

**CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT OF THE
FIFTH ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING ON
COUNTER-TERRORISM AND
TRANSNATIONAL CRIME
SINGAPORE**

2-4 MAY 2007

INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the decision of the 13th Ministerial Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 28 July 2006, the Fifth ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC) was held in Singapore on 2-4 May 2007. Simon Tensing de Cruz, Director/Special Duties (Regional Policy) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore; Chikao Kawai, Deputy Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan; and Andrey N. Rozhkov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Singapore co-chaired the meeting. The Agenda and Programme are attached at **Annex 1** and **Annex 2** respectively.

2. With its theme of inter-civilisational dialogue, this ISM aims to bring government officials together to discuss ways of promoting inter-civilisational dialogue, so as to enhance the fight against global terrorism.

3. The meeting was attended by representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, the People's Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, Timor Leste, the United States, and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat and representatives from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), APEC Secretariat, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) also attended the meeting. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 3**.

4. Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs of Singapore delivered the Keynote Address at the Opening Session on 3 May 2007. The speech is attached at **Annex 4**.

**SESSION I: COUNTER TERRORISM: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS,
STRATEGIES AND MEASURES**

5. Participants exchanged views on the recent developments in terrorism in the region, and provided updates on their respective counter-terrorism strategies. SEARCCT, Bangladesh, Japan, ROK, Russia, the US, and Viet Nam were the lead speakers under this agenda item. Their presentations are from **Annexes 5-15**.

6. Participants reiterated their commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as no country could be free from the threat of terrorism. In this regard, they noted, with satisfaction, the adoption by consensus of a UN Global Strategy on combating international terrorism by the UN General Assembly on 9 September 2006; they also reaffirmed their commitment to fulfill the various international instruments on combating terrorism, including the 13 UN Conventions and Protocols. Participants also agreed on the continued utility of measures such as depriving terrorists of financing through anti-money laundering legislation, strengthening border security, and document management security. They underscored the need for capacity building and information sharing in order to deal more effectively with the terrorist threat.

7. Notwithstanding the relatively successful efforts in combating terrorism, participants of the ISM agreed that challenges continued to exist, while reiterating that no cause or grievance can justify acts of terrorism. They pointed to the need to address the root causes or conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This would entail a sustainable strategy to win the hearts and minds of the people. To this end, participants reiterated the importance of nation-building measures such as the provision of basic economic and social services, the importance of good governance and institution-building, the necessity of achieving national political consensus through reconciliation and negotiation, and the importance of national will. This would allow the problem of terrorism to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

8. The ISM participants stressed that terrorism should not be associated with any culture, religion or civilisation. However, terrorists had been perpetuating extremist ideologies which have provided fertile ground for their exploitation. In this regard, participants called for the identification of national strategies that could promote greater tolerance amongst different cultures, religions and civilisations. This would play a useful and important role in ensuring that such extremist ideologies did not take root in society.

9. Participants exchanged views on ongoing national, regional and international initiatives aimed at combating terrorism, and agreed that regional cooperation continued to be important and useful in tackling the

threat. In this regard, participants reaffirmed the important role that the ARF could play in this area.

SESSION II: INTER-CIVILISATIONAL DIALOGUE

Session II (a): Role of Community Dialogue and Engagement in Countering Terrorism

10 Participants shared their national experiences in promoting inter-civilisational dialogue. In particular, they discussed how such dialogue had contributed to, or could potentially contribute to, the fight against terrorism. ARF participants also exchanged views on bridging divides within communities, and the related challenges of integrating and rehabilitating individuals into the community. Canada, Indonesia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Russia, and Singapore were the lead speakers under this agenda item. Their presentations are from **Annexes 16-20**.

11 Recalling that the Ministers at the 13th ARF had endorsed the ARF Statement on Promoting a People-Centred approach to Counter Terrorism, as well as called for the promotion of tolerance and understanding; the ARF participants made presentations on their countries' experiences in the enhancement of dialogue among cultures, religions and civilisations. The different presenters shared their respective national experiences, including community outreach programmes, cross-cultural roundtables, community engagement programmes, and also rehabilitation programmes. Recognising the importance of regional cooperation, the various presenters updated the meeting on their active pursuit and promotion of initiatives aimed at facilitating inter-civilisational dialogue in the region, such as the forthcoming Asia-Pacific Inter-faith Regional Dialogue to be held in New Zealand, 29-31 May 2007.

12 Participants underscored the importance of debunking the notion of a 'clash of civilisations', and pointed out that such concepts could give rise to misunderstandings and might even be used to ferment extremist ideologies. Participants welcomed the UN endorsed 'Alliance of Civilisations' Initiative which sought to counter that theory. Participants recognised that globalisation had brought different communities in contact with beliefs, cultures and religions that they were unfamiliar with, and thus had accentuated the perception of differences among them. A few members also stressed the need to define the term "civilisation" carefully. In this regard, participants emphasized the need for inter-civilisational dialogue to take place, so as to promote greater understanding and mutual respect among different communities, cultures and religions.

