



ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
**ANNUAL SECURITY
OUTLOOK
2023**

**ASEAN MATTERS:
EPICENTRUM OF GROWTH**

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FOREWORD



The challenges confronting us today, including escalating geopolitical competition, regional conflicts, the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of climate change, have increased the complexity of the regional security landscape. Navigating these challenges becomes indispensable to maintaining peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. Under the theme ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth, Indonesia's Chairmanship determines to harness ASEAN and its mechanisms' full strength to remain relevant in facing present challenges and anticipating future ones.

As one of the ASEAN-led mechanisms, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has served as an important platform to build mutual trust and confidence among its 27 Participants for the last three decades, through constructive dialogues and activities that strengthen confidence-building efforts in the region. Yet, ARF needs to be more responsive in addressing emerging security challenges in the region. In light of this, as ARF celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, there is a shared aspiration among Participants for ARF to evolve beyond its current focus on confidence-building measures and progress to the next stage of

Preventing Diplomacy. In doing so, the future role of ARF shall promote greater synergy and collaboration within an inclusive regional architecture.

In that vein, as the Chair of the 30th ARF, it is with great honor to present the 24th edition of the ARF Annual Security Outlook (ARF ASO) for the year 2023. This document is a compilation of voluntary contributions from ARF Participants, encapsulating diverse perspectives and valuable insights of the ARF Participants on the contemporary regional landscape. It also stands as a testament to their collective commitment and collective efforts to foster cooperation, build trust, and ensure transparency in addressing complex and dynamic security challenges in our region.

In this regard, I would like to express my gratitude to all the ARF Participants contributing to the publication of the 2023 ASO. Let us continue strengthening the ARF to remain adaptive and responsive to the changing strategic environment in the region to ensure a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Retno L.P. Marsudi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Retno L.P. Marsudi

Chair of the 30th ASEAN Regional Forum
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

EXCECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Security Outlook is an annual publication document of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). This year's publication includes 21 voluntary submissions from 21 ARF Participants. It provides a compilation of perspectives on the contemporary regional landscape, their national contributions to regional and global peace and security as well as their expectations on the future role of the ARF. In general, the Participants continue to reaffirm their commitment to enhance their efforts in the main areas of cooperation of the ARF, which include counterterrorism and transnational crime, non-proliferation and disarmament, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security, and security in the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

2023 ARF ASO have acknowledged that procuring security is becoming more challenging in today's dynamic and complicated environment. ARF Member States have noted that emerging security challenges including the ongoing implications of COVID-19 pandemic, the persistence of environmental degradation brought by climate change, and the evolving insidious forms of transnational crimes have significant effect to regional and global security and stability. At the same time, it has also been noted that traditional security threat emanating from ongoing great power competition, geopolitical tensions, and militaristic rivalry is not an issue that should be easily disregarded.

Marking this year as the 30th anniversary of ARF, ARF Participants have acknowledged the positive and crucial role of ARF in strengthening security, promoting peace, and enhancing stability in the Asia-Pacific region through multilateral cooperation. On ICT security, Participants have underlined increasing strategic awareness and mutual understanding between states and relevant stakeholders. On maritime cooperation, Participants emphasized that efforts to promoting greater interagency cooperation and information sharing, including maritime domain awareness need to be enhanced. On disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, Participants have provided practical support and expertise and attempt to develop better coordination and integration. On non-proliferation and disarmament, Participants highlighted the need to implement regional and international commitments and framework. On counter-terrorism, Participants have done efforts that focus on practical training and develop capacity of partners and stakeholders.

Despite an increasing hostile and dynamic environment, ARF Participants believe that ARF shall harness its fullest strength and embody a more practical form of cooperation as a means for ARF to address emerging security threats effectively and efficiently. In this regard, on the future role of the ARF, Participants express the hope that ARF can accelerate its shift from its current stage, which mainly

revolved around Confidence Building Measures, into the next stage, which is preventive diplomacy mechanism to effectively address emerging security threats. The increasing complexity of security environment also calls for a broader cooperation and engagement, not only with regional security architectures encompassing EAMF, EAS, and ADMM-Plus, but also with public and private stakeholders.

AUSTRALIA

I. **Our Region**

Australia and the countries of Southeast Asia have a long and proud history of cooperation and partnership. As ASEAN's first dialogue partner and now a Comprehensive Strategic Partner, Australia supports ASEAN's valuable contribution to the peace and stability of our region. We work with ASEAN in an open and transparent partnership which upholds ASEAN centrality and advances the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We believe that all countries that seek to work with the region have a responsibility to engage constructively with and through ASEAN. Australia's engagement with the region is underpinned by a commitment to protect and promote human rights and to achieve gender equality.

II. **The Regional Security Environment**

Our region is being reshaped. Australia shares ASEAN's wish for parties in the region to consider how they can best contribute to upholding regional peace and stability, and avoid the risk of miscalculation, including by de-escalating tensions. We share ASEAN's vision of a region where disputes are guided by international law and norms, not by power and size. A region in which countries are not forced to choose sides, but work together to shape the sort of region they want, and all countries benefit from a strategic equilibrium. A region that is peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and predictable. Where our countries and peoples can cooperate, trade and thrive, with inclusion and equity. Where we can cooperate to build economic security and resilience for all countries, underpinned by our commitment to strengthen the rules-based trading system. A regional order guided by the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). We seek to navigate this period of change together to create a region that is open, stable, prosperous and respectful of sovereignty. Our collective efforts towards this vision are being tested, in particular by Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine and the appalling violence and human rights violations being perpetrated by the military regime in Myanmar.

Australia's Defence Strategic Review, released in April 2023, found the challenges facing our region continue to escalate, as the region is reshaped by a large-scale military build-up with no strategic reassurance. The Australian Government's response to the review will be the blueprint for Australia's force posture and structure over the next decade, and will serve to ensure the Australian Defence Force is equipped for our current security

environment Australia is committed to countering disinformation that undermines the region's collective security, prosperity and sovereignty. Australia reaffirms our commitment to working with partners to ensure ours is a region where all countries can make their own sovereign choices and where people's voices and values are heard, respected and protected by the rule of law.

Australia reiterates the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We remain concerned about the risks of miscalculation and we do not want to see any unilateral change to the status quo.

Our diplomatic partnership with India, Japan and the United States through the Quad reinforces and supports our respective visions for an open, stable and prosperous region, respectful of sovereignty and with ASEAN at its centre. Quad partners are all ASEAN dialogue partners, and the Quad's positive and practical agenda is responding to the region's most pressing challenges including health security; climate change and clean energy; infrastructure and connectivity; critical and emerging technology; cyber security; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; space; maritime security; and counter-terrorism.

1. Ukraine

Australia has responded comprehensively to Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. Russia's invasion represents a flagrant breach of the UN Charter, including the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. It renders stark Australia's interest in a region – and a world – where no one country dominates, and no one country is dominated. Russia's invasion undermines the ASEAN principles of non-interference and respect for sovereignty and international law, as set out in the AOIP. It also violates the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), to which Russia and Ukraine are party.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to further exacerbate the global food crisis. Russia has destroyed Ukraine's agricultural land and facilities used for storing, processing and exporting staple foods. Its blockade of Black Sea ports has disrupted Ukraine's growing season and its capacity to export agricultural commodities. Russia's

actions have caused significant and long-lasting disruptions to exports, increasing food, energy and fertiliser costs.

Australia continues to closely monitor the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Ukraine. There are more than eight million Ukrainians seeking refuge in Europe and around 5.4 million Ukrainians internally displaced. Russia continues to target Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, leaving millions of Ukrainians without power, heating, clean water or adequate health care. We stand with Ukraine to mourn the tragic loss of life, and violence inflicted, including conflict-related sexual violence.

Australia has supported Ukraine by committing to provide more than A\$680 million in assistance, including more than A\$500 million in military assistance and A\$65 million in humanitarian assistance. We have also imposed a comprehensive suite of measures against Russia in response to its invasion, including targeted financial sanctions, import bans on Russian oil, refined petroleum products, coal, gas, gold, and export bans on alumina, bauxite and certain luxury goods. We continue to support international legal mechanisms to hold Russia accountable for its actions in Ukraine. Russia is responsible for this war and the human and economic suffering it is causing.

2. Myanmar

Australia remains deeply concerned about the worsening situation in Myanmar and the appalling violence and human rights violations being perpetrated by the military regime, including airstrikes against civilians, arbitrary arrest and detentions, and allegations of torture and deaths in custody. The military coup in Myanmar has reversed years of democratic, economic and development gains and plunged the country into a deep political and humanitarian crisis. Australia continues to urge the regime to end violence against civilians, engage in dialogue, release those unjustly detained, and allow safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance. Australia strongly supports ASEAN's leadership as a key element in responding to the Myanmar crisis and is dismayed that the regime continues to disregard its commitments under the ASEAN Five Point Consensus.

After careful deliberation and consultation, Australia imposed additional autonomous sanctions on 1 February 2023 on those directly responsible for the military coup and

ongoing repression and violence in Myanmar. This includes targeted financial sanctions and travel bans on 16 individuals who were responsible for the coup and the ongoing violence and oppression of the military regime, and targeted financial sanctions on two military-controlled entities. Australia will continue to monitor the regime's actions. We will be looking to see improvements for the people of Myanmar and moves towards the restoration of democracy, including credible elections.

Australia has consistently called for, and remains committed to, accountability for war crimes, human rights violations and abuses, and atrocities committed in Myanmar, including those committed against the Rohingya and other ethnic groups.

Australia will continue to support the people of Myanmar through provision of sustained development and humanitarian assistance (A\$120.6 million in 2022-23). Our assistance is targeted toward meeting immediate needs and building community resilience to respond to future challenges, with a focus on the most vulnerable. Australia continues to support the promotion of peace and democratic values. Our assistance is delivered through trusted partners including the United Nations and non-government organisations. Australia does not provide any direct funding to the Myanmar military regime and we take proactive steps to ensure Australia's assistance does not provide legitimacy to the regime.

3. Climate Change

Climate change is an existential threat to our health, our environment, our economy, and our national security. Australia recognises the urgency of the climate crisis. We are taking strong action to decarbonise our economy and we are working with countries to scale up global action.

Recognising the importance of ambitious action by all, the Australian Government submitted an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in June 2022, as one of its first actions as a new Government. The NDC strengthens our 2030 target to 43% below 2005 levels and reaffirms our net zero emissions by 2050 target. In September 2022, the Australian Government passed the Climate Change Act 2022, enshrining these targets in legislation and providing policy and investment certainty. Australia has announced A\$2 billion in climate finance for 2020-25, a doubling of Australia's

2015-2020 pledge. The Australian Government has increased support for our partners in Southeast Asia to accelerate the region's transition to net-zero, and we will continue to work with ASEAN on energy transition issues through our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The Australian Government is deeply committed to taking real, significant and gender-responsive climate action at home and establishing Australia as a climate leader internationally. We recognise that climate change is the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific. In July 2022, we joined Pacific leaders in declaring that the Pacific is facing a climate emergency, underscoring the urgency to scale-up ambition and implementation to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

The Australian Government is proud to join the Pacific family in co-sponsoring the Vanuatu-led UN General Assembly resolution requesting an International Court of Justice advisory opinion on climate change. Acting on climate change is a shared responsibility for all states. Our co-sponsorship underscores Australia's commitment to supporting Pacific climate leadership. We are working in partnership with Pacific islands countries to secure hosting rights for, and successfully deliver, COP31 in Australia in 2026. Australia seeks to deliver a COP that brings profile to the unique climate challenges faced by the region, and to accelerate global action to address them.

Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine has had profound effects, including on the global energy market. The invasion has also had severe impacts on energy affordability, with the World Economic Forum finding that the conflict has nearly doubled household energy costs worldwide, underlining the risk of over-dependence on fossil fuels from limited sources. Robust supply chains can contribute to energy security and support acceleration of the clean energy transition. Renewable energy, supported by storage and transmission, is secure energy.

We need to accelerate the energy transition and develop new and resilient supply chains for distributed energy production and storage, battery electric vehicles, clean hydrogen and ammonia and renewable marine, aviation, and land transport fuels. By

working together, we can help drive a more rapid adoption of new technologies and drive down emissions by giving greater confidence that supply chains can respond to increasing demand.

APS Net Zero 2030 is the Government's policy for the Australian Public Service (APS) to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2030. Australia also joined the Net Zero Government Initiative, launched at COP27 in November 2022, which commits countries to achieving net zero emissions from government operations and underscores the leadership role of governments in catalysing economy-wide climate actions. Further information is available at [APS Net Zero Emissions by 2030](#) | Department of Finance.

The 2023 Defence Strategic Review considered climate change as a national security issue. The Australian Government endorsed recommendations to develop national resilience and response measures at local levels for adverse climate changes and to accelerate the Australian Defence transition to clean energy to increase national resilience.

4. South China Sea

Australia depends on a region that is governed by accepted rules and norms, where all countries can cooperate, trade and thrive. The South China Sea is a vital waterway for the entire international community. All States have a substantial interest in peace and stability, freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded trade, and adherence to international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

We support a region which is peaceful, stable and where the rights of sovereign states are respected. We express serious concern about destabilising actions in the South China Sea, including: the dangerous and coercive use of coast guard vessels and 'maritime militia'; ongoing militarisation of disputed features; and efforts to disrupt other countries' resource exploitation activities. UNCLOS provides the comprehensive legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas. It provides the legal foundation for peace, security and stability in the maritime domain. Australia will continue to exercise our rights and freedoms under international law, including

freedom of navigation and overflight, and respect the rights of others to do the same. All claims in the South China Sea should be made and resolved in accordance with international law, particularly UNCLOS. Where claims have already been subject to binding legal judgments, the parties have an obligation to abide by them.

Australia is not a party to ASEAN negotiations with China on a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea. However, we have clear interests in ensuring an open maritime environment and upholding international law, particularly UNCLOS. Australian considers that any Code of Conduct should: not prejudice the interests of third parties or the rights of all States under international law, particularly UNCLOS; reinforce existing inclusive regional architecture; and strengthen States' commitments to cease actions that would complicate or escalate disputes, notably the militarisation of disputed features.

5. DPRK

The DPRK launched an unprecedented number of ballistic missiles in 2022, threatening the security of our partners, including Japan and the Republic of Korea, and destabilising the Indo-Pacific region. The DPRK's continued missile launches in 2023, including of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and reports that it remains ready to conduct a nuclear test, are deeply concerning. Additionally, North Korea is conducting increasingly sophisticated cyber attacks against financial institutions and cryptocurrency exchanges to raise illicit funds for its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programs. The DPRK's behaviour, in clear violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions, undermines the stability of our region and is a serious challenge to international non-proliferation efforts.

Australia has joined many other countries in calling for the UN Security Council to respond to the DPRK's escalating behaviour. Australia will continue to take action against the DPRK until it takes clear steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. This includes regular deployments of military assets, alongside partners, to monitor and deter shipments of sanctioned goods to the DPRK. We join the broader international community in urging the DPRK to change course, cease all provocations, and make a sustained commitment to meaningful talks with the United States and the Republic of Korea.

6. Health Security

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how disease outbreaks can threaten lives and livelihoods, with serious impacts on economies and health systems, which disproportionately affect individuals in vulnerable situations and those facing intersecting inequalities. Australia has been a responsive and reliable partner for Southeast Asian countries throughout the pandemic, including by providing more than 49 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Southeast Asia, including Timor-Leste. While the region has now moved beyond the acute phase of COVID-19, there continues to be strong demand from ASEAN countries for health cooperation with Australia, including to reduce risks associated with emerging infectious diseases.

Australia will improve health outcomes and promote regional prosperity and stability through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative, a new five-year program to be implemented from 2023 to 2027. This initiative will support technical expertise to build resilience in our region, and provide funding for research and development of vaccines, drugs and diagnostics for diseases that affect Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

As co-chair of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Experts' Working Group on Military Medicine, alongside Brunei Darussalam, Australia supports practical military medicine cooperation in military operations other than war, with a strong focus on pandemics and health security in the region.

III. National Security and Defend Policy

Strategic competition in the region operates in several domains – economic, diplomatic, strategic and military. All arms of Australia's national power are required to address these challenges, to deter aggression and coercion, and to maintain peace.

Australia is committed to an open, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific that respects sovereignty and operates by agreed rules, standards and laws. We are focused on transparent and consistent narratives in the region to counter negative perceptions being utilised to manipulate societies and threaten democratic values. In pursuing these goals, Australia remains unwavering in its support for ASEAN centrality, with ASEAN-led

mechanisms pivotal in promoting a peaceful, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific, free from coercion, along with full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Similarly, the Pacific Islands Forum, of which Australia is part, is central to protecting our shared interests in the region. As a member of the Pacific family our priority is to ensure the Blue Pacific remains peaceful, prosperous and equipped to respond to the challenges of our times. It is the view of the Pacific Islands Forum, and our view, that the Pacific family is responsible for Pacific security, and that regional security is enhanced when we work together, when we respond to Pacific priorities, and when we respect Pacific institutions.

We are also deeply committed to transparency. Australia reports data on its military expenditure to the UN in accordance with the UN Standardised Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, which can be accessed at UNARM (un-arm.org). Detail on the total number of personnel in the Australian Defence Force is published in the Department of Defence Annual Reports, available at: <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/information-disclosures/annual-reports>. The 2023 Defence Strategic Review has provided transparency in Australia's plans to invest in military capabilities, as one element of our statecraft, to ensure we are postured for the current strategic environment.

1. 2023 Defence Strategic Review

The independent 2023 Defence Strategic Review is Australia's most substantial defence review since the Second World War. The Government's response to the Review will inform Australia's strategic policy, defence planning and resourcing over the coming decades, and will include the delivery of a National Defence Strategy in 2024. The Review recognises that investing in our regional partnerships – including ASEAN – is essential, with enhanced diplomacy at the forefront of our efforts. Australia will use all levers of statecraft to deter conflict and maintain strategic balance, including by supporting ASEAN centrality, contributing with our partners to the maintenance of the global rules-based order and encouraging major powers to manage competition responsibly.

In implementing the Review, Australia will strengthen its defence capabilities in a responsible and transparent manner. The Australian Government will build a fully integrated and more capable Australian Defence Force (ADF) that will work seamlessly

across the five domains. Strengthening Australia's defence capabilities – and working with partners to invest in their capabilities – is a prudent response to the changing strategic environment.

2. AUKUS

Australia is committed to supporting a region that is stable, peaceful, prosperous and respectful of sovereignty. AUKUS complements Australia's multi-faceted engagement with our region, and our commitment to ASEAN centrality and the AOIP.

As a trilateral technology sharing partnership with the UK and US, AUKUS is one element of Australia's approach to addressing a more challenging strategic environment. Complemented by Australia's commitment to diplomacy, our new defence capabilities will help protect our maritime approaches, deter threats in our region and help ensure a strategic equilibrium is maintained in the Indo-Pacific. Australia believes these enhanced defence capabilities will contribute to collective security and lower the risk of conflict. Transparent engagement regarding defence acquisitions is critical for reassurance and building a stable, predictable and prosperous region.

In March 2023, AUKUS leaders announced the pathway for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines. Our acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines is in the context of a strong and longstanding commitment to non-proliferation, will be undertaken in full compliance with our obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Treaty of Rarotonga, and will not undermine the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANWFZ Treaty). Australia has a proud record of leadership in the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Australia will continue to engage with the IAEA on a non-proliferation approach for our nuclear-powered submarine program that sets the highest non-proliferation standard.

3. National Contributions to Regional Security

a. Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism

Australia works closely with our ARF partners to counter terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms, including through the Intersessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM-CTTC).

In July 2022, Australia co-chaired the inaugural ASEAN-Australia Dialogue on Counter Terrorism, as envisaged in the ASEAN Plus Australia Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC + Australia) Workplan. Australia was pleased to co-chair the second ASEAN-Australia Dialogue on Counter Terrorism in May 2023.

As Co-Chairs of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Working Group, Australia and Indonesia developed a Gender Policy Toolkit. Australia is funding the Global Centre for Cooperative Security to roll out practical training on the Gender Policy toolkit to policy makers and practitioners.

Australia continues to partner with the Southeast Asian Network of Civil Society Organisations, and is working to develop civil society organisations' capacity to partner more effectively with regional governments and the private sector on CVE.

Australia has also been a member of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism since its inception in 2011.

b. Non-Proliferation, Counter Proliferation, arms control and disarmament

Australia is committed to redoubling its efforts towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. This year marks 50 years since Australia ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and we remain unwavering in our support for this cornerstone treaty. Australia is committed to mainstreaming gender in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The NPT has continued to make a vital contribution to international security, through: driving nuclear disarmament; preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons; and ensuring that the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy and technology are available to all. The near consensus outcome of the NPT

Review Conference in August 2022, with only Russia objecting, demonstrated the strength of commitment to the NPT.

Australia welcomes progress in our region toward universalisation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) with ratifications from Timor-Leste and Tuvalu in 2022 and Solomon Islands in January 2023. Australia continues to support entry into force and universalisation of the treaty, including through the CTBT Group of Friends Ministerial Meeting chaired by Australian Foreign Minister Wong together with Japanese Prime Minister Kishida in September 2022, and the annual UN General Assembly resolution with co-leads New Zealand and Mexico.

In March 2023, Australia co-chaired with the Philippines the second ARF Nuclear Risk Reduction Workshop in Brisbane. The workshop underscored the role that risk reduction measures can play in disarmament processes and the critical importance of reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use. Work has been underway since 2020 on an ARF Nuclear Risk Reduction Guidance Document that could be considered by ARF Ministers.

Australia was pleased to bring the work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) into the region by hosting, for the first time, the annual plenary meeting in December 2022. More than 70 experts representing 20 countries gathered in Sydney to advance practical and effective nuclear disarmament mechanisms.

We also work with Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and others to build practical safeguard capabilities through the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network.

Australia's collaboration with ASEAN partners, such as the Philippines, contributed to a successful Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Review Conference in December 2022. A new BWC working group will be an opportunity to advance cross-regional cooperation.

In 2022, Australia partnered with Malaysia through the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Mentorship/Partnership Program. The partnership culminated in a co-hosted conference, with the OPCW, on Chemical Weapons Convention implementation (CWC) for Pacific Island States where Director General OPCW delivered the keynote address. The program will serve as the model for advancing cooperation on CWC implementation in the region.

Over the past year, Australia has been proactive in its contribution to the UN Open Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition. The diversion of conventional ammunition to unauthorized recipients remains a serious concern, including to organised criminal groups and terrorists, as well as their contribution to the intensity and duration of armed conflict, armed violence, including gender-based armed violence.

c. Transnational Crime (People Smuggling and Human Trafficking; Transnational, Serious and Organised Crime; Illicit drugs; Cybercrime)

Australia works closely with ASEAN partners to deal with transnational crime threats in the region. This includes operational engagement, information sharing and capacity building. Deterring and prosecuting the criminals who profit from these activities is one of Australia's highest priorities in the region. We continue to engage on key issues through the ARF Intersessional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime, the ASEAN Plus Australia Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD). We provide technical assistance and other support through activities under these mechanisms, as well as programs such as the Mekong-Australia Partnership on Transnational Crime (MAP-TNC) and ASEAN-Australia Political Security Partnership.

Australia seeks to disrupt and dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks through information-sharing, coordinated action and joint operations. Australia is co-chair, with Indonesia, of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. A successful Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Bali Process, and Third Government and

Business Forum was held in Adelaide, Australia, on 10 February 2023. During the Conference, Bali Process Members endorsed the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation, which includes strong regional commitments to: combat trafficking into online scam operations; address the impacts of technology on irregular migration; and further strengthen Bali Process engagement with civil society and the private sector.

Australia continues to counter human trafficking in Southeast Asia through the ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking program (ASEAN-ACT), an A\$80 million investment until 2028. ASEAN-ACT supports ASEAN Member States to implement and report on their obligations under the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In addition, Australia is supporting the Tripartite Action to Enhance the Contribution of Labour Migration to Growth and Development in ASEAN (TRIANGLE in ASEAN), an A\$24 million commitment until 2027, delivered in partnership with the Government of Canada and implemented by the ILO. TRIANGLE in ASEAN promotes safe and fair labour migration in the region and works to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers and reduce their risk of being trafficked.

The global illicit drug trade presents a significant threat to the stability and security of the region. The Australian illicit drug market remains a lucrative and attractive target for transnational serious and organised crime groups and the Southeast Asian region is used by these groups as both a source and transit location. Crystal methamphetamine (ice) and its precursors continue to be of great concern for Australia, though heroin, cocaine and synthetic opioids also remain a threat. Australian Government agencies work closely with regional and international counterparts to prevent and disrupt the manufacture and trafficking of illicit drugs in the region, including through joint operations, intelligence sharing and capacity building.

Australia is committed to continuing to work closely with our regional partners in the UN Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime, to develop a long-term, future-proof cybercrime convention that is consistent with the existing

international legal framework to address cross-border crimes. Australia's engagement in the Ad-Hoc Committee on Cybercrime is also reflective of the focus and priority Australia places on combatting online child abuse, as well as technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Australia is committed to working with Member States to find consensus on these crimes to better protect children worldwide. Under our SOMTC work plan, Australia co-chaired with Singapore an ASEAN cyber capacity building workshop which considered these and other cyber issues exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.

d. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Disaster Risk Reduction

The Indo-Pacific region is experiencing disasters of increasing frequency and severity, including cyclones, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. In the face of increasing climate and disaster risk, building resilience is more important than ever. Australia's long-standing commitment to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is at the core of our regional engagement to lessen the impact of future shocks. In 2022, Australia supported Indonesia's hosting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (September 2022) and is co-facilitating with Indonesia the Political Declaration on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework in May 2023.

Australia is committed to accelerating progress in line with the Sendai commitments by supporting anticipatory and locally-led solutions that recognise, respect and strengthen leadership and decision-making by local and national actors, and ensuring the most vulnerable are included in resilience-building efforts.

Australia provides practical support and expertise to increase regional engagement and cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) through ASEAN-led mechanisms and with regional and international partners. In 2023, through the Australia Assists program, we are providing a range of humanitarian specialists to support ASEAN Member States, including in Indonesia, Lao PDR and the Philippines, and two deployments to work with

the AHA Centre, to assist with training and the evaluation of ASEAN emergency response and assessment systems.

e. Women, Peace and Security

Australia is a committed global champion of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. It is a commitment shared by governments in our region, and ASEAN, and we are working actively together to progress the Agenda. Launched in 2022, the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women Peace and Security is a critical step in ASEAN Member States making progress on their commitment to gender equality and the human rights of women and girls, along with promoting sustainable peace and security in the region.

Australia is working with ASEAN and other partners to design and deliver initiatives that:

- support women peace mediator networks in Southeast Asia and the Pacific;
- strengthen channels for civil society engagement on WPS across Asia, the Pacific and the Great Lakes Region of Africa;
- provide technical support to governments to develop, implement and review national action plans and the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS;
- develop research, communication tools and digital platforms for engagement to support advocacy and accountability;
- support women's participation, leadership, inclusion and empowerment in countries facing dire peace, security and humanitarian challenges; and
- enhance exchanges of survivor-centred and gender-responsive procedures, tools, learning and systems amongst justice practitioners.

Australia also supports bilateral and regional programming on WPS, including on cybersecurity and countering violent extremism. This includes support through the ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program, through which capacity building activities focus on victim identification, protection and support, as well as the protection of persons in vulnerable situations.

Australia is attentive to the interconnections of the WPS agenda with both the Climate, Peace and Security and space security agendas.

f. Maritime Security

As a maritime nation, Australia is committed to working closely with regional partners and through international forums to enhance maritime security and promote habits of cooperation in the region. In the 2021-22 ARF intersessional year, we co-hosted workshops on Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation with the European Union and Vietnam and on Law of the Sea and Fisheries with India and Indonesia. We hope to co-host additional workshops on maritime issues in the 2023-24 ARF intersessional year. Australia is also working with regional partners to enhance maritime domain awareness; combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; disrupt maritime transnational crime threats; uphold international law, including UNCLOS; improve maritime safety; sustainably manage marine resources and respond to marine environmental challenges. In 2021, Australia and India co-hosted the Fifth East Asia Summit (EAS) Workshop on Maritime Security, and in 2022 Australia, Singapore and India co-hosted an EAS Workshop on Marine Debris. Australia continues to strongly support the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), including co-sponsoring initiatives with the Philippines to institutionalise the EAMF that were adopted by ASEAN Member States in March 2023.

Australia has worked closely with partners to support successful regional efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea, including through the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia. As a member of the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM), Australia supports HACGAM initiatives to bolster regional civil maritime security by promoting greater agency-to-agency cooperation and promoting information sharing to achieve mutual outcomes. Australia also contributes as a member of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security, a key mechanism for discussion and exchange of views on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.

g. Cyber Security

Australia recognises that cyberspace and critical technology play an important role in our vision for an open, stable and prosperous region. Australia's Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program contributes to capacity building efforts in our region, including ASEAN countries, to harness the opportunities of cyberspace and critical technology, while mitigating the risks. Australia continues to deliver activities that focus on: promoting the framework of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace; cyber security and incident response capabilities; promoting best practice use of technology for economic, sustainable and inclusive development; advocating and protecting human rights online; and also to promote regional coordination on critical technology standards, telecommunications, and broader cyber and technology resilience.

Australia is committed to multilateral cooperation in support of agreed rules and norms, and to help address global challenges. This involves progress to enhance strategic awareness and discussion of cyber issues in our region, including through the ARF Open-Ended Study Group on Confidence Building Measures to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs (OESG) and the ARF Intersessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ISM on ICT Security). Australia also continues to co-sponsor and manage the ARF Points of Contact Directory on ICT Security (ARF Cyber POC Directory) with Malaysia. Australia also contributes as a member of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security, which supports increased defence cooperation on regional cyber security challenges.

Australia strongly advocates for a global framework of peace and stability in cyberspace. In 2022, the United Nations General Assembly First Committee Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025 (UN OEWG on cyber) adopted its first consensus Annual Progress Report – providing guidance to keep advancing the process, confirming shared understanding on priority areas and recommending next steps to be taken in the future sessions.

Australia demonstrates its commitment in implementing the framework of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace by continuing to support and promote the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research's (UNIDIR) website for countries to self-assess against the Survey of National Implementation of the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) recommendations. Australia will continue to look for opportunities to expand this work (including through capacity building) and continue to promote elaboration of best-practice guidance and practical assistance to help States implement the framework of responsible state behaviour.

Australia is concerned by the increased scale and severity of malicious cyber activity occurring in the region and we are committed to ensuring international law is upheld in cyberspace. Australia collaborates internationally to coordinate our responses when these rules on responsible state behaviour are broken, including attributing malicious cyber activity and imposing sanctions if necessary. Australia believes that an effective cyber deterrence posture is an essential pillar to the prevention of malicious cyber activity occurring in the region.

Australia is especially focused on efforts to enhance regional implementation of international law and agreed norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. Australia supports – with Singapore and the Netherlands – Cyber Law International to conduct ASEAN-wide seminars and alumni workshops on the application of international law in cyberspace, tailored to the regional context.

Australia is reviewing its domestic and international policy settings for a new 2023–2030 Cyber Security Strategy. Priority areas for the new Cyber Security Strategy include Australia's ongoing international cyber engagement and capacity building efforts based on tangible outcomes.

h. Space Security

Space is increasingly vital for Australia's security and prosperity and plays a critical role in supporting an open, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific that is respectful of sovereignty.

Australia supports the creation of international rules and norms of responsible behaviour in space to help deter and disrupt behaviour that poses a risk to international peace, security and stability. Mutually agreed and consistently applied rules and norms will increase global cooperation and predictability and reduce the risk of miscalculation between states.

Australia is committed to fostering respectful cooperation with ASEAN countries and advocating for rules and norms that support sovereign decision making. Through bilateral and multilateral engagements (including the UN General Assembly, UN Disarmament Commission and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space), Australia seeks to enhance the capabilities of ASEAN partners, deepen relationships and help identify and support regional priorities regarding civil and peaceful uses of space, along with the prevention of conflict.

IV. Role of ASEAN Regional Forum

ASEAN centrality underpins Australia's engagement in the region and Australia remains committed to continuing its longstanding active engagement with ASEAN regional security architecture, including the ARF, EAS and the ADMM-Plus, all of which provide a structure for regional engagement and enable space for dialogue and for the peaceful discussion of differences. As the region's longest-established forum for security dialogue and cooperation, we consider the ARF an important mechanism for constructive dialogue and practical, working-level cooperation on regional security challenges. Australia will continue to engage constructively in the ARF, including by co-chairing ARF work streams and delivering workshops and seminars. We support Indonesia's proposal as ASEAN Chair in 2023 to brief EAS meetings on developments in the ARF intersessionally to enable greater information sharing around developments on confidence building measures.

BANGLADESH

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

The world is presently in flux with emerging challenges, causing nations to re-evaluate their alignments and alliances while searching for new ones to help them counter those challenges. Moreover, parallel to traditional security threats, the world increasingly appears to be preoccupied with non-traditional challenges, including food security, water security, energy security, cyber security, climate security and most recently, the unprecedented challenge of the global COVID 19 pandemic.

Like all global players, Bangladesh is also faced with a multitude of challenges: further aggravated by the armed conflict in Ukraine on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the country has come a long way since it picked the pieces of a war-ravaged land and started its journey as a sovereign and independent country, inspired by the dream of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for a "Sonar Bangla"- Golden Bengal. Today, this dream is within reach of the people of this country: in February 2021, it received confirmation from the UN for the second time in a row that it successfully fulfilled all the criteria for graduating from an LDC into a developing country. This remarkable achievement is testimony to the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who steered the course of inclusive and sustainable economic growth over the past decade, as well as political stability. As a result, the country remains on course to fulfilling the vision to transform into a developed economy by 2041.

Bangladesh's guiding foreign policy principle, "Friendship to All, Malice towards None", was enunciated by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh puts special effort into maintaining balanced, friendly and harmonious relations with all nations of the world, following non-alignment as a general guiding paradigm. Securing her national interests, preserving her territorial integrity and promoting sustainable socio-economic well-being of her people are the basic security imperatives for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh would like to emphasize on the following:

Geopolitical and geostrategic location advantage: Bangladesh is uniquely located as the link between two of the most vibrant economic regions of the world, Southeast Asia and

South Asia and seeks to promote itself as a hub of road, rail, riverine, maritime and air connectivity for the landlocked countries/regions of South Asia to the outside world as well as to the continental countries of Southeast Asia. Bangladesh strongly believes that fully harnessing the potentials of the Bay of Bengal and smooth and seamless connectivity could help to transform the condition of the region

Digitalization and Cyber Security: Bangladesh has identified digitalization as a means of transforming society and achieving its target of sustainable economic development. The Digital Bangladesh concept envisions delivering possible services to the people's doorsteps through the digital platform. Bangladesh is also aware of the need to ensure Cyber Security and has enacted Digital Security Act 2018 and established a Digital Security Agency to ensure Cyber security, including data protection.

Terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism: Terrorism and indiscriminate violence spawned through its tentacles are the major threats to global peace and development. Bangladesh has "Zero Tolerance" for terrorism and has enacted laws and taken effective action against all forms of terrorism. Bangladesh firmly adheres to its commitment not to allow its territory to be used for terrorist activities against any other country.

Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding: Bangladesh is an active, leading and proud partner of UN Peacekeeping and Peace Building activities. Bangladesh remains committed to fully engaging in this process as an integral element in maintaining global security. Bangladeshi peacekeepers, including women contingents, have been serving with distinction in some of the most challenging global locations.

