

Establishing an Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on Nonproliferation and Disarmament in the ASEAN Regional Forum

Background: Participants in the ASEAN Regional Forum, (ARF) have indicated the desire to advance focus of the organization beyond confidence building measures towards more concrete cooperation in accordance with their respective national laws and on a voluntary basis, particularly in non-traditional and transnational security areas. Toward this goal, the United States would propose strengthening the ARF's work in these areas to initiate a regular Inter-Sessional Meeting on Nonproliferation and Disarmament to address the threats posed by the spread of WMD. This would create a third ISM within the ARF, and the first since the creation of an ISM on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime in 2002. This new ISM would not only include the sharing of views on addressing threats posed by WMD, but would also provide a venue for working-level officials to discuss capacity building activities aimed at facilitating Participants' implementation of their Nonproliferation and Disarmament obligations as States Parties to the existing multilateral WMD instruments (NPT, BTWC, and CWC), including the 2004 ARF Jakarta Statement, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.

Proposal: Ministers at the 15th ARF should establish an Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on Nonproliferation and Disarmament to begin during the 2008-2009 Inter-sessional year.

Future meetings of this ISM could focus on specific and concrete ways and means toward:

- Promoting full compliance with and effective implementation of participants' existing WMD nonproliferation and disarmament commitments and obligations;
- Preventing the illicit trafficking, in all aspects, of WMD, their means of delivery, and related materials, in accordance with national laws of ARF Participants;
- Implementing effective and appropriate national export control and border controls;
- Countering acts of WMD terrorism;
- Promoting implementation of UNSCR 1540.
- Promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and access to nuclear technology, equipment and fuel for peaceful uses under IAEA safeguards on a non-discriminatory basis.
- Promoting implementation of the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty, and encouraging dialogue between states party to SEANWFZ and the Nuclear Weapons States on its Protocol.
- Preventing any costly and destabilizing arms race in the ARF region.

An ISM on Nonproliferation and Disarmament would allow discussion and cooperation on issues related to achieving Nonproliferation and Disarmament of WMD, and would include exchanges of information on national measures taken by participants to implement their commitments as States Parties to existing multilateral nonproliferation

and disarmament instruments. The primary focus of each meeting would be on practical steps Participants are willing to take including technical capacity-building to address the threat posed by WMD proliferation. ISM Participants would include officials and technical-level experts from relevant agencies.

Venue: As with other ISMs within the ARF, chairmanship of this meeting would rotate in the future among interested ARF participants. The United States would chair the first meeting of the ISM on Nonproliferation and Disarmament during the 2008-2009 inter-sessional year, and Singapore and China would serve as co-chairs. This first meeting would build upon recommendations made during the February 2007 Workshop on Implementation of UNSCR 1540 as well as previous work in ARF on the subject. Subsequent ISM meetings would be held annually as appropriate.