



CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT

15th ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM EXPERTS AND EMINENT PERSONS MEETING

13 July 2022, via videoconference

INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the decision of the 28th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held via videoconference on 6 August 2021 under Brunei Darussalam's chairmanship of ASEAN, the 15th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) Meeting was held via videoconference on 13 July 2022.

2. The Meeting was co-chaired by Professor Chen Dongxiao, EEP of China and Mr. Garry Ibrahim, EEP of Brunei Darussalam, and attended by the representatives, officials and observers of all ARF Participants, with the exception of Australia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Papua New Guinea. Representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat were also in attendance. The List of Delegates appears as ANNEX 1.

AGENDA ITEM 1: CO-CHAIRS' WELCOMING REMARKS

3. The Co-Chairs welcomed participants to the Meeting and recalled the critical role of the EEPs over the past two decades in generating innovative ideas and recommendations on security issues in the region, as well as supporting the ARF's objective to promote peace and stability in the region through confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. Reflecting on the rapidly growing uncertainties and complexities in the region interlinked with the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and global geostrategic tensions, the Co-Chairs reiterated the significance of ASEAN-centred regional architecture to promote inclusive security cooperation, and highlighted the importance of utilizing the EEPs' consultative resources to address the traditional and non-traditional security challenges as the common threats to the region.

4. The Co-Chairs informed that the meeting agenda included Regional Security Issues, mainly focusing on Regional Security Landscape; Non-proliferation and Disarmament; and Food, Energy and Sustainable Development, as well as Opportunities and Challenges for Preventive Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region. The updated Agenda appears as ANNEX 2.

AGENDA ITEM 2: OPENING ADDRESS BY AMB. WANG FUKANG

5. In his keynote address, H.E. Wang Fukang, Ambassador in the Department of Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, recalled the establishment and developments of the ARF EEPs meetings, and recognized the contributions of EEPs to the deepened and expanded security cooperation in the region. Noting that the world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, Ambassador Wang stressed the urgent task for all parties to better leverage the role of ARF, so as to effectively safeguard regional peace, stability and prosperity. He further recommended that the EEPs focus on the following work: 1) Offering advice and suggestions on how to maintain a peaceful and stable regional environment, uphold true multilateralism, enhance ASEAN Centrality, and ensure the correct direction of regional cooperation; 2) Conducting in-depth discussions on how to collectively address financial, food and energy security risks, and effectively maintain the momentum of regional economic recovery and sustainable development; 3) Actively studying how to promote consensus, carry out more confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy among ARF members and support the sound development of the ARF.

6. Ambassador Wang highlighted China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) proposed by President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022, which aims at forging a new type of security, featuring dialogue, partnership and win-win cooperation instead of confrontation, alliance and a zero-sum approach. The Ambassador underscored that the GSI is consistent with the concepts of ARF, and that China is ready to follow through the concept of cooperative security and actively carry out security dialogues and cooperation with ARF members.

AGENDA ITEM 3: REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARF WORK PLAN ON PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY**3.1 Update on the ARF PD Work Plan**

7. The ARF Unit updated the Meeting on the steady progress of the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy during the inter-sessional year 2021-2022, including 23 ad-hoc activities in the form of workshops and seminars. Due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, majority of the activities were convened virtually, and 8 of these activities would be carried out in the next inter-sessional year possibly in person. The ARF Unit informed that the ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) 2021 had received 24 submissions from the participants; representatives of international organizations had been invited as speakers in several workshops and activities, e.g. the ARF Workshop on Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in December 2021, and ARF Workshop on Health Security and Pandemic Response and Recovery in May 2022; 3 activities related to PD had been conducted in the inter-sessional year 2021-2022, i.e. ARF Workshop Series on Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Mitigation – Part Two in September 2021, ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy for Sustaining Peace in June 2022, and ARF Symposium on Inclusive Processes for Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution in June 2022.

8. Regarding action line 7, the ARF Unit informed the Meeting that as part of efforts to also implement the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025), the ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) in June 2021 agreed to task the ASEAN Secretariat to develop an information paper to review the role and capacity of ARF Unit, which was under deliberation by ASEAN Member States.

3.2 Review of the recommendations of the 14th ARF EEPs Meeting

9. EEP from Myanmar, as the Co-chair of the 14th ARF EEPs Meeting, highlighted that the topics addressed by EEPs need to be adapted to the emerging challenges. He briefed the outcomes of the Meeting co-chaired by Myanmar and China on 6 July 2021, which covered regional security issues and non-traditional security challenges post COVID-19. He outlined the following key recommendations from the 14th EEPs Meeting: 1) Establishing a virtual working group to streamline EEPs' recommendations in the future; 2) Establishing a repository for EEP statements, recommendations, and memorandum; 3) Enhancing EEPs' role and relevance within the ARF in a more inclusive manner; 4) Submitting the recommendations of the EEPs to the ARF ministers.