General and Complete Disarmament: Commitment to general and complete disarmament is an essential pillar of Bangladesh's foreign policy, as enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is signatory to most of the major international treaties and agreements of disarmament and non-proliferation and remains actively engaged in the UN disarmament process.

Climate Change: Global Warming and the impact of Climate Change has emerged as one of the significant challenges of the world today. Countries like Bangladesh are emerging as the worst victims of Climate Change, but Bangladesh has taken some notable initiatives

to minimize and mitigate the impact of climate change. Bangladesh has also achieved remarkable success in disaster preparedness and disaster management. However, the country is increasingly witnessing unpredictable weather patterns and multiple and intense natural disasters resulting from the effects of global warming.

Rohingya issue: The issue of the 1.1 million Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals has become one of the major security challenges for Bangladesh. This has placed a huge burden on the economy, ecology and social security of Bangladesh. Bangladesh feels that unless the Rohingya refugees are repatriated from Bangladesh, this will have major security implications for the country and the entire region.

The COVID 19 pandemic: Bangladesh, with its 160 million population, has been quite successful in containing the successive waves of the pandemic by adopting a prudent policy of "balancing lives and livelihoods." Therefore, Bangladesh suggests that an ARF Fund be created to support economies recovering from the impact of the pandemic. Bangladesh also firmly believes that vaccines should be made available as a global public good for the benefit of all humankind.

II. Bangladesh Overview of National Security

1. Bangladesh's concept of national security is embedded in its long struggle for justice, equality, sovereignty and emancipation and the nine-month-long war of liberation in 1971. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman steered the nation's course with the aim of eliminating inequality, injustice, and oppression from society. Inspired by this vision and enduring legacy, our National Security policy keeps global, regional and national imperatives in mind along with focusing on the country's geostrategic location. The term 'National Security' for Bangladesh implies a condition where all security imperatives relating to politics, military, economic, sociological, technology, environment, legal, education, demography, health, food, water, energy and ethical aspects would guarantee pursuit of happiness, political stability, economic freedom, religious freedom, ethnic and communal harmony, equality, equity and above all capability of defending the country from external and internal traditional and non-traditional security threats.

2. The ripple-effect of global and regional security threats substantially impacts our national security. Although Bangladeshis are renowned for their resilience, the unprecedented natural and man-made disasters from within and its border substantially affect the citizens' security. The dense population, shrinking land space, and scarce resources continually threaten her people and society. The influx of over a million Myanmar refugees has compounded the threat to our national security in recent years. Millions of Bangladeshi expatriates in some of the most conflict-prone areas like the Middle East are also a great concern. The effects of international terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization, trans-border crime, illegal migration, human, drug, illicit arms, fake currency trafficking, and cybercrimes are also threats to our security. Our society is increasingly connected through the internet and digital networks, exposing us to manifold threats and challenges for which we may not be prepared or have the resources to combat. The new technology has created many opportunities as well as vulnerabilities and has created a digital divide. With its increasing geostrategic importance, Bangladesh is a gateway for connectivity to the greater Asian region via the Bay of Bengal. Therefore, Bangladesh must remain vigilant to avert potential security threats.

Overview of Defence Policy.

1. Bangladesh, with its unique linguistic, cultural and ethnic legacy and a solid attachment to cultural heritage, has contributed to a set of distinctive national values, including democracy, nationalism, socialism, and secularism. The fundamental objectives of the state, as enshrined in the Constitution, are to realize, through the democratic process, a society free from exploitation in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social rights will be secured for all citizens. Bangladesh pursues her key national interest by ensuring security through securing its people, resources, land, waters, airspace, and core national values. It also seeks friendly and balanced relationships with all countries and security arrangements through bi-lateral and multilateral partnership with global, regional and sub-regional countries or organizations. Bangladesh follows a global approach, which strengthens its diplomatic linkages in an international community committed to maintaining global peace, environmental protection, human rights, and the security responsibilities enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter.

2. Defence diplomacy, deterrence and defeating hostile design form three pillars of Bangladesh's defence policy. Keeping in view Bangladesh's national interest and commitment to global peace and stability, the defence policy aims at protecting the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, socio-political stability, economic prosperity, environmental protection, global and regional peace and stability etc. These are addressed through a comprehensive security mechanism to accelerate the national progression and well-being of the country's people. Bangladesh's defence policy further focuses on compliance with all treaties and obligations undertaken by the Government concerning international peace and security, reduction of means of war and disarmament, and adherence to national security policy congruent with its foreign policy, "Friendship to all, malice towards none".

Indo-Pacific Outlook of Bangladesh

Being a littoral State of the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh considers the stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific to be a crucial factor in realizing her "Vision 2041", i.e. building a modern, knowledge-based developed country by 2041. The Indo-Pacific area's collective share in global GDP, preponderance in international trade, enhanced climate action and growing technological dynamism can be key determinants for ensuring Bangladesh's long-term resilience and prosperity. Bangladesh, therefore, envisions a free, open, peaceful, secure, and inclusive Indo-Pacific for the shared prosperity for all.

Guiding Principles:

- a. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's foreign policy dictum 'Friendship towards all, malice toward none.'
- b. Constitutional mandate on the conduct of international relations based on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful settlement of international disputes, as well as respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter; and striving for renunciation of the use of force in international relations and for general and complete disarmament.
- c. Adherence to the relevant UN treaties and international conventions, as applicable, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

- d. Constructive regional and international cooperation for sustainable development, international peace and security, humanitarian action, and fundamental rights and freedoms.

Objectives:

Consistent with the above-mentioned principles, the following objectives will guide Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific outlook and engagements:

1. Strengthen mutual trust and respect, forge partnerships and cooperation, and promote dialogue and understanding with the aim of ensuring peace, prosperity, security and stability for all in the Indo-Pacific.
2. Strengthen existing mechanisms on maritime safety and security in the Indo-Pacific, including response to emergencies at sea and conduct of search & rescue, and uphold the exercise of freedom of navigation & over-flight, in accordance with international law and relevant international conventions, including UNCLOS, 1982.
3. Maintain meaningful and value-driven contribution to international non-proliferation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and counter-terrorism efforts, including with partners in the Indo-Pacific.
4. Support regional and international efforts towards combating transnational organized crimes in the Indo-Pacific through both normative and practical actions.
5. Expand global lead on the flagship agenda of a 'culture of peace', enhance focus on the 'women, peace and security' agenda, promote interfaith harmony and work towards building peaceful, just and inclusive societies in the Indo-Pacific.
6. Promote open, transparent, rules-based multilateral systems that enable equitable and sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific and beyond through inclusive economic growth, right to development and shared prosperity for all.
7. Enhance physical, institutional, energy, digital and human connectivity; facilitate movement of goods, services, capital, and people in a systematic manner; and promote technology transfer, access to innovations and responsible behaviour in open and secure cyberspace and outer space.
8. Leverage the domestic agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors towards building resilient regional and global value chains to better manage future crisis

and disruptions and to promote unimpeded and free flow of commerce in the Indo-Pacific.

9. Promote conservation, sustainable use and management of oceans, seas, and marine resources in the Indo-Pacific in pursuance of SDG-14 and other relevant internationally agreed development commitments.
10. Engage proactively in promoting food security, water solidarity, and disaster risk reduction in the Indo-Pacific, including through disseminating home-grown good practices.
11. Continue tangible work towards addressing the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, marine pollution, and other significant and harmful impacts on the environment in line with relevant international conventions and commitments.
12. Foster cooperation among Indo-Pacific countries to ensure energy security for all, including through investment and technology transfer on renewable energy.
13. Work towards developing coordinated response to future pandemics and ensuring health security, including through access for all to global public goods like vaccines, diagnostics and other equipment and treatment facilities.
14. Collaboration with sub-regional partners and relevant organizations towards bolstering regional cooperation and enhancing mutually beneficial complementarities.
15. Strengthen collaboration and cooperation in science, technology, research and innovation for shared benefits of all, in keeping with the vision of 'Smart Bangladesh'.

III. Bangladesh in ARF

Keeping in view the objectives of ARF and the criteria for participation, Bangladesh first expressed her interest in joining this Forum as early as 1998. Bangladesh became a member of the ARF in 2006. Bangladesh is firmly committed to the guiding principles of the Forum, most notably, peace and disarmament. Bangladesh has received international acclamation in peacekeeping and peace building role as one of the largest troop contributor countries. In the ASEAN region, Bangladeshi peacekeepers were deployed in UN missions in Timor Leste and Cambodia. Bangladesh continues to catalyse the process of regional Cooperation in South Asia and beyond. Given her geostrategic location, Bangladesh is ideally placed in linking the countries of South Asia with South East Asia and

traditionally has had very close links with most of the ASEAN countries. These contacts have further been reinforced through her membership in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Bangladesh has undertaken massive infrastructure development to upgrade its roads, rails, riverways, ports, bridges, airports, riverine ports and sea ports to connect the landlocked regions of South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asia. Bangladesh has a clear stake in the security and prosperity of South East Asia. This ranges from conventional security issues to emerging threats like trafficking in persons, drugs and arms. Bangladesh opposes terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and fully supports the ARF in combating this menace. Additionally, as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, even during the COVID 19 pandemic, Bangladesh has the potential to be a strong economic and trading partner for the ASEAN region and the ARF countries.

IV. Bangladesh's Efforts in Countering Terrorism And Violent Extremism

Bangladesh maintains a policy of 'zero tolerance' towards all forms of terrorism including financing of terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism - both nationally and internationally and does not allow its territory to be used by any terrorist individual, group or entity against any state or people.



Currently, there is no existence of any international terrorist outfit in Bangladesh. However, some home-grown domestic terrorist organizations have been declared "Proscribed" by the Government, and their activities have been banned.

We advocate for adhering to the relevant human rights and humanitarian principles in counter-terrorism efforts.

Comprehensive Strategy for CT & PVE

Bangladesh does not condone any act of terrorism on the pretext of their circumstances, method or objective. A terrorist must be identified as a terrorist only, irrespective of their race, colour, creed or religion. Bangladesh has already employed several hard and soft approaches to deal with the threat of violent extremism. Hard approaches include intelligence-led operations, continuous surveillance on suspected terrorists and arresting or detaining terrorists. On the other hand, soft approaches seek to address the process of radicalization and community engagement where all the stakeholders collaborate through sharing their knowledge and experience.

The Government's initiatives intend to implement 'four pillars' resembling the global efforts to combat terrorism:

- a) **To prevent radicalization:** Bangladesh emphasizes promoting the essence of the liberation war, culture and heritage, promoting family bonding and good parenting, strengthening social cohesion, addressing women's role in preventing radicalization, increasing state's capacity to prevent radicalization, engaging relevant stakeholders to build social resilience.
- b) **For countering radicalization:** Bangladesh is working on identifying online and offline hotspots, mapping geographic and demographic vulnerabilities, countering radical narratives, utilizing the information network, mass media and popular platforms, community-based law enforcement, monitoring the cyber world and trying to adopt people's diplomacy.
- c) **For Countering terrorism:** Bangladesh is taking measures to deter, disrupt and isolate groups that use terror, building the capacities of state security forces to fight terrorist groups, and increasing the state's capacity to prepare, prevent, protect and respond to terrorism.
- d) The Government is also implementing a few **de-radicalization** programs to ensure psychological disengagement, religious education, social reintegration and rehabilitation.

Legal Measures

In recent years, Bangladesh has enacted a number of laws and developed several strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Some important legal measures are as follows:

- Anti-terrorism Act, 2009
- Anti-terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2013
- Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012
- The Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, 2012
- National Counter Terrorism Strategy, 2011
- Accession to the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes.
- Digital Security Act -2018
- The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act -2012

Establishment of specialized units

- a) **ATU & CTTC:** Bangladesh government has formed the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) and Countering Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit (CTTC) under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, which are especially responsible for conducting operations and investigation of terrorist and extremism-related cases.
- b) **Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit:** Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) works as the national central agency for receiving, analysing and disseminating suspicious transactions reports (STR)/suspicious activity reports (SAR), cash transaction reports (CTR) and any information related to money laundering, financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In addition, BFIU coordinates and cooperates with domestic regulatory, investigating and law enforcement authorities to combat money laundering (ML) & terrorism financing (TF). BFIU works very closely with Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Egmont Group of FIUs to provide a wider range of international cooperation.
- c) **Preventing terror financing & money laundering**
To develop and formulate policies related to anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism, Bangladesh established in 2010 National Coordination Committee (NCC), headed by the Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Finance.
- d) **National Committee on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Combating Terrorism and Financing of Terrorism**
Bangladesh has established the National Committee to monitor the implementation of the provision of UNSCRs relating to terrorism, terrorist

financing and financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, headed by the Foreign Secretary.

e) **Banning of militant outfits**

The Government of Bangladesh has already banned several militant outfits.

f) **Awareness Programs Undertaken to Prevent Violent Extremism**

The Government has engaged public servants, civil society, NGOs, media and educational institutions to strengthen the campaign against militancy. Imams have contributed significantly to the Bangladesh government's CVE efforts.

g) **International Cooperation**

As a part of her commitment to the eventual elimination of terrorism in all its forms, Bangladesh acceded to all 14 United Nations (UN)/ International Anti-Terrorism Conventions/ Protocols. Bangladesh signed the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in December 2000 to support the process of creating an international regime against terrorism and related crimes. Bangladesh is very much engaged with Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC)/ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) pursuant to UNSCR 1373, Sanction Monitoring Committee, and Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF).

V. Cyber Security

The Government of Bangladesh has enacted a holistic law for combating the growing menace of cybercrime in the form of the Digital Security Act 2018. The Government has established a Digital Security Agency to coordinate with local and international institutions to reduce the risk of digital crimes. In addition, a national digital Security Council has been formed.

VI. Contribution of Bangladesh to UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

Bangladesh stands committed to the principles laid down in the United Nations (UN) Charter, highlighting 'peaceful settlement of international disputes and maintenance of global peace and security. The vow to establish peace and security by Bangladeshi peacekeepers emanates from the principles enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has responded promptly to the United Nations' call for strengthening world peace and stability by contributing its troops and police for peacekeeping.

Bangladesh successfully completed 55 Peacekeeping Operations in around 40 countries with 1,79,701 peacekeepers. Bangladesh is also sending correction officials and judicial officers in peacekeeping missions.

Bangladesh has pledged 26 components to the UN "Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System" to meet the UN requirement.

Women Engagement in Peacekeeping Operations

- i. Bangladesh is deeply committed to the WPS agenda, founded by the security council resolution 1325. As per the UN's Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy Bangladesh is committed to increasing the participation of women. Bangladesh is on the way to fulfil the requirement set by the UN for deploying 18% Women Military Staff Officer/Military Observer in UN Peacekeeping Operations by 2021. Bangladesh has deployed 400 Women peacekeepers as contingent members in different UN missions. Bangladesh Armed Forces deployed Women officers as contingent commanders of a military contingent in MINUSCA and the Central African Republic. Bangladesh Police has also deployed 150 Women peacekeepers in MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNPOL.
- ii. Bangladesh is the founding executive member of the Women Peace and Security Chief of Defence Network (WCN) along with the UK and Canada. Bangladesh has taken over the Chairmanship of the WCN in 2022.

Achievements of Bangladesh in UN Peacekeeping Operations

Bangladesh can hold its head high globally because the Bangladeshi uniformed personnel have earned the gratitude of millions worldwide. The footprints of Bangladeshi peacekeepers are now evident in almost all the troubled areas of the world. In this context, the President of Liberia, Her Excellency Ms Ellen Sirleaf, also conveyed her gratitude to the Bangladeshi peacekeepers for their contributions and commented, "Bangladeshi contingent has gone beyond its protection mandate and helped to build up the manpower capacity of the country".

Response of Bangladesh Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

Bangladeshi peacekeepers are known for their integrity and excellent conduct. Bangladesh maintains a zero-tolerance policy concerning allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Any lapses in this regard are handled with utmost seriousness. Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was one of the earliest world leaders to join the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations (in 2017).

Efforts of Bangladesh towards Peace Building and Sustaining Peace

Bangladesh perceives peacebuilding and sustaining peace as an inclusive and broad-based process beyond its traditional remit of short to medium-term post-conflict crisis response and recovery.

Bangladesh is an active member of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and is currently the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the effort of the Peacebuilding Fund, including implementing its 2020-24 investment strategy. Bangladesh's support to the peacekeeping operations and the peacebuilding architecture of the UN is demonstrated by its pledging monetary contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund this year despite COVID-19-related austerity measures.

Bangladesh recognizes the importance of women and youth's full, equal, and meaningful participation in peacebuilding. It is vital to reinforce the commonalities and complementarities of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda for peacebuilding. Both strategies must be integrated in implementing UN PBF's investment strategy.

Bangladesh also acknowledges increased representation of women in various peace negotiations and in increasing gender-specific provisions in peace agreements. Bangladesh adopted the first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security in 2019. It recognizes women's role in peacebuilding and puts emphasis on their participation in peacebuilding activities. In 2017, Bangladesh and Canada acted as focal points for implementing the Peacebuilding Commission "Gender Strategy".

As a part of encouraging global peace initiatives, Bangladesh Peacebuilding Centre started its activities on 01 November 2016.

Bangladesh stresses the importance of national ownership in peacebuilding involving relevant national institutions and all level stakeholders coupled with meaningful, sustained, and well-calibrated international support. Bangladesh also considers that institution-building is an important pre-requisite for sustaining peace.

Bangladesh Institute for Peace Support Operation and Training (BIPSOT) is promoting global peace and security as an international Centre of Excellence. In response to the UN Women Elsie Initiative Fund of uniformed women in the Peace Operations Secretariat, Bangladesh proposed one project during 2020 under Elsie Project Fund. Implementation of the project will significantly contribute to training more Women peacekeepers for deployment in UN Missions.

Culture of Peace

Bangladesh took the lead in introducing the normative agenda item "Culture of Peace" in the General Assembly and followed up with the flagship resolution entitled "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace". The resolution was adopted on 13 September 1999, during the first tenure of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Since then, Bangladesh has been facilitating this resolution every year.

The notion of a "culture of peace" continues to earn increasing importance across the three pillars of the United Nations in addressing contemporary global challenges. Bangladesh considers the "Culture of Peace" as an overarching notion strengthening the message for peace in years to come and moving beyond the landmark Agenda 2030.

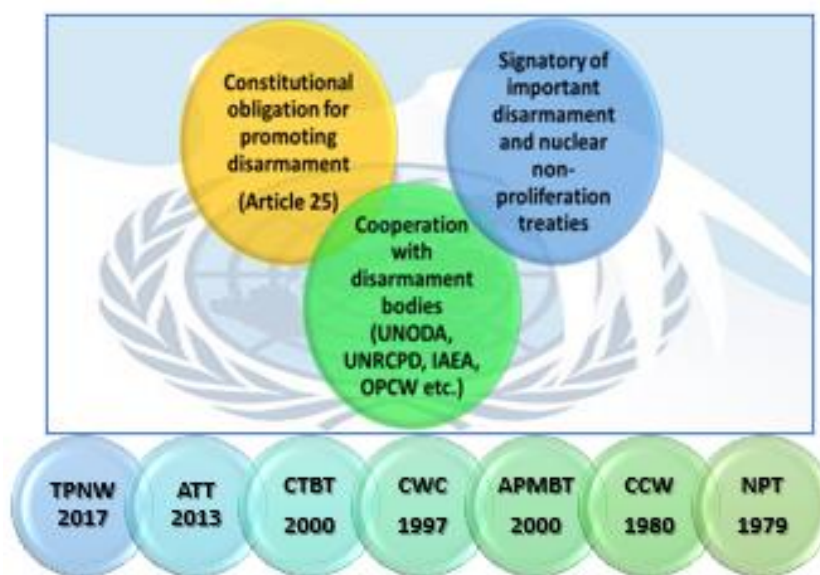
Bangladesh remains fully committed to the implementation of this concept through action-oriented policy interventions in eight programme areas of the 'Program of Action on Culture of Peace' – education, sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between men and women, democratic participation, tolerance and solidarity, free flow of information and knowledge and international peace and security.

VII. Disarmament and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

"Strive for the renunciation of the use of force in international relations and for **general and complete disarmament**"

- Article- 25(a) of the Constitution of Bangladesh [on the principles of the state's international relations]

Bangladesh's commitment to general and complete disarmament is anchored in its Constitution and remains a fundamental pursuit of the country's foreign policy. Therefore, despite living in the shadow of nuclear neighbours (India, Pakistan and China), Bangladesh has unconditionally opted to remain non-



nuclear. "We believe that the security of our people can be ensured not through the accumulation of expensive weapons but through education, ending segregation, the promotion of democratic values, and the realization of human faculties by peaceful means,' Hon'ble Prime Minister stated in her statement at the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament.

Bangladesh strongly considers disarmament as an instrument for enhancing international security and is concerned at the new arms race, rising geopolitical tensions, increasing military spending, and weakening arms control architecture. As a member of the UN Security Council for two terms during 1979-1980 and 2000-2001, Bangladesh was particularly active and visible in international disarmament efforts.

In various international fora, we maintain that in a world of finite resources, there is a close relationship between expenditure on armaments and economic and social

development. Yet, research shows that world military expenditure has topped 1.7 trillion dollars.

Bangladesh successfully conducted the Presidency of the **Conference on Disarmament (CD)** for the period of 06 July to 21 August 2020. As the President of the Conference, Bangladesh continued to urge the Member States to revitalize multilateral negotiations in pursuit of the disarmament goals.

Bangladesh has long been advocating the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world. Following the nuclear test explosions by India and Pakistan in 1998, Bangladesh took special initiative to ensure that South Asia remains a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone to ensure peace and stability in the region. As the first South Asian country, Bangladesh signed and ratified the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 2000 the "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction" and the "Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction".

In compliance with **the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA)**, Bangladesh has put in place stronger legislative norms and administrative procedures to regulate lawful possession, manufacture, export, import and transport of small arms and light weapons. Every year, Bangladesh observes 09 July as the "Small Arms Destruction Day" to raise public awareness about the human, social and economic cost of illicit trade in SALW.

Bangladesh is a State Party to the **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)**. Bangladesh submitted the Instrument of Ratification for its accession to the CCW Amended Paragraph 1 and CCW Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War during the 68th UNGA.

Bangladesh stands strictly against chemical weapons usage anywhere in the world. Bangladesh is one of the earliest signatories of the **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**, signed on 14 January 1994.

In the area of verification and nuclear safeguards, pursuant to provisions of the NPT, Bangladesh has also signed a **Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA**,

which entered into force on 11 June 1982. Bangladesh became a Member State of the IAEA in 1972.

In the area of peaceful uses of nuclear technology, the Government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has attached top priority to the generation of power for facilitating the country's socio-economic development in line with its Vision 2021. Nuclear energy is now considered to be a potential constituent of the country's overall energy mix as part of the broader energy policy. Bangladesh has decided to implement the **Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant** project with technical and financial support from the Russian Federation and with technical assistance from the IAEA.

Bangladesh is a State Party to the **Outer Space Treaty**. Bangladesh has now a higher stake in outer space after the launch of the Bangabandhu-1 satellite for communications and research purposes.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Bangladesh voted in favour of UNGA Resolution 71/258 titled "Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations" on 16 December 2016, establishing the mandate for negotiating a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. Bangladesh actively participated in the negotiations on the draft legally binding instrument in 2017, and voted in favour of adopting the negotiated outcome titled "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" (TPNW) on 07 July 2017. As a result, the Treaty was opened for signature on during 72nd UN General Assembly in September 2017. Bangladesh signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 20 September 2017; and ratified it on 26 September 2019.

VIII. Climate Change

Climate change is a global phenomenon that goes beyond national borders. It is an issue that needs to be addressed through collective efforts and innovative solutions not only at the national level but also at the local and regional level. The Paris Agreement calls for a coordinated and combined effort at the local and regional levels to ensure effective climate action in a sustainable manner.

According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2021 published by Germanwatch, Bangladesh is ranked 7th among the countries affected most from 2000-2019 due to climate change.

However, the country's contribution to global warming is negligible (it contributes less than 0.47% of global emissions with per capita 0.98-ton CO₂-eq emission).

Economic Impact: It is projected that Bangladesh could suffer annual losses of up to 9% of its economy by the end of this century. Without changes to current global behaviour, Bangladesh would see annual economic costs equivalent to 2% of its GDP by 2050, widening to 9.4% by 2100 (ADB, 2014).

Bangladesh believes that the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement is a collective responsibility for shared prosperity. Climate finance is a key to this end. However, financing mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) are severely under resourced.

Initiatives taken for addressing climate change in Bangladesh

To enhance climate resilience, Bangladesh has taken the following adaptation and mitigation activities:

Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP): At the national level, Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) was formulated in 2009. This is one of the most credible initiatives of any developing countries to address climate change in a comprehensive manner for a 10 year programme, built on six thematic areas namely (1) Food security, Social Protection and Health, (2) Comprehensive Disaster Management, (3) Infrastructure, (4) Research and Knowledge Management, (5) Mitigation and Low-carbon Development, and (6) Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening.

Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF): Bangladesh is the first country to set up its own Climate Change Trust Fund from its own resources. As of August 2020, the Government has allocated nearly US\$443 million (3752 crore BDT) to BCCTF since 2009. So far, the BCCTF has undertaken 800 projects with an investment of US\$480 million to implement strategic actions of the BCCSAP, which mainly focuses on adaptation, mitigation and climate change research.

NAP Formulation: The Department of Environment, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) has already initiated the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Formulation Projects, with US\$2.55 million financed by Green Climate Fund (GCF) (Implementation support provided by UNDP).

Nationally Determined Contribution: Bangladesh prepared and submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) on 26 August 2021. As an unconditional contribution, Bangladesh will reduce its GHG emissions in the power, transport, and industry sectors by 27.56 Mt (CO₂emission) (6.73%) below Business As Usual (BAU) in 2030 in the respective sectors.

Clean Development Mechanism: Bangladesh is also involved in the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

- **Joint Crediting Mechanism:** Bangladesh has a bilateral mechanism called Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) with Japan for transferring energy-efficient technology, providing up to 50% grants.

Climate Technology Centre & Network: Bangladesh is also involved in the Climate Technology Centre & Network (CTCN) under the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism for technology transfer. The Department of Environment is the National Designated Entity (NDE) of the CTCN

Adaptation Project: The Department of Environment (DoE) under the MoEFCC has taken a project on "**Adaptation Initiative for Climate Vulnerable Offshore Small Islands and Riverine Char Lands in Bangladesh**" to improve livelihoods through about US\$9.2 million financial support received from Adaptation Fund.

The DoE has taken another two new projects, one entitled "**Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Sustainable Development pathways of Bangladesh**" with approximately US\$5.7 million financial support and the other one entitled "**Building Climate Resilient Livelihoods in vulnerable Landscapes in Bangladesh**" with approximately US\$8.9 million financial support from the LDC Fund of the UNFCCC operated by the GEF.

Construction of Cyclone Shelters: The Government has constructed **4291 cyclone shelters** all over the coast. Besides, additional **523 flood shelters** have been constructed in flood-prone areas in the country. In addition, **550 'Mujib Killa'** (a specially designed raised land) have been constructed to shelter the livestock in coastal regions during the cyclone/tidal surge.

Plantation of 10 Million Tree Saplings: In order to celebrate the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh Forest Department **planted 10 million tree** saplings across the country last year. Additionally, to reduce the risk of death due to lightning, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief has **planted 5.4 million Palm trees** which will also contribute to the carbon sink.

Initiatives on Renewable:

- a. Solar Power: More than 6 million solar home systems (SHSs) have been installed across the country, meaning that almost 18 million beneficiaries are getting solar electricity, around 12% of the total population of Bangladesh.
- b. Improved Cook Stoves: To reduce biomass burning emissions, over 3.5 million Improved Cook Stoves (ICSs) have already been distributed to rural households in the country.

National Solar Energy Roadmap: Bangladesh has recently drafted the **National Solar Energy Roadmap, 2021-2041** and set a time-bound achievable target of 30 GW by 2041.

Additionally, Forest Department under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has been implementing climate change adaptation activities in vulnerable coastal and offshore communities:

IX. Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is ranked 26 out of 193 countries with a high INFORM Index for Risk Management which indicates that the risk of humanitarian crisis and disasters that would overwhelm national response capacity is high.

Bangladesh has signed the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), which requires proper monitoring and reporting coordination and progress. Under the Sendai

Framework, Bangladesh submitted a progress report during the 7th Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022 Conference held in Bali, Indonesia. Bangladesh has taken a holistic approach to reduce the risks stemming from disasters, both man-made and natural.

X. Rohingya Issue

It has been more than five years since the mass exodus of Rohingyas in 2017. Along with previously displaced Myanmar Nationals, the total number of Forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals residing in Bangladesh is 1.2 million at present. Despite Bangladesh's continuous effort, not a single Rohingya has been repatriated yet in absence of conducive situation in Rakhine State. Without any certainty of returning to Rakhine State, the FDMNs are being frustrated and engaging in various criminal activities like human and drug trafficking. This tendency of FDMNs of getting involved in criminal activities is creating a major security threat, not only for Bangladesh but also for the neighbouring countries. The huge number of Rohingyas without any hope of repatriation may also incite trans-national/ trans-border crimes including human trafficking. Sustainable and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas through creating a situation conducive for return and ensuring political will not only establish the plight of the Rohingyas to live in their place of origin but also contribute to control these cross-border crimes. A regional effort under the ASEAN forum can play a critical role in this regard.

XI. South China Sea

Bangladesh respects the principles contained in the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea signed on 04 November 2002. Bangladesh deeply appreciates that all parties concerned have reaffirmed their respect for and commitment to the freedom of navigation in and over-flight above the South China Sea.

XII. Maritime Security

The region faces many traditional and non-traditional safety and security challenges including piracy, armed robberies at sea, terrorism, human trafficking, irregular movement of persons, drugs trafficking, illicit trafficking in wildlife, trafficking of weapons, crimes in the fisheries sector such as IUU fishing, degradation of ocean health, unlawful exploitation of marine resources and climate change with its related repercussions on environmental security. Freedom of navigation is vital for the smooth flow of maritime

trade but the above threats have the potential to seriously disrupt international trade and thus hamstrung national and regional economic development. Furthermore, the lack of regional maritime security architecture has prompted major powers to compete for control over these resources and sea-lanes. This competition and potential escalation of tensions in the region would surely hurt the openness of the region's sea lanes and subsequently disrupt trade and affect energy security.

- A. Rule of law is critical to maritime security. The most pressing maritime challenges are law enforcement and governance issues. The Maritime Security Index shows that strong rule of law is closely correlated with many positive aspects of maritime security and its absence is a predictor of a variety of maritime challenges. The Rule of Law score in the Maritime Security Index encompasses a broad set of governance indicators including corruption, government, port and customs efficiency, judicial integrity and political inclusion.

In order to address maritime security challenges and implement maritime policy, states ultimately need adequate naval and maritime law enforcement capabilities. The potential gains from comprehensive legislation on maritime issues, international and regional cooperation and blue economic growth cannot be fully realized if there is a lack of assets available for enforcement.

Bangladesh currently has adequate domestic legal framework to ensure maritime safety and security of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the first countries in South Asia to formulate an act to govern territorial waters and maritime zones. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with his visionary leadership, presented the country with 'Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act 1974'. This Act laid out the basis of all subsequent legal documents governing Bangladesh's maritime safety and security. However, due to international and regional developments, it was necessary to update the Act. Hence, in May 2021, 'Territorial Waters and Maritimes Zones (Amendment) Act 2021' was approved in the Cabinet and the gazette was published in December 2021. This is a comprehensive document which covered all relevant aspects, articulated relevant elements and decided the punishments for violations. Maritime security and safety encompasses all the operations that are being carried out to ward off threats from the sea, defend sovereign rights at sea and control

risks relating to maritime activities (fisheries patrol, accidents at sea, pollution, sea rescue/shipwreck and assistance, legacy munitions clearance etc.). The 2021 Act covers these issues in a comprehensive manner.

The government of Bangladesh has also enacted National Plan of Action for IUU fishing in 2019. Law enforcing agencies of Bangladesh have been taking strong measures against unlawful fishing and strengthening patrolling activities to stop infiltration by other countries in our exclusive economic zone. Also, the Government has decided to bring all fishing vessel under surveillance in order to eliminate IUU fishing. The Department of Fisheries has already taken up a project to set up Automatic Identification System (AIS) in thousands of boats, among those some are satellite based. A project has been taken by the Department of Shipping titled “Establishment of Global Maritime Distress and safety system and Integrated Maritime Navigation Systems” is in progress to provide radio communication, navigational aids, tracking of ships, search and rescue facilities etc. in Bangladesh sea waters and beyond. Bangladesh is one of those few countries that have firm fish conservation policy and has been acting upon accordingly in order to ensure the proper growth of fish.

- B. Another pressing maritime enforcement priority is continued development of maritime domain awareness (MDA). There are some obvious challenges to that including the relatively limited assets of some regional navies mentioned above, the massive size of many member states’ maritime domains, the sheer number of vessels active in the region, and the often blurred line between licit and illicit maritime activity.

Thankfully, the Indian Ocean is home to some of the most well-developed collective MDA and information-sharing structures of any region. These include the Information Fusion Centre, and a series of developing platforms for sharing MDA information. Information exchange between participating nations is currently largely conducted through virtual communication, but will eventually be expedited through the stationing of an increasing number of country-specific liaison officers at the centre. Maritime law enforcement agencies can use the information extrapolated from

incident frequency and location to inform their operations and better monitor their effectiveness.

Bangladesh engages itself to secure its maritime security interests in a cross-sectoral, comprehensive, coherent and cost-effective way in conformity with existing treaties, national and international laws in particular the UNCLOS and other relevant conventions and instruments. Bangladesh is doing its part regarding MDA and the government is making efforts to raise awareness of the relevant agencies concerning MDA.

- C. The physical and economic welfare of coastal communities, while sometimes overlooked, is critical to maritime security. Poverty and conflict in coastal communities can quickly undermine maritime security and governance. A lack of economic opportunities can drive some in coastal communities to participation in maritime crime, illicit economies, and potentially, participation in armed groups. All of these factors can contribute to the possible funding of armed groups. In short, economic and physical insecurity in coastal regions can generate a malicious cycle of poverty and conflict in which security threats bleed from shore to sea.

The Government of Bangladesh has been extending Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) through relief programs (cash transfer/food transfer), early warning, infrastructure building programs, education and training programs, programs for disadvantaged groups and others. The major social safety net programs in Bangladesh are aimed at employment generation, coping with natural disasters and other shocks; greater encouragement towards children's education; and incentives provided to families. These programs cover the coastal people as well thereby mitigating the risk that may grow out of the lack of opportunities.

- D. Looking beyond socio-economic issues, the other component of coastal welfare is physical safety. Here, a comparatively high level of organized violence in coastal areas severely impacts coastal welfare. In the past, we have seen such insurgency and terrorism in some coastal areas which severely undermine security both on shore and at sea. These incidents threaten critical sea lanes and offshore energy and fan illicit maritime trades in arms and narcotics with extremely detrimental impacts.

In order to sustain the progress already made in the region, economic growth will need to be more inclusive in nature and collective action to address the root causes of conflict must be made.

