

**ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Workshop
on Preventive Diplomacy for Sustaining Peace
Virtual Meeting, June 1-2, 2022**

Introduction

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy for Sustaining Peace was convened virtually during June 1-2, 2022. The Workshop was co-chaired by China, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore and Myanmar. Among the attendees of the seminar were officials and scholars from ARF participants.

Opening Remarks

Dr. Khin Thida Aye, Deputy Director General, ASEAN Affairs Department, MOFA, Myanmar, expressed that amidst the increasing geo-strategic uncertainties and escalating security challenges in the region and beyond, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), being a central pillar of region security architecture, is trying to become an action-oriented forum focusing on activities for confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, and conflict resolution. She was of the view that this workshop would be contributing to the purposes of ARF by identifying new and emerging approaches of PD for sustainable peace as well as linking the works of ARF to those of UN Global Agenda on Sustainable Peace (2016)

Mr. Rajpal Singh, Director-General, ASEAN Singapore, stated that Preventive Diplomacy is instrumental in helping to prevent conflicts and disputes that would threaten our collective goals of prosperity and harmony. He said that a global effort to end poverty and reduce inequality must go hand in hand with preserving our natural environment. Island states, like Singapore, are especially vulnerable to climate change. He highlighted the recently launched Singapore Green Plan 2030, which is a national sustainability movement which seeks to rally collective action to tackle climate change, through the charting of concrete targets. In conclusion, he said that Singapore looks forward to working with ASEAN partners in addressing the challenges we face in this regard.

Ms. Fang Hong, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs, MFA, China, stated that history has proved that peacekeeping and sustainable development are necessary, which are two sides of the same coin. To achieve sustainable development, we need a peaceful and stable environment. She introduced President Xi Jinping's plan to address the complex and acute challenges to development and peace, namely global development initiative and global security initiative. She finally stated that China is willing to work with all parties to actively implement these two initiatives, formulate confidence building measures, do its best to explore ways to achieve its own peace and common development through preventive diplomacy.

Ms. Latifah Zaini, Deputy Director-General of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam, reminded that the pandemic could exacerbate other security and humanitarian crises such as international terrorism, cyber-attacks, poverty, and political instability. These, in turn, could hamper our efforts to manage the pandemic and achieve a sustainable and comprehensive recovery. Therefore, she expressed the view that it was imperative that ARF participating countries find ways to address these challenges, especially through working together closely in order to maximize our chances of success. As these crises were at risk of escalating, regional cooperation mechanisms such as the ARF played a critical role in achieving sustainable peace.

Session 1: Preventive Diplomacy and International Development Cooperation

(This session discussed how regional countries can help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, attain inclusive development, and address the root causes of conflicts through international development cooperation.)

Prof. Li Xiaoyun, Chair Professor and Honorary Dean of College of International Development and Global Agriculture (CIDGA), China Agricultural University, explained how poverty reduction could help mitigate inequality and to achieve peace and stability by introducing some East Asia pilot projects of China International Poverty Reduction Center. He believes development is crucial to address conflicts and crises, since poverty and inequality are often the root causes of them. Small intervention by states could lead to big impacts. He suggested increased South-South cooperation, a comprehensive development framework, strengthened regional development cooperation between villages, and awareness in the urban-rural gap, and poor rural communities vulnerable to conflict and crisis.

Prof. Takeshi Daimon-Sato, Faculty of International Research and Education, Waseda University, shared the best practice of Timor-Leste to illustrate the importance of peacebuilding and development cooperation in Southeast Asia and the complementarity of Chinese and Japanese assistance. Professor Takeshi briefly described the history and post-conflict situation of Timor-Leste. He found many countries have assistance in Timor-Leste, and the assistance of China, France and Japan are complementary. By illustrating several examples, such as Port of Tibar Bay and the Timor-Leste national highway project, he emphasized the complementarity of assistances in contributing to Timor-Leste's development and stability. Finally, Professor Takeshi suggested that strengthening Timor-Leste's own capacity and Governance (rule of law) is key to improving economic and social resilience.

