ARF countries to provide training assistance on mine clearance.

18. The Ministers supported efforts to establish nuclear weapons free zones and noted the importance of the Treaty on Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in enhancing peace and security in the region. The Ministers welcomed the continuing consultations between the States Parties to the SEANWFZ Treaty and the nuclear weapon states and

expressed the hope that the accession of the latter to the Protocol of the Treaty could

be facilitated.

19. The Ministers commended the good progress that has been made in the first year of the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and called on all states which have not ratified or acceded to the Convention to do so. The Ministers expressed hope that progress would be made in the work on the protocol dealing with compliance and verification of the Biological Weapons Convention. They also urged the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the BWC to intensify and complete its work as soon as possible before the commencement of the Fifth Review Conference. To this end, the Ministers also welcomed efforts to give impetus and support to the Ad Hoc Group negotiations.

20. The Ministers welcomed the growing number of signatures and ratification of the CTBT, especially the ratification of the UK and France. The Ministers called for the immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. The Ministers also called on the nuclear weapon states to make further efforts towards achieving the ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons.

21. The Ministers recalled that as early as 1995 the ARF put emphasis on the importance of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in promoting regional peace and security. They also noted that the ARF subsequently welcomed the overwhelming adoption of the CTBT as an important step in prohibiting nuclear test explosions and stressed its determination to continue to contribute to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. In this connection, the Ministers recalled the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1172 issued on 6 June 1998. The Ministers, therefore, expressed grave concern over and strongly deplored the recent nuclear tests in South Asia, which exacerbated tension in the region and raised the specter of a nuclear arms race. They called for the total cessation of such testing and urged the countries concerned to sign the Treaty on the Non- Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty without delay, conditions, or reservations. They asked the countries concerned to refrain from undertaking weaponization or deploying missiles to deliver nuclear weapons, and to prevent any transfer of nuclear weapon-related materials, technology

and equipment to third countries. In the interest of peace and security in the region, the Ministers called on the countries concerned to resolve their dispute and security concerns through peaceful dialogue.

22. The Ministers noted the signing of the Second Protocol to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia by the High Contracting Parties at the 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Manila on 25 July 1998 and agreed to consider the call of the TAC High Contracting Parties for non-Southeast Asian states, particularly the major powers, to accede to the Treaty after the Second Protocol enters into force.

### **Reports of Track I and II Activities for the Current Inter-sessional Year (July 1997-July 1998)**

#### **Track I Activities**

23. The Ministers noted the Co-Chairmen's Report of the Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief in Bangkok on 18-20 February 1998, which appears as **Annex B**, the Co-Chairmen's Summary Report of the Meetings of the Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures in Bandar Seri Begawan on 4-6 November 1997 and in Sydney on 4-6 March 1998, which appears as **Annex C**, and the Chairman's Report of the First ARF Meeting of Heads of Defense Colleges and Institutions in Manila on 7-8 October 1997, which appears as **Annex D**.

#### **Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief**

24. The Ministers welcomed the contribution of the Second ARF Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief towards the continued development of the ARF and in enhancing cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. They agreed that cooperation on disaster management contributes significantly to the ARF's goal of regional confidence building. The Ministers also recognized the potential of furthering regional cooperation on disaster management through the continuation of the work of the ISM. The Ministers endorsed the list of recommendations contained in the Co-Chairmen's Report. The Ministers also agreed that the ARF Disaster Relief Experts Group should report its findings to the Third ISM. The Ministers expressed appreciation to Thailand and New

Zealand for the successful co-chairing of the meeting.

### **Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures**

25. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress of the work of the ISG on CBMs. The Ministers noted that the ISG had served as an effective forum for frank, open and substantive dialogue on the regional security environment, for the exchange of information on security-related developments in individual countries, and for the development of practical and doable activities to enhance confidence among ARF participants. The Ministers endorsed the Recommendations contained in the Co-Chairmen's Summary Report. The Ministers agreed there was still considerable scope to further develop and deepen cooperation on confidence building measures among ARF members and in this context felt that the work of the ISG on CBMs should continue for the foreseeable future.

26. Pursuant to the request of Ministers at ARF 4 that inter-sessional meetings should review the implementation of agreed CBMs, the Ministers welcomed the set of matrices and tables, including the summary table, which had been produced by the ISG on CBMs showing the degree of implementation of agreed ARF CBMs (**Annex E**). The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the high degree of implementation and agreed that these matrices and tables should be updated on an annual basis.

27. The Ministers endorsed two lists of new CBMs contained in **Annex F** and agreed that these should be considered by the ISG on CBMs for implementation in the near future (Basket 1) and over the medium term (Basket 2). The Ministers welcomed the offers by several countries to hold expert level first track meetings under the auspices of the ISG on CBMs.

28. Noting that the distinction between CBMs and preventive diplomacy was blurred, and in light of the decision of ARF 2 that the consideration of these two issues could proceed in tandem, the Ministers agreed that the ISG should further consider the following tabled proposals: an enhanced role for the ARF Chairman, particularly the idea of a good offices role; the development of a register of experts or eminent persons among ARF participants; Annual Security Outlook; and voluntary background briefing on



regional security issues. Ministers agreed that the ISG should hold two meetings in the next inter-sessional year with one meeting addressing the overlap between CBMs and preventive diplomacy, including the four proposals tabled.