- E. Piracy, armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom at sea are matters of significant concern for states, the shipping industry and seafarers. These incidents threaten the safety of seafarers, disrupt maritime trade and have the potential to fund the deadly campaigns of violent non-state actors. Member states can take a leading role in coordinating maritime law enforcement capacity-building efforts which would benefit those states where this activity is centred.
- F. Reports indicate that there are a significant number of armed robberies targeting vessels at anchorage in the region. Limited berthing capacity in some regional ports means vessels wait at anchorage for longer periods of time giving robbers and thieves the opportunity to observe crew behaviour and plan and execute such attacks. Increasing emphasis on port and anchorage security by enhancing surveillance and improving port efficiency can help ensure that vessels remain undisturbed at anchorage.
- G. Illicit maritime trade in arms, drugs, wildlife and other illicit products undermines global security and stability. This lucrative trafficking activity funds criminal organizations and violent non-state actors and fuels conflict and terrorism. It also undermines the development of the licit blue economy, thus fuelling the long-term cycle of underdevelopment, conflict, and instability. Illicit trades remain an extremely pressing challenge for the region. While illicit trade in various forms occurs across the region, three particular trades deserve specific consideration due to their severity and detrimental impacts on coastal economy-trade in illegal wildlife products, opium and heroin trafficking, trafficking of synthetic drugs. In addition to attempts aimed at curtailing production, efforts could be taken seriously on areas such as maritime domain awareness, interdiction, and port security. Much of this maritime trafficking utilizes small fishing vessels and ship-to-ship transfers which attempt to hide amidst the sheer volume of small vessel traffic in the region. Collective efforts to enhance shared maritime domain awareness and identity behaviour associated with trafficking

can help direct enforcement efforts more efficiently. In addition, strengthened port security measures could help identify suspicious cargo at critical transit points.

The Government of Bangladesh enacted the Narcotics Control Act in 1990 that regulates all aspects of narcotics and alcohol within the country, including production, distribution, transaction, possession, transportation and cultivation. The major anti-trafficking laws which provide punishments for the acts, processes and end products of human trafficking are the Penal Code, 1860, the Suppression of Immoral Trafficking Act, 1933, the Children Act, 1974 and the Prevention of Repression against Women and Children Act, 2000 (as amended in 2003). Wildlife (Conservation and Protection) Act 2012 has been in practice to curb illegal wildlife trade.

- H. There are a variety of drivers of maritime mixed migration. Some migrants take to the seas in search of economic opportunities in other states. Some are driven by conflict and instability. Others still are deceived or coerced into maritime migration for the purposes of trafficking and forced labour. It is important to note that irrespective of motivation or cause, all migrants are extremely vulnerable to exploitation in a variety of forms. What may begin as a voluntary migration can easily end in human trafficking, violence, extortion, and exploitation. The region is no exception to the global prevalence of these challenges and contains several hotspots for maritime mixed migration.

Maritime mixed migration will continue as long as poverty and conflict drive migrants to the sea in search of a better life. Addressing those root causes is the only long-term solution. While it is an important consideration, no level of maritime enforcement action will serve as a deterrent.

Countries should promote awareness, stability, education and employment opportunities and reduce the drivers of forced migration, including by promoting resilience, thereby enabling individuals to make the choice between staying or migrating. Bangladesh, on its part, has been promoting safe and legal migration. In recent times, awareness campaign has been conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported by other agencies to raise awareness amongst the people in the

areas that produce significant number of migrants. The government is committed towards that and will do everything to promote safe and legal migration.

In the more immediate future, ARF can play a critical role in helping member states coordinate search and rescue operations and provide much-needed assistance to destination states dealing with migrant inflows. In addition, ARF can drive collective efforts among members to develop alternative, legal pathways for migration that help mitigate the risks posed to migrants by dangerous human smuggling and trafficking operations.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

The Asia-Pacific region constantly faces significant strategic changes with the emergence and re-emergence of interests from regional and extra regional powers to engage with and gain foothold in the region. All this while the region is also grappling with lingering and emerging security challenges, both traditional and non-traditional in nature.

Increasing interest to engage the region present both opportunities and challenges, particularly as it accentuates the complexity of shoring multilateral cooperation to effectively address these challenges. Nevertheless, holistic and concerted efforts and initiatives in combating non-traditional security threats are embedded in several ASEAN-led platforms, for instance, within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) defence and security policy meetings, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus framework.

Brunei Darussalam remains committed in contributing and supporting efforts and cooperation aimed at maintaining peace, stability, security and prosperity of the region both bilaterally and multilaterally.

a. Traditional Security

i. Evolving Geopolitical Environment

Current geopolitical issues urgently call for more cordial interactions through dialogues and discussions with mutual defence and preventive diplomacy as we collectively resolve the threats of traditional security. Although the region continues to face competing national visions, concepts, and strategies which further intensify the complex geopolitical environment, however, the existence of regional partnerships continues to positively encourage hope for inclusive and constructive engagements.

ii. South China Sea

Brunei Darussalam underlines the importance of the maintenance of peace and stability in the region including the South China Sea. It reaffirms the importance of upholding and adhering to international law, in particular the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

ASEAN and China remain committed to continue promoting maritime security and safety, and enhancing mutual trust and confidence. They have reaffirmed their commitment to the freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability. In conjunction with the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), they also reaffirmed their commitment to fully and effectively implementing the DOC in its entirety, and emphasised the need to maintain and promote an environment conducive to the negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). They further look forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law including the 1982 UNCLOS, within a mutually-agreed timeline.

iii. Korean Peninsula

At the beginning of 2023, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was observed to accelerate its missile launches signalling that the future towards achieving denuclearisation and non-proliferation in the region remains bleak. Since the last talks held between the DPRK and the United States in 2021, the progress to promote dialogue and negotiations on issues of denuclearisation with DPRK has been exceedingly stalled, further impeding the motions of denuclearisation and peace process between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Despite the DPRK facing multiple sanctions, the recent military and nuclear posturing may influence the DPRK's stance to be more inclined to not give up its nuclear weapons possession. Moving forward, inclusive and transparent

engagements between key parties remain one of the significant tenets to address the issues of concern. Additionally, leveraging the existing mechanisms such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Treaty and Biological Weapons Convention to manage the challenges of growing nuclear proliferation in the DPRK, is seen as paramount to maintain the global security and stability.

In the Southeast Asian region, ASEAN reaffirms its readiness to play a constructive role through the ARF, and this is further demonstrated by the reiteration of the support towards nuclear non-proliferation in the ASEAN Chairman's Statement released annually.

b. Non-Traditional Security

The existence of the non-traditional security further exacerbates with the complexities of multidimensional issues which continue to revolve around health, technology, climate change and terrorism. In this case, Brunei Darussalam has actively developed efforts to mitigate the issues through the dynamic cooperation with other regional and international partners.

i. COVID-19 Pandemic

In the past 3 years, the Asia-Pacific region continues to face the impacts of COVID-19 pandemics, alongside efforts of pandemic recovery. Since its identification in December 2019, the COVID-19 virus has mutated and created impacts in what was described as waves, with number of infected reaching peaks and lows. Since February 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned of XBB.1.16, an Omicron sub variant and labelled it as a 'variant of monitoring'. XBB.1.16, also known as the Arcturus variant, has garnered international interest following its contribution towards a recent surge in cases. While experts emphasise that current vaccines remain effective against Arcturus, anecdotal reports suggest the new variant may cause new symptoms not seen with previous strains, as well as has mutations that may make it more transmissible and cause a higher rate of infection. In this regard, the international community may observe the

reinforcement of COVID-19 related restrictions, such as mask mandates, testing, and travel restrictions

On the economic front, the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) noted how the pandemic, among others, could have compounding implications to economic growth and development. Brunei Darussalam's economy contracted by 4.2% in the first quarter of 2022. Brunei Darussalam has also largely felt the implications of rising inflation in the country as consumer prices continue to increase, surging to 3.9% of inflation rate in April; the highest-ever for the country in more than 25 years.

ii. Terrorism, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

The global reach of terrorism and the spread of violent and extremist influence in societies remains a top concern for countries worldwide. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2023 report have indicated that terrorist attacks for the year 2022 have become more deadly, with the lethality of attacks rising by 26%. Notably, the Islamic State and its affiliates remained the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2022 for the eight consecutive year, conducting attacks in 21 countries. Other key observations underscored by the report include how terrorism continues to thrive in countries with poor ecologies and climate induced shocks, while drone technologies and its use by terrorist groups continue to evolve, especially with groups such as the Islamic State, Boko Haram and Houthis.

While the terrorism threat remains relatively low for Brunei Darussalam, region-wide and global terrorist activities have not excluded Brunei Darussalam entirely from its implications. Previous reports and investigation highlighted how foreign nationals are utilising Brunei Darussalam as a transit point and to harbour greater support for their activities. This is further demonstrated through arrests of four individuals linked to Daesh in 2017. Meanwhile, in 2018, an arrest was made on an individual with possession of Daesh propaganda-related materials, deliberately construed to garner sympathy and radicalise. Thus, these cases amplify the

serious risks posed by social media and the cyber domain in the circulation of extremist ideologies and terrorist-related movements.

iii. Climate Change

Climate change is a security threat that can no longer be ignored. It is increasingly affecting global stability, military readiness, humanitarian crises and will be a 'threat multiplier' in current and future conflicts. Increased climatic events will inevitably require a shift in policy for the country's national security strategy. As climate change is now increasingly used as a bargaining tool in politics, a new version of the climate trap can render indebted countries vulnerable. Recognising this trend, countries have already adopted a dedicated White Paper to address climate change. Climate change will also require countries to assess their climate vulnerability index to ensure their socio-economic livelihoods are not affected. This can be in the form of adopting more resilient measures such as the more resistant infrastructure and a more sustainable form of agriculture.

The recent launch of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report on 27 February 2022 further stresses how the world is likely to pass a dangerous threshold within the next ten (10) years – pushing the planet past the point of catastrophic warming. The report also underscores how the current rate of warming stands at 1.1°C and is projected to increase global warming by 3.2°C. The IPCC warns with 'very high confidence' that risks and adverse impacts from climate change will escalate with increasing global warming. As the warming of the planet is inevitable, the defence sector must ensure it is adequately prepared to carry out its primary tasks, whilst concurrently managing rising expectations to supplement and contribute towards Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations (HADR), without the detriment to its strategic postures.

Recognising the urgency of coordination and collaboration in addressing climate change, Brunei Darussalam will establish the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change (ACCC) by late 2023. It will function as an inter-governmental centre for climate

change among ASEAN Member States to realise a climate-resilient and low carbon ASEAN region by conducting research, generating analyses and insights which in turn could lead to innovative solutions and policy recommendations.

iv. Emerging Technologies

New technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and robotics, continue to evolve rapidly within the past decade. It is widely recognised that these technologies had shown its potential as an enabler of developments for various sectors, such as economic, social, and cultural, in the era of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR).

In the defence and military realm, the technological integration in this sector has present opportunities and benefits, allowing it to further enhance its defence capabilities. Yet, the emergence of these new technologies has also exposed deeper risks and vulnerabilities to the security sector. The new trend evolved during the recent years has reshaped the nature of combats and brought about new hybrid warfare strategies, through the means of cyberspace and space domain. This itself denotes the expansion of technological scope in growing conflicts which could challenge the security and stability of the world.

Looking ahead, this calls for a strategic approach, inclusive of all relevant actors in short- and long-term perspective. This can be done through cross-sector collaborations, where key international and regional organisations cooperate with various partners both within and outside their usual area of engagement to discuss ways on minimising the existing or potential negative impacts brought by emerging technologies.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

a) Overview of National Security and Defence Policy

The 2021 Defence White Paper of Brunei Darussalam is an extended dedication in supporting the three goals of National Vision 2035 which is in line with a comprehensive approach of Whole of Government and Whole of Nations. The

policy-making contexts would also consider the Islamic sentiments through the notion of *Maqasid Syari'ah* as it assures the values and principles of Islam to be thoroughly and practically embedded in defence and security facets.

National security in Brunei Darussalam is further maintained with the formidable and credible military readiness and preparedness as it provides an effective means of defence for the people in Brunei. The Ministry of Defence and Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) continues to retain the distinctive peaceful environment and identity of Brunei Darussalam in developing the bilateral and multilateral partnerships.

The defence deliverables are based in the seven key result areas called IKWONDAMAI (Integrity, Preparedness and Readiness, Whole of Nation, Defence Diplomacy, International Missions and Credible Defence Image). The approaches of IKWONDAMAI include the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity which covers all military fields such as the land, maritime, air, space and cyber. Second approach is the high level of preparedness and readiness which reflects the adequate resources to respond productively and efficiently. The national security is further enhanced through the cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation with other relevant stakeholders for national resilience. In addition to that, firm defence diplomacy is effectively practiced between the defence and military establishments through ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus countries. The defence deliverables also focus on participating in the international missions such as the peacekeeping operations of International Monitoring Team and United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

b) Defence Expenditure

For the fiscal year 2023/2024, the Ministry of Defence of Brunei Darussalam's defence budget is BND619,618,960.00 (approximately US\$445,769,036.00 @1.39), marking an increase of about 1.03% from the previous financial year.

III. National Contributions to Promote Regional Peace and Security

Brunei Darussalam remains steadfast and is cognisant of the importance of cooperation and engagements in the region to protect its interests and play its part as a responsible member of the international community. Its participation in various multilateral regional platforms, such as the ARF, ADMM and ADMM-Plus, present opportunities for Brunei Darussalam to continue to engage constructively in dialogue and work together on addressing common security challenges.

a) Defence and Security Achievements and Initiatives

The ADMM and ADMM-Plus have proved to be productive and efficient platforms in strengthening Brunei Darussalam's defence and military capacity and capability development. In its commitment to contribute towards regional security, Brunei Darussalam initiated three proposals of cooperation during its ADMM Chairmanship in 2013, which have significantly progressed at various stages. These include:

i. Logistics Support Framework

The ADMM Logistics Support Framework (LSF) intends to strengthen logistics cooperation that will enable the military forces in the ASEAN region to address non-traditional security challenges, including but not limited to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Search and Rescue (SAR), Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and anti-piracy in a coordinated and effective manner. Upon the validation and verification of LSF in a Table-Top Exercise (TTX) by all ASEAN Member States (AMS) in January 2016, the LSF was endorsed by the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting (ADSOM). In moving forward, Brunei Darussalam is utilising LSF during the implementation of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Military Medicine project-based activity in 2023.

ii. ASEAN Direct Communication Infrastructure

In recognising the importance of developing an ASEAN early warning system to prevent the occurrence and/or escalation of conflicts, the ADMM has adopted the concept of establishing and maintaining the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI). ADI sets to provide a permanent, rapid, reliable and confidential means by which any two ASEAN Defence Ministers may communicate with each other at mutual decisions in handling incidences or emergency situations. This communication platform aims to

prevent or defuse misunderstandings and misinterpretations, therefore preventing escalation and promoting quick response cooperation in emergency situations.

The ADI is launched in phases. The first phase, which is in the form of an IP-based mechanism, was launched on 24 October 2017, after the ADMM-Plus Meeting in Clark, Pampanga, Philippines. AMS conducted an ADI Exercise on 21 February 2019 to successfully test the functionality of the system and operationalise the SOP itself. The second phase is currently under deliberation among the AMS co-chaired together by Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines. The concept paper to expand the initiative to Plus countries has also been adopted by the 13th ADMM in 2019. This is anticipated to further promote open communications among the member states, and enhance regional and wider confidence and security building measure. In June 2021, during the 15th ADMM, the ASEAN Defence Ministers have agreed to adopt the Concept Paper on Enhancing the Usage of ADI as Defence Communications Architecture in the ADMM Process. The Concept Paper will further provide the policy and technical parameters for Phase 2 of the ADI. The next phase will see the expansion of user case and include a routine exchange of information.

iii. ASEAN Defence Interaction Programme (ADIP)

ADIP is introduced to aspire defence junior officers towards working and interacting together through people-to-people contacts. Brunei Darussalam held the first ADIP in 2014 which was continued by Malaysia in 2018. This interaction programme further emphasises the common values in the spirit of unity in diversity through mutual trust, respect and understanding. The momentum of the ADIP as a platform for knowledge sharing and forging cooperation on emerging issues for the defence sector remains encouraging for Brunei Darussalam, with Cambodia's Chairmanship of the 4th ADIP in October 2022 focused on the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, and Indonesia's hosting of the 5th ADIP in March 2023 with the theme of "Posturing Young ASEAN Defence Officers for Future Leadership Challenges to Create a Region of Peace, Prosperity and Security".

iv. ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups

Within the ADMM-Plus, Brunei Darussalam is strongly encouraged by the progress of the seven ADMM-Plus EWGs in the areas of HADR, Military Medicine (MM), Maritime Security, Counter-Terrorism, Peacekeeping Operations, Humanitarian Mine Action and

Cyber Security. Brunei Darussalam is fully committed and supportive of ADMM-Plus endeavours and has worked alongside the Plus partners. This includes hosting the inaugural multinational ADMM-Plus HADR and MM Exercise in 2013 together with China, Vietnam, Singapore, and Japan. Brunei Darussalam also co-chaired the EWG on Maritime Security with New Zealand from 2014 to 2017, culminating into the ADMM-Plus Maritime Security and Counter Terrorism Exercise that took place in Brunei Darussalam and Singapore, and a Maritime Security Field Training Exercise in New Zealand.

As for the new cycle of co-chairmanship of EWGs (2021-2024), Brunei Darussalam has been working closely with Australia as co-chairs of the EWG on MM. In line with Brunei Darussalam's 2021 Chairmanship's theme of "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper", the EWG on MM is undertaking a component of Project-based Community Medical Deployment (PCMD)/Medical Aid Provision (MAP) aiming to support an underprivileged community in one of the ASEAN countries to enhance their healthcare provisions and contribute to the community's progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals outlined by the United Nations.

The works of the EWGs have garnered understanding, promoted capacity building and interoperability in all member states. More importantly, these have contributed towards deeper trust and fostering stronger military-to-military relations among the armed forces of the ADMM-Plus. Further to this, the practical cooperation in the EWGs contributes to ASEAN's collective response to addressing non-traditional security challenges. Particularly on HADR, there have been increasing integration of HADR in the broader ASEAN disaster response mechanism with efforts for closer coordination between military and civilian responders.

b) Peacekeeping and Peace Monitoring Initiatives

Brunei Darussalam also remains committed to participating in peacekeeping and peace support operations. Since 2008, the RBAF has been involved in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), in which a total of 375 RBAF personnel have been deployed to UNIFIL, and embedded under the Malaysian Armed Forces. The first contingent of the RBAF in 2008 comprised five (05) personnel and has increased over the years, totalling thirty (30) personnel in 2022. Throughout the fourteen years of RBAF's involvement in the UNIFIL, six female members of the RBAF served in the peacekeeping operations.

It has also deployed personnel for the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao, Southern Philippines since 2004, and in the 2021-2022 peacekeeping mission, there were four (04) RBAF personnel and one (01) Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF). Further to this, Brunei Darussalam contributes to the Mindanao peace process as a member of the Independent Decommissioning Board (IDB) alongside Turkey and Norway since 2014. Four (04) RBAF officers are currently serving in the IDB Verification, Monitoring and Assistance Team (IDB VMAT) in Mindanao, Southern Philippines.

At the operational theatre level, such initiatives provide exposure and knowledge in operation in conflict environments for the personnel involved. The interactions and engagements of RBAF with its foreign counterparts and organisations further contribute to Brunei Darussalam's defence diplomacy. At the same time, these initiatives showcase the RBAF image as a professional force that can contribute meaningfully. For Brunei Darussalam, this also reflects significant support towards regional and global efforts to bring about peace and stability.

c) Countering Terrorism, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

While overall threats from terrorism in Brunei Darussalam remain low, the country remains equally vulnerable to the exposure and potential dangers posed by the spread of extremist narratives and infiltration of any extremist elements. Brunei Darussalam has heavily emphasised on preventive measures to ensure peace and stability with regards to countering extremist narratives, radicalisation, and terrorism. The country's counter measures thus focus on a comprehensive Whole of Nation approach through various forms of preventive measures, such as promotion of social harmony, while enforcement, as well as monitoring platforms also exist to mitigate the impacts of terrorism.

Legal frameworks, such as the amended Anti-Terrorism Order (2012), Anti-Terrorism (Terrorist Financing) Regulations 2013, as well as the Internal Security Act (Revised, 2008) all exist to reinforce and strengthen counterterrorism efforts and commitment in Brunei Darussalam. Brunei Darussalam also has a strong centralised authority on religious-related affairs. This includes regulating a standardised education curriculum, preparation of standardised text in sermons, and screening of both Muslim and other faiths religious preachers to avoid misinterpretation of religious values, and deter the spread of deviant

or violent ideologies amongst society. The centralisation of religious authority suggests that the government retains the sole responsibility of representing Islam and other religions, in turn minimising the possibility of propagation of radical ideas among citizens. Further, the community is regarded as playing an important proactive role to alert any suspicious activities to the authorities' attention.

Meanwhile, on the domestic front, the National Security Committee (NSC) has been established to oversee security matters at the national level. Formally established on 15 February 2007, the Committee acts as the national body in overseeing key security matters in the country. The Committee consists of five executive working committees, looking at issues ranging from maritime security, law enforcement, intelligence, technological support, and cyber security. Additionally, the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) and the Internal Security Department (ISD), both under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Brunei Darussalam, are two key agencies that retain responsibility for internal security, especially with regards to law enforcement and keeping peace.

d) Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

In Brunei Darussalam, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) is the central agency in undertaking the whole-of-nation approach towards disaster management in the country. NDMC is under the administration of the Ministry of Home Affairs, established under Disaster Relief Order 2006. According to Disaster Relief Order 2006, the country is guided by two main documents in its efforts toward disaster management in the country; National Standard Operating Procedure (NaSOP) and Strategic National Action Plan for Risk Reduction (SNAP).

The NDMC looks at all aspects of disaster management ranging from prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery through policies, strategies, and practices. It also acts as a leading government agency to coordinate the country's multi-agencies effort in any events that requires relief operation. The NDMC also initiates interaction and engagement through its various community outreach program across the four districts to create awareness and collect localised knowledge as part of its preventive efforts. This is also to ensure the local community can prepare themselves and evade any foreseeable disasters through early management.

While the primary responsibility for disaster management is under the purview of the NDMC, the RBAF has served as a supporting role, particularly in the events that overwhelms NDMC's resources. The NDMC also manages multi-agency collaboration along with the RBPF, the Fire and Rescue Department (FRD).

Brunei Darussalam has actively supported HADR efforts around the region. Through the various ASEAN's platforms and mechanisms, there has been improvements in national disaster-response coordination and capabilities derived from the sharing of best practices among member states as well as regional cooperation, when required. There has also been better integration and coordination on HADR in the broader ASEAN disaster response mechanism with effort for closer coordination between military and civilian responders.

NATIONAL

Disaster Management Strategic Policy Framework (DMSPF)

The NDMC is currently working to develop a Disaster Management Strategic Policy Framework (DMSPF) that will incorporate the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. DMSPF aspires to synergize Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction. It aims to integrate a Whole-of-Nation approach for effective disaster management planning and programming across agencies and sectors. This framework will dissolve the Brunei Darussalam's Strategic National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction (SNAP) 2012-2025 and introduce a more updated policy which will address wider scope of disaster in line with the establishment of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 as well as the AADMER work Programme 2021-2025. DMSPF's priority programmes will cover Disaster Research, Policy and Governance, Disaster Risk Assessment and Monitoring, Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation, Disaster Preparedness, Disaster Response and Immediate Relief, and Disaster Recovery.

On 28 February 2023, NDMC in collaboration with Brunei Darussalam's Ministry of Home Affairs conducted a DMSPF Workshop and facilitated a Table-Top Exercise (TTX) at the Ministry of Home Affairs. It was participated by the Minister of Home Affairs and attended by representatives from relevant agencies in disaster management such as District Offices

(DOs), Brunei Fire and Rescue Department (BFRD), Brunei Darussalam Meteorological Department (BDMD), Community Development Department (JAPEM), Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF), Royal Brunei Police Forces (RBPF), Emergency Medical Ambulance Services (EMAS), Public Works Department (PWD), including grassroots and community leaders. The objective is to test the response of multi-agencies on El Nino-related scenarios (wildfires) and to test plans such as Tremor, Earthquake and Tsunami Response Plan in 2022. This is one of the initiatives to ensure Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) measures are implemented and aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

SOPs, Response and Action Plans

The NDMC has developed several plans and SOP namely National Standard Operating Procedures (NaSOP); Flood Response Plan, Tremor, Earthquake and Tsunami Response Plan and Temporary Shelter Management Plan (PPSe) which the NDMC has cascaded to relevant agencies to improve capacity in managing all different types of disaster through strong cooperation and coordination among relevant stakeholders.

Disaster Awareness Programmes

In order to become a disaster-resilient nation, it is important to have good engagement with the community on disaster awareness and management. The NDMC is a strong advocate for a knowledgeable and skilful community which understands its roles in protecting itself against harms throughout the disaster phases that can contribute towards effective disaster management efforts. Some of NDMC's initiatives on disaster awareness and management are the Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) Programme, School-Based Disaster Risk Management (SBDRM) Programme and Disaster Preparedness Coordinator (DPC) Programme conducted annually to promote an understanding of DRR concept to the general population at all levels of society including community and school. The programme modules are designed according to the target audiences, for instance, grass root leaders or community leaders, school community, our youth and public in general.

Recently, the NDMC in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports has conducted a Basic DPC Programme from 23-29 January 2023 at the Program Khidmat Bakti Negara (PKBN) Training Camp in Batu Apoi, Temburong District for trainees under the 11th

Intake of the National Service Programme. In addition, the NDMC celebrates the ASEAN Day for Disaster Management (ADDM) thus programmes are elaborated through public engagement and social media such as radio and quizzes on social media.

Brunei Darussalam conducts Public Safety, Health and Security Training Services (PSHS) Courses through the CAE-Brunei Multi-Purpose Training Center (CAE-Brunei MPTC) as part of an agreement between Brunei Darussalam and Canadian Aviation Electronics (CAE) Inc. since September 2017. The training program aims to establish and enhance understanding of disaster management, including providing initiatives that can be implemented at the grassroots and community levels to collectively manage disasters. Furthermore, it supports the objectives of the national vision *Wawasan Brunei 2035*, which are to have an educated, highly skilled and successful population, as well as a dynamic and resilient quality of life for the people and economy. Under this training program, a total of 19 courses have been offered over an 8-year period and have commenced according to an agreed training plan prepared by the CAE-Brunei MPTC and the NDMC. A total of 76 Government and Non-Government agencies have since been invited to attend these courses where a total of 7,033 participant have been successfully trained in the PSHS Courses through on-site and online training. The training courses will continue to be offered to Government and Non-Government agencies throughout 2023.

REGIONAL

As Focal Point for Brunei Darussalam for the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), the NDMC is continuously implementing initiatives towards supporting its mission - towards a disaster resilient community and collective efforts of the ACDM and its Working Groups, ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) to support the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management in working together to build a safer and resilient ASEAN Community.

A way forward with this vision is to ensure that the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) would still be relevant and would continue to serve as a comprehensive regional framework and policy backbone for disaster management and emergency response in ASEAN. The implementation of AADMER toward a people-centred, people-oriented, financially sustainable and

networked approach by 2025 will help to further strengthen the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance in disaster management (AHA Centre)'s role as the main coordinating body for disaster management, and to realize the vision of 'One ASEAN, One Response'.

In this regard, the NDMC continues to implement initiatives that cover four (4) phases of a disaster management process, namely: 1) Prevention and Mitigation; 2) Preparedness; 3) Response; and 4) Recovery to develop resilience and to realize NDMC's vision to be a Competent Coordinating Centre in Disaster Management in Brunei Darussalam.

Hosting of the 5th Meeting of the ACDM Working Group on Preparedness, Response and Recovery (ACDM WG PRR) and the 16th Technical Working Group on Civil-Military Coordination (TWG on CIMIC) in Brunei Darussalam

The NDMC is a Focal Point of the ASEAN Committee of Disaster Management (ACDM) and Brunei Darussalam is a Governing Board Member of ASEAN Coordinating Centre on Humanitarian Assistance in disaster management (AHA Centre). To enhance cooperation with internal and external agencies, the NDMC has attended several meetings either nationally, regionally or internationally. It allows the NDMC to work closely with relevant agencies and other countries as well as to be up to date with our national initiatives done by relevant agencies and what is happening in the region especially those who experience a lot of disasters such as the Philippines and Indonesia on lessons learned and best practices.

As Vice-Chair of the ACDM in 2023, Brunei Darussalam hosted the 5th Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) Working Group on Preparedness, Response and Recovery (ACDM WG PRR) Meeting and Other Related Meetings from 5-10 March 2023. The meeting was co-chaired by Malaysia, Myanmar & Singapore and attended by ASEAN Member States (ACDM WG PRR) and other representatives from regional and international organizations. In addition, Brunei Darussalam will conduct several other ASEAN Programmes such as the 'One ASEAN One Response' Roadshow in June 2023 aimed to provide stakeholders at the national level an understanding of regional and international disaster management response mechanisms, the vision 'One ASEAN One Response' - which is to bring together all of ASEAN when responding to a

major disaster either within the region or outside of the region, and their interoperability with the United Nations (UN).

ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT)

Brunei Darussalam, through the NDMC, plays a role in assisting in emergency response and humanitarian assistance in ASEAN Member States affected by disasters. In 2023, the NDMC sent two (2) NDMC Officers to attend the 14th ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) Induction Course from 12-21 February 2023 in Da Nang, Vietnam to improve their capacity and ability in terms of capacity development. To further enhance the capacities of its ASEAN-ERAT Members, Brunei Darussalam has also sent two (2) personnel from the NDMC and BFRD to attend the ASEAN-ERAT Level 2 Course on Humanitarian Logistics held in Singapore and a further two (2) personnel from Tutong District Office and Temburong District Office to attend the Level 2 Course on Civil-Military Coordination in Singapore.

In addition, the NDMC has sent two (2) ASEAN-ERAT members from Brunei Darussalam to Myanmar and the Philippines to conduct Rapid Assessment to assist the affected ASEAN Member States in May and November 2022 respectively. As of now, there are 384 qualified ASEAN-ERAT Members and 29 nationals of Brunei Darussalam are active ASEAN-ERAT Members. ASEAN-ERAT is a rapidly deployable response team to support the affected ASEAN Member States during major sudden and slow on-set disasters. It is collectively owned by all 10 ASEAN Member States and managed by the AHA Centre.

Donation Coordinator for ASEAN Village, Palu, Sulawesi, Indonesia, 2019

Brunei Darussalam's practice during the 2018 Earthquake and Tsunami which hit Palu, Central Sulawesi in Indonesia on 28 September was the first time in ASEAN that a nation had managed to assist an affected ASEAN Member State where the contributions had come solely from the public and the NDMC has been entrusted to coordinate the contributions from the People of Brunei Darussalam to the AHA Centre and the Government of Indonesia. The contribution has managed to construct 53 Permanent Housing and 1 Mosque to the affected people. This highlighted the solidarity within ASEAN to assist each other during disasters and highlighted the role and opportunity that the public plays during disasters which we want to further strengthen towards a disaster-resilient nation.

Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration On The Strategic and Holistic Initiative To Link ASEAN Responses To Emergencies And Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD)

During Brunei Darussalam's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2021, the adoption of the Bandar Seri Begawan Declaration on Strategic and Holistic Initiative to link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD) during the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summit also underscores and maintains Brunei Darussalam's commitment to enhancing the well-being and livelihood of the ASEAN Communities to enable communities to thrive, prosper and secure sustainable development when confronted with adversities resulting from natural disasters and other emergencies. The adoption of the ASEAN SHIELD further captures the spirit and values of 'One ASEAN, One Response' in times of crises.

MULTILATERAL

ASIA-PACIFIC Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022 (APMCDRR 2022)

In September 2022, Brunei Darussalam through the Minister of Home Affairs participated in the APMCDRR 2022 and delivered the Country Statement on behalf of Brunei Darussalam. Among the key highlights presented in Brunei Darussalam's shared during the Conference include the development of a Disaster Management Strategic Policy Framework (DMSPF) to reinforce the synergy between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction towards achieving a disaster resilient nation. The DMSPF aligns with the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), reaffirming Brunei Darussalam's strong commitment in accelerating national efforts in reaching the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction targets.

Voluntary National Report On The Midterm Review Of The Sendai Framework For Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and Participation at the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

As the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 meets its half-way stage, the Mid-Term Review provides the opportunity for Member States to assess the implementation of the Sendai Framework to this juncture and assess the progress made and challenges experienced by all Member States in improving and implementation disaster risk reduction initiatives as well as take into account new and emerging threats

such as pandemics and the impacts of Climate Change. To assist the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in developing the Mid Term Review Report of the Sendai Framework, Brunei Darussalam through the National Disaster Council has submitted its Voluntary National Report (VNR) which captures the outcome and national efforts in accomplishing the goals of the Sendai Framework coinciding with the Country's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The VNR was developed by undergoing a Whole-of-Nation Approach through the collection and consultation of qualitative data through mapping exercises amongst agencies and organisations relevant to disaster management enabling the Country to capture the challenges, barriers, opportunities and recommendations to improve disaster management capabilities holistically.

Complementary to the submission of the VNR, Brunei Darussalam attended the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (HLM MTR SFDRR) which was held in New York, United States of America between 18-19 May 2023. The Delegation was led by the Minister of Home Affairs in his capacity as the Chair of the National Disaster Council. During the meeting which carried the theme "Working Together to Reduce Risk for a Resilient Future", Brunei Darussalam highlighted the importance of enhancing regional cooperation with dialogue partners and organisations to develop innovative solutions in disaster management to overcome the challenges face in the present and future.

e) Non-Proliferation, Counter-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

Being a small nation, Brunei Darussalam sees the importance of adhering to non-proliferation, counter proliferation, arms control, and disarmament effort. Brunei Darussalam is a signatory to various multilateral and global non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament agreements, notably those concerning weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Brunei Darussalam will continue its support for non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, as the country believes consensus and universalisation of these instruments are needed to ensure peace and stability, not only for Brunei Darussalam but the world.

Brunei Darussalam illustrates such commitments by participating in confidence building measures and activities, articulating support when needed, submission of reports to ensure transparency, and capacity building through technical assistance and training. With regards to the United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1540, Brunei Darussalam supported the resolution and continuously updating the UNSCR 1540 matrix to fulfil the implementation of the resolution.

Brunei Darussalam also actively participates in regional effort for non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament, such as through ASEAN and ARF, and in the international arena, the UN and its associating bodies.

f) Transnational Crime

Brunei Darussalam is equally vulnerable to various forms of transnational crimes. Brunei Darussalam is a small country both in its size and population, thus diminishing some of the pull factors for transnational criminal activities. However, while data generally record minimal cases of transnational crimes, the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed vulnerabilities in controlling certain forms of transnational crime. In particular, the country observed an uptick of drugs and other related contraband trafficking and distribution.

Recognising the transnational nature such challenge, Brunei Darussalam remains committed to working with regional partners bilaterally and multilaterally, particularly with other AMS to strengthen international and regional cooperation in combatting transnational crimes. This includes through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), which remains the central platform to strengthen cooperation with regional and international partners. The current initiative that is undertaken by the AMMTC is the 'Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2019 – 2025)' that aims to provide a framework which will guide ASEAN sectoral bodies in carrying out necessary activities and monitor effective in preventing radicalization and violent extremism. Further, another ASEAN-led initiative is the ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime (2016 – 2025) which aims to continue AMS close cooperation to prevent and combat transnational crimes as well as to enhance ASEAN's capacity to address transnational crimes in an effective and timely manner. Furthermore, guiding documents such as the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025 remains

important in strengthening political and security cooperation as well as enhancing the capacity of AMS to respond to both traditional and non-traditional security threats through defence cooperation and confidence-building measures.

g) Maritime Security

Brunei Darussalam remains committed in addressing threats pertaining to maritime security. The National Maritime Coordination Centre (NMCC) has previously identified three main concerns to maritime security, namely terrorism, man-made disasters, and activities of transnational crimes. In 2022, Brunei Darussalam held a ground-breaking (*perletakan batu asas*) event for its first-ever National Coastal Surveillance System (NCSS) project that supports efforts in maintaining and protecting the country's maritime domain. Its operations centre will be placed under the command of the NMCC at the Prime Minister's Office, Brunei Darussalam, to enable centralisation and coordination through a whole-of-nation approach.

