

Concept Paper
on
ARF Workshop on Enhancing Regional Cooperation to Address
Challenges Posed by Illicit Drugs -- Implementing the ARF Counter-
Terrorism Transnational Crime Work Plan

Background

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), through the ARF Work Plan for Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime, has long identified the production and trafficking of illicit drugs as an important transnational crime challenge. Throughout the past years, ARF participants have continued to show a firm commitment to strengthening regional and international cooperation as means to comprehensively and systematically combat the production and trafficking of illicit drugs and their precursors in a progressive manner.

This commitment in the ARF is also reinforced by the political will of ASEAN as expressed in the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Drug Free ASEAN 2015 adopted in 2012 and through the establishment of a new mechanism in the form of an ASEAN Special Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters, launched in Thailand in 2012.

With the ARF reinforcing its cooperation on the illicit drugs priority and with a drug-free ASEAN emerging as a key characteristic of an ASEAN Community in 2015, it is timely to explore new and practical means of win-win cooperation to address the challenge of production and trafficking in illicit drugs.

Concept Development

This year, Thailand and New Zealand, as lead countries in this priority area of illicit drugs under the ARF CTTC Work Plan, wish to continue the momentum and positive development of ARF cooperation in addressing the challenge of illicit drugs, such as the ARF Seminar Narcotics Control held in China in 2007 and the ARF Statement Promoting Collaboration on the Prevention of the Diversion of Precursors into Illicit Drug Manufacture adopted in 2009.

To take forward this cooperation, Thailand and New Zealand will host an ARF Workshop on Enhancing Regional Cooperation to Address the Challenges Posed by Illicit Drugs. The approach offered is to identify and develop practical means to promote intelligence exchange and information sharing as well as capacity-building through technical cooperation to help better protect the region from illicit drugs and other related transnational crimes such as money laundering. Such cooperation will also be more important than ever within the context of enhanced regional connectivity in the Asia-Pacific and ASEAN.

Objectives

- To identify and develop capacities in dealing with issues such as precursor chemicals used for illicit drug production and new psychoactive substances (NPS).
 - o To identify and improve on intelligence exchange and information sharing that will help promote greater regional cooperation to address the challenge of production and trafficking of illicit drugs.
 - o To develop capacities in the area of financial investigations in the area of combatting illicit drugs including sharing best practices on effective legal measures in this area
 - o To share best practices and practical experience on responses in fighting illicit drug challenges at the national, regional, and international levels.
- To explore and help develop synergies between existing regional and international cooperation as means to create or strengthen effective regional mechanism for drug control and suppression.

Format

The Workshop would take place over two days and would involve a number of key speakers from the Co-Chairs, other interested ARF Participants and the UNODC to kick-off discussions and provide practical training to help enhance capacities to address the challenge of production and trafficking of illicit drugs. Breakout sessions may be convened to allow for more focused discussions on specific topics, which will be developed by the Co-Chairs.

Participants

- Experts on Illicit Drugs and Related Issues from ARF Participants
- Experts from UNODC, INTERPOL and other relevant regional and international organizations

Next Steps

- The 12th ARF Intersessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC) to be convened in Indonesia on 14-16 April 2014 will have a focus on combatting illicit drugs. This ISM will provide important inputs on priority areas for enhanced cooperation on intelligence exchange and information sharing as well as training and capacity-building, that will be factored into the development of this Workshop.
- To enhance synergies in the ARF Work Plan on CTTC, the Workshop is also envisaged to contribute to the upcoming Workshop on Concept Development of the ASEAN Regional Forum Transnational Threat Information-sharing Center (ATTIC) to be co-hosted by Thailand and the United States on 10 – 11 September 2014 in Thailand.

Timing

- It is envisaged that this Workshop would be hosted prior to and back-to-back with the ATTIC Workshop on 10-11 September 2014.