10. Myanmar EEP reported that Myanmar Foreign Minister H.E. U Wunna Maung Lwin briefly informed ARF participants about the set of recommendations during the 28th ASEAN Regional Forum held virtually on 6 August 2021, but the Co-Chairs' Summary Report of the 14th Meeting was unable to be finalized ahead of the Forum, and was therefore not ready to be discussed by the 28th ARF. He expected that the recommendations of both the 14th and the 15th EEPs Meeting to be officially submitted to the 29th ARF this year.

AGENDA ITEM 4: REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES

4.1 REGIONAL SECURITY LANDSCAPE

11. Some EEPs outlined the evolving and growingly complex regional security landscape, referring to intensifying geostrategic competition between major powers, unresolved internal and regional security focal points, risk multipliers such as the pandemic and climate change, and challenges to the ASEAN-centred regional security architecture by the emergence of exclusive minilateral security arrangements. They also recognized that the Ukraine issue had multiple implications on regional peace and stability, ranging from increasing risks of conflicts and nuclear proliferation, to economic slow-down as a result of food and energy shortage. In this regard, the EEPs highlighted the increasing importance of further utilizing ARF's functions by promoting confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution in the region.

12. The EEP from the People's Republic of China highlighted the policy speech by Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to the ASEAN Secretariat on 12 July 2022, which renews China's firm commitment to open regionalism, and support to increase synergy and cooperation with ASEAN on the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook for

Indo-Pacific (AOIP) to produce cooperation outcomes at an early date. He said that inclusiveness is one of the basic principles of AOIP, all parties can strengthen synergy and cooperation within the framework of AOIP to establish a more inclusive order in the region. The EEP from the United States highlighted that climate change and water scarcity may increase nuclear risk in the region, and emphasized the important role of CBMs and PD on resolving such kind of tension and conflict. She also called for the notion of common security, and echoed Brunei's emphasis on pursuing the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agendas in the region. The EEP from Vietnam called for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and an early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC) that is consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. He also raised the importance in achieving a feasible solution to the Myanmar issue by speeding up the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. The EEP from the European Union highlighted the security and economic impacts of the Ukraine issue on the Asia-Pacific region, and the pressure on the ARF to further deliver solutions to regional peace and security.

4.2 NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

13. Some EEPs outlined multi-layered challenges to the global agenda of non-proliferation and disarmament, including the launch of new minilateral security arrangements that could create a backdoor for nuclear proliferation; accelerating development of nuclear and delivery capabilities in DPRK; unresolved negotiation between U.S. and Iran; and non-traditional nuclear security challenges. The EEPs recognized that the 10th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) scheduled in August would take place under difficult circumstances, and called for diplomatic efforts and constructive discussion to promote trust and consensus.

14. EEP from the Republic of Korea called for urgent attention on DPRK's rapidly advancing nuclear capability and its grave impact on regional peace and stability, and highlighted the need for a firm and united regional response. A Russian Discussant highlighted the importance of trust and consensus for international cooperation on NPT and other non-proliferation regimes of chemical and biological weapons. A Singaporean EEP called for consensus on creating a world free of nuclear weapons, and encouraged member states to support the Conference of Disarmament (CD) and the negotiation on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). EEP from Japan called for major nuclear powers to improve transparency in their nuclear strategies. A Chinese discussant highlighted the defensive nature of China's nuclear strategy, reflected by its commitment of no first use of nuclear weapon and no use of nuclear weapon on non-nuclear states.

4.3 FOOD, ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

15. The EEPs outlined the severe challenges of global food and energy market and the multiple factors behind, including climate change, COVID-19 pandemic, poverty, disruption in global supply chain and global conflicts. The EEPs noted that food and energy insecurity had a transboundary impact on the world, and that Southeast Asia as a region of food and energy deficit, is extremely vulnerable to shocks in the international market. The EEPs also highlighted the importance of addressing food and energy security challenges through sustainable development, including through the adoption of the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economic model. The EEPs concluded that food and energy security should be a top priority for track 1 diplomacy, and called for further cooperation to abate price inflation, diversify supply chain and invest in research and innovation.

16. The EEP from Indonesia highlighted President Joko Widodo's shuttle diplomacy Ukraine and Russia, and called for diplomatic efforts to address the supply chain disruption and scale up humanitarian assistance. The Indonesian EEP also outlined the potential for the region to further integrate into global food and energy supply chain. The EEP from Thailand proposed that ASEAN establish mechanisms similar to the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) to cover other food commodities, such as wheat, maize, vegetable oils and fertilisers. A Chinese discussant raised concerns about the current account balance deficit of many countries in the region due to the food and energy crises, and called for increased cooperative efforts in enhancing regional financial safety net and economic resilience.