In the latest 2021 Defence White Paper, the document underscores the RBAF's efforts to forge credible and professional reputation through maintaining its engagements with international partners. In turn, these engagements translate to providing opportunities and support for the RBAF to strengthen its security; including but not limited to maritime security.

IV. Role of ARF

Since its establishment, the ARF remains relevant to the attainment on constructive dialogues and discussions, particularly on mutual interests and concerns involving the issues of security. The platform gathers several stakeholders from various sectors such as the subject matter expert from professional institutions to expand the information and knowledge-sharing which is in line to the three goals of ARF related to confidence building, preventive diplomacy as well as conflict resolution.

As the ARF is commemorating the 30th anniversary in 2023, Brunei Darussalam remains committed to the ARF-related platforms in the defence sectoral that prove to be an indispensable platform for member countries to deepen understanding of the different perspectives on regional security concerns. Additionally, both ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD) and ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) have long provided an avenue

for defence and military officials to establish networks, build confidence and promote mutual trust among one another. Furthermore, the ARF Heads of Defence Universities, Colleges and Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM) has been valuable in promoting military education best practices and exchanges of research on security issues.

Brunei Darussalam commends the work and commitment of ARF Participants through the various initiatives such as workshops and sharing of best practices, including in the defence sector that can go a long way towards enhancing the region's post-pandemic resilience.

The ARF continues to undertake a holistic approach by including timely issues such as the increasing security risks of and in ICTs, maritime security and the increased risk of nuclear threats. With the presence of nuclear risks in the region and globally, this underlines the ARF's continued importance to discuss practical ways and measures to alleviate the threat that arises which will have spill over effects on the region.

a) National Contributions to Enhancing the ARF and Regional Security

During Brunei Darussalam's co-chairmanship of the ARF DOD with Australia in May 2021, Brunei Darussalam proposed for the ARF DOD to have an institutionalised agenda on the sharing of developments of other regional defence cooperation such as the ADMM and ADMM-Plus as well as any other initiatives that could be shared to promote confidence building and exchange of best practices. In line with the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practical and Protocol as well as the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025), the proposal intends to support the promotion of defence and security dialogue as well as practical cooperation to enhance regional peace, security and stability which includes enhancing synergy between ARF and the ADMM-Plus.

These various levels of engagements within the ARF underscore the inclusiveness and ongoing efforts in fostering dialogue and consultations. Brunei Darussalam remains committed to the ARF processes in promoting mutual understanding and working together to address the wide range of regional security challenges. In an increasingly uncertain regional security environment, engagements through dialogue, collaboration

and cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels are crucial to manage future risks in a comprehensive manner.

b) Future of ARF

The ARF remains an important ASEAN-led mechanism and platform in enabling the contribution towards peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region, complementing various political, security and economic processes for its member states and wider security environment. Overall, the ARF has been paramount in fostering capacity building, mutual trust through Confidence Building Measures (CBM) and dialogue amongst Foreign Ministers of its member states, and in ensuring consistent dialogue towards a secure regional security environment amidst growing external challenges. However, institutionally, the progressive expansion of activities and scope within the ARF may warrant review of its initiatives to avoid repetition, and enable streamlining of the platform's significant thematic contributions.

CAMBODIA

I. **Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

The world today has long been faced with the challenges that arise in a rapidly changing global environment. The current security context is shaped by a range of factors and several broader trends that interact in a variety of ways to produce a volatile and unpredictable security environment, characterised by both traditional and non-traditional security threats. These are all contributing to a world that is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before, but also more complex and unpredictable.

In recent years, the world at large seems to be encountering more and more new threats, raising concerns about superpower rivalry, a changing world order, the rapid technological revolution, the slow pace of economic growth and arms proliferation. The rise of new strategies in the region and the recent establishment of partnerships followed these challenges and the desire to change geopolitical conditions in the region.

Given the complexity of the current situation, it is clear that there are no easy solutions to the challenges that we face. As the challenges are often diffused and difficult to predict, they require sustained solidarity and cooperation among states and non-state actors. The complex and interconnected nature of the security challenges today highlights the importance of cooperation between countries in the region for safeguarding peace, stability and security. Indeed, resolving issues, ensuring stability, building lasting peace and harmony and promoting prosperity for the region and the world as a whole depends on joint efforts taken with goodwill, understanding, transparency and mutual respect.

II. **National Security and Defence Policy**

The Ministry of National Defence of Cambodia released the latest strategic defence policy - known as the Defence White Paper 2022 (DWP2022) - in May 2022. The ultimate goal of the DWP2022 is to reshape Cambodia's national defence objectives towards 2030 through a carefully defined strategy of safeguarding peace, defending national interests, and strengthening international cooperation. Cambodia's defence policy intends to promote a stable, secure, and rules-based order by pivoting on four key defence priorities, consisting the border defence; internal security; military reform; and international cooperation.

Border defence remains one of the top defence priorities for Cambodia. While the process of border demarcation with our neighbouring nations is showing notable progress, we continue to face hurdles in misperception that could escalate at any time. Overlapping maritime claims are unlikely to be resolved shortly and Cambodia must remain subtle in avoiding any kind of tensions. In addition, cross-border illegal activities remain a security concern, including drug, arms and human trafficking, and other transboundary crimes. In response to these challenges, the effort of maintaining political and security dialogues through existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms is vital so as to maintain a peaceful, stable, and developed borders with our neighbouring nations.

Over the years, the Royal Cambodian Government has taken measures to repel and counter threats posed to domestic security. The attempts to ravage peace and stability through subversive acts have come about over the past few years. The emergence of both internal and external cybercrime of any form also poses an unprecedented threat to national cyber security. Thus, the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) will play a leading role in countering cyber threats in the future.

In term of terrorism, Cambodia has so far not encountered any threats in the form of international terrorism. Despite this fact, the spread of ideological extremism and radicalism in the region, and the use of sophisticated technology such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and biotechnology have posed grave concerns not only to regional and global security but also to the national security of Cambodia.

Moving beyond our borders, Cambodia is strongly committed to collaborating with our regional and international security partners to safeguard and promote peace, security, and stability in the region. We are firm in our support of existing regional security architectures namely the ADMM, ADMM-Plus, East Asia Summit, and ASEAN Regional Forum, among others. We will continue to build strong partnerships with regional partners in human resource development, capacity building, and exchange of expertise.

Over the next 10 years, the RCAF will undertake its reform process aiming at restructuring our defence and military institutions, improving military personnel management and human resource capabilities, simplifying roles and responsibilities, and upgrading our platform, including modernization of land, sea, and air defence capabilities. This

modernisation will enable the RCAF to increase participation in exercises and activities under the ASEAN frameworks.

Ream Naval Base Modernisation

Cambodia has always displayed good will to strengthen and encompass military cooperation with countries in the region and around the world, based on the principle of respect of mutual interests. The development of the RCAF's capability is an obligation of the RGC in the same way as that of other countries in the world. The modernisation of Ream Naval Base, which has been in progress for many years, is an important part of the capability development of the Royal Cambodian Navy. This process aims to take more effective control of Cambodia's maritime zones and to participate with other nations in maintaining peace, stability and security in the region. The continuous baseless accusations related to the foreign military presence, aimed at the disruption of this development have revealed an intention to view Cambodia as being unable to master the defence of its sovereignty. These unfounded accusations are a pretext for geopolitical, hegemonic strategy in Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific.

However, Cambodia always demonstrates its transparency and mastery of all activities concerning the Ream Naval Base development. Cambodia has made a lot of concessions when other countries are unable to do the same. We have opened for the visits to Ream Naval Base for many military representatives which have been regarded as cooperation through goodwill and friendship. In addition, we notified relevant parties, through official correspondence and public announcement, that foreign-funded buildings in the base were to be relocated. However, we find it difficult to accept any further demands that are by nature an intention to search or investigate these areas. Such demands violate Cambodia's sovereign rights and territorial integrity, and contradict the spirit of maintaining friendship and cooperation.

Cambodia will be the sole owner of Ream Nava Base in all circumstances. No foreign countries will be given exclusive management of this Base. This is not only Cambodia's full responsibility but also a commitment to its sovereignty which is enshrined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia and guaranteed through the strong policy of the RGC. Nevertheless, Cambodia has repeatedly reaffirmed that any cooperation for mutual interests is always welcome, including the use of Ream Naval Base, after the

completion of the development, by international partners with Cambodia as the exclusive owner. In this regard, Cambodia reiterates that the modernisation of Ream Naval Base is not a security threat, but instead, serves the interests of the entire region.

III. Cambodia's Contributions to Regional Security

1. Counterterrorism

Terrorism is a threat to both global social and security orders, an issue to world leaders and populations. Cambodia has taken a significant step to fight against terrorism. Although the security scope has been shifted over to the world-long stretching pandemic (COVID-19) since 2020, combatting international terrorism has again taken its shape in our government and the National Counter-Terrorism Special Force is in a ready posture, for both training and operations. We have planned for national and international exercises with our counterparts to strengthen our skills, information sharing and fighting capabilities. To make sure of a peaceful region by preventing terrorist activities; deterring and combatting terrorism to maintain peace, stability, and security and promoting cooperation in the region and the world.

In response to growing terrorism threats, the RGC has taken several important steps which include:

- Fighting for information and sharing them with our operational partners, both nationally and internationally.
- Support external partners at all levels on various counter-radicalization initiatives by the government such as educational programs and local community supports, spreading soft approach agendas, nesting local community regardless of their religions, races or colours by encouraging them to share, talk and understand each other as a measure of preventing them from being radicalized.
- Enhancing maritime security via the empowerment of the National Committee for Maritime Security and its maritime CT components, by conducting joint training and exercises, and by sending relevant individuals for joint planning exercises, information sharing workshops, seminars and many other educational programs. All these activities can assure that Cambodian CT elements are better equipped with knowledge and skills.

- Implementing measures to improve land and sea border security as well as closely cooperating with partners in strengthening response capabilities on cross-border terrorism through monitoring and tracking terrorist movements, activities and networks as well as supporting resources and supply routes.

Thus far, Cambodia can conduct fully self-reliant training and operations among its Special Operation Forces. We have increased our operational capabilities to respond simultaneously across the country, gaining control over any unforeseen and foreseen situations that required quick release and response forces.

The government on the other hand has participated in different cultural, traditional, and religious celebrations of the communities to show that the government is here to support everyone equally at all costs and that everyone is part of the society, sharing the same land, celebrating each other traditional, cultural and religious events. Doing this lets everyone know that their cultures and traditions are fully accepted and respected within this country.

2. Non-Proliferation, Counter Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

The Kingdom of Cambodia has committed to a range of capacity-building for non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regarding national laws and legislations as well as regional and international legal instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) to present the illicit trafficking of WMD and materials used in developing such weapons. Cambodia has been actively engaging in various diplomatic efforts to ensure the peaceful use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) materials and the national implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540).

According to Article 54 of Cambodia's Constitution, the manufacture, use and storage of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons shall be prohibited. To support the global movement on the non-proliferation of WMD, the Kingdom of Cambodia has adopted various international conventions and treaties to combat the use of WMD and become a party to several organizations and treaties which include the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC),

Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), United Nation Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540), International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol.

At the national level, significant legal frameworks were adopted and have been implemented such as Law on the Prohibition of Chemical, Nuclear, Biological and Radiological Weapons; Law on Counter-Terrorism; Law on the Management of Weapons, Explosives and Ammunition; Law on the Management of Pharmaceuticals; Law on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism; Law on Combating Financing of Mass Destruction Weapons; and Law on the Punishment of Acts of Terrorism.

The Kingdom of Cambodia established the National Authority for the Prohibition of Chemical, Nuclear, Biological and Radiological Weapons (NACW) to serve as a national central point for effective liaisons with international organizations and States Parties in disarming and combating the proliferation of CBRN weapons. The NACW is also missioned to disseminate, educate and raise public awareness of national and international laws.

The Kingdom of Cambodia recognizes the importance of developing an integrated and comprehensive approach to mitigating CBRN risks/threats and works with international partners to minimize such dangers by developing the CBRN National Action Plan (NAP) to focus on prevention, detection, and preparedness and response. The CBRN NAP covers a wide range of CBRN activities and is tailored to addressing CBRN hazards – whether natural, accidental or criminal in origin – of greatest relevance to the country.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is fully in line with many initiatives including the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), European Union CBRN Centre of Excellence (EU CBRN CoE), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

(CTBTO), United Nation Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the activities of the Committee established according to the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Health Organization's protocol for assessing National Surveillance and response capacities for the International Health Regulations (IHR), International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), World Customs Organization (WCO), Network of ASEAN CBR Defence Experts, and countless partner countries in the region and world. Cambodia also faithfully cooperates and implements the law on combating the finance of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Cambodia. It means that Cambodia values collective efforts and is ready to collaborate and cooperate with all countries in the region and global arena to mitigate CBRN risk and threat to the security and peace of the people.

3. Transnational Crime

Transnational Crime is a common concern and poses a complicated challenge in the Southeast Asian region, including Cambodia. Currently, transnational crime has not yet decreased. which poses a threat to the stability, security, economic development and public order of each country in the region. Although there has been cooperation between the countries in the region to suppress and prevent crime, it is still evolving along each country's borders. Furthermore, criminal groups have well-organized structures and networks. At the same time, globalization and regional integration have made the movement along national borders, the flow of people, finance and technology from one country to another become free and much easier. Moreover, the rapid development of information technology is a factor that eases those criminals' communication and their activities.

There are various types of transnational crimes, most notably:

- a. **Cybercrime:** is a crime in the information technology era which includes spreading fake news against legitimate government and hacking to steal important data from public institutions and private companies, which causes significant financial losses. This crime is now a contentious issue that also presents a serious challenge.
- b. **Illegal Arms Smuggling:** this is also a concern that needs to be closely monitored amid the rising threat of terrorism and separatism against the

government. Terrorist groups could have used the weapons that they got from illegal trade to attack government forces.

- c. **Drug Trafficking:** this is still a challenge that needs to be carefully monitored, particularly in the regions along the Mekong River due to the flow of drugs from the Golden Triangle Region (the border between Myanmar, Thailand and Laos). Local authorities have seized the illegal drugs that were planned to export outside the region and the number of seizures is still on the rise. International criminals are still trying to use Cambodia as a country to produce, process and transport drugs in all forms through land, sea, and postal means. Provinces along the border, especially in the northeast, remain vulnerable to drug trafficking despite crackdowns on major cases and criminal organizations. Furthermore, it is challenging for the government to monitor the situation as criminals attempt to use small entry points to illegally cross the borders. Nowadays, illegal drug production and trafficking trends across the world continue to rise, especially the production of synthetic drugs (ATS), which is a major threat in every region including Cambodia.
- d. **Human Trafficking and Labour Exploitation** is still a challenge in the region. Tens of thousands of victims have been trafficked along the borders and deceived by middle persons to work without payment. Some women have been forced to work overtime or been sexually exploited. Despite travel restrictions during COVID-19, Cambodia remains concerned about cases of people being trafficked through illegal entry points along the borders.
- e. **Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing** is a common concern in the region and the world because syndicates and terrorist groups always launder their money through transferring, trading and doing business from one country's bank to another. Cambodia is among the countries that are vulnerable to money laundering and terrorist financing. Therefore, the government has closely monitored these issues.

Measures and Cooperation to Suppress the Transnational Crimes

- **Cybercrime**

The RGC has both legal and institutional mechanisms such as:

- The adoption of Digital Government Policy 2022-2035 on 28 January 2022, which also focuses on the development of Digital Government infrastructure and Cyber Security.
 - Law on Anti-Cybercrime (finalized drafting stage).
 - Sub-Decree on National Internet Gateway (NIC) which took effect on 16 February 2021 will allow the authority to maintain and protect the security and safety of the Internet in Cambodia.
 - Established a Department of Anti-Cybercrime under the General Commissariat of National Police, Ministry of Interior, to suppress all offences related to cybercrime.
- **Illegal Arms Smuggling**
 - Strictly enforce measures in checking and monitoring all flows of goods in all target zones and border checkpoints in the country and along the borders.
 - Increase cooperation in the region to share information related to any case or individual suspected of arms smuggling and ammunition -Improve effectiveness in implementing the law on Arms control Explosive Substance and Ammunition
- **Drug Trafficking**
 - Enforce the capability to check and find narcotic substances by providing modern equipment for law enforcement institutions.
 - All countries shall strictly enforce the law and punish criminals.
 - Raise awareness and educate the population, especially the youth, about the risk and harmful impacts of consuming drugs.
 - Impose control measures on dual-use chemicals (which can be used as precursors to produce illegal drugs) and plan to draft laws to control chemical substances that can be used to produce illegal drugs.
 - The issuance of the seventh "one-year campaign strategy to combat illegal drugs from 1 January to 31 December 2022 after the sixth successful "one-year campaign strategy" to combat illegal drugs.
 - International cooperation with bordering countries.

- **Human Trafficking**

- Raise awareness and educate the population to understand the laws and regulations such as labour law, the law on immigration, law on marriage with foreign nationals, and explain the risks of illegal immigration so that they can protect themselves from being exploited by crooks or some brokers.
- Enforce the law on Immigration by the authority and strictly punish the criminals in accordance with the law.
- Strict control of the borders, as well as the corridors between the neighbouring countries, is needed to prevent the pandemic and monitor illegal crossing activities.

- **Combating against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing**

To combat money laundering, Cambodia adopted the law on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism on 27 June 2020. This law paves the way for effective enforcement of measures in combating illegal activities of terrorist groups. On 18 January 2022, The Ministry of Justice formed a task force to fight money laundering and the financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, led by the minister of justice.

4. Humanitarian Assistant and Disaster Relief (HADR)

The continuation of competitions between powerful nation-states for geopolitical influences, economic influences, and territorial integrity, brought greater challenges to the global system which greatly influences the world's social, political, economic, and security stability in the region and throughout the world. Complexities from these challenges exert greater problems for many nation-states to access resources such as food, medication, shelter, and energy. Compounded with the war in Ukraine, environmental degradation, cyber security, socio-cultural and geopolitical changes through civil wars and national identity have created even greater uncertainty and complexity in our global environment. Furthermore, with the borderless global environment, we are continually being exposed to even more vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) in the global environment.

Beyond these transnational challenges, regional countries and nation-states throughout the world are continued to struggle to contain the spread of the pandemic

diseases, which have significantly affected the economy, security, health, and well-being of our daily lives. During the spread of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in 2019, the RCAF and the Royal Gendarmerie played a significant role in implementing various measures to thwart the spread of the pandemic diseases throughout the country. Additionally, other non-traditional threats such as natural disasters have also been increasingly prevalent in our global environment. As far as natural disasters and made disasters are concerned, relentless typhoons, hurricanes, landslides, flash floods, earthquakes, forest fires, building collapses, and traffic accidents have increased in frequency at an alarming rate possibly due to the impact of climate change as well human carelessness activities. Furthermore, traditional threats such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, illicit arms trade, piracy, and other violent extremist movements have affected our daily lives and well-being as well. Therefore, disasters such as these often outweigh the capabilities of our respective governments, and individual nation-states deal with them quickly in providing humanitarian assistance, and responding to these disasters.

Even though, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is no longer a major problem to the regions as well as the whole world, the RGC has been continuing working endlessly with its ASEAN member states, partner nations, civil societies, national and international non-governmental organizations to establish and ratify new concepts, procedures, guidelines, regulations, and law on disaster management. In addition, the RCAF and the Royal Cambodian Gendarmerie have been implementing, and participating through either bilateral or multilateral exercise activities on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations with ASEAN militaries as well as regional militaries in line with the ASEAN charter, agreement, protocol and other existing mechanisms; and is committed to supporting all Defence cooperative activities conduct by the ASEAN militaries, regional militaries. To further contribute to national, regional, and world security, the RCG, the RCAF, and the Royal Cambodian Gendarmerie have carried out measures in disaster relief operations through the implementation of national legislation, and national policy; as well as through the establishment of National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM). Additionally, the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and the Royal Cambodian Gendarmerie continue their participation in both bilateral and multilateral Defence

cooperative activities; particularly in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations (HA/DR).

Endlessly continuing its participation in Command Post Exercises, Field Training Exercises (CPX/FTX), workshops, and seminars will undoubtedly strengthen the capacity of our arm forces in performing humanitarian and disaster relief operation tasks. For instance, recently the RCAF and the Royal Cambodian Gendarmerie participated in a bilateral Gold Dragon HA/DR table-top exercise and field training exercise with the Chinese Liberation Army. Respectively, five Cambodian gendarmerie officers will be participating in an ASEAN HA/DR table-top exercise and field training exercise in Indonesia which is co-hosted by Indonesia and India. Undoubtedly, disaster preparedness and readiness are the key element to the strategic blueprint for the ASEAN Community, and regional partners to hedge against this uncertainty as well as the key element to promote a successful outcome and turn vision into reality. In summary, continued efforts to strengthen the relationship and closer cooperation while implementing more frequent pragmatic Defence cooperative activities among the ASEAN militaries, and regional partners will undoubtedly build trust, confidence, professionalism and partnership. In addition, our ASEAN militaries, and regional partners will possess the capabilities, skill sets, and intellectual knowledge to respond to these challenges while anticipating and preparing for those of tomorrow. To succeed, we must harness and integrate all aspects of our capabilities, and intellectual knowledge, and work closely with allies, friends, and partners.

In conclusion, we strongly believe that promoting closer defence cooperation and implementing more pragmatic defence cooperative activities among the ASEAN member states, and partner nations through either bilateral or multilateral exercises would undoubtedly enhance our military's tactical, operational, and strategic capability which eventually help to strengthen our national security, regional security, and the world security as a whole.

5. Maritime Security

Regional Maritime development has been highly regarded as ASEAN's growth centre, pivot and heart of world trade linking the East and the West and one of the richest regions of the world such as fishery, forest, oil, natural gas and mineral resources. The

sea is the gateway for trade and tourism; thus, the sea must be peaceful and stable. Along with these developments, ASEAN faces a variety of challenges including piracy, sea robberies, IUU fishing, transnational crime, human and drug trafficking, contraband smuggling, terrorism, environmental destruction, climate change, and other non-traditional threats. In particular, Cambodia has actively taken part in several initiatives to develop the global maritime policy.

In response to maritime threats, the RGC established the National Committee for Maritime Security (NCMS), which put into place overarching constitutional provisions, national strategy and vision for Maritime Security. NCMS is a national inter-agency mechanism responsible for leading two primary missions: (1) defending the country's maritime sovereignty and (2) managing cohesive maritime law enforcement for the Kingdom of Cambodia. Identifying that Maritime Security requires operations from all involved agencies of the government beyond Defence, NCMS facilitates and provides cohesions for national cooperation strategically and tactically. NCMS has organized a large-scale biennial national training exercise named MOHAROU-EL since 2017, aimed at strengthening collaboration and inter-agencies skills. Furthermore, Cambodia has participated in almost all forms of maritime security fora including ARF, AMF, EAMF, ACGF, EAS, ADMM, ADMM-Plus, etc. Cambodia is still an active member of the Southeast Asia Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation (SEAMLEC) which was changed from the Southeast Asia Maritime Law Enforcement Initiative (SEAMLEI).

The Royal Cambodian Navy (RCN) plays a pivotal role in the defence of Cambodia's coastline, islands and maritime sovereignty, monitoring the security of its main deep-water ports and crucial waterways. The RCN has been carrying out its international missions under the framework of the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and spirit of ACDFM, ADMM and ADMM-Plus as a compass and an integrated approach in maintaining peace, security and stability in the region. To achieve a common goal of promoting sustainable maritime security the RCN continues to work closely with other ASEAN navies in strengthening cooperation through promoting constructive and collective participation including intelligence, education, joint patrol, operations, logistics, exchange visits of high-ranking officials and organizing interaction platforms such as ASEAN Navy Chiefs' Meeting (ANCM), ANCM-Staff Meeting, ASEAN Navy Young Officers' Interaction Program (ANYOI), Guidelines

for Maritime Interaction, ASEAN Cadet Seminar and ASEAN Cadet Sail, ASEAN Navy Training Experiences Exchange Program (ANTEEP), ASEAN Multilateral Naval Exercise (AMNEX) and International Liaison Officer (ILO) to be stationed at the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) to promote mutual understanding, effective working in solidarity, enabling its navy to adapt and respond positively when dealing with unexpected circumstances. Moreover, the RCN has been actively participating in international activities including International Fleet Review (IFR), ASEAN - India Maritime Exercise (AIME), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), ASEAN Security Outlook (ASO) and other international activities.

Cambodia has developed a maritime security policy and has also joined in several initiatives to develop the global maritime policy. Especially, the NCMS and the RCN express their fullest commitment and support to any effort or initiative with the objectives to promote cooperation for maintaining regional maritime peace, security, stability, prosperity and sustainable development.

6. ICTs Security

regularly participating in the ASEAN Cyber SEA Game, a notable regional capture-the-flag competition conducted with the collaboration of Japan as well as the Singapore Cyber Conquest, which were hosted by Singapore.

Since 2017, an annual cyber exercise, codenamed Cyber Angkor, has been conducted to evaluate the cyber incident response readiness and crisis management capabilities of chief information officers or officials in charge of IT across various ministries in Cambodia. The primary objective of this exercise is to simulate a realistic cyberattack scenario, enabling the response officers to become familiar with effective incident processes and procedures, while also enhancing their expertise in cyber crisis management and recovery.

The attraction of young, talented individuals to the ICT Security profession is of paramount importance for Cambodia in its efforts to secure its cyber-infrastructure and online services throughout the country, thereby facilitating regional connectivity. To this end, Cambodia annually organizes a cyber competition, codenamed

"Cambodia Cyber Contest," which is open to university students and the public under 30 years old, with the aim of promoting interest in this crucial field.

In the recent year Cambodia has rolled out two policies, namely the Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035 and the Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022-2035 in the years 2021 and 2022. These policies are crucial in strengthening Cambodia's ICT Security infrastructure and Secure data. To achieve this objective, Cambodia is currently drafting laws on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection. The adoption of these laws will reinforce the country's legal framework and enhance the security of its ICT infrastructure and data.

Cambodia will launch its "Improvement on Cyber Resilience" project in 2023 with the support of Japan. The primary goal of this initiative is to enhance the services provided by the Cyber Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT). Additionally, the project aims to promote cooperation and engagement with related organizations and stakeholders such as CII operators and the public in the field of cybersecurity. Lastly, it intends to identify laws, regulations, and standards to improve cybersecurity measures.

Regarding awareness-raising programs, Cambodia has partnered with industry partners to conduct several seminars, workshops, and training sessions.

IV. Role of ASEAN Regional Forum

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is the first region-wide Asia-Pacific multilateral forum for official consultations on peace and security issues. An outgrowth of the annual ARF activities, with the participation from 10 ASEAN member states plus 17 dialogues partners, the ARF provides a setting for discussion and diplomacy and the development of cooperative responses to regional Security issues. The principle and modalities of dialogue and cooperation fostered by the ARF, such as mutual respect, dialogue on an equal footing, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs together with the cooperative security concept, are increasingly accepted by countries in the region.

The uniqueness of the ARF is that the forum serves as an effective platform where regular collaboration and meetings between military and civil elements in the region take place. The ARF continues to be the most comprehensive multilateral security forum in the

region. As an active and responsible ARF member, Cambodia is contributing to regional peace and stability and supporting the development of a more robust, rules-based regional order, while upholding the central role of ASEAN in any ASEAN-led forums, Cambodia will also continue to make a valuable contribution to the forum through its continuous active participation, contributing ideas and initiatives in many ARF activities, including co-chairing various ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting with other ARF member states.

V. Others

Cambodia would like to clarify that Cambodia has never had any cooperation project with the US Naval Medical Research Unit 2 Detachment (NAMRU-2), comparable to those said to be in operation in other countries. In 1998, the Ministry of Health of Cambodia had a cooperation project with NAMRU-2 on “Vector Control Program for communicable diseases, especially malaria and dengue fever”. This project ended the following year and was not deemed relevant for further renewal, thanks to significant improvement of Cambodia’s capacity.

CANADA

After 46 years as an ASEAN Dialogue Partner, and as we commemorate 30 years of cooperation through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Canada is proud of our longstanding partnership with ASEAN. This partnership is built on close to five decades of mutually beneficial collaboration. We also reaffirm our strong support for ASEAN centrality and shared commitment to advancing cooperation in line with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN is central to Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, released in November 2022, which sets out an ambitious plan for Canada's increased engagement in the region over the next decade.

Canada deeply appreciates the support of our ASEAN partners as we look to elevate our status to Strategic Partner at this year's ASEAN-Canada Summit, reflecting our deepening engagement with ASEAN and the ARF. Working with partners in the region, supported by our Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada will continue to take an active part in, and help strengthen, ASEAN-led mechanisms. When ASEAN is stronger and more effective, we all benefit from its increased ability to promote regional peace and stability.

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

The Indo-Pacific region will play a critical role in shaping Canada's future over the next half-century. Encompassing 40 economies, over four billion people and \$47.19 trillion in economic activity, it is the world's fastest growing-region and home to six of Canada's top 13 trading partners. The Indo-Pacific is rapidly becoming the global centre of economic dynamism and strategic challenge. Every issue that matters to Canadians—including our national security, economic prosperity, respect for international law, democratic values, public health, protecting our environment, the rights of women and girls and human rights—will be shaped by the relationships Canada and its allies and partners have with Indo-Pacific countries. Our ability to maintain open skies, open trading systems and open societies, as well as to effectively address climate change, will depend in part on what happens over the next several decades in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Indo-Pacific region, with a strong ASEAN at its core, is important to Canada. As a Pacific country, we deeply value a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive, prosperous, secure, based on the rule of law, and that protects shared principles

including sovereignty, territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

The rise of the Indo-Pacific and the profound impacts the region will have on the lives of all Canadians demand a comprehensive, whole-of-society strategy to guide Canada's actions. That is why, in November 2022, Canada launched its Indo-Pacific Strategy. The Strategy outlines five interconnected strategic objectives: promote peace, resilience and security; expand trade, investment and supply chain resilience; invest in and connect people; build a sustainable and green future; position Canada as an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific. Overall, Canada will defend its national interests. Stability in this region directly impacts the safety, prosperity and security of Canadians. Canada will invest in an enhanced military presence, along with intelligence and cyber security, to promote security in the region and ensure the safety of Canadians. Canada will build on its Women, Peace and Security agenda and its established security partnerships to reinforce regional capabilities and promote stability.

a. Korean Peninsula

North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missile programs are a violation of UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and remain one of the most critical threats to regional and international peace and security. Canada continues to call on North Korea to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its WMD and missile programs, and to avoid any further provocations. Canada is deeply concerned by North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches throughout 2022 and 2023, including launches of inter-continental ballistic missiles. We are also concerned by indications that North Korea is preparing to resume nuclear testing. Given the significant implications of this threat for the region, Canada believes that this issue should be a central focus of the ARF's work, including at all relevant inter-sessional meetings. Canada is committed to working with ARF members and the broader international community to ensure effective and coordinated implementation of UNSC sanctions against North Korea.

Furthermore, Canada firmly believes that dialogue and diplomacy represent the only path to security, stability and economic prosperity for the North Korean people, and

strongly supports the United States, South Korea and Japan in their efforts to strengthen diplomatic engagement with North Korea in order to pursue denuclearization and reduce the risk of conflict.

Canada calls on North Korea to cease all malicious cyber activities and to abide by the norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. Canada continues to call for humanitarian access, noting the lack of delivery of humanitarian assistance and access by trusted humanitarian organizations since North Korea's decision to close its borders in response to the pandemic. Since 2005, Canada has provided over CA\$40.4 million in humanitarian assistance funding through international organizations to address urgent needs in North Korea. Canada also remains gravely concerned by North Korea's human rights violations and the basic denial of freedoms of North Korean citizens.

b. Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Canada believes that effective and sustainable counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-violent extremism (CVE) measures require a global approach, combining domestic and international efforts. These efforts must be guided by the principles of respect for human rights and the rule of law, and be driven by partnerships. Such approaches should also be evidence-based and gender-responsive. They must build on local strengths and capabilities in order to foster sustainable resilience to violent extremism among those affected.

Canada advocates for a coordinated, global civilian-led approach to CT and P/CVE that safeguards democracy, human rights, the international rules-based order, and integrates gender considerations and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda into CT and P/CVE initiatives.

Canada's CT efforts link domestic and international efforts, including intelligence, policing, criminal justice, diplomatic, military, development and capacity building. Canada supports international efforts to CT and prevent and counter violent extremism, encompassing not only security-based CT measures but also preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups. Terrorism and violent extremism are global problems, not tied to

any particular religion, ethnicity or ideology. Canada strongly supports the UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Canada maintains strong bilateral relationships and is active in a number of international forums in addressing issues related to CT and P/CVE. These include the UN, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) which Canada currently co-chairs with Morocco, the G7 Roma Lyon Group, the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Canada continues to support the Global Coalition against Daesh in its military and civilian-led efforts in Iraq and Syria. Under Canada's whole-of-government Middle East Strategy, Canada has provided over CA\$3.5 billion in funding to respond to the crises in Iraq and Syria, and address their impact on the region. While the Coalition has succeeded in the territorial defeat of Daesh in the region, Daesh remains an insurgent threat and continues to exploit instability in Iraq and Syria.

Canada is deeply concerned with the rise of ideologically-motivated violent extremism (IMVE), both at home and abroad. IMVE threat actors operate in a decentralized manner and pose a challenge to law enforcement because they exist primarily on the web, making it difficult to identify them in the real world.

Canada will continue to build on its partnerships domestically and internationally to counter the threats posed by terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. Addressing the underlying conditions conducive to such threats is essential.

At the Christchurch Call 2022 Leaders' Summit, Canada announced CA\$1.9 million in funding over three years to Tech Against Terrorism for Phase 2 of their Terrorist Content Analytics Platform (TCAP), a secure online tool that automates the detection, notification, and analysis of verified terrorist content. This funding is made available through the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence's

Community Resilience Fund (CRF), which supports partnerships and innovation in countering radicalization to violence in Canada.

c. East and South China Seas

Canada is concerned by escalatory and destabilizing actions in the East and South China Seas. Activities such as the militarization of disputed features; the use of naval, coast guard and maritime militia vessels to intimidate and threaten the ships of other states; and the unilateral declaration of administrative authority over disputed features are not conducive to the peaceful settlement of disputes. Canada opposes all unilateral actions that escalate tensions and undermine stability and the rule of law. Canada also reiterates its steadfast commitment to maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. The Taiwan Strait is an indispensable element in security and prosperity in the international community and it is in the interest of all parties to maintain the peaceful and accessible nature of this waterway.

Canada places great importance on lawful commerce, navigation and overflight rights, as well as the sovereign rights and jurisdiction of coastal states, exercised in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS. These fundamental principles are essential to a secure, stable and prosperous maritime region. In this regard, Canada reiterates that the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal ruling is final and binding on the parties. This ruling continues to be a significant milestone and a useful basis for peacefully resolving disputes in the region.