Prof. Cedric de Coning, The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, stated that there can be no peace without sustainable development. He believed the sustainable development goal is the main goal of building a peaceful, just and inclusive society free of fear and violence. Professor Cedric stated that when we focus on maintaining peace, it expands and changes the concepts of

PD and international development. He proposed three important ways to cooperate. Finally, Professor Cedric stated that the key to successful PD and international development cooperation for peacekeeping lies in finding an appropriate balance between international expertise and support and local ownership and self-organization. The exact balance varies from case to case. However, adaptability is also a coping process. In view of this complexity, he believed it is necessary to cooperate with the affected communities through learning by doing to generate contact specific solutions.

Session 2: Innovative Preventive Diplomacy Practices by Developing Countries

(This session explored the useful experiences from developing countries in philosophy and innovative practices of PD and provide concrete recommendations for the ARF.)

Amb. I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, Executive Director, ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, stated that preventive diplomatic measures can be used as a means to maintain peace in ASEAN and the Asia Pacific region. He introduced ASEAN-IPR as a new method of preventive diplomacy, whose task is to establish an academic institution to engage in research activities on conflict management and conflict resolution. Ambassador puja said that cooperation should be carried out not only between ASEAN and Member States, but also with Asian partners, and ASEAN-IPR has indeed established a mechanism and platform with a clear mandate. He believed that ASEAN-IPR needs to take small incremental steps so that it can learn from experience and past best practices, but also promote development to maintain peace in the affected areas and prevent new disputes and all conflicts. He argued that peacekeeping is a systematic political process involving the comprehensive settlement of conflicts.

Mr. Ponnya Win Aung, Deputy Director, Ministry of the Office of the Union Government (1) , Myanmar, mainly introduced the peace process in Myanmar, and explained about the implementation what Myanmar government has done for everlasting peace, the challenges it has encountered and the future direction how to build a Union based on democracy and federal system. He also introduced Myanmar's Foreign Policy and national defense policy, and the role of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). He believed that in PD, it is necessary to look at issues impartially, understand positions, views, tensions and the root causes of this situation, consider and respect the territorial integrity, culture and sovereignty of each country, and fully highlighted the challenges in Myanmar the peace process. Finally, Mr. Ponnya said that, in the peacebuilding process, Myanmar government is taking unrelenting efforts to establish a Union based on democracy and federal system through NCA, constantly emphasizing the peace building process, and implementing it through negotiations with all stakeholders including Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOS) and political parties, except with terrorist groups declared by Myanmar Government to make the nation stable and peaceful.

Dr. He Yin, Deputy Director and Associate Professor at China Peacekeeping Police Training Center, China People's Police University, starting from his efforts to explore the relationship between peacebuilding and conflict prevention, he proposed that inclusive peacebuilding is the most effective way to prevent conflict. He argued peacebuilding is different with peacekeeping, and the cornerstones of the Peace Building include institutional building, enhanced security development, human rights, and more. He advocated inclusive peacebuilding, rather than liberal peacebuilding. Dr. He Yin believed that conflicts between local people should be decided by the locals. He then shared China's experience in Haiti and Timor-Leste. Dr. He Yin believed that the secret of preventing war in Timor-Leste lies in having an inclusive peace and learning from development, and practicing consensus democracy, which made them have the ability to bargain with local governments and make economic development a priority.

Session 3: Preventive Diplomacy and Pandemic Prevention

(This session explored how to enhance the resilience of the Asia-Pacific region by PD and maintain the regional stability and prosperity against the challenge of pandemic.)

Dr. Qi Xiaopeng, Acting Director, Center for Global Public Health, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, first explained “Infodemic” which happens when unreliable information spreads far and wide. She introduced the global COVID-19 data integration and risk analysis platform designed by the Global Public Health Center of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. She introduced the global COVID-19 risk assessment framework at the international and domestic levels, and shared several major data sources used by the platform. Dr. Qi also introduced a Balloon Chart program created by the Global Public Health Center, which could simultaneously display incidence, total death, and fatality rate through the same chart. She explained the role of artificial intelligence in the ongoing pandemic measures. She also discussed the potential of the platform in monitoring and assessment of global infectious diseases from four indicators, namely knowledge and technique preparation, public travel suggestions, regulations for imported case and tabletop exercise for training.