13 Some participants also expressed the view that national strategies for promoting inter-civilisational dialogue should involve societies, as civilisations, by definition, were not monopolised by the national governments. To this end, participants indicated that while governments could foster inter-civilisational dialogue, civil society had to play an active role in such dialogues to make them truly effective.

14 Apart from promoting inter-civilisational dialogue, many participants also recognised the existence and importance of an *intra*-civilisational element, which would also complement the fight against terrorism. In this regard, while reaffirming that terrorism should not be linked to any culture, religion or civilisation, participants agreed that intra-civilisational dialogue entailed the promotion of moderate ideologies, and that strengthening moderate elements within various communities would help counter extremist ideologies and contribute to the fight against global terrorism.

Session II (b): Special Informal Session on Inter-civilisational dialogue

15 In order to provide for a variety of perspectives and to enrich the discussions, the ISM-CTTC, for the first time, convened a ‘Special Informal Session on Inter-Civilisational Dialogue’, where three scholars were invited to engage in a panel discussion and interactive session with the ISM participants on the trends in and means of promoting inter-civilisational dialogue. The three speakers were Dr Azizan Baharuddin, Professor and Director of the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur; Dr Bahtiar Effendy, Director of Academic Affairs for Postgraduate Studies at the State Islamic University in Jakarta and currently a Research Fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore; and Dr Tan See Seng, Associate Professor and Deputy Head (Studies) of RSIS.

16 Dr Azizan Baharuddin presented a paper entitled ‘Demystifying the Rhetoric of Civilisation Conflict.’ Explaining the origins and historical evolution of the term ‘civilisation,’ Dr Azizan cautioned that this, along with notions such as ‘civilisational conflict’, by itself carried historical baggage and thus could potentially be a recipe for conflict. She also pointed out the need to avoid ascribing certain characteristics to specific civilisations, as civilisations in fact shared common values. However, recognising the tendency for this to happen, Dr Azizan underscored the need for dialogue to prevent the formation of misperceptions. This, in her view, was a soft but powerful tool in resolving problems. Her paper and presentation are attached at **Annexes 21-22**.

17 Dr Bahtiar Effendy believed that inter-civilisational dialogue was a

means to build trust and understanding, which would help alleviate the sense of grievances amongst Muslims. While stressing that terrorism should not be associated with the Islamic faith as all religions were inherently benign, he conceded that misinterpretations had provided cause for concern amongst the Muslim community. He thus reiterated the need to lay all the cards on the table, and was of the view that inter-faith dialogue could be regarded as a form of soft power. In order to achieve successful and truly meaningful dialogue, Dr Bahtiar was of the view that trust and openness were critical and so was a world campaign to lend impetus to such dialogue.

18 Dr Tan See Seng discussed the objectives, means, and limitations associated with promoting inter-faith dialogue. Limitations included the fact that participants of such dialogue were likely to already be firm believers in the value of dialogue and hence this might be a case of ‘preaching to the converted’; the fact that such dialogues were usually highly structured with pre-defined parameters and hence their real value might be questionable; that participants might not represent the dominant view within their own communities and hence resulting in an issue of credibility; and also that religious institutions, by their very nature, had an ‘evangelising’ element. Nonetheless, Dr Tan stressed that inter-faith dialogue had its value. In the process of facilitating dialogue, it was important to balance means and ends and ensure that the undertaking did not get hijacked by political goals, so as to build trust and confidence, and to transcend oneself.

19 During the question and answer session, some participants questioned the difference between inter-civilisational and inter-faith dialogue. In response, Dr Azizan was of the view that both ran almost parallel to each other. However, while one could promote dialogue among different civilisations, this could not be done within the inter-faith arena as religious theologies and scriptures could not be easily ‘dialogued’. Dr Bahtiar agreed, and suggested that the reason why the terms had been used interchangeably was due to religions and cultures playing a role in shaping and inspiring one’s belief system, which in turn had helped form human civilisations.

20 To the question posed on the value of inter-civilisational vis-à-vis inter-faith dialogue, Dr Tan was of the view that inter-civilisational dialogue in fact provided a forum for participants to begin asking difficult questions about their own civilisations, which they might not have otherwise pondered. Some participants were also of the view that the value of inter-civilisational dialogue lay in the process itself. While not all those who needed to participate in such dialogue might be present, the message sent out through the convening of such dialogues was that extremism was not acceptable. In doing so, such dialogue would cut off oxygen to extremist elements. Some participants also indicated that the primary purpose of inter-civilisation

dialogue was not to bring people into total agreement but to reach a better appreciation of each other through understanding differences and attaining mutual respect.