Canada continues to urge that China and ASEAN Member States make concerted efforts to implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). Canada is encouraged by ongoing negotiations between ASEAN Member States and China to develop a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea. We encourage transparency in the negotiations and reiterate that any agreement must be consistent with international law, and without prejudice to the rights of third parties. Despite diplomatic negotiations on a COC, Canada notes a continued deterioration of the security situation in recent years, caused by increasing militarization and unsafe and unprofessional conduct on by some militaries. Canada urges all sides to take steps to de-escalate by removing military assets from disputed features, ensuring interactions are conducted in a safe and professional manner, and engaging in good-

faith negotiations with a view to managing or resolving disputes in accordance with international law. Canada is pleased to be contributing to initiatives that are helping to build confidence and restore trust in the region and advance a comprehensive COC.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

Canada is committed to strengthening peace and security and to enhancing its defence relations and engagement in the Indo-Pacific. In June 2017, the Government of Canada released its defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE). Through this policy, the Government of Canada directs the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to deepen engagement with the Indo-Pacific region and ASEAN. In particular, SSE directs DND/CAF to have a more consistent, predictable, and sustainable presence in the region, including through seeking membership in the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting – Plus (ADMM-Plus) and increased participation in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) events.

In November 2022, Canada released its new Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), which reinforces the guidance extant in SSE and sets out an ambitious plan for Canada's increased engagement in the region over the next decade. The IPS is supported by dedicated new investments totalling nearly CA\$2.3 billion to enable unprecedented engagement in the region. It commits to seeking membership in the ADMM-Plus, strengthening Canada's diplomatic presence in the region and increasing security cooperation with ASEAN and its members. In this way, the IPS continues to recognize and support ASEAN centrality in the region, including by reinforcing alignment between Canada's IPS and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, and our shared commitments to the principles of openness, transparency, inclusivity, and good governance.

Canada has taken steps consistent with the intent of SSE (2017) and the IPS (2022), including increased contributions to the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula through ongoing personnel contributions to United Nations Command, and consistent participation in regional humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief efforts. Canada has taken concrete steps to strengthen defence relations and cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific, including by expanding its network of defence attaché offices, establishing a more enduring naval presence, and increasing its regional

military contributions, notably through Operation NEON, which supports international monitoring of North Korean sanctions evasion activities.

In recent years, Canada has increased its participation in regional military exercises and high-level defence forums, such as the Shangri-La Dialogue and its related Sherpa Meeting, the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue and Security Policy Conference, which are both taking place in-person again after three years of virtual meetings, and the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and Maritime Security, both of which offer select activities that Canada can now participate in given its achievement of Observer Status in 2023. Canada has also taken key steps to support the deepening of cooperation with ASEAN defence institutions by moving to establish new Memorandums of Understanding, Terms of Reference, and defence policy and military staff talks with Southeast Asian partners, and seeking to expand official talks and high-level defence dialogues with additional ASEAN members in due course.

Canada's defence policy also reaffirms our commitment to capacity building projects and mutual education, training and assistance. The Military Training and Cooperation Program (MTCP) supports cooperative, non-lethal training and military professional development activities across the region that enhance interoperability, expand and reinforce Canadian bilateral defence relations, and promote Canadian democratic principles, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. The MTCP offers training in broad categories such as language, staff officer, peace support operations and professional development. There are 13 MTCP members within the Indo-Pacific region, with over 3,500 candidates in this region having received sponsored training to-date. In 2019-2020, DND trained 305 personnel from the Indo-Pacific region. The COVID-19 pandemic paused much of MTCP's activities, both inside and outside of Canada, throughout 2020-2021. As a result, DND contributed lower than normal figures in 2020-2021, training 42 personnel in the Indo-Pacific region. The program has since adapted to delivering a selection of courses and training via distance learning for the time being. Once conditions allow, bilateral training courses hosted in Indo-Pacific countries will resume. DND will continue using the MTCP to build and reinforce partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries and support Canada's engagement objectives across the region.

ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM ANNUAL SECURITY OUTLOOK 2023

In Canada's 2021-2022 fiscal year, Canadian federal government departments, including the Department of National Defence, incurred a total of CA\$31,976 million in defence-related expenditures. Detailed information on Canada's military expenditure return is available below. Figures are reported in millions of Canadian dollars (CA\$).

Table 1. Canada's FY 2021-2022 military expenditure in millions of Canadian dollars (CA\$)

RESOURCE COSTS	Strategic Forces	Land	Navy	AF	Other	Sup& Comd	UN Peace-keeping	Military Assistance and Cooperation	Emergency Aid to Civilians	Undistributed	Total
1. PERSONNEL	-	4,551.8	1,981.2	2,572.0	797.1	5,650.4	1.3	1.7	-	-	15,555.6
1.1 CONSCRIPTS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.2 ACTIVE MILITARY PERSONNEL	-	2,578.4	1,005.8	1,559.8	465.6	2,168.1	1.1	-	-	-	7,778.8
1.3 RESERVES	-	416.2	110.4	113.7	26.6	262.0	0.3	-	-	-	929.1
1.4 CIVILIAN PERSONNEL	-	291.6	371.4	132.8	78.1	2,162.6	-	1.7	-	-	3,038.2
1.5 MILITARY PENSIONS	-	1,265.6	493.7	765.6	228.8	1,057.7	-	-	-	-	3,811.4
2. OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE	-	1,525.0	1,565.3	2,332.6	468.0	5,015.6	6.6	5.5	-	-	10,918.6
2.1 MATERIALS FOR CURRENT USE	-	466.6	355.9	394.4	127.7	315.5	1.3	0.1	-	-	1,661.6
2.2 MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR	-	151.6	366.5	1,142.9	10.9	201.9	0.0	-	-	-	1,873.8
2.3 PURCHASED SERVICES	-	765.2	697.6	706.8	237.0	1,692.0	2.7	0.2	-	-	4,101.5
2.4 OTHER	-	141.6	145.2	88.5	92.3	2,806.1	2.6	5.3	-	-	3,281.7
3. PROCUREMENT AND CONSTRUCTION (INVESTMENTS)	-	1,132.2	2,051.9	1,067.3	62.6	962.1	-	-	-	-	5,276.1
3.1 PROCUREMENT	-	839.1	1,861.1	875.5	62.4	819.4	-	-	-	-	4,457.6
3.1.1 AIRCRAFT AND ENGINES	-	-	-	631.7	-	9.4	-	-	-	-	641.0
3.1.2 MISSILES, INCLUDING CONVENTIONAL WARHEADS	-	-	0.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3
3.1.3 NUCLEAR WARHEADS AND BOMBS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.1.4 SHIPS AND BOATS	-	-	1,700.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,700.7
3.1.5 ARMoured VEHICLES	-	329.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	329.3
3.1.6 ARTILLERY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.1.7 OTHER ORDNANCE AND GROUND FORCE WEAPONS	-	9.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.9
3.1.8 AMMUNITION	-	232.1	7.4	43.8	8.1	0.1	-	-	-	-	291.5
3.1.9 ELECTRONICS AND COMMUNICATIONS	-	98.6	34.8	21.7	8.2	61.7	-	-	-	-	225.0
3.1.10 NON-ARMoured VEHICLES	-	44.4	-	9.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	53.4
3.1.11 OTHER	-	124.7	118.1	169.4	46.1	748.2	-	-	-	-	1,206.6
3.2 CONSTRUCTION	-	293.1	190.8	191.7	0.2	142.7	-	-	-	-	818.5
3.2.1 AIR BASES, AIRFIELDS	-	-	-	123.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	123.7
3.2.2 NAVAL BASES AND FACILITIES	-	-	182.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	182.5
3.2.3 ELECTRONICS facilities	-	0.5	-	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.8
3.2.4 PERSONNEL FACILITIES	-	-	-	-	-	63.7	-	-	-	-	63.7
3.2.5 TRAINING FACILITIES	-	4.1	-	-	-	4.9	-	-	-	-	9.0
3.2.6 OTHER	-	288.4	8.3	66.7	0.2	74.0	-	-	-	-	437.7
4. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT	-	2.9	0.5	2.3	12.9	207.4	-	-	-	-	228.0
4.1 BASIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH	-	0.0	0.3	0.2	1.2	3.7	-	-	-	-	5.4
4.2 DEVELOPMENT, TESTING AND EVALUATION	-	2.8	0.3	2.1	11.7	203.8	-	-	-	-	220.6
5. TOTAL (1+2+3+4)	-	7,211.9	5,599.0	5,974.2	1,340.6	11,835.4	7.9	7.3	-	-	31,976.3

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

III. National Contributions to Regional Security

a. Counterterrorism

Terrorist threats are complex, multifaceted and constantly evolving. They are not tied to any particular religion, ethnicity or ideology. Terrorist threats represent a global challenge that calls for flexible and forward-looking approaches that combine domestic and international efforts.

Countering violent extremism and terrorism requires a whole-of-society vision that puts partnerships, in particular with civil society, as one of its core pillars. Canada believes that long-term sustainable success in countering terrorism and violent extremism requires civilian-led, evidence-based efforts that respect human rights, emphasize inclusion and diversity, and build on local strengths and capabilities. To be effective and sustainable, efforts must also be guided by the principles of respect for the rule of law and be gender responsive.

Canada is concerned about the evolving and increasing threat posed by violent extremists, including the use of the Internet to recruit, to encourage violence, and to spread hateful messaging.

Canada supports international efforts to counter terrorism and prevent and counter violent extremism, encompassing not only security-based measures but also preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups.

Canada maintains strong bilateral relationships and is active in several international forums to address issues related to terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism. These include the UN, the Global Coalition against Daesh, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the G7 Roma Lyon Group, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Canada strongly supports the UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and we are pleased to be working alongside our Tunisian partners to co-facilitate this year's Strategy review process.

b. Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

Canada's steadfast efforts to advance non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament are grounded in its commitment to the rules-based international order and an inclusive, human-centred approach. As an active State Party to the major international treaties and conventions, Canada will continue to work with ARF partners to promote their universalization and full and effective implementation. These include: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Treaty), the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as other arrangements such as The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and the Missile Technology Control Regime. Canada is a strong proponent of measures to prevent non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, underpinned by UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 and its successor resolution (UNSCR 1977). Canada also continues to advocate the long overdue commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Finally, Canada supports the contribution of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, such as the Treaty of Bangkok, to regional security and nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Canada welcomes all efforts aimed at securing the signatures of the Nuclear Weapons States to the Treaty of Bangkok.

Canada promotes these priorities with partners through its Weapons Threat Reduction Program (WTRP), our flagship contribution to the G7-led Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP). The WTRP's programming is closely coordinated with the ASEAN Secretariat and its member states (including the Philippines) to enhance the security of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons and related materials in the region, including through the ARF. The ASEAN region is vulnerable to CBRN trafficking owing, inter alia, to its geography, role as a transportation nexus, lack of advanced export controls in certain nations, extremist groups active in the region, and the presence of improperly secured radioactive sources as well as endemic diseases, both with potential to be weaponized.

Since 2011, Canada's WTRP has delivered more than US\$53 million in threat reduction programming in the ASEAN region. Activities have focused on: strengthening biosafety and disease surveillance capabilities; providing physical protection security upgrades to facilities housing nuclear and radiological material; strengthening measures to combat nuclear smuggling; building the competencies of nuclear security personnel; and, building partner capacity to meet international obligations set out in UNSCR 1540. Key efforts include the Mitigation of Biological Threats in the ASEAN Region Programme, a highly successful collaboration between the WTRP, the ASEAN Secretariat, and ASEAN member states to build capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to naturally occurring, accidental, and deliberate biological threats (US\$26 million since 2013). The WTRP has also committed over US\$30 million to address North Korea's weapons of mass destruction proliferation activities, including building international capacity to implement UN sanctions and investigating North Korea's sanctions evasion activities.

Canada also makes concrete contributions to strengthen nuclear and radiological security in Southeast Asia, through the WTRP's support to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund and through implementing partners (including the US Department of Energy, INTERPOL and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute). One such project is upgrading security systems at medical facilities in Thailand and Malaysia housing on-site high activity radioactive sources. Another project is enhancing law enforcement and state intelligence agency capacities in Cambodia, Laos, and Philippines, to prevent the illicit trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive material.

Canada is pleased to have been the inaugural chair of the Nuclear Security Contact Group, which aims to implement nuclear security commitments, identify ways of addressing new and emerging threats, and maintain momentum on enhancing global nuclear security. The NSCG currently includes a number of ASEAN members, including the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam.

Acknowledging the role of nuclear technology to meet the increasing energy demands of states and in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Canada supports the peaceful uses of nuclear technology in a safe and secure manner, in full cooperation with the IAEA. Canada strongly believes that implementation of the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol (AP) constitute

the safeguards verification standard. Through signing and ratifying the AP, ARF members and Dialogue Partners can support transparency and confidence in the peaceful nature of their nuclear applications. Canada has consistently supported efforts to build state capacity to implement the AP, and believes that the ARF can help promote its universal implementation in the Indo-Pacific region.

c. Transnational Crime

Canada is committed to working with Indo-Pacific partners, including through the ARF, the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOM-TC), and the Bali Process, to counter threats to governance and stability arising from the activities of transnational crime groups in the region, including cybercrime. Canada is also committed to enhancing capacity building assistance in the region through the recently announced, which will aim to support Indo-Pacific countries, including ASEAN Member States, in their efforts to reduce threats from transnational organized crime and international terrorism.

Frequently linked to organized crimes are trafficking networks, including trafficking in persons, illicit drugs and/or firearms, migrant smuggling, money laundering, and wildlife trafficking, which underscore the transnational dimension of these challenges. Through the Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program, (ACCBP) Canada currently supports 18 projects to address these threats, valued at over CA\$28.9M.

Migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons are areas of particular concern. Canada is currently an observer nation to the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Organised Crime with a particular interest in the trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling element of its mandate. Canada will also seek full membership in the Bali Process at its next Ministerial meeting. In the meantime, Canada remains an active observer and regularly participates in the various Bali Process working groups and the Ad Hoc Group Senior Officials Meetings.

Through the ACCBP, Canada also works with regional partners to address these issues, often in coordination with international organizations such as the UNODC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and INTERPOL. ACCBP programming focuses primary on countering migrant smuggling, cybercrime, and the trafficking of drugs and other illicit substances, strengthening national and regional approaches to identify, investigate, and counter migrant smuggling

ventures; increasing the resilience of ASEAN member-states to combat cybercrime in all its forms; and enhancing the capacity of law enforcement officials in information sharing, safe-handling, monitoring, and awareness of synthetic opioids across the region.

Canada is also a regular contributor to the annual International Narcotics Control Board Conference on Precursor Chemicals and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). This conference is focused on practical measures countries can take to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals and trafficking of NPS. The Conference is held annually in Thailand, which recognizes the specific challenges faced by the region with respect to NPS trafficking and precursor diversion. Additionally, through the ACCBP Canada supports the INCB Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Program which seeks to coordinate INCB's global operational response to non-medical synthetic (NMS) opioids and fentanyl-related substance trafficking, by delivering tools, task force support, technical expertise and training to target regions around the world.

In response to the opioid crisis, Canada, through the ACCBP, has recently signed onto the UNODC's global response to the Opioid Crisis – UNODC Opioid Strategy project. This initiative aims to build the capacity of beneficiary law enforcement, forensic laboratories and border control agencies officers to predict, prevent, and protect against the challenges posed by synthetic opioids. This will be achieved through the provision of equipment and training of law enforcement and border control officers in Latin America and Asia.

Finally, the ACCBP has been reviewing potential cybercrime and cybersecurity projects in the region and is currently supporting three regional cyber projects being implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). These projects seek to improve cyber resilience in the ASEAN countries through increased understanding of the measures needed in preventing and prosecuting cybercrime, develop information sharing networks between ASEAN stakeholders, and create a more inclusive process at the UN cybercrime negotiations by supporting civil society organizations to facilitate their meaningful participation.

Canada continues to promote anti-corruption engagement in the region including through participation in the APEC Anti-Corruption and Transparency Experts Working Group and is working to increase visibility of regional anti-corruption efforts across multilateral forums.

d. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

The increasing intensity and frequency of natural disasters underscores the importance of strengthening practical cooperation among Indo-Pacific partners on disaster preparedness and response. Canada continues to be an active contributor to humanitarian relief efforts in the region, by providing timely, effective, coordinated and needs-based assistance, and working closely with partners in the region to enhance cooperation, coordination, and awareness. Ongoing discussions on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) issues can serve to improve the delivery of such capabilities in the future, particularly in a region which will likely see ARF members respond to the same disaster.

The health-security capacity that Canada has helped to build in the ASEAN region has meaningfully strengthened the capacities of ASEAN partners to respond to all manner of biological threats, including COVID-19 and other emerging infectious diseases. This includes support to the ASEAN Emergency Operations Center Network, the ASEAN Plus Three Laboratory Network, and the ASEAN Biodiaspora Virtual Centre. Canada is committed to further bolstering health-security capabilities through targeted investments in the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases. Additionally, Canada is helping to build sustainable capacity in Laos to detect, diagnose and respond to emerging viral pathogens of bioweapons and bioterrorism concern.

Reiterating the importance of enhancing our response mechanisms through close collaboration and exchange of best practices, Canada has been pleased to co-chair the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ARF ISM-DR), together with Lao PDR and China since 2019. Canada continues to reiterate the importance of finding synergies between the numerous disaster relief initiatives in the region, and to underline the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive approach in all aspects of disaster management, from preparedness through responses and recovery.

Likewise, Canada encourages all ARF members to adopt a more proactive approach to collaboration, communications, planning and execution for the effective and strategic delivery of disaster relief assistance. Moreover, Canada is pleased to be a member of the Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia-Pacific and considers that the Group represents a valuable forum to share best practices on civilian-military cooperation in disaster response and to improve predictability and interoperability in the region.

With the number of engagements related to disaster response in the region, Canada looks forward to working with ARF partners to better assess opportunities for synergies between the ARF and other mechanisms, including the RCG, EAS, and ADMM+, that strengthen ASEAN capabilities and advance local approaches to disaster response and risk reduction.

e. Maritime Security

As a Pacific nation, Canada is committed to contributing to maritime security, upholding international law, and preserving peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific alongside our ARF partners. ARF cooperation on maritime security issues will continue to support the region's security and prosperity as well as global economic health by ensuring the efficient and secure movement of goods and people.

Canada regularly deploys military ships, aircraft, and personnel to work with our allies and partners in the region. Canada deploys vessels to the Indo-Pacific region to promote maritime security, uphold navigation rights, enhance interoperability with partners, build mutual trust and increase readiness to respond to natural disasters. When deployed, the Royal Canadian Navy regularly conducts port visits and participates in cooperative deployments and joint and multinational exercises. Canada also supports multinational efforts to counter North Korea's maritime evasion of UN Security Council sanctions.

More broadly, Canada is committed to working with international organizations to meet the security challenges of a complex maritime environment and recognizes the importance of broadening international consensus when addressing these challenges. We are actively engaged in a number of international forums, including the International Maritime Organization and the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum – which brings together experts from maritime safety and security agencies in Canada,

China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States. The North Pacific Coast Guard Forum fosters multilateral cooperation and best practices through information sharing on matters related to fisheries enforcement, maritime security, illegal migration, illegal drug trafficking and combined operations.

Civil society and Track II initiatives can also make a useful contribution to developing informed options for regional partners in areas such as regional connectivity and preparedness to address incidents at sea. Canada will continue to support initiatives to organize workshops and seminars in ARF countries on these themes, and will encourage civil society, academics and others to contribute to the discussion by submitting constructive, original and non-zero-sum proposals that can advance solutions for peaceful resolution.

f. Cyber (ICT)

The ARF region is susceptible to cyber threats emanating from both state and non-state actors, whether through the theft of intellectual property and sensitive information, the compromise of systems and critical infrastructure, the theft of money, and other malicious activity. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the threat of malicious activity against the health sector, where cyber threats to hospitals and other health care providers have increased, in addition to cyber means being used to spread misinformation related to the pandemic. The pandemic has also highlighted concerns relating to how states seek to censor, control and partition the Internet under the pretext of cyber security and the misuse of cyberspace by criminals.

The ARF first addressed cyber-security issues in 2006 and has been steadily increasing its engagement ever since. The establishment of an Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) in 2016 was undertaken to support the process specifically on ICT (cyber) issues. Canada is working with Indonesia, South Korea as they Co-Chair until 2024.

The ARF has also put in place an Open Ended Study Group (OESG) on CBMs to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs. The ARF's work on cyber CBMs, including the Establishment of ARF Points of Contact Directory of Security of and in the Use of ICTs, and the Protection of Critical Infrastructures and Consultations Mechanism has been particularly useful.

Canada believes that peace and stability in cyberspace is grounded on the acceptance of the applicability of existing international law, the adoption of norms for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, and the implementation of CBMs. Canada welcomes the efforts undertaken by the ARF to develop and implement CBMs that will enhance transparency and dialogue while reducing the risk of misunderstanding, miscalculation and conflict in cyberspace.

Internationally, Canada collaborates with close allies and a wider coalition of countries that share our vision for a free, open and secure cyberspace that in order to promote can be a vehicle for political, social and economic development, and to counter efforts of repressive regimes to control the Internet and its content.

Canada is continuously working with friends and partners, including the ARF and its participating countries, to enhance cyber security by identifying cyber threats and vulnerabilities, and by preparing to respond to a broad range of cyber incidents.

Canada has also supported regional capacity-building efforts aimed at bolstering the ability of states to respond to and mitigate cyber threats. For instance, Canada supports two projects with the UNODC and INTERPOL valued at CA\$2.4M and CA\$1.3M respectively, which seeks to improve the capacity of ASEAN member states to increase cyber resilience to effectively combat transnational crime, including human smuggling facilitated via the darknet and virtual assets. Canada is also contributing CA\$1.5 million to a Chatham House led project to increase cyber capacity in the ASEAN countries tailored cyber development programs. The project will also bring stakeholders from several ASEAN countries together to participate in bilateral simulations exercises and one regional simulation, based on a bespoke toolkit, which will test the ability of several ASEAN countries to coordinate a regional response to a large-scale cyber incident and to cooperate amongst each other. Finally, Canada is also supporting another project with Chatham House valued at US\$900,000, which works to increasing knowledge amongst civil society organizations from around the world on key cybercrime concepts, issues and existing UN processes and establishes a platform that facilitates their input into the UN treaty negotiations on cybercrime.

Canada has agreed to participate in the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE), which involves delivery of capacity-building courses to the

ASEAN region. The recently established ASCCE has been limited to delivering online training due to the pandemic, but it can do more. Canada committed to delivering training on stakeholder engagement in 2022 in conjunction with the EU and New Zealand. Possible areas of further collaboration include conducting research and providing trainings in areas spanning international law, cyber strategy, legislation, cyber norms and other cybersecurity policy issues.

Canada is committed to continuing the collaboration developed within the ARF to support regional confidence-building and help support collective efforts to maintain a free, open, and secure cyberspace. This commitment is re-enforced by Canada's intent to seek a Co-Chair position of the ISM on ICTs when next it becomes available (likely 2024).

g. Women, Peace and Security, and Peace and Stabilization Operations Program in Asia

Canada recognizes that while everyone is affected, women and men, girls and boys, (including gender non-conforming and intersex persons in all their diversity) experience conflict differently. They bring different perspectives to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Women broaden the agenda beyond that of the warring parties, and the link between their meaningful participation and durable peace agreements has been established. Yet, women are often excluded from formal peace processes. In recognition of this, Canada has been a strong supporter of the Women, Peace and Security agenda from its inception and co-sponsored UNSCR 1325 as a non-permanent member of the body in 2000. Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and security (WPS) guides the efforts of over nine federal departments and agencies to implement the agenda both at home and internationally.

Canada is committed to increasing its engagement on WPS in the Indo-Pacific region. In August 2019, Canada led the adoption of the ARF's first Ministerial "Joint Statement on promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the ASEAN Regional Forum". In March 2021, Canada, Thailand and Indonesia co-chaired the ARF's first workshop on Women, Peace and Security to advance commitments outlined in the Joint Statement. The 3-day workshop hosted over 140 participants, including government officials, civil society, and academic representatives, mainly

from the Indo-Pacific Region. The workshop addressed ways to strengthen existing regional coordination mechanisms and mainstream WPS agenda into ARF activities, and develop and advance regional commitments in implementing the WPS agenda. Canada will continue to deepen its engagement in Asia on all fronts, making sure to embed the WPS agenda into all its processes.

In 2021, Canada launched a new 5-year, CAD 8.5 million initiative with ASEAN and UN Women, “Empowering women for sustainable peace: preventing violence and promoting social cohesion in ASEAN – Advancing WPS in ASEAN”. This project, which was formally endorsed by the ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives, will support ASEAN to build regional and national capacity and become a knowledge hub on WPS. This will be the first multi-year regional project co-created by ASEAN, for ASEAN with all the key ASEAN bodies and actors. To complement this initiative, Canada is supporting the ASEAN Institute of Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) to develop WPS training modules to build regional capacity to implement the WPS agenda and mainstream gender equality in the peace and security sector.

Canada’s Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) is designed to prevent and respond to conflict and crisis abroad. PSOP’s approach to stabilization includes targeted efforts to anticipate, prevent and respond to violent conflict and promote long-term stability. PSOPs provides a strong Canadian voice through policy leadership and advocacy, coordinates a whole-of-government response to various conflicts and crises, and provides visible and concrete assistance through targeted programming and expert deployments. PSOPs current engagement in Southeast Asia totals over US\$15 million focuses on peace and stability programming to protect and promote human rights, implement peace agreements, and advance the role of women and youth in the participation and promotion of peace and security.

For example, through the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Canada is supporting the empowerment of Bangladeshi and Burmese women and youth so they are equipped to lead and participate in community-based peacebuilding and decision-making at local, national, and regional levels. The GNWP is working with representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to strengthen the commitment of Member States to further the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas. In particular, GNWP amplified the recommendations from women and youth for sustainable

peace and gender equality in Myanmar to ASEAN and other global policymakers. GNWP plans to implement the first national consultation on the National Action Plan to integrate issues confronted by Rohingya refugee and host community women and girls and advocate for their participation in the implementation in late 2021.

In addition, through funding to the Nobel Women's Initiative, Canada recently supported the Women's Peacebuilder Network, which works with grassroots women's organizations and peacebuilders in the Korean Peninsula, and in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, Canadian support to the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) sustains and strengthens the impact of women peacebuilders and organizations. In Afghanistan, with Canadian support, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom works to strengthen alliances by mobilizing men to work with women for peace and to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

In March 2019, UN Women, alongside the UN Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Department of Peace Operations, announced the launch of the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations with a five-year mandate that have been extended until December 2025. The Elsie Initiative Fund is designed to use collective resources to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations, with a focus on police and military roles. It provides funding to countries that contribute troops and police to UN peace operations to carry out barrier assessments of their T/PCC military and police institutions, to identify the factors impeding the deployment of uniformed women peacekeepers to UN missions as well as flexible funding to increase their deployment of trained and qualified uniformed women. The Fund also includes the provision of the innovative 'Gender Strong Unit Premium,' which is a results-based payment for the deployment of military contingents and Formed Police Units that include the substantial representation of women across all units and functions, and which meet criteria to ensure an adequate work environment. The Elsie Initiative Fund has completed two programming rounds, and recently launched its third programming round on March 30 2023. Canada encourages all troop and police contributing countries in the ASEAN region to consider submitting a letter of interest in the current programming cycle, which is expected to close by 31 July 2023.

To date, the Elsie Initiative Fund has received contributions and pledges of US\$34.4M toward its US\$40M fundraising target from Canada (CA\$17.5M), the United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and South Korea. UN Women serves as the permanent UN co-chair of the Fund, with Canada serving as the other co-chair for the initial five-year term. Other seats on the Steering Committee are occupied by three Member States - currently Rwanda (as a representative of T/PCCs), the United Kingdom (as a donor representative), and Uruguay (as representative of the Elsie Initiative Contact Group) – as well as the UN Department of Peace Operations, and the UN Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The three seats that belong to member states rotate every two years. More information is available at www.elsiefund.org.

IV. Role of ARF

a. National Contributions to the ARF (ASEAN)

The ARF is a key security forum within the Indo-Pacific region and an important component of Canada's engagement in the region's evolving security architecture. We will continue to engage constructively with our partners to build capacity and ensure that the ARF continues to contribute to security and stability in the region as per the action lines of the Hanoi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) and the principles of the 2009 ARF Vision Statement.

Canada has expanded its diplomatic presence across the region and since 2015 has had a resident diplomatic presence in all 10 ASEAN member states. In 2020, defence representation in Malaysia and Vietnam was upgraded to full defence attaché status with the opening of defence attaché offices. Further, Canada's appointment of its first dedicated ASEAN Ambassador in 2016, as well as a standalone mission to ASEAN the same year, demonstrate our strong commitment to ASEAN and engagement with the ARF and our partners in the region.

In the 2022-2023 inter-sessional year, Canada participated in and made significant contributions in a wide range of ARF events. Canada co-hosted the second ARF Workshop on Health Security, *COVID-19 and Beyond: Maintaining Momentum for the Next Global Health Emergency*, which was held in Ottawa, Canada from June 28-30, 2023 in hybrid format. Canada also co-chaired the 21st ARF Intersessional

Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR), held virtually on 22 May 2023. Going forward for inter-sessional year 2023-2024, Canada will co-chair the 5th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues.

b. The Future of the ARF (ASEAN)

The regularity of exchange facilitated through the ARF is increasingly important to sustaining an atmosphere of cooperation in a region of global strategic importance. In this respect, Canada encourages a pragmatic and cooperative approach to the ARF's work. By delivering concrete initiatives, we can demonstrate the constructive role played by the ARF in the regional security architecture.

As a mature organization and in the spirit of preventive diplomacy, the ARF can continue to provide a forum for active discussion of issues and perspectives without jeopardizing the activities and exchanges that members support. The ARF has been most successful in bringing together policy practitioners and experts to address specialized security issues that require interagency cooperation across borders. Its inclusive membership highlights the importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the interconnected nature of the global security environment. Canada believes it is essential for the ARF to maintain a global perspective about the evolving security challenges affecting the region, including to condemn with one voice Russia's illegal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine. The consequences of Russia's egregious violations of international law and the rules-based international order extend well beyond Ukraine's borders, affecting regional and global stability, including in the Indo-Pacific region.

As the ARF marks its 30th iteration in 2023, Canada is pleased to have contributed to the development of the burgeoning security community that works together to protect the region's vitality and continued economic growth. In line with the consistent efforts of other ARF members, Canada is committed to playing a positive and constructive role in the continuing evolution of the ARF over the next 30 years and beyond.

CHINA

I. Overview of the Security Environment of the Asia-Pacific

In 2022, the Asia-Pacific maintained overall stability and recovery. Regional countries on the whole began economic recovery, regional cooperation and economic integration moved forward, and the digital economy and energy transition made faster progress. In the meantime, the resurgence of Cold War mentality, rampant hegemonism and unilateralism, complex regional hotspot issues and intertwining traditional and non-traditional security threats highlighted the risks and challenges faced by the region. In particular, a certain country has advanced its so-called “Indo-Pacific Strategy”, by increasing military and security deployment in the region, seeking to bring NATO to the Asia-Pacific, and introducing nuclear proliferation risks to the region, which seriously undermines regional peace and stability. It has put together exclusive blocs such as the Quad, and imposed decoupling and industrial and supply chains disruption, stoking division, confrontation and bloc rivalry. Moves of some individual country to discharge nuclear-contaminated water that jeopardize the marine environment and public health also deserve close attention. To safeguard peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and promote its development and prosperity remains an arduous task that requires redoubled efforts from all parties.

Right now, changes of the world, of our times and of history are unfolding in ways like never before. The historical trend of peace, development and win-win cooperation is unstoppable. Promoting peace, security, development and prosperity in the region remains the shared pursuit of most Asia-Pacific countries. The Global Security Initiative (GSI), put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping, champions the spirit of solidarity to adapt to the profoundly changing international landscape, and advocates the win-win mindset to address the complex and intertwined security challenges. It is committed to eliminating the root causes of international conflicts and improving global security governance. It aims to mobilize global efforts to bring more stability and certainty to an age of instability and transformation, and realize enduring peace and development in the world. On February 21, 2023, China launched the Global Security Initiative Concept Paper to expound the core ideas and principles of the GSI and lay out its 20 priorities of cooperation as well as the platforms and mechanisms of cooperation. The GSI is underpinned by six commitments, namely, staying committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security; staying committed to respecting

the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; staying committed to abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter; staying committed to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously; staying committed to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation; and staying committed to maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains.

The 21st century is an Asia-Pacific century. The future trajectory of the Asia-Pacific's security bears on the development of the region, the well-being of the people, and the future of the world. To sustain peace, stability, development and prosperity serves the common interests of all Asia-Pacific countries. The core concepts and principles of the GSI fit well with Asia-Pacific countries' tradition of mutual respect, seeking common ground while shelving differences, and peaceful coexistence. China stands ready to work with countries in the region to act on the spirit of the GSI, build partnerships based on mutual trust, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, pursue coordination and sound interactions among major countries, and consolidate the political foundation for regional peace and stability; coordinate development and security, resolve differences through development, and firm up the economic foundation for regional peace and stability; practice true multilateralism, advance the development of regional multilateral security mechanisms, and establish a balanced, effective and sustainable regional security architecture; and resolve disputes and differences through dialogue and consultation, promote the political settlement of hotspot issues, and foster an enabling environment for regional peace and stability.

II. China's Defence Policy and Multilateral Military Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region

China firmly pursues a defensive national defence policy. China's nature as a socialist country, strategic decision to follow a path of peaceful development, independent foreign policy of peace, and peace-loving tradition determine its unswerving commitment to the defensive national defence policy. Commitment to never seeking hegemony, territorial expansion or spheres of influence is a salient feature of China's defence in the new era. China's record on peace and security is the best among major countries in the world. In recent years, the Chinese military has been actively providing public security goods to the international community in such fields as peacekeeping, maritime escort operation and

COVID-19 response. History has proven and will continue to prove that the Chinese military is always a staunch force for world peace.

China conducts active national defence. It adheres to the principles of defence, self-defence and post-strike response. China advances coordinated progress of defence development and economic growth, and decides on the appropriate scale of its defence expenditure. In recent years, in a bid to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests as well as to better fulfil China's international responsibilities and obligations as a major country, the Chinese government has kept a reasonable and steady growth of defence expenditure on the basis of sustained, sound economic and social development, enabling the buildup of its national defence capability in step with economic strength. In 2023, RMB 1.58 trillion has been earmarked as defence spending in central government expenditures.

By engaging in international military cooperation, the Chinese military contributes to safeguarding China's sovereignty, security and development interests, promoting world peace and stability, and building a community with a shared future for mankind. China faithfully acts on the GSI. It deepens military exchanges and cooperation with Russia, including those under existing bilateral mechanisms, and enhances mutual trust between the two militaries. It maintains overall stability in the mil-to-mil relationship with the United States, and urges the US side to work in the same direction with China, act on the common understandings reached by the two presidents, keep open lines of communication, address disputes and differences appropriately, and strengthen crisis management. It actively carries out cooperation on the implementation of international arms control treaties, resolutely safeguards national strategic interests, and promotes global strategic stability. China has been an active participant in China-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Informal Meetings and other mechanisms. It sent high-level military delegations to the Shangri-La Dialogue, the Moscow Conference on International Security (MCIS) and other multilateral dialogues and cooperation mechanisms. China held the first "Shared Vision" International Peacekeeping Forum and Beijing Xiangshan Forum Webinars.

