

Enhanced Role of the ARF Chair

(Shared perspectives among the ARF members)

Objective

The 6th Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in May 1999 agreed that the next ISG (1999-2000) would continue to explore the principles and procedures for an enhanced role for the ARF Chairman in good offices and co-ordination in between ARF meetings. The 6th Ministerial Meeting in July 1999 noted the common understandings reached on the four tabled proposals relating to the overlap between CBMs and PD. These common understandings includes the above agreement at the SOM.

Consistent with this request, the ARF ISG on CBMs of the 1999-2000 inter-sessional year at its meeting in Tokyo in November 1999 discussed these roles and agreed that such a role for the ARF Chairman in liaising with external parties should be further encouraged as far as it was carried out informally with prior consultation with all ARF members and their consent. The ARF ISG meeting in Singapore in April 2000 had a substantive exchange of views on this issue. The meeting agreed that the ARF Chair could serve as a useful conduit for information-sharing in between ARF meetings, and that members could utilise this on a voluntary basis.

The 7th Ministerial Meeting in July 2000 requested the ISG to continue its work in exploring the overlaps between CBMs and PD and strengthening the four CBM/PD overlap proposals already agreed upon, which include an enhanced role of the ARF Chair.

The aim of this paper is to help clarify and facilitate the ongoing discussions at the ISG on the Enhanced Role of the ARF Chair. The paper is mainly focused on the role of the ARF Chair in the CBM stage, and outlines principles and procedures that could serve as a basis for further discussions. These principles and procedures are shared perspectives that would apply only to the ARF and should be understood as representing the current status of an evolving consensus in the ARF as discussions continue.

1. Principles

In accordance with universally recognised basic principles of international law and inter-state relations embodied, inter alia, in the UN Charter, the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence and the TAC, including respect for sovereign equality, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of a state, the Enhanced roles of the ARF Chair in good offices and co-ordination in between ARF meetings are aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and promoting the continuity and efficiency of the ARF process.

2. Roles and Procedures

(1) Definition of the ARF Chair

ARF Chair means the Minister for Foreign Affairs or its equivalent of the ARF Chair Country in the inter-sessional year. The ARF Chair could appoint a representative (such as the SOM Leader) to assist the Chair.

(2) Roles

The ARF Chair could perform a role in good offices and/or a role in co-ordination in between ARF meetings which includes:

- (a) Promoting confidence building among ARF members by facilitating information exchange and dialogue between and among ARF members, such as by holding conferences and workshops.
- (b) Fostering cooperation between ARF members by facilitating discussion on potential areas of cooperation.
- (c) Facilitating discussion on norms building in the ARF to enhance mutual trust and understanding.
- (d) Encouraging exchange of information and highlighting issues that can impact on regional security for consideration by the ARF by serving as a conduit for information sharing in between ARF meetings.
- (e) Serving as a focal point for consultations among ARF members on the basis of consensus of all the ARF members. Upon prior consent of directly involved states and the consensus of all ARF members, the ARF Chair may convene an ad hoc meeting of all ARF members at an appropriate level.

- (f) Liaising with external parties, such as heads of international organisations, and Track II organisations on an informal basis and with prior consultation with all ARF members and their consent.

(3) Mechanism to Support the ARF Chair

The ARF should discuss an appropriate mechanism to support the ARF Chair so that the Chair can carry out the roles in good offices and co-ordination in between ARF meetings smoothly and effectively. The following modalities of mechanism could be taken into consideration:

- (a) The ARF Chair will be supported by the resources of its country as is the current practice.
- (b) The ARF Chair could draw on the expertise and resources of other ARF member(s). In this context, a particular attention should be paid to the need to ensure effective continuity during a transition period of chairmanship.
- (c) The ARF Chair could call upon the Experts and Eminent Persons (EEP) to provide their views on issues of relevance to their expertise in accordance with the Terms of Reference of EEP to be established with the consensus of all ARF members.
- (d) The ARF Chair could draw on the expertise and resources of external parties and Track II organisations as far as this was undertaken informally with consent of ARF members.

(4) Reporting

The ARF Chair should report to all ARF members on its activities in a timely manner.