SESSION III: ENHANCING INTER-CIVILISATIONAL DIALOGUE

Session III (a): Role of Community Organisations and the Media

Session III (b): Role of Multilateral Institutions

21 This session focused on the role of multilateral institutions, community organizations and the media in promoting inter-civilisational dialogue, in order to enhance the fight against global terrorism. Invited representatives from APEC, UNESCO, ASEM (presented by the EU delegation), ARF Unit and the SCO briefed the meeting on their respective organisations' efforts in this area. Emphasizing the wide scope for cooperation, the multilateral organizations also expressed a wish for closer future cooperation with the ARF and countries on these important issues. Australia, the EU, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand were lead speakers under this agenda item. Their individual ARF presentations are from **Annexes 23-33**.

22 Participants stressed that besides the government, the private sector, community groups, civil society and international financial institutions also had a key role to play in enhancing inter-civilisational dialogue so as to combat terrorism. In this regard, participants welcomed various key regional and international initiatives, including *inter alia*, the United Nations' Alliance of Civilisations, the Asia-Pacific Regional Inter-faith Dialogue, the Tripartite Forum for Interfaith Cooperation on Peace and the European Union's designation of 2008 as a Year of Inter-Cultural Dialogue. The meeting also highlighted the important role of education, community-building elements, outreach efforts and cultural exchange in enhancing awareness, tolerance, understanding and hence, dialogue across religions, communities and cultures.

23 In particular, some participants noted that given its pervasive influence and vast reach, the media had a very powerful role to play in enhancing inter-civilisational dialogue. Even while respecting the freedom of the press, the meeting suggested that it was important that media reporting be done in a sensitive and responsible manner, lest it foster ignorance and misunderstanding, and thus be exploited by extremists. At the same time, participants stressed that the media could and should be encouraged to bolster the message of inter-civilisational dialogue, for instance, by publicising inter-faith and inter-cultural initiatives and meetings so as to demonstrate solidarity, and giving moderates and minority communities a stronger voice.

SESSION IV: FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF ISM ON CTTC

24 During this session, participants discussed Russia's draft ARF Statement on the Promotion of Inter-civilisational Dialogue, and put forward recommendations on the future direction of the ARF ISM on CTTC, including priority areas of cooperation. The relevant Annexes are from **34-37**.

25 Russia presented its revised draft ARF Statement on the Promotion of Inter-civilisational Dialogue (**Annexes 34-35**), which had been proposed as the outcome document of the 5th ARF ISM on CTTC. It indicated that most countries had already provided comments and that it had incorporated most of these. Some delegates provided preliminary comments on the revised draft, while Canada circulated its proposed revised text (**Annex 36**). Russia took note of Canada's suggestion and called for the other ARF participants with outstanding concerns to provide their comments by 10 May 2007 to Russia at email: **daap-asean@mid.ru**. Russia would consolidate the comments and circulate a revised draft by 15 May 2007. The revised Statement would then be put up for consideration at the ARF SOM in Manila on 25 May 2007 and submitted to the 14th ARF on 2 August 2007 for the Ministers' endorsement.

26 On the future direction of the ARF ISM on CTTC, participants reaffirmed the role of the ARF in addressing issues related to counter-terrorism and transnational crime. To this end, they suggested that future ARF activities in counter terrorism and transnational crime should continue to encompass concrete cooperation such as information sharing among civilian and military agencies, capacity building and practical cooperation in areas such as anti-money laundering and maritime security. In this regard, participants acknowledged the importance of the ARF Maritime Security Shore Exercise hosted by Singapore from 22-23 January 2007, as well as similar practical exercises aimed at promoting inter-operability among ARF participants.

27 The meeting agreed to recommend to the ARF SOM that the work of the ARF ISM on CTTC be continued. In this regard, the meeting welcomed the offer by Indonesia to host the next ARF ISM on CTTC, and looked forward to a non-ASEAN ARF member co-chairing this next ISM with Indonesia.

CLOSING REMARKS

28 In his closing remarks, the Singapore Co-Chair expressed his appreciation for the active participation of all the ISM participants. He highlighted the useful and enriching contributions of the international and regional organisations as well as the Track II scholars, and hoped that they

would continue to be involved in future ARF activities. The Singapore Co-Chair also noted that this was the first time that the ARF had addressed the issue of inter-civilisational dialogue. Having discussed the traditional and the physical approaches towards combating terrorism, it was timely and pertinent for the ARF to also study the softer approaches to counter-terrorism. It was important that we undertake a more comprehensive approach so as to deal with terrorism in all its varied forms and manifestations. His closing remarks are at **Annex 38**.

29 The Japanese Co-Chair thanked the participants for their active participation, and was of the view that discussions for the past one and a half days had been very useful and constructive, and would serve as a basis for future deliberation. He also underscored the continued importance of efforts to counter terrorism, as well as to promote inter-civilisational dialogue.

30 The Russian Co-Chair agreed that participants had embarked on fruitful and interesting discussions, and had covered a wide range of counter-terrorism related issues. He reiterated the need to look upon inter-civilisational dialogue as an effective counter-terrorism strategy, and reaffirmed Russia's commitment to work together with ARF member countries to enhance the work in this arena.

31 The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Republic of Singapore for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality accorded to the delegations.

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