Dr. Alan Chong, Senior Academic, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, pointed out that to carry out pandemic preventive diplomacy through ready channels, a people-centered response is urgently needed. He believed that urban health can be an entry point to the study of health security. He also stated that paying attention to preventive measures adopted by cities would be conducive to preventing the deterioration of the pandemic situation. He made a few recommendations for dealing with the next pandemic. First, to provide funds for such research. Second, to strengthen non-political cooperation among ARF members and conduct more Track-2 dialogues between scientific research institutions regarding vaccine research and development. Third, ASEAN and ARF governments and their biomedical institutions could share knowledge in the fight against infectious diseases. Fourth, ARF member countries could deepen cooperation to jointly create a routine early warning such as a “Biomedical Threat Situation Report” system.

Prof. Zha Daojiong, professor of International Political Economy from Peking University, first compared traditional PD and PD in public health. He noted that health provision is always first and foremost a domestic responsibility and intervention in health can take place at every stage, with involvement of multiple actors. He believed that PD in health cooperation can only take place and be sustained when the interests of different social or government agencies and the business community match with each other. He also noted a hierarchy of global health governance institutions and the distinction between “health security” and “health and security”. He also shed light on health surveillance, vaccine patent rights and innovation issues, indicating the application of PD in public health could be very complicated. Finally, Prof. Zha concluded that for East Asia, it is important to foster an international epistemic community in health security as mutual protection rather than a component of foreign aid. And he recognized that trade arrangements have far-reaching implications for both health provision and pandemic prevention.

Session 4: New Issues and Solutions

(This session discussed topics including peace from a gender perspective and peace for the next generation through open discussions to offer new ideas for the implementation of PD.)

Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, Personal Envoy of the President and Head of Regional Delegation for East Asia, International Committee of the Red Cross, noted that political divisions, conflicts and escalating violence, whether on social media platforms or on battlefields around the world, made the topic of this workshop very important to ARF. He explained that the ICRC was very familiar with this, and had been working to save lives throughout this era of polarization and conflict. He believed that if the world were to talk about how to build sustainable peace, it should first look at human attitudes towards war. Over a career spanning three decades, he shared that he had discovered that humans had a tendency to glorify conflict, often accepting it as the first means for resolving differences between nations and societies. He then shared the Red Cross' humanitarian relief work on the front lines in Ukraine. Pierre Krahenbuhl criticized the view that wars were inevitable, believing that war could be avoided. But he also clarified that humanitarian aid never addressed the root causes of conflict, which would require the collective involvement of political actors and institutions, local civil society, actors and others, and calls for dialogue, mediation and negotiation.

In his presentation, General Romeo Dallaire, International Commissioner on Inclusive Peace, first reviewed the era of globalization and the role of information technology in the dissemination of the Rwandan genocide. He stated this did not change the Western government's bystander attitude towards the genocide. He said that the principles of peacemaking would need to be adapted to national peace processes as well as the needs, cultures and histories of grassroots communities. He believed that the transformation of lasting peace from a philosophical idea into a

practical principle of peace would require the collective participation of the people as well as the incorporation of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into a framework that would ultimately lead to a lasting peace process.

Hiba Qasas, Head of the Principles for Peace Secretariat, highlighted the complexities of conflict prevention and peace-building landscapes in areas of heightened polarization. She said violent conflict was now more common than ever. She argued that, despite efforts to reform, the existing international system had shown its limitations and were now in need of new approaches and frameworks to address the challenges of the new era. She informed that she had led a quantitative survey of his organization across the globe and then shared some of its key findings during the meeting, along with some of the observed changes in practice and some emerging principles. She pointed out that peacebuilding was not a linear process and that all actors and organizations, both multilateral and bilateral, had a key role in it. She also emphasized that dignity was at the heart of peacemaking and required clear legitimacy.