III. China's Efforts in Promoting Security in the Asia-Pacific

a. Relations with Major Regional Countries and Cooperation Mechanisms

- i. **China-ASEAN cooperation.** China always takes ASEAN as a priority in its neighbourhood diplomacy, firmly supports ASEAN's community building, supports ASEAN centrality in East Asian regional cooperation, and supports ASEAN in playing an even greater role in regional and international affairs.

The year 2022 was the first year for building the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. On November 11, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang attended the 25th China-ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The Summit adopted the China-ASEAN Joint Statement on Strengthening Common and Sustainable Development, China-ASEAN Joint Statement on the 20th Anniversary of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, and China-ASEAN Joint Statement on Food Security Cooperation. It also welcomed the adoption of the Annex to the China-ASEAN POA (2022-2025): Advancing China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. On August 4, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Phnom Penh.

The year 2022 continued to be declared China-ASEAN Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation as was 2021. A series of activities were held in fields relating to sustainable development, including the China-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management, China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Forum, China-ASEAN Dialogue on Climate Change and Environment, China-ASEAN Social Development and Poverty Reduction Forum, and China-ASEAN Agricultural Cooperation Forum.

Steady progress was also registered in other areas of China-ASEAN cooperation, with institutionalized meetings successfully convened. In January, the second China-ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting was held via video link. In June, the 13th China-ASEAN Defence Ministers' Informal Meeting and the 11th Meeting of China-ASEAN Joint Science, Technology and Innovation Committee were convened via video link. In August, the China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week was launched in Guiyang, China. In September, the 21st China-ASEAN Economic

Ministers' Meeting was held via video link, and the 19th China-ASEAN Expo was held in Nanning, Guangxi Province in China. In October, the sixth Meeting of China-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts, the 21st China-ASEAN Transport Ministers' Meeting, and the second China-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management were held via video link.

- ii. **China-Russia relations.** China and Russia are each other's biggest neighbour and comprehensive strategic partners of coordination. As the world's two major countries and permanent members of the UN Security Council, China and Russia develop a relationship that is defined by mutual-respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation on the basis of no-alliance, no-confrontation and not targeting any third country.

Since 2022, presidents of the two countries have maintained close contact through in-person talks, virtual meetings, phone calls and correspondence. On February 4, 2022, President Vladimir Putin attended the opening ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics upon invitation. From March 20 to 22, 2023, President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Russia, during which he and President Putin reached new consensus on expanding bilateral exchanges and cooperation in various fields. High-level exchange mechanisms have been leveraged to the full, including the mechanism of regular meetings between the two heads of government and its subcommittees in various fields, exchanges between leaders of legislatures, strategic security consultations, law enforcement and security cooperation, and foreign ministers' meetings. This has helped deliver on the consensus reached by the two presidents and ensured the progress of cooperation across all fields.

Practical cooperation made steady headway. In 2022, China-Russia trade reached US\$190.27 billion, up by 29.3%. The two countries have kept close coordination on the global stage, stayed firmly committed to the UN-centred international system and the international order underpinned by international law, and maintained close communication and coordination in the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, G20 and other international and multilateral mechanisms.

- iii. **China-US relations.** China-US relations have faced serious difficulties since 2022. China continued to explore the right way for the two countries to get along, while firmly opposing the misconceived China policy of the US

Single-mindedly regarding China as its “primary competitor” and “the most consequential geopolitical challenge”, the US continued to contain and suppress China on all fronts. It made erroneous statements and actions that interfered in China’s internal affairs and undermined China’s interests on such issues as Taiwan, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Tibet, human rights, religion, economy and trade, technology, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and forged various international groupings targeted at China. China responded resolutely to counter those hegemonic and bullying acts, and firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests.

At the same time, the two countries maintained high-level interaction and communication. In 2022, President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden had a video call in March, a phone conversation in July, and a meeting in Bali, Indonesia on November 14. President Xi Jinping underscored that China and the US should follow the three principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, and find the right way for two major countries to get along. He also drew the red line on major issues of concern for China, including Taiwan, democracy and human rights, development path, political system, decoupling and severing supply chains. President Biden made some positive remarks, stating that the US respects China’s system and does not seek to change it; it does not seek a new Cold War, does not seek to revitalize alliances against China, does not support “Taiwan independence”, does not support “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan”, does not seek to use the Taiwan question as a tool to contain China, and has no intention to have a conflict with China or to contain China.

China and the US had some exchanges and cooperation in such areas as economy and trade, climate change, energy security, public health, military-to-military relations, counter-narcotics and agriculture. Two cooperation documents on public health and agriculture were signed. Communication were also maintained

by the two sides on international and regional issues, including the Ukraine crisis, the Korean nuclear issue, the Iranian nuclear issue, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

- iv. **China-Japan relations.** The year 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the normalization of China-Japan relations. Bilateral relations remained generally stable and the two countries maintained high-level communication and exchanges. In November, President Xi Jinping met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of the 29th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand. The two leaders reached important common understandings on working to build a constructive and stable China-Japan relationship that answers the call of the new era. The two teams also reached a five-point consensus on stabilizing and growing bilateral relations. On September 29, President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang exchanged congratulatory messages respectively with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on the 50th anniversary of the normalization of China-Japan relations. Receptions commemorating the 50th anniversary were held respectively by China in Beijing and Japan in Tokyo, which were attended and addressed respectively by Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Ding Zhongli, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan Yoshimasa Hayashi. In August, the ninth China-Japan high-level political dialogue was held in Tianjin, China, co-chaired by Yang Jiechi, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, and Takeo Akiba, Secretary General of the National Security Secretariat of Japan. In May, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a virtual meeting with Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi.

Economic and trade cooperation between China and Japan enjoyed steady development. Japan is China's fifth largest trading partner, and China is the largest trading partner of Japan. In 2022, total trade between China and Japan reached US\$357.424 billion. Due to the impact of COVID-19, around 377,600 travels were made between the two countries in 2022.

- v. **China-India relations.** In 2022, the relationship between China and India showed an overall momentum of recovery. High-level interactions guided the development of bilateral ties, and coordination and cooperation were carried out on bilateral and multilateral fronts. On July 25, 2022, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to Droupadi Murmu on her inauguration as President of the Republic of India. In October, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent a congratulatory letter to President Xi Jinping on his re-election as General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee. In March, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi paid a working visit to India, during which he met with India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and held talks with External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. In July, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in Bali on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting. During the meeting, Wang said that since March, 2022, thanks to efforts of the two countries to maintain communication and effectively manage differences, bilateral relations have shown an overall momentum of recovery. The two sides should implement the important consensus reached by the two leaders with concrete actions to bring bilateral relations back onto the right track as early as possible. Minister Jaishankar said that India looked forward to a positive, cooperative and constructive India-China relationship, and expressed readiness to work with the Chinese side to improve bilateral relations.

In 2022, China and India held two meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs and four rounds of Corps Commander-Level Meeting. The two sides kept communication over the boundary question through diplomatic and military channels, and worked to further deescalate tension in border areas. Troops of the two countries have disengaged in Galwan Valley and other three points along the western section of the China-India boundary, and the situation in border regions remained stable in general. The two sides also maintained communication and coordination on various multilateral platforms, including the SCO, BRICS and G20.

- vi. **Shanghai Cooperation Organization.** The year 2022 marked the 20th anniversary of the SCO Charter and the 15th anniversary of the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation Between the SCO Member States.

Committed to the Shanghai Spirit, the SCO continued to expand political, security, practical, cultural and other cooperation, and actively advanced the membership expansion process, significantly raising its global influence.

On September 16, 2022, President Xi Jinping attended the 22nd Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State. At the meeting, leaders of SCO member states signed and released the SCO Samarkand Declaration; issued several statements on protecting international food and energy security, tackling climate change, and keeping supply chains secure, stable and diversified; signed the Memorandum of Obligations on Iran's status as a permanent SCO member; launched the procedure for Belarus' accession; admitted Bahrain, the Maldives, the UAE, Kuwait and Myanmar as dialogue partners; and approved a series of documents in the form of resolutions, including the Comprehensive Plan for the Implementation of the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation Between the SCO Member States for 2023-2027.

On November 1, 2022, Premier Li Keqiang chaired in Beijing the 21st Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government via videoconference. A joint communiqué was signed and released, and multiple cooperation documents and resolutions on trade, economy and other fields were adopted. On July 29, 2022, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended the Meeting of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers in Samarkand, which made all-round preparations for the SCO summit.

b. Cooperation on Non-Traditional Security

- i. **Cooperation on disaster relief.** In 2022, China actively engaged in multilateral and bilateral cooperation on disaster relief in the Asia-Pacific region. It hosted the first Coordinators' Meeting of the Belt and Road International Cooperation Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management (BRIDRREM). It held the second China-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management and the first China-ASEAN Forum on Emergency Management Cooperation, providing disaster management capacity building programs for disaster management officials, rescue personnel, community workers and young people from ASEAN. Under the framework of ARF, China held the 20th Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief,

exercises for urban search and rescue after earthquakes, and the 5th Workshop on Urban Search and Rescue. China served as co-chair of the APEC Emergency Preparedness Working Group (EPWG), and co-hosted the 15th APEC Senior Disaster Management Officials Forum and the 18th APEC Emergency Preparedness Working Group Meeting. It also conducted bilateral exchanges and cooperation on disaster relief with countries including Russia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Laos and Cambodia.

The Asia-Pacific is a key region for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). To better protect life and property in Belt and Road countries and ensure sustainable economic and social development, China welcomes other Asia-Pacific countries to join the BRIDRREM. It is ready to strengthen communication and coordination with relevant parties to implement the consensus reached at relevant ministerial meetings and promote cooperation on disaster management under the frameworks of ARF and APEC, supports ASEAN in establishing a ministerial meeting mechanism with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) on disaster management, and will continue to promote the establishment of a Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism on disaster management.

- ii. **Cooperation on maritime security.** Since 2022, China has actively participated in maritime security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific despite obstacles caused by COVID-19. China and Japan held the 14th round of high-level consultation on maritime affairs virtually and the 15th round in person. The two sides agreed to continue holding joint maritime search and rescue exercises under the framework of China-Japan Agreement on Maritime Search and Rescue, and cooperate in such fields as combating crimes at sea and promoting exchanges between law enforcement personnel. China and the ROK held the second meeting of the dialogue and cooperation mechanism on maritime affairs, and kept communication going between their militaries, coast guards and authorities for maritime affairs, fisheries and environment. China and ASEAN countries continued to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), strengthened practical maritime cooperation in marine science, environmental protection, search and rescue, and actively advanced consultations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), to jointly preserve peace and stability in the South China Sea. The 35th Meeting of the Joint

Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (JWG-DOC) was held via video link, and the 36th and 37th JWG-DOC meetings were held in Cambodia. China also hosted the second Training Course on Marine Scientific Research in the South China Sea, the China-ASEAN workshop on marine information technology, the workshop on overall marine management in the South China Sea, and the third International Workshop on Maritime Cooperation and Policy Harmonization.

China attaches great importance to keeping sea lanes safe. It continued to take an active part in regional cooperation mechanisms including the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ship in Asia (ReCAAP). Since 2022, delegations of the Chinese government has attended the 16th and 17th meetings of the Governing Council of the ReCAAP Information Sharing Center (ISC), and held consultations with ReCAAP member states on combating piracy and armed robbery against ships, keeping sea lanes safe, and supporting the ReCAAP ISC in conducting capacity building and cooperation with external parties.

China is actively engaged in cooperation on maritime law enforcement. It held the 5th China-ROK Coast Guard High-Level Meeting, the 2022 China-ROK Fisheries Law Enforcement Meeting and the sixth China-Viet Nam Coast Guard High-Level Meeting. China Coast Guard held the second working-level meeting with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency via video link, conducted two joint patrols in the Beibu Gulf with Vietnamese coast guard, and conducted a joint patrol with the ROK Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries in provisionally designated waters under the China-ROK Fisheries Agreement. China also took an active part in activities under bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, including the China-Japan high-level consultation on maritime affairs, the China-Philippines bilateral consultation on the South China Sea, the China-Viet Nam working group on cooperation in less sensitive sea-related areas, the ARF, the JWG-DOC, the Governing Council of ReCAAP ISC, the Workshop on Implementing United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues, and Great Wall-2022 International Forum on Counterterrorism.

China is actively engaged in cooperation on maritime search and rescue and ferry safety. The Chinese side co-hosted the 4th ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety with the Marine Department of Thailand and has worked for the establishment of an Expert Group on Ferry Safety under the ARF framework. China continued to advance the e-certificate data exchange pilot project with Singapore. China actively participated in the activities of the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF), and promoted regional exchanges and cooperation in this field through the IMRF's Asia-Pacific Regional Center. China did its utmost to address maritime emergency and distress concerning foreign vessels in its rescue area of responsibility and sea areas under its jurisdiction, and provided search and rescue services for foreign ships in distress.

China is committed to providing maritime security public goods for the region. The South China Sea Tsunami Advisory Center (SCSTAC) operated by China provides efficient and steady all-weather earthquake and tsunami early warning services for ASEAN countries along the South China Sea. Forecast Information for Voyage on the Maritime Silkroad (FIVMS) offers refined forecasting services for maritime transport, maritime escort and disaster prevention of 102 major cities along the South China Sea and the north Indian Ocean.

As a country of responsible fishing, China highly values the scientific conservation and sustainable utilization of fishing resources and actively fulfils its international obligations. China has put in place a well-fledged ocean fishery management mechanism and combated IUU fishing together with the international community. The Chinese side has taken measures on its own initiative to conserve fishery resources, including by implementing voluntary fishing moratorium on the high seas, assigning on-board observers to prevent transshipping on the high seas and conducting research and assessment of international fishery resources. China supports efforts to crack down on IUU fishing through port supervision and is actively considering joining the Agreement on Port State Measures of the FAO and the Cape Town Agreement of the IMO. China has joined eight regional fishery management organizations, and has worked with other members to formulate through consultations and faithfully implement fishery resources conservation and management measures. China will continue to work with other countries to

promote the conservation and sustainable utilization of international fishery resources.

- iii. **Counterterrorism cooperation.** At present, counterterrorism and security situation in the Asia-Pacific is complex and challenging. Some regions are facing active terrorist activities. Terrorist organizations are stepping up the use of cyber means to incite, recruit and plan for terrorist attacks. Extreme separatists in the region are fast colluding with international violent and terrorist forces, posing grave threats to peace and security in regional countries.

Terrorism is the common enemy of humanity. The international community needs to foster a sense of a community with a shared future for mankind, support the UN in playing a central role of coordination, strength cooperation and solidarity, and increase consensus and synergy for counterterrorism. It is important to abandon “double standards” and a selective approach to counterterrorism, oppose politicizing and instrumentalizing counterterrorism, and firmly fight against all types of terrorism. A holistic approach needs to be followed to address both the symptoms and root causes and eradicate the root causes of terrorism.

China is actively engaged in international and regional counterterrorism cooperation. It has strengthened international counterterrorism cooperation under the SCO framework, organized joint counterterrorism exercises, cracked down on illegal trafficking of arms, ammunition and explosives, carried out cooperation to identify and sever channels of infiltration, and promoted international counterterrorism intelligence exchange and sharing. As the rotating chair of BRICS, China hosted the 7th Meeting of BRICS Counterterrorism Working Group and the related thematic seminar, organized on-line training for BRICS police personnel, participated in the 19th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime, the ARF Seminar on Anti-money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism, and meetings related to the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

- iv. **Cooperation on combating transnational crime.** China attaches great importance to combating transnational crime. By fully harnessing bilateral law enforcement

and judicial cooperation mechanisms as well as multilateral platforms such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, China has actively engaged in various types of cooperation with other countries to prevent and combat transnational crime, with a view to building a community with a shared future for mankind that enjoys universal security.

In 2022, China's law enforcement agencies actively carried out practical cooperation with their counterparts in ASEAN countries. China attended the 9th China-ASEAN and 12th ASEAN Plus Three ministerial meetings on transnational crime. Through law enforcement cooperation between the police forces of China and ASEAN countries, 450 suspects were arrested in ASEAN countries. China worked with Cambodian law enforcement agencies to combat crimes committed by Chinese offenders in Cambodia, worked with Laos to conduct a special joint campaign on combating crimes along the Boten-Vientiane section of the China-Laos Railway, and worked with countries on the Indochina Peninsula to crack down on crimes related to guns and explosive devices. China continued to enhance its cooperation with other countries to combat crimes related to cross-border gambling. China hosted the meeting of Greater Mekong Sub-region drug control liaison officials and attended the 44th Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies for Asia and the Pacific Region. China participated in the 7th ASEAN Plus China coordination meeting on drug control cooperation and the 15th ASEAN Plus China, Japan and the ROK working group meeting on drug control, and conducted the 2022 joint patrol and law enforcement action with Laos, Myanmar and Thailand against cross-border crimes along the Mekong River.

- v. **Cooperation on cybersecurity.** China has always been a builder, defender and contributor for global cybersecurity. China is working actively for a community with a shared future in cyberspace, and is committed to fostering a cyberspace featuring greater fairness, equity, openness, inclusiveness, security, stability and vitality. To this end, China put forward the Global Initiative on Data Security, issued a Cooperation Initiative on Data Security with the League of Arab States, and reached the Data Security Cooperation Initiative of China+Central Asia with the five Central Asian countries. China stands ready to discuss and develop rules for

global digital governance with other parties on the basis of the Global Initiative on Data Security to jointly advance global governance on cyberspace.

China consistently supports the UN in playing a central role in the global governance of cyberspace and international rules-making. China believes that the international rules governing cyberspace should be formulated under the UN framework and be widely acceptable to all countries, and efforts could be made to explore the formulation of legally binding international instruments. In 2022, at China's initiative, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on information security containing the idea of building a community with a shared future in cyberspace for the third time. China played a constructive role in the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025, and took the lead in proposing that major countries should lead by example in observing the framework for responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs, a concept incorporated into the Annual Progress Report of the Working Group. China took a constructive part in UN negotiations for a convention against cyber crimes, and worked to ensure progress in the negotiations.

China actively engages in dialogue and cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries on cyberspace, with a view to jointly maintaining peace and security in cyberspace. In 2022, China established the World Internet Conference (WIC), hosted the 2022 WIC Wuzhen Summit, held the second ASEAN-China Cyber Dialogue and participated in the Singapore International Networking Week. China actively promoted the cybersecurity process under the ARF and the SCO, held the meeting of the BRICS Working Group on Security in the Use of ICTs and facilitated the conclusion of the BRICS Roadmap of Practical Cooperation on ensuring security in the use of ICTs. China deepened bilateral cooperation in this field with countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, and expanded practical cooperation with the rest of the world in such areas as digital technology and cyber infrastructure.

Through bilateral police cooperation and channels such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), China actively cooperated with law enforcement agencies of Singapore, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Malaysia and other

countries to share information on cyber fraud, hacking, child pornography, and online terrorism. China actively engaged in international and regional symposiums and experience sharing on cybersecurity law enforcement, co-hosted the second ARF Workshop on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes, and attended multilateral meetings including the second ASEAN-China Cyber Dialogue.

- vi. **Cooperation on non-proliferation and disarmament.** China firmly upholds the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime underpinned by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). China submitted an updated national report on its implementation of the NPT and six working papers to the 10th NPT Review Conference, took a constructive part in the review of the substantive matters, and proposed that the NPT needs to promote peace and development as its new mission.

China is committed to the path of peaceful development and a nuclear strategy of self-defence, and keeps its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security. China actively stands for and advocates the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons worldwide, and undertakes not to use nuclear weapons first at any time or under any circumstances. China is unequivocally committed to a policy of not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-weapon-free zones unconditionally.

China believes that nuclear disarmament should follow such fundamental principles as “maintaining global strategic stability” and “undiminished security for all” and proceed in a gradual manner. Countries with the largest nuclear arsenals should fulfil special and primary responsibilities in nuclear disarmament, and should further make significant and substantive reduction of their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable, irreversible and legally binding manner, so as to create necessary conditions for ultimate, complete and thorough nuclear disarmament. To this end, China played an active role in securing the Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races issued in January 2022. The Joint Statement emphasized that a nuclear war cannot

be won and must never be fought and reaffirmed that none of the five countries' nuclear weapons are targeted at each other or at any other state.

China firmly upholds the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. China believes that eliminating the risks of nuclear proliferation is crucial for international and regional peace and stability. The international community should pursue political and diplomatic resolution of regional hotspot nuclear issues, and reject double standards in the area of non-proliferation. The so-called "nuclear sharing arrangements" run counter to the provisions of the NPT and increase the risks of nuclear proliferation and nuclear conflicts. Nuclear-weapon states should withdraw their nuclear weapons deployed overseas, and should not replicate the so-called "nuclear sharing arrangements" in other regions of the world.

China firmly supports the efforts of ASEAN countries to build a nuclear weapon-free zone in Southeast Asia. In August 2022, China pushed for the issuance of the Statement on Reiterating Commitment to Preserve Southeast Asia as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone at the ASEAN Regional Forum. The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper proposed by China unequivocally calls for supporting the efforts of countries in relevant regions to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. In March 2023, Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang, during his meeting with ASEAN Secretary General Kao Kim Hourn, stated that China is willing to take the lead in signing the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone. China will continue to enhance communication with ASEAN countries, with a view to signing the Protocol as early as possible.

China believes that the nuclear submarine cooperation among the US, the UK, and Australia undermines regional peace and stability, provokes arms race, and poses serious nuclear proliferation risks. It is a violation of the object and purpose of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. China expresses serious concern over and resolute opposition to such cooperation. The three countries have pressed the IAEA to invoke Article 14 of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) for the purpose of making safeguards arrangements with Australia regarding nuclear submarines, which is essentially coercing the IAEA Secretariat into making safeguards exemption arrangements. They claim that

Article 14 of the CSA allows for non-application of safeguards for the use of nuclear material in “a non-proscribed military activity”, despite a lack of consensus among the international community on the definition of such an activity and huge divergences on the interpretation of this Article. An arrangement between Australia and the IAEA Secretariat invoking Article 14 would set a precedent, and concerns the interests of all IAEA member states. Safeguards arrangements for the nuclear submarine cooperation in question should be discussed and agreed upon by all interested IAEA member states through an intergovernmental process, taking into account the Agency’s previous practice of strengthening the safeguards system, instead of making any deal privately between the IAEA Secretariat and a few member states.

China believes that Japan’s disposal of contaminated water of the Fukushima nuclear plant bears on the global marine environment and the health of people around the world. It is not Japan’s private business. In April 2021, the Japanese government unilaterally announced its decision to release Fukushima’s nuclear waste water into the ocean. This has triggered grave concern and strong opposition among coastal countries in the Pacific Ocean. Japan should earnestly respond to the concern of neighbouring countries and the wider international community. It should dispose of nuclear-contaminated water in a safe way that is consistent with its international obligations, international safety standards and international good practices, including fully studying alternatives to ocean discharge and receiving strict international supervision so as to minimize possible unpredictable risks to the international community. Japan must not start the discharge before reaching consensus through full consultation with neighbouring countries and other stakeholders.

China has consistently advocated for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including biological and chemical weapons, and supports continuous efforts to enhance the validity, authority and universality of international legal instruments on non-proliferation, including the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). China values and actively engages in international communication and cooperation under these two conventions, with

a view to sharing implementation experience and assisting other parties in enhancing their capacity for implementation.

China strictly fulfils its international obligations to non-proliferation, firmly upholds multilateralism, and supports the UN in leading international non-proliferation efforts. China is deeply engaged in the implementation of and comprehensive review under UN Security Council Resolution 1540. China supports international and regional cooperation on non-proliferation export controls. In December 2020, the Export Control Law of the People's Republic of China formally entered into force, and competent Chinese authorities are now actively pushing forward the revision and update of relevant regulations and control lists under the framework of this law. China will continue to improve its relevant legal framework and management regime, and continuously modernize its non-proliferation export control system. China is committed to promoting the sound and long-term development of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and safeguarding the international non-proliferation regime. In the spirit of equality and mutual benefit, China stands ready to have dialogue and develop relations with other non-proliferation export control mechanisms including the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Australia Group. China urges relevant mechanisms to abide by their founding purpose of ensuring non-proliferation and avoid becoming a political tool used by certain countries to pursue technological decoupling.

In December 2022, at its 77th session, the UN General Assembly once again adopted the resolution of Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses in the Context of International Security submitted by China. The resolution stresses the importance of the peaceful uses of science and technology for sustainable development and the inalienable right of all countries under international law to the peaceful uses of science and technology. It urges relevant countries to eliminate excessive regulation on developing countries, and share the progress in science and technology through dialogue and cooperation. It reflects the common position of the international community, the vast majority of developing countries in particular. China will continue to push for the full and effective implementation

of the resolution and safeguard the common interests of the international community.

China actively promotes regional cooperation on disarmament and non-proliferation. In April 2022, China participated in the 13TH ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, and elaborated on its policies and propositions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In March 2023, China attended the second ARF Nuclear Risk Reduction Workshop and took a constructive part in the discussions, contributing to greater understanding and mutual trust among regional countries on nuclear risk reduction.

- vii. **Outer space cooperation.** China stands for peaceful uses of outer space, upholds the international order in outer space underpinned by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, opposes weaponisation of and arms race in outer space, and supports conclusion of international legal instruments on arms control in outer space through negotiation to fundamentally resolve outer space security issues. China calls on the international community to uphold the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, strive to prevent arms race in outer space, safeguard outer space security and stability, and make activities in outer space sustainable, in a bid to build a community with a shared future for mankind in the field of outer space.

Both China and ASEAN countries support peaceful uses of outer space and oppose arms race in and weaponisation of outer space. The two sides have maintained sound cooperation on outer space security. China is ready to further strengthen coordination and cooperation with ASEAN and other parties in the Asia-Pacific, so as to jointly contribute to promoting security and sustainable development in outer space.

- viii. **Cooperation on combating illicit small arms and light weapons.** The Chinese government attaches great importance to combating illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons (SALW). China has introduced and implemented laws including the Law on Firearms Control and the Regulations Governing Export Control of Military Goods, put in place a Firearms Control Information System, and

continuously improved its inter-agency cooperation mechanisms. China has enforced whole-process control over SALW and adopted a prudent and responsible attitude toward the export of military items including SALW.

The Chinese government actively supports the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument, and has actively participated in activities of combating illicit transfer of SALW launched by the World Customs Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization. On July 6, 2020, China officially joined the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). On September 24, 2022, China announced the launch of its domestic procedure to ratify the UN Firearms Protocol, which will make new contributions to strengthening global cooperation on firearms control and security deficit elimination.

China takes seriously ASEAN countries' concerns over illicit transfer of SALW and actively supports relevant efforts within the region. China stands ready to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with ASEAN countries on this matter.

- ix. **Assistance in mine clearance.** China attaches great importance to humanitarian issues caused by landmines, and has actively carried out international assistance and cooperation on mine clearance. To date, through donation, equipment aid, training, on-site guidance and other ways, China has provided over 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America with more than RMB 100 million worth of assistance, and trained over 1,000 mine clearance professionals. ASEAN countries have been key recipients and partners of China's mine clearance assistance, and demining is an important part of China-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership. In recent years, China has increased its assistance to ASEAN and its member states to help relevant countries remove risks posed by mines.

In 2022, China continued to carry out assistance and cooperation on mine clearance. China sponsored the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) in hosting a technical expert working group meeting and a high-level regional meeting. China also provided financial support to the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, as well as RMB 6.6 million worth of mine detection

and clearance equipment, protective gears and humanitarian supplies to countries including Cambodia and Laos.

IV. China's Views on the Future Direction of the ASEAN Regional Forum

The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper issued by China has identified 20 priorities of cooperation, which are highly compatible with ARF's six main cooperation fields. The Concept Paper stresses the need to support and improve the ASEAN-centred regional security cooperation mechanism and architecture, and adhere to the ASEAN way to further strengthen security dialogue and cooperation among regional countries. China stands ready to increase dialogue and communication with all parties, carry out cooperation in areas of shared interests, and take concrete steps to inject more vitality and impetus into confidence-building measures and activities and preventive diplomacy in various fields.

i. Uphold Multilateralism and Maintain an Open and Inclusive Regional Architecture

China calls on ARF members to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and practice true multilateralism. ARF members need to firmly uphold the UN-centred international system, the international order underpinned by international law, the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and the authority of the UN and its role as an important platform in global security governance. It is important to firmly uphold an open and inclusive regional security architecture, firmly uphold ASEAN centrality in regional cooperation, and firmly resist and oppose Cold War mentality, unilateralism, bloc confrontation, hegemonism and other acts that run counter to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

ii. Deepen Practical Cooperation and Tackle Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats in a Coordinated Way

China encourages ARF members to follow the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits in global governance, and jointly address regional disputes and common challenges such as terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity and biosecurity. Under the guidance of the Hanoi Plan of Action (2021-2025) and the understandings reached at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, ARF members need to actively put forward practical cooperation projects, build more platforms and mechanisms for

exchanges and cooperation, adopt multi-pronged and comprehensive approaches, and work together to find long-term solutions and advance global security governance.

iii. Properly Handle Hotspot Issues to Safeguard Regional Peace and Stability

China is committed to exploring solutions with Chinese characteristics to hotspot issues and upholds peaceful settlement of differences and disputes among countries through dialogue and consultation. ARF members need to increase strategic communication, enhance security mutual trust, resolve conflicts, manage differences and eliminate the root causes of crises. All efforts that are conducive to the peaceful settlement of a crisis should be supported, and all parties to conflict should be encouraged to build mutual trust, resolve disputes and promote security through dialogue.

EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

1. Over the course of the past year, the security landscape of both Europe and Asia has faced stark changes, becoming more strained. The return of war in Europe, with Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the deteriorating security situation in Myanmar after the February 2021 military coup, and the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021, present challenges to regional and global peace and security.
2. Military aggressions, conflicts, weaponization of energy and food, and other sources of instability, including hybrid and cyber threats, are increasing in our neighbourhood and beyond, leading to severe humanitarian suffering and displacement.
3. In addition to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, other evolving threats such as climate change, political instability, illicit activities (arms, drugs trafficking), armed robberies, piracy, as well as supply chain disruptions have severe consequences for livelihoods, and regional and global energy and food security. These developments highlight the importance of a rules-based international order, the adherence to the UN Charter and international law and the need to further foster multilateral dialogue in and with the region. The EU remains committed to ASEAN centrality and it will continue to engage with the ASEAN-led regional architecture to promote an effective rules-based international order.
4. The EU's engagement in Asia is comprehensive and reached a critical milestone with ASEAN in 2020 when we raised our level of partnership to that of a Strategic Partnership. In 2022, the EU and ASEAN celebrated 45 years of dialogue partnership. In this context, an EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit was held in Brussels in December 2022. As well as with ASEAN, the EU continues to engage closely with other Asian partners and seeks to build further on existing and future partnerships by providing tailor-made security cooperation solutions.
5. This engagement is set out in the EU's Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which recognises ASEAN Centrality and promotes an inclusive approach to the challenges affecting the region, acknowledging that the prosperity and security of both Europe and the Indo-Pacific are interconnected. Under this Strategy, the EU is deepening its engagement with partners in the Indo-Pacific on a broad range of traditional and non-traditional security and defence-related issues, such as maritime

security, cybersecurity, counter-terrorism, crisis management, hybrid threats, and trans-national crime.

6. The EU attaches importance to the stability and peace in the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait that are key for the regional and global security and economy. The display of force and increasing tensions in such regional hotspots can have a direct impact on European security and prosperity. The EU opposes unilateral changes to the status quo by force or coercion and encourages the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues. The EU also urges for the peaceful settlement of disputes over maritime claims in the South China Sea in accordance with UNCLOS.
7. The EU's "Strategic Compass", adopted in March 2022, will guide the development of the EU's security and defence agenda for the next five to ten years. The Strategic Compass will support the EU to act more quickly and robustly, enhance our ability to anticipate threats and protect its citizens, invest more and better in capabilities and innovative technologies, fill strategic gaps and reduce technological and industrial dependencies, and to strengthen our cooperation with partners to address common threats and challenges.
8. Existing and future security dialogues will be complemented by concrete activities, such as training, targeted capacity building, confidence building, technical assistance, peer-to-peer cooperation, table-top exercises, practitioner exchanges and development of networks.
9. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the interdependence of the European and Asian continents while also highlighting that both gain resilience from open, diversified and undistorted access to world markets.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

1. Overview of National Security and Defence Policy
 1. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine brought war to the EU's borders and gave renewed impetus to the EU's security policies. Russia's war is a threat to all countries and to the rules-based international order, not just to Europe, and is causing food and energy insecurity with dramatic effects around the world, particularly for the most vulnerable. The EU is leading efforts and supporting its partners to mitigate the global consequences of Russia's war. Globalisation, free movement and the digital transformation continue to bring prosperity, make our

lives easier, and spur innovation and growth but also carry risks. We have seen the effects of the health crisis on our interconnected international system. We witnessed that high levels of interdependence may be manipulated by terrorism, organised crime and nation states. Malicious cyber activities, disinformation campaigns, interference in elections and political processes as well as economic coercion, are direct threats to our citizens and our European way of life. These security threats are also becoming more complex, increasingly intertwined with energy policy, climate policy, social policy and migration policy. More than ever, security threats do not limit themselves to national borders, but also reach beyond the border between the physical and digital world.

2. The EU's approach to external security is based on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In March 2022, the EU adopted the Strategic Compass to set out a common strategic vision for EU security and defence policy over the next five to ten years. The objective of the Strategic Compass is to make the EU a stronger and more capable security provider, to be able to better protect its interests and citizens and to contribute to international peace and security. Additionally, it will enhance the EU's ability to act autonomously and its ability to work with partners to safeguard its values and interests. To do so, the Strategic Compass provides a shared assessment of the strategic environment in which the EU is operating and of the threats and challenges the Union faces. The document makes concrete and actionable proposals, with a very precise timetable for implementation, in order to improve the EU's ability to act decisively in crises and to defend its security and its citizens. It covers all the aspects of the security and defence policy and is structured around four pillars: act, invest, partner and secure.
3. The EU and the Indo-Pacific have a direct stake in each other's stability and prosperity. Europe and the Indo-Pacific are highly interconnected. Therefore, the potential consequences of ongoing conflicts and instability, as well as possible supply chain disruptions, go beyond any one country or region. Through its Indo-Pacific Strategy, adopted in September 2021, the EU shows its commitment to supporting the region's stability, security, and sustainable prosperity, based on the rule of law, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international law.

4. The EU's strategic engagement with the Indo-Pacific region is designed to promote effective rules-based multilateralism, an open and fair environment for trade and investment, while enhancing connectivity. The EU's approach is inclusive of all partners wishing to cooperate.
5. In addition, the Global Gateway is the new European strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world. Global Gateway stands for sustainable and trusted connections that work for people and the planet. It will help to tackle the most pressing global challenges, from fighting climate change, to improving health systems, and boosting competitiveness and security of global supply chains.
6. To deal with the threats to the EU's energy security, the EU adopted various measures under its REPowerEU package to diversify away from Russian fossil fuels while accelerating its just and clean energy transition. This included securing coal, oil, gas and nuclear fuel supply from different sources and measures for a 90% gas storage obligation, energy efficiency (as well as emergency measures to save gas for a safe winter) and faster deployment of renewable energy. The EU is addressing cyber security risks of critical energy infrastructure as a key requirement to the accelerated digitalisation of the energy system.
7. In an era of strategic competition and complex security threats, the European Peace Facility (EPF) expands the EU's ability to provide security for its citizens and its partners. With a total budget of EUR 7.979 billion for the period 2021-2027, it enables the EU to provide all types of military equipment to the armed forces of EU partners, in compliance with the highest human rights standards, while also funding the common costs of military CSDP missions and operations.
8. In 2022, the EU continued to carry out civilian and military CSDP missions and operations throughout its near periphery and in Africa. As of March 2023, the EU conducted nine military missions and operations, and 12 civilian missions. In addition, the EU devised the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept to boost its collective engagement by enhancing coordination of the existing Member States air and naval assets present in defined maritime areas of interest to increase the EU's capacity to collaborate, interoperate and position itself as a reliable partner and maritime security provider, including in the North Western Indian Ocean.