29. The Ministers noted that maritime safety, law and order at sea and protection and preservation of the marine environment were important issues appropriately considered by the ARF under the rubric of comprehensive security. The Ministers agreed that ARF countries should lend their full support to existing regional and multilateral arrangements and instruments in these areas. The Ministers considered that these three areas should be further discussed in the ISG on CBMs, with the advice of specialist officials, to develop a clearer sense of the areas where the ARF could add value to existing activities.

### **First ART Meeting of Heads of Defense Colleges and Institutions**

30. The Ministers affirmed the importance of cooperation on security education and research in enhancing confidence building in the region. The Ministers expressed satisfaction that the First ARF Meeting of Heads of Defense Colleges and Institutions in Manila had helped in this effort. The Ministers believed that the networks established by this meeting would serve as a strong foundation for further ARF cooperation in this important area. The Ministers agreed that this meeting contributed to the growing awareness and recognition of the vital role of defense officials in the ARF process. The Ministers expressed appreciation to the Philippines for the successful hosting of the First ARF Meeting of Heads of Defense Colleges and Institutions.

### **Track II Activities**

31. The Ministers noted the Co-Chairmen's Report of the Third ASEAN Regional Forum Track Two Conference on Preventive Diplomacy, which appears as **Annex G**, held on 9-11 September 1997 in Singapore and jointly organized by Singapore's Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS) and United Kingdom's International Institute for Strategic Studies. They also noted the results of the seminar on "The Future of ARF" in Singapore on 27-28 April 1998, which was organized by IDSS. The Ministers deemed it useful that the ISG on CBMs consider the recommendations of these meetings in the next inter-sessional period.

## **Program of Work for the Next Inter-sessional Year (July 1998-July 1999)**

### **Track I Activities**

32. The Ministers agreed that the Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief should continue for another year and welcomed the offer of Vietnam and the Russian Federation to co-chair the next ISM in the first half of 1999 in Moscow. The Ministers noted that the ARF Disaster Relief Experts Group would convene prior to the Third ISM.

33. The Ministers agreed to extend the mandate of the Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures for another year and welcomed the offer of Thailand and the United States to co-chair the next ISG on CBMs. The Ministers noted that the ISG had decided to hold two meetings within the next inter-sessional year, one in November 1998 and the other in March 1999, with one meeting addressing the overlap between CBMs and preventive diplomacy, including the four proposals tabled, and the other on the remaining issues on the ISG's agenda including the list of new CBMs and the maritime issues of maritime safety, law and order at sea, and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. The Ministers also noted that the following first track activities under the auspices of the ISG on CBMs would take place in the next inter-sessional year:

- A meeting of specialist officials on maritime issues to be held in conjunction with the November meeting of the ISG;
- Second Meeting of Heads of Defense Colleges and Institutions on 8-10 September 1998 in Seoul;
- Training on Regional Security for Foreign Affairs and Defense Officials in Spring of 1999 in the United States;
- Military Medicine Symposium on Tropical Medicine and Epidemic Control in Tropical Regions on 25-27 November 1998 in China; and
- Seminar on Production of Defense Policy Documents in Canberra on 31 August - 3 September 1998 to be organized by Australia and Malaysia.

34. The Ministers also welcomed the offers to host follow-up activities on peacekeeping namely:

- Workshop on Approaches to Training for Peacekeeping co-chaired by Ireland, in behalf of the European Union, and Thailand in Dublin on 19-23 October 1998; and
- Peacekeeping Training Course co-chaired by Canada, Japan and Malaysia in Tokyo on 22-26 March 1999.

## **Track II Activities**

35. The Ministers agreed to the holding of the following Track II activities in the next ARF inter-sessional year:

- Conference Towards Comprehensive Security and Cooperation in Asia-Pacific on 27-30 September 1998 in Vladivostok; and
- Workshop on Common Principles of Disaster Management in the Asian Disaster Prevention Center in Bangkok to be organized by the ADPC and the United States in tune for recommendations to be considered by the ARF Disaster Relief Experts Group.

## **Future Direction of the ARF Process**

36. The Ministers agreed that the evolutionary approach to the development of the ARF process would be maintained. The Ministers stressed the importance of proceeding in the development of the ARF, from confidence building to preventive diplomacy to elaboration of approaches to conflict, in an incremental and step-by-step manner. The Ministers affirmed the approach to decision-making by consensus while taking into consideration the interests and comfort level of all ARF participants.

37. The Ministers agreed to request the ISG on CBMs to continue its work in exploring matters in the overlap between CBMs and preventive diplomacy, including the four proposals tabled, and to submit recommendations on ways and means of addressing them with the view to consolidating the gains of the ARF and firmly establishing its foundations to prepare for the challenges of the future.

38. The Ministers noted the growing involvement and participation of defense and military officials in the work and activities of the ARF and expressed the view that this trend should be strongly supported.