AGENDA ITEM 5: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

17. Recognizing that ASEAN Centrality in the regional security architecture that promotes trust and inclusive collaboration is under pressure from the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, climate changes, food and cyber security issues, Ukraine crisis, divided and exclusive minilateral security arrangements as some EEPs listed, the meeting highlighted the importance for ARF to adapt to the increasingly complex and multi-dimensional challenges, so as to better fulfil its function on building confidence, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. The EEPs noted that ARF should improve synergy with other ASEAN-led regional mechanisms, including ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). The EEPs also stressed that the ARF needs to actively address issues including food and energy security, climate change, nuclear non-proliferation, humanitarian assistance and disasters relief, and the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda.

18. A Brunei EEP suggested enhancing institutional processes, including an information sharing mechanism between ARF Defence Officials Dialogue (DOD) for defence cooperation with other regional mechanisms such as the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, which enables both platforms the opportunity to complement one another, and to develop new means to pursue preventive diplomacy built on dialogue and mutual trust towards a cohesive vision for the Asia-Pacific region. EEPs from Canada and the Philippines emphasized that ARF needs to shift the focus from confidence building measures to preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. EEPs from New Zealand and the Philippines also suggested that the promotion of responsible and independent media could be one of the ways to mitigate concerns of misinformation.

AGENDA ITEM 6: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 15TH ARF EEPs MEETING

19. The EEPs further discussed major global and regional security issues, and ways to enhance the consultative role of the ARF EEPs Meeting on confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution in the region.

20. The EEPs outlined major issues for the ARF to focus on: 1) Reaffirming ASEAN Centrality in the regional security architecture, which adheres to the principle of inclusive multilateralism. 2) Dedicating diplomatic efforts to promote de-escalation and peaceful solution to global and regional focal security issues, including the Ukraine issue, nuclear capability build-up in DPRK, and stability in Myanmar. 3) Reaffirming commitment to NPT obligations, supporting constructive dialogues on non-proliferation and disarmament at the 10th Review Conference of NPT and other regional and international occasions. 4) Taking actions to abate global and regional food insecurity, including support for a humanitarian corridor in Ukraine to allow food shipments, and establishment of an ASEAN-led mechanism to avert price inflation of food commodities in the region. 5) Recognising the need to address the issue of misinformation and disinformation in building confidence.

21. With regard to the submission process of recommendations to ARF, the EEPs recognized several areas for further improvement: 1) Future EEP meetings need to be scheduled at least 2 months ahead of the ARF ministerial meetings to ensure timely submission of EEP recommendations. 2) EEP meetings need to enhance relevance and synergy with other ASEAN-led mechanisms. 3) Some EEPs suggested the need to set up inter-sessional working groups to have thorough discussions on some key issue areas and provide solid recommendations. 4) The Co-chair from Brunei called for encouraging youth participation in the EEP.

AGENDA ITEM 7: CONCLUDING SESSION

Co-Chairs' Summary and Closing Remarks

22. The co-chairs appreciated active participation by the ARF EEPs for a rich and intense discussion on all agenda items. The co-chairs recognized the growingly complex and

increasingly interrelated global and regional security agenda, including traditional geopolitical tensions and conflicts and non-traditional security nexus. Acknowledging the challenging situation, especially misunderstanding and misinformation among regional actors and fragmentation of regional security architecture, the co-chairs highlighted the importance of maintaining ASEAN centrality in regional security architecture, encouraging inclusive and comprehensive cooperation, and enhancing implementation and synergy of ASEAN-led security platforms for confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. They also emphasized a development-focused approach to address non-traditional security issues, calling for cooperation and collaboration on food and energy resilience, climate change, WPS and YPS.

Dates and Venue of the 16th ARF EEPs Meeting

23. Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Korea will co-chair the 16th ARF EEPs Meeting, which is expected to be convened in-person or online during the inter-sessional year of 2022-2023. The Co-chair from Brunei noted some relevant suggestions from Agenda Item 6, and will coordinate with the ROK to prepare for the 16th ARF EEPs Meeting.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the key recommendations of the 15th ARF EEP Meeting:

- (i) To call for early ceasefire and peaceful resolution in Ukraine and enhancing humanitarian assistance as well as safeguarding food security.
- (ii) To establish ASEAN-led mechanisms to address the price inflation of food commodities in the region other than rice (which is already covered by APTERR).
- (iii) To further emphasize the importance of regional cooperation on climate change resilience and sustainable development in ARF agenda.
- (iv) To enhance synergy of ARF and other ASEAN-led platforms promoting regional confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy.
- (v) To further involve women, peace and security (WPS) and youth, peace and security (YPS) agendas to ARF EEPs Meetings.
- (vi) To conduct preparation workshops ahead of future ARF EEPs Meetings for the discussion of major issues and solutions.

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