9. The EU currently supports 60 projects under the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), focusing on different operational domains, such as Cyber, Land, Maritime, Air, Space, and Training.
10. Further progress has been made on the European Defence fund, which has a dedicated allocation of close to EUR 8 billion in the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework to finance collaborative defence research and collaborative capability development projects complementing national contributions.
11. Threats to global security require continuous cooperation with multilateral partners. Through 'Framework Participation Agreements' (FPAs), the EU aims to promote the participation of partners around the world in EU CSDP missions and operations. FPAs have been established with ARF members such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the United States and Vietnam
12. The EU remains convinced that only a political solution, grounded on the full implementation of UNSC Resolution (UNSCR) 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, will enable lasting stability and peace in Syria. In order to continue its efforts the EU and UN, on 10 May 2022 co-chaired the sixth Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region", which succeeded in mobilising aid to Syrians inside the country and in neighbouring countries through pledges totalling close to EUR 6.4 billion for 2022 and beyond. The European Union and its Member States remain the largest provider of international aid and deliver humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.
13. In Libya, the EU has continued to support the UN-led Berlin process that aims at restoring peace and stability across Libya. As part of the strategy on Libya and broader security within the Mediterranean, the extended mandate of EUNAVFOR MED IRINI until 31 March 2023, will allow to further enforce the UN arms embargo by inspecting vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya suspected to be carrying arms or related material in accordance with UNSCR 2292. EUNAVFOR MED IRINI will also monitor illicit exports of petroleum from Libya, contribute to capacity building and training to the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy and tackle the disruption of human smuggling and trafficking in human beings networks.

14. While the dire humanitarian, economic and human rights crisis in Afghanistan continues, the EU remains committed to support the Afghan people and promote peace and stability for the country. According to UN data, over 28.3 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance and protection (an increase from 18.4 million in 2021 prior to the Taliban takeover), of which 20 million are facing acute hunger and 6 million of those at emergency level. In response, and despite the overall worsening of the situation, the EU continued to provide humanitarian aid and basic needs assistance with a pragmatic yet principled approach. The systematic decisions by the de-facto authorities to curb civil rights of individuals, notably the rights of women and girls to participate in public life – notably to acquire education and work for local and international organisations – have severely impacted the capacity of the international community to deliver assistance. The European Union agreed, at the Foreign Affairs Council of March 2023 to continue providing humanitarian aid and basic needs assistance in accordance with the ‘Guiding principles and donor expectations’ adopted by the international community; namely to remain active in sectors and geographic areas where there is no discrimination, with women allowed to work and benefit from aid. A monitoring mechanism has been put in place by the implementing partners to ensure the implementation of these expectations. The EU constantly calls on the de-facto Taliban authorities to reverse all bans undermining fundamental rights of Afghan people - among others via direct contacts of the EU Delegation in Kabul or through contacts of the EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan, while it remains committed to support Afghan women and girls and make their voice heard, also via the Afghan Women Leaders Forum platform supported by the EU. In line with the benchmarks outlined in the 2021 Council Conclusions, the EU has also continued calls on the Taliban to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights, to address human rights violations and abuses, to establish an inclusive and representative government, to prevent Afghanistan from serving as a base for hosting, financing or exporting terrorism, to provide unhindered and non-discriminatory humanitarian access and to continue allowing safe, secure and orderly travel to and from Afghanistan.

III. National Contributions to Regional Security

The EU has continued to pursue an ambitious international security agenda that reflects our broad cooperation with our international partners. The fight against terrorism, pursuit of disarmament, maritime security and disaster management are key areas of EU engagement. The work is directly relevant to the most pressing issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

1. Counter-Terrorism

- i. The EU manages a network of Counter-Terrorism/Security Experts in 20 EU Delegations across the globe. In 2023, the EU co-chairs the Global Counter Terrorism Forum together with Morocco and Egypt.
- ii. With ASEAN, the EU continues to actively engage on Counter-Terrorism through capacity building efforts and political dialogues and holds regular bilateral security dialogues and consultations with ASEAN and its Member States on these issues. The 22nd ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) with the EU in July 2022 took stock of the ASEAN-EU Work Plan to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Crime 2022-2024.
- iii. In the context of the ARF, the EU continues its work as co-chair, together with New Zealand and Malaysia of the ASEAN Regional Forum work stream on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational crime until July 2023, including as co-chair of the 19th ARF ISM on CTTC in May 2023.
- iv. The EU has also led, together with Indonesia and Lao PDR, an ARF workshop to understand better and exchange experiences on how to prevent the abuse of non-governmental organisations for terrorism financing as well as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) and other important platforms.
- v. Furthermore, following a 2021 regional workshop on Non-Profit Organisations and the risk that that can be abused for the financing of terrorism (Recommendation 8 FATF), future activities in South-East Asia are being discussed in the framework of the EU Global anti-money laundering (AML)/ combatting the financing of terrorism (CFT) facilities.
- vi. The EU will continue its efforts in supporting the criminal justice sector of Central Asia countries against terrorism, radicalization and financing of terrorism from drugs trafficking.

2. Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

- i. The EU continues to reaffirm its commitment to preserve the South-East Asian region free of nuclear weapons, and all other weapons of mass destruction (Bangkok Treaty), and to promote relevant international instruments, including UN Security Council Resolution 1540.
- ii. The EU believes in a multilateral approach and continues to support universal accession to, and the full and effective implementation of, all relevant international Treaties and instruments. The EU remains a strong supporter of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC), the Biological and Toxin Weapon Convention (BTWC), the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (the Ottawa Convention) and the Convention on certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The EU is actively supporting the universalisation and implementation of these Treaties and Conventions by means of dedicated outreach projects.
- iii. The EU welcomed the ratification of the CTBT by Tuvalu and The Gambia in 2022. The EU promotes consistently the benefits and the contribution of the Treaty to peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation, including in its civil applications. The EU looks forward to continuing its cooperation with Malaysia at the Tenth NPT Review Conference in August 2022, as the chair of the Main Committee I on Nuclear Disarmament. The NPT Review Conference is also appropriately focusing attention (of both the non-proliferation and the broader security community) on the importance of nuclear security, as an end itself and as an enabler of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- iv. The EU notes a growing interest in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful uses, such as power generation, in certain ASEAN Member States. Nuclear safety, security, and safeguards are key priorities for the EU in this regard. The EU promotes the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) and to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its Amendment (A/CPPNM) as fundamental elements of the global nuclear security and anti-terrorism architecture.

- v. The EU offers long-term cooperation for mitigating risks associated with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials building on the achievements of the EU CBRN Risk Mitigation Centre of Excellence (EU CBRN CoE) Initiative and collaborating with the Network of ASEAN CBR Defence Experts. The EU CBRN CoE supports CBRN National Action Plans (NAPs) and the initiative's network of national focal points. The NAPs have proven to be useful coordination instruments at the country level and efficient tools to channel stakeholder support for national and regional priorities. Likewise, the EU P2P Export Control Programme for Dual-use Goods has cooperated with ASEAN Member States in order to contribute to the establishment, consolidation or update of effective strategic trade control systems. Further coordination on CBRN related issues with other key regional actors (i.e. the US, Canada, Australia, Japan) is essential.
- vi. The EU has also supported ASEANTOM through the EU-ASEAN Regional Project on Enhancing Emergency Preparedness and Response in ASEAN and the ASEAN Early Warning Radiation Monitoring Network. These technical projects form part of a broader effort to exchange technical expertise to ensure the security of dangerous materials and ensure the consistent application of protective measures in the Southeast Asian region.
- vii. The EU will maintain its policies aiming at strengthening the global disarmament architecture and multilateral non-proliferation regimes. This includes continued diplomatic efforts towards the goal of achieving a 'Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East'. Moreover, the EU is a global top assistance donor in addressing the threats posed by mines and explosive remnants of war. The threat from illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) will continue to be addressed through international cooperation and supported by the EU through projects in third countries. The EU will also support international efforts to enhance outer space security.

3. Transnational Crimes

- i. The EU Drugs Strategy (2021-2025) sets out the political framework and priorities for the EU's drug policy. The strategy aims to ensure a high level of health protection, social stability and security and contribute to awareness raising. Under drug supply reduction/enhanced security the strategy targets

all aspects of the illicit drug market, and includes the prevention of, dissuasion from and disruption of drug related crime, in particular organised crime, through judicial and law enforcement cooperation, intelligence, interdiction, confiscation of criminal assets, investigations and border management. In Asia, drugs trafficking and organised crime originating from Afghanistan will be a major priority in the next years.

- ii. The EU Drugs Strategy makes it a strategic priority to strengthen international cooperation: enhancing the role of the EU as a global broker for a people-centred and human rights-oriented drug policy through cooperation with third countries, regions and international and regional organisations, while strengthening the commitment to development-orientated drug policies and alternative development measures.
- iii. The EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) lays down priorities to reduce the demand that fosters trafficking, break the criminal business model of traffickers both offline and online, and protect, support and empower the victims, especially women and children, while promoting partnerships and cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations. The EU is currently funding an ISF programme with multi-disciplinary international cooperation to identify and tackle Vietnamese Trafficking in Human Beings in the EU. In connection with this programme there are also operational actions taking place within the framework of European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).
- iv. Building on the EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, in May 2022 the EU adopted the Common Anti-Trafficking Plan to protect people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The key actions, which have been quickly implemented, focus on awareness raising; prevention; law enforcement and judicial response; early identification, support and protection of victims; and cooperation with non-EU countries, especially Ukraine and Moldova.

- v. The EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling (2021-2025) aims at strengthening the EU's cooperation with partner countries and international organisations, especially through the development of tailor-made Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships; sanctioning migrant smugglers and preventing the exploitation of migrants; reinforcing cooperation and supporting the work of law enforcement and judiciary; and strengthening knowledge base.
- vi. In addition, the EU is committed to tackling illegal wildlife trade and forestry crimes as part of the EU's biodiversity strategy.

4. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

- i. The EU stands ready to provide humanitarian assistance to populations affected by humanitarian crises in ASEAN Member states when disasters strike and national or additional support is required. To strengthen regional capacities, the EU also supports the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) through the EU-SAHA Programme from 2019 to 2024.
- ii. In February 2023, the European Commission announced a new allocation of EUR 43 million in humanitarian assistance to address the humanitarian needs of people in Myanmar, as well as those of Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Bangladesh. Part of this allocation will also help addressing the needs of Rohingya and other refugees in neighbouring countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and India. Since the Rohingya major displacement to Bangladesh in 2017, the EU has provided over EUR 370 million in humanitarian and development funding to respond to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and South-East Asia.
- iii. Additional specific support has been provided to address the frequent natural disasters in the Philippines and, in particular, in Mindanao. Overall, the EU has been a staunch partner to the Philippines and has provided over EUR 154 million since 1996, of which more than EUR 14 million in 2022. The European Union has also brought the Philippines into the Copernicus Programme, which will augment the country's environment data and monitoring initiatives and disaster response capabilities.

- iv. The EU systematically mainstreams disaster preparedness into its humanitarian assistance, as appropriate in each context. The EU's Disaster Preparedness Strategy contributes to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and to the priorities established by the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and its work programmes for 2021-2025.
- v. EU support in Southeast Asia aims to improve regional systems and capacities, ensure these are responsive and inclusive to community priorities, and fill gaps when local systems are overwhelmed. The EU has been working on Disaster Preparedness (DP) in ASEAN countries since 1995 and it is now particularly committed to scale up the Anticipatory Action approach to take early actions when a predictable disaster is imminent, before a crisis occurs and to mitigate its humanitarian impact.

5. Maritime Security

- i. The EU is strongly committed to a rules-based international maritime order and to the principles of international law as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The EU is committed to maritime security cooperation, freedom of navigation and overflight, and the peaceful and sustainable use of the seas in the interest of all states.
- ii. The EU remains active in the context of the ARF. For instance, in April 2022 it co-chaired with Vietnam and Australia the 4th ARF Workshop on Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation. Subsequently, together with Vietnam and Australia, the EU co-chaired a workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to address Emerging Maritime Issues together with Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand in November 2022.
- iii. In the context of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the EU seeks to encourage the EU Member States' naval presence in the Indo-Pacific, while also conducting more joint exercises, including multilateral ones, and port calls with partners in the region, to fight piracy, deter illicit activities and contribute to the protection of freedom of navigation and overflight in the region.
- iv. The EU will continue to enhance regional maritime security, in particular through the project CRIMARIO II (Critical Maritime Routes in the Indo-Pacific). The project's focus on maritime domain awareness is complemented by a

broad portfolio of capacity building activities with a view to contribute to safer sea lanes of communication with the EU, via increased information sharing (through the IORIS platform), while also improving inter-agency cooperation at national and regional level.

- v. Incidents at sea have seen an overall decrease from 2021 to 2022. Despite this, in South-East Asia and other regions like the Indian and Pacific oceans slightly more incidents were registered (MICA Centre Annual Report 2022). This shows the need for continued joint efforts and vigilance at sea and in ports. The EU has contributed to increasing maritime security and safety, particularly through its CSDP mission Operation ATALANTA. This operation – in combination with the wider international response, implementation of best practices, and the provision of private armed guards on-board ships – has reduced almost entirely the number of attacks at sea in the Western-Indian Ocean region. Operation Atalanta was prolonged by two years until the end of 2024, given an expanded area of operations and a broader mandate to also deter illicit activities (e.g. drugs and arms smuggling). Operation ATALANTA has also stepped up its naval cooperation including through exercises with India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Djibouti, Oman and others.
- vi. In addition, the newly devised Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) concept and its implementation in the North Western Indian Ocean as a Maritime Area of Interest allow the EU Member States to better coordinate the presence of air and naval assets in this essential area for the EU's interests. CMP strengthens the EU's maritime security engagement by increasing the EU's efficiency and visibility as a maritime security provider; raising maritime situational awareness for decision making in the security domain; facilitating a continued EU maritime presence in designated Maritime Areas of Interest and promoting international and regional maritime security cooperation, including with likeminded partners from third countries.

IV. Role of ARF

1. The EU's contribution to the ARF is a tangible demonstration of its willingness to support the ASEAN-led security architecture in Southeast Asia. It is also evidence of

the EU's commitment to regional peace and stability, and to the development of a more robust, rules-based regional security order.

2. The ARF continues to be the most comprehensive multilateral security forum in the ASEAN region and beyond. The ARF offers a valuable platform for partners to engage on a broad range of issues. Building on the ARF's comprehensive approach to security issues, the EU has engaged actively with ARF partners at various levels and on a range of critical issues.
3. In line with ARF Ministerial Guidance, the EU is keen to make the ARF more "action oriented". The EU acknowledges the importance of strengthening the organisational and institutional structures of the ARF, including the ARF Unit in the ASEAN Secretariat. The EU respects and promotes the central role of ASEAN in the emerging regional architecture and believes in the need to ensure transparency and synergy between ARF and other regional fora, such as the ADMM+ and the East Asia Summit.

INDIA

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment.

- India's security is linked to the wider Indo-Pacific region, which is a seamless maritime space from the western coast of North America to the eastern shores of Africa. The Indo-Pacific Ocean system carries an estimated 65% of world trade, 90% of world's energy and contributes 60% of global GDP. A significant part of India's foreign trade, including its energy supplies is carried across these waters. The evolving security challenges across the entire region are therefore key for India. Traditional security threats emanating from maritime disputes, territorial claims and claims over natural resources are a matter of particular concern. There are also some global challenges that merit regional considerations. Chief among them are climate action and counter-terrorism.
- The concepts of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" – 'the whole world is one family' and "*sarve bhavantu sukhinah*" – 'all be at peace' are at the core of our values and traditions. The principles on which these concepts are based: inclusivity, equality and openness guide India's Indo-Pacific vision.
- At the East Asia Summit (EAS) held in Bangkok in 2019, PM Narendra Modi announced the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) as practical implementation of India's vision of Indo-Pacific. As an open, non-treaty based global initiative, the IPOI draws on the existing regional cooperation architecture and mechanisms to focus on central pillars conceived around Maritime Security; Maritime Ecology; Maritime Resources; Capacity Building and Resource Sharing; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport. These seven pillars are being progressed in cooperation with respective partners for each of these areas.
- India's engagement with the South East Asian region and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is based on its 'Act-East' Policy (AEP). Key elements of India's Act East Policy are to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationships with countries in Indo-Pacific region through engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. India shares a deep connect with ASEAN and views it as a central factor for the security architecture in the region. India continues

to attach importance to ASEAN centrality and unity in ensuring peace and stability in the region.

- In 2022, India and ASEAN celebrated 30 years of dialogue relations and elevated ASEAN-India Partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership at the 19th ASEAN-India Summit held in Cambodia, with focus on enhancing cooperation in Maritime domain, public health & traditional medicine, cyber security, fintech, disaster management, blue economy, connectivity, agriculture, renewable energy, people-to-people cooperation and economic engagement.
- A Plan of Action (2021-2025) to further strengthen the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership in the next five years, was adopted in 2020. As part of its implementation, planned activities seek to enhance India-ASEAN connectivity, support ASEAN community building objectives and expand cooperation in maritime domain. India has reiterated its support to ASEAN's Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC)-2025, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV and agriculture development strategy.
- India is actively engaged with various Indo-Pacific frameworks including, inter alia, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), East Asia Summit (EAS), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC). India also joined the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) as a Development Partner in July 2019 and has become an Observer at Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) in March 2020. India is also a part of various other multilateral institutions, which deal with maritime security issues in the region including ADMM Plus, Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ship in Asia (ReCAAP) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF). India also joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct- Jeddah Agreement (DCOC-JA) as an 'observer' and the G7++ Friends of Gulf of Guinea (G7++FOGG) as a 'friend' in 2020.
- The International Sea Lanes passing through the South China Sea are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development of the Indo-Pacific region. It is natural for the international community to have vital stakes in ensuring freedom of navigation and

over flight, and unimpeded commerce in these international waterways. This commitment was also reflected in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. India hopes that all parties to that Declaration would strictly abide by it, in letter and spirit, and will not take any actions that would jeopardize peace and security in this region. India hopes that the Code of Conduct negotiations will lead to an outcome that is in keeping with all relevant international laws, including UNCLOS.

II. National Contributions to Regional Security

a. Counterterrorism

- India believes that terrorism is the gravest global threat to international peace and security and it is important to isolate those countries, which harbour terrorists, provide them safe havens and use cross-border terrorism as a foreign policy tool. It is also in common interest that all the States must take credible, verifiable, irreversible and sustained action against terrorism and terror financing which are emanating from the territories under their control.
- India has been actively participating in ARF activities related to Counter-terrorism and transnational crime pillar including participation in the recently held 19th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ARF ISM on CTTC), in May 2023.
- During its UNSC membership in 2022, India, as the Chair of the UNSC Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC), hosted a special session of CTC on 28th October, 2022 in Mumbai and on 29th October, 2022 in New Delhi on the theme of countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes. After the meeting, 'The Delhi Declaration on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes' was adopted unanimously by the CTC.
- The Delhi Declaration, inter alia, has emphasized the need for UN Member States to act cooperatively to prevent and counter the use of new information and communications technologies, and other emerging technologies, for terrorist purposes, including recruitment and incitement to commit terrorist acts, as well as the financing, planning and preparation of their activities and stressed the

importance of cooperation with civil society and the private sector in this endeavour.

- India conducts various Joint Military Exercises with Friendly Foreign Countries to share best practices in training and promote inter-operability in Sub-Conventional Military/ Counter Terrorism Operations under the UN Mandate of Chapter VII.
- India will be participating in the Joint Exercise ; Table Top Exercise (TTX) & Field Training Exercise (FTX) under ADMM Plus Expert Working Group (EWG) on theme of Counter Terrorism scheduled this year.

b. Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms control and Disarmament

- India accords great importance to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540. With its longstanding commitment to global non-proliferation, India has established a strong law-based, national system to implement the provisions of Resolution 1540.
- As a part of the latest comprehensive review of resolution 1540, UNSCR 1540 Committee reviewed India's matrix to the 1540 Committee that assesses national level implementation of UNSCR 1540 provisions; and it has been assessed that India fulfils the requirements of UNSC Resolution 1540 in terms of prohibitions, measures and controls in the relevant areas. Further, India participated actively in the consultations on the Comprehensive Review report related to status of UNSCR 1540 implementation and the UNSC Resolution 2663 that extended the 1540 Committee's mandate for another 10 years (till 30 November 2032).
- India has also supported 1540 Committee's mandate and its work, wherever possible, by offering to share its knowledge and technical expertise in various areas as part of the Committee's assistance framework. Recognizing the role of the industry, academia and other key stakeholders in facilitating the States' implementation of resolution 1540, India has been organising outreach events involving these stakeholders at the national level, and in the region.

- With the pronounced threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related materials, equipment and technology to the terrorist groups and other non-State actors, India is of the view that full implementation of Resolution 1540 assumes far greater importance now than when it was adopted in 2004.
- India recognizes the important role of multilateral export control regimes in non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials, equipment and technologies, including to terrorists and other non-State actors.
- India has been engaging actively in the multilateral export control regimes of WA, AG and MTCR, including by sharing of our best practices or implementation experiences in the area of export controls, participation in the development of guidelines for export controls and lists of materials, equipment and technologies regulated under these regimes. India has assumed the Plenary Chairmanship of WA for a period of one year (from 1 January 2023). This further establishes India's recognized credentials on export controls and non-proliferation matters.
- As a responsible nuclear weapon State, India has a policy of maintaining a credible minimum deterrence based on a No First Use posture and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States.
- India remains committed to universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. India believes that nuclear disarmament can be achieved in a time bound manner through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. India's Working Paper (CD/1816) presented to the Conference on Disarmament in 2007 encapsulates this approach.
- In line with its vision, India supports the commencement of negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention at the Conference on Disarmament.

- India's annual resolutions at the UNGA on the 'Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons' and on 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' are adopted with widespread support. Without prejudice to the priority attached to disarmament, India looks forward to commence negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty based on CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.
- India has participated in the meetings of the 25-member Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Nuclear Disarmament Verification (NDV) established by the UN Secretary General, and participates in the 'Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament' (CEND) initiative, and the ARF ISMs on Non Proliferation and Disarmament and related workshops and seminars.
- India is mindful of the rapid pace of developments in science and technology which, while offering tremendous benefits, also pose potential challenges to international peace and security. India's annual Resolution at the UNGA on the "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament", adopted by consensus, mandates the UNSG to submit a report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts.
- India values the role played by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in facilitating adoption of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and at the national level strengthening nuclear security and safety. India participated in the Joint Eighth and Ninth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) held in Vienna from 20-31 March 2023.
- India believes that it is imperative to strengthen collective commitment to disarmament instruments including the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which is a unique instrument within the UN framework for progressive controls over certain categories of conventional weapons.
- India is fully committed to the CCW and the humanitarian principles enshrined in the Convention and is a party to all the five protocols of the CCW. The Convention while stipulating measures to mitigate humanitarian concerns arising from the

use of specific weapons, strives to strike a balance with the military necessity of such weapons. India has also been participating actively in the deliberations of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) within the framework of the CCW and recognizes the progress made in the discussions at the GGE on LAWS in recent years and reiterates its support to the eleven guiding principles adopted.

- India is deeply concerned about the challenges posed by illicit transfers of conventional weapons as well as ammunition management, including small arms and light weapons (SALW), to unauthorized recipients such as criminals, terrorists and non-State actors, which pose a major threat to international peace and security. India accords high importance to the UN Programme of Action as the cornerstone of multilateral efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trade in SALW. The full and effective implementation of the UN Progress of Action and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) is a priority for India, especially as a means for combating terrorism and transnational crime.
- Towards this, India is also committed to refine the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), wherein India has been recently added as the 11th member of the TRB (Technical Review Board) of IATG. Towards safer and secure ammunition management, India is an active participant in the OEWG on Conventional Ammunition (under the UN auspices) which is working to create a Global framework on Ammunition Management to prevent diversion to unauthorized recipients, including criminals and terrorists. The fourth substantive session of the OEWG was held in June 2023 and the global framework has been recommended to UNGA for adoption.

c. Transnational Crime

- India is fully supportive of all possible efforts to combat transnational crime. The access to and misuse of technology by terrorist organizations is a major concern for all. Cyberspace, encrypted chat applications and social media platforms are being used extensively for radicalization, misinformation, propaganda, terror funding, training, recruitment and execution of terrorist attacks.

- The threat of 'lone wolf' radicalized attacks over the cyberspace has increased manifold in the recent times. Another threat vector is the use of drones to carry out terrorist attacks. Rapid emergence of encrypted chat applications, access to Dark Web and crypto-financing and emergence of newer technologies will continue to have significant implications for counter terrorism efforts.
- Data is increasingly becoming an important source of economic growth, and cooperation should be enhanced for trusted sources, respecting privacy and ensuring data protection. Growing cyber threats have the potential to disrupt national, regional and international security environment. Securing critical information infrastructure and tackling growing incidents of cyber crime and cyber terrorism are paramount.
- Cooperation on countering terrorism and extremism propaganda on the internet, in removing such content, in alerting each other of such activities and in investigating terrorist attacks mounted through the use of ICTs could be an essential part of confidence building measures among countries. Ransomware attacks have become sophisticated and pervasive over the last decade. They now have the potential of disrupting critical cyber infrastructure and government organizations. The ongoing Ad Hoc Committee to elaborate a comprehensive international convention against use of ICTs for criminal purposes is an important process under the aegis of the United Nations and India has been actively participating in it.
- India has successfully concluded the 3rd edition of 'No Money for Terror (NMFT)' Ministerial Conference on November 18-19, 2022 in New Delhi in which 78 countries and 16 multilateral organisations participated. India was happy to note that some ARF members participated in the Conference.
- Participants in the NMFT Conference, discussed the issues like Countering Terrorist Financing using crypto-currencies, Virtual Assets, Crowd funding platforms, payment intermediaries, Dark Web etc. India has offered to set up a permanent secretariat for the 'No Money for Terror' Ministerial Conference.

d. Humanitarian and Disaster Relief

- In keeping with its tradition of '*Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*', India has traditionally been the first responder to natural disasters in the region, especially in the immediate and extended neighbourhood with increasing frequency and a credible regional partner with demonstrated capabilities to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) materials for affected people. Indian Naval ships and aircrafts were regularly deployed to facilitate security to Indian and international maritime community, provide HADR assistance and respond to any maritime incident in the region.
- Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) is a Maritime Security initiative launched by India to address regional vulnerabilities. The IONS initiative is the largest in the region in terms of membership of countries, with 25 'full time' members and 08 'observers'. Last edition of IONS Maritime Exercise (IMEX), co-hosted by the Indian Navy and French Navy (FN), was conducted in the Arabian Sea (off Goa) from 20-28 March 2022. The next edition of the exercise is being planned in November 2023 with all members of IONS.
- OP Karuna (Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar) : The cyclone storm 'Mocha' made landfall close to Sitwe (Myanmar) in May 2023 and India was the first responder post crisis. India extended HADR assistance to Myanmar in the form of Medical aid and HADR material (emergency food items, tents, essential medicines, water pumps, portable generators, cloths, sanitary and hygiene items, etc.).
- In February 2023, a series of earthquakes hit various cities of Turkiye and Syria. Under Operation Dost, Indian Armed Forces set up a 30 bedded hospital at the Vocational and Technical High School at Iskenderun, Hatay Province and 251 personnel were deployed.
- Annual Joint HADR Exercise 'Samannvay-22' was held at Agra from 28-30 November 2022 on Flood and Earthquake with ASEAN countries.

- India and Indonesia are the co-chairs of the 4th Cycle of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus Experts Working Group (ADMM-Plus EWG) from 2021-2023.

e. Maritime Security

- Maritime security is an important dimension of India's international engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. During India's Presidency of the UN Security Council in August 2021, maritime security was the theme for high level discussion, chaired by the Prime Minister of India. This meeting concluded with a UN Security Council's Presidential Statement on maritime security, which suggests a broader approach to address common concerns of maritime safety and security.
- India supports free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and believes that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) sets out the legal framework for activities in the oceans and seas. Maritime Security is also one of the seven pillars of India's Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) on which India and UK have taken co-lead to work with all the interested partners in the region to ensure peace and prosperity.
- India engaged bilaterally with countries around the world as well as regional bodies ranging from EAS, ARF, ADMM Plus, IORA, IONS, Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Djibouti Code of Conduct-Jeddah Amendment (DCoC-JA), Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (CGIMA), G7 plus Friends of Gulf of Guinea (G7++FoGG), Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Head of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meetings (HACGAM), and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) etc. In the ARF Inter-Sessional Year 2022-23, India along with the USA, Phillipines and Papua New Guinea co-chaired and hosted second part of "ASEAN Regional Forum Training Series and Best Practice Manual on International Ship and Port Facility Security Code in Mumbai from 10-14 April, 2023.

- India's Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) near New Delhi, launched in December 2018, has contributed greatly towards enhancing maritime domain awareness through collaboration with partner countries and organizations. With white shipping information exchange agreements with around 25 countries and regional organizations, as well as international liaison officers from various countries. The IFC-IOR in addition to alerting all the partners on maritime incidents also publishes monthly, half yearly and yearly reports on its website.
- India has been actively involved in capacity building, capability enhancement and training of the maritime entities of various countries in the region; providing Lines of Credit, patrol aircraft and helicopters, patrol vessels and boats for patrolling of their vast EEZs, training of personnel, deploying training teams for enhancing maritime security capacities, and providing hydrographic assistance to countries in the region.
- Anti Piracy Patrol in Gulf of Aden: 103 Indian Naval ships have been deployed in the Gulf of Aden since commencement of anti-piracy patrols in 2008. India has been an active member of CGPCS (Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia) since its inception in 2009 and India is an active member of Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (CGIMA) which is the re-envisioned CGPCS. At the first plenary of CGIMA, held in Kenya in May 2023, India put forth various proposals and offers to enhance the Maritime Security of the region.
- The maiden ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise (AIME) was conducted from 02-08 May 2023. The exercise was co-hosted by the Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy and witnessed participation of 9 ships and 6 aircraft from Indian and ASEAN Navies.
- MILAN is one of the largest multilateral exercises in the IOR, hosted by Indian Navy biennially. MILAN 22 was conducted at Visakhapatnam from 25 February-04 March 2022 with participation from 39 countries. The next edition of MILAN is planned to be conducted from 19-27 Feb 2024 at/off Visakhapatnam.

- India participated in 18th ADMM Plus EWG on Maritime Security Table Top Exercise (TTX) in Bangkok, Thailand from 22-24 February 2023, that focused on measures to prevent and suppress unlawful activities like drug/ human trafficking, piracy and armed robbery and included discussions on collaborative efforts towards conduct of Search and Rescue operations in Maritime domain.

III. Role of ARF

- India views ARF as an inclusive forum supporting dialogue and cooperation towards stability and security in the region. ASEAN is the driving force of the ARF, and ASEAN's unity and solidarity will further the objectives of ARF. India believes that the ASEAN way of "dialogue and consensus" have served the grouping well and should remain ARF's guiding principles. ARF provides a valuable platform in which practical cooperation can be forged amongst the Member States in addressing various common challenges.
- India believes that ARF should continue to evolve into a balanced, open and inclusive framework for partners to interact and cooperate in addressing traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Candid discussions on regional and international security issues in ARF have led to greater interaction and understanding of different perspectives and activities conducted under its framework, and have contributed to confidence building, among the ARF countries and beyond. India will continue to engage constructively in and contribute positively to the ARF processes.

INDONESIA

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

Indonesia highlights the importance of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to uphold the ASEAN Charter, the Charter of the United Nations, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the Bali Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations, and universally recognized international law thereby enhancing regional peace, security, stability, and prosperity as well as promoting mutual confidence and trust.

Indonesia remains of the view that maritime security in the region is of top priority. Indonesia's perspective of the regional security outlook is consistent with its strategic geographical location, its nature as the largest archipelago in the world, and its vision to be the Global Maritime Fulcrum. Southeast Asian waters and the surrounding area are vital to the region's economy, trade, transportation, and communication.

Disputes generated from overlapping claims in the area underscores the necessity for peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It is therefore crucial that all parties to refrain from activities that may escalate tensions, and to fully and effectively implement the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC).

Indonesia attaches great importance to peace and stability in the South China Sea, even though Indonesia is not a claimant state in the territorial dispute in the area. Indonesia appreciates the start of negotiation of the Single Draft Negotiating text of COC since early 2019, and despite the negotiation is being put on hold due to pandemic, Indonesia remains of the view that expediting the COC negotiation process is essential to achieving the main objective to govern the behaviour of states in the region.

Indonesia reaffirms that the freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, and other lawful uses of the seas are one of the fundamental rights of all States protected by international law, particularly UNCLOS 1982. It is of utmost importance for Indonesia to consistently uphold 1982 UNCLOS as the legal basis for determining sovereign rights and legitimate interests over maritime areas.

Indonesia will play an active role in encouraging the completion of the COC through practical, effective and actionable means in the shortest possible time, to serve as a governance guide behaviour of ASEAN Member States and China in the South China Sea. Indonesia will continue to show leadership to promote substantive progress, including offering avenues for various controversial issues in the negotiations.

Indonesia stresses the importance of a constructive dialogue as the main component of a peace process, which will ultimately be pivotal to the achievement of regional and international peace and security. In the near future, involvement of an independent and competent body (IAEA) in the verification process will certainly help to achieve the goal of a permanent denuclearization of the Peninsula.

Indonesia reiterates that UNSC sanctions are not the end, but the means and need to be well targeted and reviewed periodically to be effective. Indonesia reiterates its commitment to implement the multilateral sanctions in accordance with its national laws and regulations. Indonesia does not recognize the unilateral sanctions.

Based on UNGA Resolution A/RES/3284-B, the definition of Weapons of Mass Destruction consists of atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and many weapons developed in the future which might have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of atomic bomb or other weapons mentioned above. Indonesia believes that Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threatens the existence of every nation in the world, humanity, as well as peace, security and stability of the world at large.

Indonesia has joined several multilateral related treaties including the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and is currently in the process of ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Indonesia has also joined the Bangkok Treaty (Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty/SEANWFZ) as Southeast Asia Region commits to delegitimize all forms of WMDs.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

a. Overview of national security and defence policy

Today's global security and strategic environment influences national defence. National policy should be dynamic and adaptive particularly to address the increasingly complex and multidimensional challenges, considering that there are military and non-military threats, as well as hybrid threats, which can be categorized as factual and non-factual. These threats include terrorism, radicalism, separatism and armed rebellions, natural disasters, border violations, sea piracy and natural resources theft, epidemics, cyber attacks and espionage, trafficking and drug abuse as well conventional war and armed conflicts. Internal country conditions cannot be separated from the influence of the strategic environment triggered by ideology, political, economical, socio-cultural, and security factors. These developments become challenges in managing national defence.

Indonesia pursues an independent and active foreign policy. Indonesia believes that neighbouring countries are friends with a shared commitment to promoting security and stability in the region. Establishing a common perspective is needed to minimize problems faced in international relations, including in the bilateral and multilateral fora.