Achim Wennmann, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Geneva Graduate Institute, pointed out that the urban dimension would become an increasingly important operational landscape for international relations and conflict prevention. The crises and strategic challenges facing humanity today were interlocked with public health, climate change, military and geopolitical tensions. In addressing and finding new solutions to these international crises, the concepts of complexity, unpredictability and informality would need to be embraced. He explained that, at the heart of the concept of urban peace was a focus on how people approach issues, trust each other and come together. In the face of climate change and COVID-19, especially the unprecedented speed and scale of their effects, the current approach to prevention must be reconsidered. Speaking of the urban context, he emphasized the importance of strengthening the resilience of the city by enhancing the social connections between its people, which would allow them to build mutual trust and work together to respond to common challenges.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Latifah Zaini, Deputy Director-General of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam, said that during the two-day workshop there was agreement that preventive diplomacy was important for maintaining regional peace, stability and prosperity. She highlighted some of the key points made by the speakers, including the need to strengthen development cooperation together, extend capacity building to those in need, cooperate on transferring skills to poor rural communities, the importance of local self-organizations and the sense of ownership towards peace building and development, and being able to adapt to the complexities of current and future challenges. Talking about the pandemic, she stressed the importance of having a comprehensive database to conduct research, share knowledge, and exchange ideas. She said that it was imperative that ARF participating countries abide by common human values and principles, dignity, solidarity,

and humanity, to prevent conflict and build lasting peace. She agreed that preventive diplomacy should be inclusive and advance a people-centered response with active engagement and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and all levels of society. Ms. Latifah Zaini hoped that ARF participating countries could work closely together and pick up some of the recommendations given during the workshop, based on their respective needs and interests.

Ms. Hla Thida Lin, Director, ASEAN Affairs Department, MOFA, Myanmar, commented that the workshop was successful and contributed significantly to the regional peace, stability, and prosperity. She also believed that the deliberation and interactive discussion during the session of the workshop have enlightened and broadened the personal knowledge and capacity of each participant from the ARF countries who have played a pivotal role in maintaining peace and security in the region. Ms. Hla Thida Lin encouraged the participants to share the experience and information learned from this workshop with their colleagues, so as to meet the needs of their respective national capacity building, and at the same time actively coordinate and cooperate in related aspects to jointly maintain regional peace.

Mr. Seah Seow Chen, Deputy Director, ASEAN Singapore, said that ARF is an important platform for security dialogue between traditional security and non-traditional security, and noted that a small country like Singapore depends on international order including peaceful methods of dispute resolution between states. Regional peace should not be taken for granted. He also said that the workshop highlighted the importance of building long-term sustainable peace in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and that a people-centered response is necessary. Mr. Seah Seow Chen believed that we need to address the root causes of conflict at its core through international development cooperation and poverty reduction. He stated that Singapore has and will continue to actively contribute to the regional community by sharing Singapore's developmental experience, such as through the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Looking ahead, Mr. Seah Seow Chen said that changing regional and global developments, COVID-19, and non-traditional security threats accelerated the challenges we face and our approach needs to be adapted to a constantly changing world. He said that today's speakers have discussed extensively on addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He acknowledged the long-term threats in climate change to regional peace and security, and that sustainable development contributes to a sustainable peace. He emphasized that while welcoming ideas from the rest of the world, we must also adapt them to fit our regional context.

Prof. Guo Yanjun, Director of the Institute of Asian Studies, China Foreign Affairs University, concluded that this is an efficient and successful workshop, and summarized the following four points: first, local capacity is key for the success of sustaining peace, which is rooted in the complexity of social lives and uncertain factors and influences. Second, a holistic and multilevel approach is necessary for the effectiveness of PD. Third, pandemic gives us opportunities to seek

a resilient, people-centered, and inclusive way of PD in the region. Fourth, new threats and problems bring new conflicts. Facing a more turbulent world, we should rethink the principles for peace, and seek a more inclusive and coordinated partnership with International NGOs, to tackle those new issues such as climate change. Prof. Guo said that we need to introduce a more systematic perspective and creative approach to deal with the severing challenges. Prof. Guo also quoted Chinese President Xi Jinping's "global security initiative" at Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022, advocating a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security concept, maintaining the basic principles in the existing international order, and clarifying new topics and new paths for security cooperation. He believed that this represents a new security outlook and a way of addressing the security challenges we all face now and more in-depth discussions could be conducted on these issues in the future.