Indonesia relies on a total defence system in order to achieve national goals. The system essentially involves all citizens and all other national resources, each with a role and function. The involvement of every citizen is based on love for the homeland that is oriented towards a common goal to serve national interests. Maritime defence is based on a concept of Indonesia serving as the Global Maritime Fulcrum. This concept of national defence guides every citizen in recognizing national goals, national interests, the nature of national defence, national defence system, national defence functions and national defence basic principles.

Indonesia has been actively promoting peace and enhanced cooperation in the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean through the ADMM and ADMM-Plus frameworks. Indonesia actively participated and contributed to all meetings and activities under the framework of ADMM and ADMM-Plus during 2022 under the chairmanship of Cambodia. As the co-chair of ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group (EWG) on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) with India for the cycle of 2021-2024, Indonesia and India hosted the 18th ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR meeting on 11-12 May 2022 aimed to build interoperability on HADR among ADMM-Plus countries, empower ASEAN and other regional bodies to support HADR and evolve a

comprehensive method on awareness, planning, early warning and mitigation measures as also physical and mental rehabilitation of victims. Indonesia also hosted the Middle Planning Conference (MPC) and Site Survey on 30 October to 2 November 2022 in Yogyakarta. The MPC discussed the operational and technical brief of the exercise, confirmation of the participation, administration, and rules of engagement. Participants also visited the exercise venue. Both co-chairs plan to conduct the Final Planning Conference in July 2023 and Table-Top-Exercise and Field Training Exercise on HADR in October 2023 in Yogyakarta. The exercise is focused on enhancing the ADMM-Plus countries' capacity for humanitarian assistance during a pandemic.

Indonesia continues its contribution to the regional effort to counter terrorism by initiating the ASEAN Our Eyes (AOE) framework. The 6th ASEAN Our Eyes Working Group (WG) meeting was successfully hosted by Cambodia via video conference. Recently, Indonesia hosted the 7th AOE WG on 31 January to 3 February 2023 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

As the Chair of ASEAN in 2023, Indonesia has the theme of "Peace, Prosperity and Security" under the ADMM Chairmanship. Indonesia priorities are to maintain ASEAN unity and centrality; keep ASEAN united and dignified and able to become a driver of regional interests; make ASEAN remain an open and inclusive region that not only involves plus countries in cooperation but also countries far outside the region so that ASEAN can become an anchor of regional and world peace and prosperity; uphold international law and always prioritize dialogue to find solutions to every problem both internal and external with a spirit of brotherhood in order to realize the security of the ASEAN community.

Indonesia has hosted several meetings during its chairmanship in ADMM in 2023 such as the 7th AOE WG, the 7th Ad Hoc Meeting on ASEAN Direct Communication Infrastructure, ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Working Group (ADSOM WG) and ADSOM-Plus WG, ASEAN Defence Interaction Programme (ADIP), ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue, and the 20th ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC).

Indonesia is committed to promote wider cooperation during its chairmanship as highlighted in the deliverables, among others are the Concept Paper on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific from A Defence Perspective, the Jakarta Joint Declaration of ADMM for Peace, Prosperity and Security, as well as the Joint Statement by the ADMM-Plus on Women, Peace

and Prosperity which are currently being discussed by the ADMM and ADMM-Plus mechanism.

In the maritime sector, Indonesia is well aware of how important it is to safeguard Indonesian zone, and it is evident that the Indonesian government requires investigators with the requisite skills to enforce the law, particularly in National jurisdictions. Through Government Regulation Number 13 Year 2022 Regarding Implementation of Security, Safety, and Law Enforcement in Indonesia Waters Territory and Indonesian Jurisdiction Area, investigate the scheme to accommodate collaboration from all institution levels, which are The Sea and Coast Guard (KPLP), the National Police (Polair), the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL), and the Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA). The synergy and cooperation between these institutions will have an effect on the effectiveness and efficiency of preventive and efficiency law enforcement.

Indonesia attaches great importance of multilateralism. It is reflected by Indonesia's active participation in the international organizations such as in the United Nations. Indonesia served its role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from January 2019 to December 2020. But Indonesia's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations dated back since 1957, when the country dispatched its first deployment of military contingent to UN Emergency Force (UNEF) in Egypt. Since then, Indonesia has been a proud contributor by sending more of its military and police servicemen as peacekeepers.

The country's involvement in UN Peacekeeping Operations has always reflected the mandate emanating from the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, to actively participate and contribute in the maintenance of world order based on freedom, lasting peace, and social justice. Indonesia's commitment to UN Peacekeeping Operations has also transformed the latter into one of the country's flagships of diplomacy in the United Security Council membership.

As of January of 2022, Indonesia's contribution to UN peacekeeping operations amounted to 2,697 peacekeepers. This number places Indonesia in the rank 8 out of 122 Troop/Police Contributing Countries (TPCCs). They are deployed in 7 missions out of 23 UN missions, namely UNIFIL (Lebanon), MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo), MINUSCA (Central African Republic), MINUSMA (Mali), UNMISS (South Sudan), MINURSO (Western Sahara), and UNISFA (Abyei-Sudan).

Indonesian peacekeeping contingent has been supported with moderate numbers of women personnel to help better implementation of the protection of civilian mandate in the field. As of January 2022, 158 female personnel are in the missions and serve as troops, military staff, Formed Police Unit, Individual Police Officers, and some as doctors and nurses.

Their presence has been a critical enabler to generate strong social interactions with the locals by exercising community engagement activities under the Civil-Military Coordination/CIMIC, notably protection to women, girls, and children. Indonesian women personnel are able to further help the contingent in winning the hearts and minds of the local community as an important component to support successful implementation of mandated tasks, as well as useful to provide safety and security to the peacekeepers themselves.

Those postures of contribution thus far have placed Indonesia as one of the main enablers to keep the UN well-resourced and well-oiled to run the machinery of peace operations.

Moving forward, Indonesia is keen to strengthen its contribution and support initiatives that bolster UN Peacekeeping substantively for its ultimate aim that is to assist a nationally-owned and -led endeavour by the host country to build sustaining peace and development. Among others is by enhancing the capacity of the Indonesian Peacekeeping Centre in Sentul, as an international hub for regional training, and marshalling the role of the country's civilian capacities, including women's participation, into peacekeeping missions to help effective implementation of the contemporary multi-dimensional peacekeeping mandates.

Indonesia encourages the importance of the contribution of civilian experts in peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding missions in order to face the dynamics of situations in conflict areas that are increasingly becoming more multidimensional and require approaches from various aspects. In this regard, Indonesia has played an active role in supporting the development of civilian capacity (CivCap), both at the multilateral, regional and national levels.

Indonesia has given intellectual contributions to the UN Peacekeeping namely:

- One of the first countries formulating the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)

- Initiated a Presidential Statement (PRST) at the UN Security Council on increasing peacekeeping capacity to improve the safety and security of personnel (2019)
- Advancing its interests regarding reimbursement, transportation, and equipment in negotiations for the preparation of the Contingent Owned Equipment Manual 2020,
- Initiating the UN Security Council Resolution 2538 (2020) on Women in Peacekeeping.
- One of the members of the Group of Friends on the COVID-19 Vaccine for Uniformed Personnel to ensure a COVID-19 vaccine for all peacekeepers in the UN Mission.
- Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends on Safety and Security of UN Peacekeepers launched in April 2021.
- The main negotiator of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the issue of the safety and security of the UN MPP troops at the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34).
- One of the Co-Chairs of the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial (UNPM), and Preparatory Meeting UNPM on 2021 with Japan and Ethiopia on training and capacity building of UN PKO personnel.
- Pledging on the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial of 1.000 peacekeepers in reserve and capacity building cooperation.
- One of the co-sponsors of UN Security Council Resolution 2518 (2020) and 2589 (2021) on Safety and Security of Peacekeepers.
- The host of UN Triangular Partnership Programme, a joint peacekeepers training program with UN and Japan scheduled in mid-2022.

b. Data contribution to ARF Arms Register

i. Total defence expenditure on annual basis

1) Defence expenditure

Based on Book II of Work Plans and Budgets of State Ministries/Institutions (RKA-K/L) issued by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, the budget of the Ministry of Defence in 2022 is Rp. 133,923.4 billion or Rp. 133.9 trillion.

2) Defence expenditure as a %age of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Based on Indonesian Economic Development throughout 2021 issued by The Central Bureau of Statistics, Indonesia GDP is Rp.

16,970.8 trillion, resulting in the %age of the defence budget GDP is around 8%.

3) Defence expenditure per capita

Based on Indonesia's population data submitted by the Director of General of Population and Civil Registry, Ministry of Home Affairs, by the end of 2021 there were 273,879,750 registered civilians, hence making the defence expenditure per capita to a total of Rp. 488,986.

ii. Total number of active personnel in national armed forces.

The National Armed Force aggregate to 450,548 (Not including reserves) personnel consisting of 339,747 army personnel, 71,132 naval personnel, and 39,669 air force personnel.

iii. Total number of reserve personnel in national armed forces

The reserve component consists of 2.499 personnel divided among different Military Regional Command's Main Regiment (Rindam) and institutions. Rindam II/Sriwijaya hosts 450 personnel, Rindam VI/Mulawarman, Rindam XIV/Hasanuddin and Pusdiklat Pasgat hosts 500 personnel each, Marine Education Command (Kodikmar) hosts 499 personnel and Women Corps' Education Center (Pusdikkowad) hosts 50 personnel.

III. National Contributions to Regional Security

I. NATIONAL LEVEL

i. Counter-terrorism

Update on the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism 2020-2024

On 16 June 2021, Indonesia adopted Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2021 on the National Action Plan (NAP) to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism 2020 – 2024. The aim of the NAP is to secure the protection of citizens from violent extremism that leads to terrorism, by addressing the drivers of violent extremism, namely (1) conditions conducive and structural context and (2) the radicalization

process, the so-called “push and pull factors”. The NAP consists of three pillars, namely: (1) prevention, including national preparedness, counter-radicalization, and deradicalisation; (2) law enforcement, protection of witnesses and victims; strengthening national legislative framework; and (3) international partnership and cooperation.

The NAP consists of 130 Action Lines, mostly related to prevention efforts. The action plan is a systematic and coordinated program that is being and to be implemented by various related Ministries/Agencies at the national level and by regional/local governments at the subnational level in accordance with their respective responsibilities along with the participation of CSOs to ensure the whole of government and the whole society approach.

In order to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Action Plans, the Joint Secretariat was established comprising six ministries/agencies which have a portfolio of coordinating among relevant ministries and agencies as outlined in the Presidential Regulation. The joint secretariat carries out six monthly meetings to assess the progress of the implementation and prepares for the report to the President on the outcome of the implementation of the NAP by the end of the year. On top of that, the report is also made available to the public as public accountability.

To ensure an effective reporting mechanism for the national action plan, the Joint Secretariat has utilized I-Khub on CT/VE (Indonesian Knowledge Hub) as a digital platform to provide data and information on the progress of the implementation of the NAP.

Throughout 2022, 97 of 135 actions of the NAP have been successfully implemented and still counting. Furthermore, to enhance the implementation of the NAP at the local level, Local Action Plans by the local governments also have been adopted in 5 provinces and 2 cities, namely: Aceh, Central Sulawesi, West Java, Central Java, East Java, Bandung City, and Surakarta/Solo City. Meanwhile, Bogor, Malang, and Makassar are currently initiating their local action plans.

The need to strengthen coordination between governments, CSOs, and communities is fulfilled by establishing a thematic working group and national partnership forum between the government and CSOs to facilitate the involvement of society to enhance the implementation of the NAP.

In order to strengthen the implementation of NAP on P/CVE, at least there are 4 (four) analytic documents and studies have been prepared to support the sustainability and improvement of NAP on PCVE, among others:

1. Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism Outlook, provided by Indonesia Knowledge Hub (I-KHub) on P/CVE - BNPT, presents a trend analysis of potential threats based on the development of violent extremism over the past five years;
2. K-Hub PCVE Outlook, published by a Civil Society Organization and member of the K-Hub Community, highlights the achievements of various actions and programs undertaken by CSOs in preventing and addressing violent extremism;
3. Mid-Term Evaluation of the NAP on PCVE, conducted by an independent evaluator, delves into the evaluation and achievement in implementing NAP on PCVE for the last 2 (two) years mandated by Presidential Decree; and
4. The Analysis of the Local Government Readiness to Implement NAP on PCVE, initiated by The Joint Secretary of the NAP, in cooperation with USAID-HARMONI aims to measure the readiness of local governments in implementing NAP on P/CVE.

II. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

a. The Role of Indonesia in AMMTC and SOMTC

Indonesia as a voluntary lead shepherd on counter-terrorism issues in ASEAN continues to emphasize its commitment to implementing the Work Plan of

the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (Bali Work Plan) 2019-2025. The document serves as a testament to ASEAN's commitment to synergize cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration in preventing and eradicating terrorism and violent extremism, with the highest number of implementation participations from various sectoral bodies to date.

To encourage the implementation of the Bali Work Plan 2019-2025, SOMTC Indonesia, in cooperation with external parties and dialogue partners, successfully implemented several Projects in late 2022 until the first quarter of 2023. Those Projects are in line with various indicative activities in the Bali Work Plan.

In first quarter of 2023, SOMTC Indonesia, in collaboration with several ASEAN Dialogue Partners, has also initiated several Concept Notes of ASEAN Projects under SOMTC mechanism, to support the implementation of various activities of the Bali Work Plan. Some of the concept note was already endorsed by SOMTC, while another draft still under discussion and endorsement consideration.

As a follow-up to the convenience of international travel restrictions that apply during the pandemic, Indonesia has successfully conducted “the 2nd Bali Work Plan Multi-Sectoral Task Force (MTF) Meeting” and also “the 2nd ASEAN Partners Meeting for the Implementation of Bali Work Plan 2019 – 2025”, back-to-back in Bali, on 25 August 2022.

During the 2nd Bali Work Plan MTF, the meeting highlighted that the total 113 indicative activities that are planned on the Bali Work Plan 2019-2025, all relevant sectoral bodies/organs/entities still can manage to addressed 30 indicative activities until 2022, despite the pandemic situation that complicates the implementation effort of Bali Work Plan 2019-2025.

Furthermore, in order to continue to monitor and support the implementation of the Bali Work Plan, Indonesia also initiated the 3rd Bali Work Plan Multi-Sectoral Task Force (MTF) Meeting, as well as the 3rd ASEAN Partners Meeting, to further support and encourage the Implementation of the Bali Work Plan in Bali, 8 June 2023.

During the 3rd Bali Work Plan MTF, the meeting also highlighted several milestones, including an increase in the number of indicative activities from 113 recorded in the 2nd MTF, to 117 indicative activities. The 3rd MTF Meeting also noted a total of 46 indicative activities (39.32%) addressed by relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies/organs/entities. This number can still be increased, considering that Indonesia is still waiting for input from several ASEAN Sectoral Bodies/Organs/Entities that have indicated their interest in submitting an update on implementing the Bali Work Plan under their purview.

b. The Role of Indonesia in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

In a larger regional setting, through the ASEAN Regional Forum, Indonesia had also advocated for the adoption of the ARF Statement on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism in 2019, and the ARF Statement on the Treatment of Children Recruited by or Associated with Terrorist Groups in 2020. These documents enable the Asia Pacific region and beyond to advance the agenda for preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism, including the treatment of children associated with and recruited by terrorist groups

c. International Context

At the international level, Indonesia's initiatives and leadership in the field of counter-terrorism have been acknowledged by the international community. In 2022, the Government of Indonesia invited to the Open Briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on the Work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) with the Member States of South and South-East Asia Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2395 (2017). This takes into account the achievements of the Government of Indonesia which

are noted significant progress in counter-terrorism since 2019, as well as Indonesia's commitment to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in accordance with international law and international standards.

On counter-terrorism legislation and judicial issues, as identified by CTED, Indonesia has ratified 8 (eight) of the 19 international counter-terrorism instruments. To this end, various inter-ministerial meetings, led by the BNPT and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have adopted national measures of acceding to the 1979 Taking of Hostages Convention and the 1973 Convention on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents. Until now, the President has granted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the initiative permit to draft the Bill on the accession to the IPP Convention prior to its submission to Parliament.

On the treatment of victims of terrorism, Indonesia invited to "The First United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism" organized by the United Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in 2022, to convey the efforts in promoting the fulfilment of the rights and needs of victims of terrorism.

In terms of technical cooperation, Indonesia has partnered with relevant UN Agencies, including UNODC, UNDP, UNOCT, CTED, UN Women, both at the national and regional levels, through various programs preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) through four the scope of cooperation includes: (i) Community-based approaches to PVE; (ii) Countering Financing of Terrorism; (iii) Rehabilitation and reintegration for VE prisoners and offenders; and (iv) safeguarding juveniles from terrorism.

Consistent with national and regional efforts, through the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), since 2017 Indonesia and Australia co-chairs the Working Group on CVE of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), which focuses its work on addressing the challenges of radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism and terrorism.

As part of its leadership, Indonesia continues to work with GCTF Members and Partners to share practical, action-oriented steps for CVE, including identifying challenges, good practices and lessons learned – mainly in six priority areas which consist of:

- Gender and CVE;
- National-Local Cooperation in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism;
- Countering Online Violent Extremism;
- Rehabilitating and Reintegrating Returnees and Families of Foreign Terrorist Fighters;
- CVE in Prisons; and
- Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism

On another issue, Indonesia is committed to promoting the adoption of standard minimum rules pertaining to the treatment of children associated or recruited by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Such rules will focus on three important pillars, namely: prevention; treatment and rehabilitation; and justice for children (protection). Thus, fulfilling one of the SDGs on Ending Violence Against Children.

d. Measures against Terrorist Financing

Indonesia remains committed to continuously strengthen its anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism regime. The enactment of Law no. 9/2013 concerning the Prevention and Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism Financing has provided Indonesia with a strong legal basis to enhance the capacity of authorities in identifying, preventing, and addressing terrorist financing. The forms and means of terrorist financing continue to experience change, adapting to to the development of global terrorism situation.

In countering the financing of terrorism, the Government of Indonesia develops national and international cooperation, involving stakeholders such as Interpol, counter terrorism institutions from various countries, Financial Intelligence Unit and other relevant stakeholders. Despite, efforts to enhance

cooperation with various stakeholders, Indonesia continues to face challenges to counter terrorist financing.

The efforts to counter the financing of terrorism in Indonesia is done based on risk assessment. The Government of Indonesia routinely publishes National Risk Assessment report on Terrorist Financing, with the latest issue being published in 2021. For the year 2023, Indonesia will start to publish a sectoral risk assessment on terrorist financing, which will focus on high-risk industry.

Looking at the landscape of terrorist financing in Indonesia, the most common method of collecting high-risk funds is through legal sponsorship that is generated by individuals and through donations collected by civil society organization or non-governmental organizations. In regards to transfer of funds, fund transfer in the financial services is one of the methods that possess a high risk and the scope of this sector includes Public Banks, Fund Transfer Operators, and Non-Bank Foreign Exchange Business Activities.

Based on the risk identification, analysis and evaluation, the current emerging trends in terrorist financing include:

1. The utilization of crypto assets;
2. The utilization of goods/services in both legal or illegal ICT based financial services;
3. Profit-oriented corporation entities that conducts the activity of collecting money or goods with the intention of fundraising in a form that is similar to the one conducted by non-profit organization;
4. Profit-oriented corporation entities that operates in a form of foundation, association, or registered civil society organization to collect and generate funds intended for social/humanitarian/religious causes, donation, social welfare purposes or other acts of goodwill.
5. Other developments that have the potential of becoming a common means of terrorist financing include:
 - i. The utilization of goods/services in the sector that operated e-Wallet and/or e-Money; and

- ii. The use of Payment Services that are conducted by Minimarket/Retail Business Entities for delivering remittance services.

Prevention methods carried out in the administrative sector is done through the freezing of assets. Thus far, the Government of Indonesia implemented efforts to freeze assets through the mechanism of listing Suspected Terrorists and Terrorist Organizations, which statistic has been recorded for the period of 2017 – 2023 with the data as follows:

No	Inclusion Sources	National Individuals	Foreign Individuals	Total Individuals	National Entities	Foreign Entities	Total Entities
1	United Nations	23	366	5	5	88	93
2	The Government of Indonesia	22	1	23	23	-	23
Total		45	367	412	27	88	116

The total fund raised through the freezing of assets through the mechanism of listing Suspected Terrorists and Terrorist Organizations within the period 2017 – 2023 is approximately Rp. 790 million. The total insurance policy that is raised is Rp. 98 million.

In the context of law enforcement, the number of investigations and prosecutions for terrorist financing crimes in Indonesia within the period of 2017 – 2023 is as follows:

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Investigation	16	7	16	23	22	18	1	103
Prosecution	16	3	4	8	46	42	-	119

e. **Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament**

National Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540

Indonesia remains committed to comply with Security Council Resolution 1540 and have taken necessary measures for its compliance. Indonesia has been constructively participating in multilateral negotiations to strengthen its non-proliferation efforts and to achieve disarmament of Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) in all its aspects. In this regard, Indonesia is in favour of the total and complete prohibition of the transfer of all equipment, information, material and facilities and resources or devices related to WMD and of the provision of assistance in the nuclear, biological and chemical scientific and technological fields to non-State actors.

This spirit is reflected in Indonesia's ratification to relevant international treaties. Indonesia has ratified relevant international treaties which among other, consist of Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons 1972, Chemical Weapons Convention in 1998, the Treaty on South East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in 1997, The Codes of Conduct and Additional Protocol to the Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement of IAEA, and International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism in 2014. In addition, Indonesia has also declared South East Asia as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in 1971 with other members of ASEAN.

Currently, Indonesia is finalizing the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Indonesia has expressed its political commitment to IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources' Supplementary Guidance. This commitment shows Indonesia's shared interest in managing the risks posed by certain high-activity radioactive sources, especially given the present of widespread use of radioactive materials throughout Indonesia, which indicates that the traffic of radioactive materials is a common occurrence. Due to the strategic geographical location, the trade of radioactive materials also poses a challenge to Indonesia and the region. An illegal traffic of radioactive materials could not only threaten national security, but also the region as well

as worldwide. Hence, synergic cooperation at the national, regional, and international level is required to mitigate the potential of radioactive materials smuggling or illicit trafficking.

Based on awareness of the serious threat to radioactive material illicit trafficking and the need for cooperation to achieve the goal of securing all radioactive materials, the President of Indonesia took measures to install radiation portal monitors (RPM) at international ports and airports, as well as cross-border posts as a form of supervision and prevention of radioactive materials illicit trafficking. Currently there are five ports installed with RPM equipment, they are: Tanjung Priok – Jakarta, Tanjung Emas – Semarang, Tanjung Perak – Surabaya, Bitung – Manado, and Soekarno-Hatta – Makassar.

Indonesia continues to call for the non-proliferation of export control regime. This commitment is reflected in the enactment of national laws among others on export control (Law No.10/1995), eradication of criminal acts of terrorism (Law No.15/2003 amended by Law No. 5/2018), and on the use of chemical substance for chemical weapons (Law No.9/2008). National implementation of international obligations is supported and enhanced by the Centre of Excellence on Nuclear Security and Emergency Preparedness, established in 2014 and the National Authority on Chemical Weapons, established in 2017.

The Government is in the process of amending the Law No. 10 Year 1997 on Nuclear Energy with the view to strengthen coordination on nuclear security by synergizing the duties and functions of relevant Government authorities. The amendment will stipulate three main issues under the National Policy and Strategy of Nuclear Security as well as the penalty that has not been provided by current national law. The three main issues are as follows:

1. Developing an integrated information system to support nuclear security;
2. Increasing coordination related to nuclear security by synergizing the duties and functions of relevant Government authorities; and
3. Strengthening the infrastructure of nuclear security.

Indonesia's enforcement actions are carried out through the monitoring/control on the issuance of regulations and permits, inspections, and implementation of the procedure of the nuclear material inventory accounting system by the Indonesian Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency and relevant agencies conduct. The verification of inventory is managed by routine inspection, which involves the monitoring of the quantity, location and ownership; movement of materials from one installation to another; and export and import of nuclear materials. Routine inspection also includes monitoring waste management.

Indonesia as an archipelagic country faces an enormous operational challenge in implementing nuclear security measures due to an exceptionally long shoreline and numerous entry points, such as seaports, airports and land crossings. Due to this, Indonesia remains strongly committed in improving its nuclear security and emergency response and preparedness. A national co-ordination effort to establish a capacity building centre and technical and scientific support for nuclear security and emergency response is necessary and this has been operationalized through the Indonesian Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency launched an initiative called I-CoNSEP (Indonesia Centre of Excellence on Nuclear Security and Emergency Preparedness) that was established in 2014. The initiative ultimately aims to improve the national capabilities in nuclear security and emergency preparedness, through a better coordination among stakeholders, training and exercise, technical support, and infrastructure development. I-CoNSEP is expected to fulfil the needs for human resource development and the provision of support services for nuclear security and emergency response implementation at national level. Furthermore, I-CoNSEP is expected to take a bigger role in contributing the development and sustenance of nuclear security and emergency preparedness in the South East Asian Region.

In terms of nuclear security, The I-CoNSEP reflects the concepts of centres of excellence currently those promoted by the IAEA and many other multilateral organizations. The IAEA Office of Nuclear Security (IAEA/ONS) espouses the concept of Nuclear Security Support Centre (NSSC). Similar concept is also

being promoted by the European Union through the Instrument for Stability (IfS) via the establishment of Chemical-Biological-Radiological-Nuclear (CBRN) Centre of Excellence (CoE).

With regards to measures taken to address financing activities under the scope of Resolution 1540, Indonesia has issued two joint regulations on the establishment of national list to combat terrorist and proliferation financing of WMD. In addition, Indonesia is at the final stage of process to become a member of FATF.

Indonesia has also been working closely with relevant competent international institutions such as OPCW, IAEA, and WHO to enhance national and regional capacity building programs on a regular basis. Indonesia will continue to enhance its cooperation on these important issues through bilateral, regional and multilateral forums, including through the ARF.

Non-Proliferation/NPT Regime

Indonesia views NPT as an indispensable instrument in one part to ensure the inalienable rights to use of nuclear energy in strictly peaceful manner, while in other part to ensure no proliferation of nuclear technology for non-peaceful purposes. Indonesia also supports the notion that the objectives of the NPT can only be achieved through a balanced, comprehensive and non-discriminatory implementation of all its three pillars. The three main pillars are disarmament of nuclear weapons, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

Disarmament

Indonesia urges the nuclear deterrence doctrines as Nuclear disarmament's objective cannot be achieved if every major possessor state continues to enhance its nuclear arsenals as a deterrence factor. Indonesia also stresses an obligation under Article VI of the NPT to pursue in good faith, and to bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under transparent, strict and effective international control

Indonesia concerns on the continuity of qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons (upgrading, refurbishing or extending the service life of nuclear weapons and related facilities) and related aspects. The modernization measures could contribute to a new arms race and undermine the value of reductions in nuclear weapons.

Indonesia calls on all NWS to fully implement the 13 practical steps in the manner that was agreed to at the 2000 Review Conference and the action plans adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference on nuclear disarmament.

Indonesia is also among the first countries to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) Treaty, having signed it on the same day it was opened for signature, on 24 September 1996. Indonesia believes that the CTBT is a key element in the international regime for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As an Annex II country, Indonesia has ratified the CTBT through Law No. 1 year 2012, a very timely initiative as it was taken soon after ASEAN Member States concluded negotiations with Nuclear Weapon States (NWSs) on the latter's accession to the Protocol of the SEANWFZ Treaty at the 19th ASEAN Summit in Bali in November 2011.

In terms of supporting the implementation of CTBT, the Indonesian Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency in cooperation with the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency, has installed radiological monitoring station at the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency Stations with CTBT Stations. Their locations are:

- Lembang, Bandung, Jawa Barat station (AS040)
- Jayapura, Papua station (AS041)
- Sorong, Papua station (AS042)
- Kappang, South Sulawesi station (AS044)
- Baumata, East Nusa Tenggara station (AS045)

The installation of radiological monitoring station is to provide radiological data to complement the seismic data from CTBT station installed at the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency Stations above mentioned in case of nuclear weapon testing.

Indonesia also actively participated in the series of meetings of the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), which was held in Washington DC in 2010, Seoul in 2012, The Hague in 2014 and Washington DC in 2016.

Since the inception of the NSS, Indonesia played constructive and have presented a “gift basket” which serves as a reference for countries striving to enhance safety and security in accordance with their respective national processes and legal systems.

Non-proliferation

Indonesia believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and are essential for strengthening international peace and security. Non- proliferation derives its legitimacy from the larger objective of nuclear disarmament.

Pursuing non-proliferation alone while ignoring nuclear disarmament obligations is both counterproductive and unsustainable. Indonesia emphasizes that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non- discriminatory agreements.

Indonesia continues to advocate that the universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) be made a priority and urges states, which are not yet parties, to immediately accede to the NPT as non-nuclear states.

In line with the ASEAN Political-Security Blueprint 2025, Indonesia envisions a Southeast Asia that is not only a nuclear weapons-free zone but also a region that is free of all other weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, Indonesia stands ready to intensify the ongoing efforts between ASEAN and NWSs to

resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty with a view to the signing and ratifying of the Protocol of SEANWFZ by the NWSs at the earliest.

Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy

On the other hand, Indonesia believes that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable rights of States to acquire, have access to, import or export nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes.

The inalienable right of each State to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop full national nuclear fuel cycle, for peaceful purposes without discrimination, and to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, material and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

During the working visit of the Director General of IAEA, Yukiya Amano on 5-7 February 2018, Indonesia and IAEA signed a practical arrangement on enhancing technical cooperation among developing countries and strengthening South-South cooperation which covered a three-year period (2018-2021). In 2020, IAEA also requested Indonesia to be a pilot country for its project in tackling plastic pollution.

Indonesia has been at the forefront of technical cooperation in such fields as enhancing food security and plant breeding, where Indonesia has assisted trainees from Asian and African countries. In this regard, help was extended by the National Nuclear Energy Agency (or now National Research and Innovation Agency/BRIN) which is a designated IAEA Collaborating Centre engaged in developing new crop varieties to improve agricultural yields and food security.

f. **Transnational Crimes**
Illicit Drug Trafficking

Indonesia faces the complex reality, trends and existing problems of drug abuse and illicit trafficking. For Indonesia, comprehensive efforts being taken to combat illicit drug trafficking must also include strict and proper law enforcement measures against drug traffickers.

Indonesia has found some indications that the pandemic also plays a role in intensifying the connection between drug trafficking and other organized crimes, such as trafficking in person, corruption and arms smuggling. In facing this challenge, Indonesia continues to implement our obligations as enshrined in the convention as well as the 2009 Plan of Action, including through effective use of law enforcement measures.

The prevalence of drug abuse from 2019 to 2021 has increased. According to national prevalence data in 2021, there was an incline of around 0.15% from 3.41 million people (1.80%) to 3.66 million people (1.95%). Furthermore, Indonesia has also become one of the biggest targets for narcotics distribution by international networks. These facts clearly show the complex reality, trends and existing circumstances Indonesia is facing. For Indonesia, comprehensive efforts being taken must also include strict and proper law enforcement measures against drug traffickers.

There are 1212 types of NPS that have been reported worldwide until June 2023 (from EWA UNODC), but only 91 NPS were found in Indonesia. There are 85 types of NPS that are listed in the Ministry of Health Appendix Number 36 Year 2022, while 6 others have not been regulated.

Indonesia plays an active role in various multilateral meetings such as the 66th Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna on 13 – 17 March 2023 and Indonesia will host the Extraordinary Session of the Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) Asia and the Pacific on October 2023 in Bali.

In the war against drugs to achieve the drug-free Indonesia, BNN as the leading sector, uses 4 approaches, there are:

- Soft Power approach by prevention, community empowering and rehabilitation
- Hard Power approach through eradication approach
- Smart Power approach by IT development and analysis
- And the last one is Cooperation by national, regional and bilateral cooperation

These approaches implemented synergically into the national action plan on the Prevention and Eradication of the Abuse and Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics and their precursors (P4GN) to achieve Indonesia BERSINAR (*bersih narkoba*) - Drug Free Indonesia

In terms of rehabilitation, BNN carries out strategies such as improving the accessibility and capability of narcotics rehabilitation institutions, increase the capacity of the rehabilitation services workforce, and improving the quality of narcotics rehabilitation services. These strategies aim to improve the quality of life of people with substance use disorders so it can encourage productivity and economic growth of people with substance use disorders

In carrying out the rehabilitation program, BNN has a Community Based Intervention (CBI) method, CBI is a rehabilitation service that is easily accessible and provided in the community, and is carried out by the community, from the community, and for the community. CBI accommodates clients with special needs. CBI is a feasible solution to cope with the treatment gap in areas lacking in rehabilitation institutions.

In 2022, BNN rehabilitation recorded 9,783 outpatients, 1,570 inpatients and a total of 2,357 patients treated with the CBI method.

To tackle this problem, Indonesia has established a national interdiction task force that comprises of relevant national agencies to combat illicit drugs coming in and out of Indonesia. Within the region, Indonesia initiated ASEAN Seaport Interdiction Task Force in 2016 to combat transnational drug

trafficking via sea routes, and to prevent and deter drug syndicates from using ASEAN countries' seaports to distribute illicit drugs.

Bearing in mind the different capacities and circumstances of member states, Indonesia is of the view that in addressing the world drug problem, several factors should be taken into account, such as a zero-tolerance stand against drugs, a comprehensive and balanced approach, and the sovereign rights of each country. To this end, Indonesia adopted the ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016 – 2025 as a guideline to address illicit drug activities and mitigate their consequences on society. Indonesia also finished the Mid-term Review of the ASEAN Workplan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016 – 2025 in 2021 to review and analyse the work plan that has been implemented in 2016 – 2020.

Indonesia believes that international cooperation remains important to deter criminal syndicates and drug traffickers. With the spirit of common and shared responsibility, Indonesia has established agreements and cooperation with other countries in the region. In light of this, the Indonesian government also organizes judicial cooperation to arrest perpetrators of organized crime involving narcotics, such as through extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA).

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Trafficking in Persons and People Smuggling

Combatting and preventing trafficking in persons is of high importance to Indonesia as it has recorded quite a high number of trafficking victims. The majority of the victims of trafficking from Indonesia are Indonesian migrant workers who were sent to work abroad through illegal channels, especially domestic workers and workers in the fisheries sector.

Against this background, the Indonesian government has undertaken reforms and greater works to strengthen its efforts to combat trafficking in persons. At the multilateral level, Indonesia is a party to United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Protocol to Suppress, Prevent and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UNTOC since 2009.

At the regional level, together with Australia, Indonesia has established and co-chaired the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime to strengthen cooperation in preventing and combating smuggling of migrants as a shared responsibility of countries of origin, transit and destination. Bali Process was attended by 49 participants consisting of 43 countries, 2 jurisdictions, and 4 international organizations) and 28 observers.

Bali Process is unique as it is the only Regional Consultative Process (RCP) involving countries of origin, transit, and destination – an added value for efforts to build the 'confidence' of countries in the region to constructively resolve irregular migration issues including people smuggling and trafficking in persons. Under the framework of Bali Process, there are number of working groups and expert groups which are also used by countries in the region to carry out dialogue and information-sharing related to the development and challenges of irregular migration issues in the region. In 2022, Bali Process will celebrate its 20th Anniversary and will hold the 8th Bali Process Ministerial Conference.

Along with other ASEAN countries, Indonesia has concluded ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children which entered into force since 8 March 2017.

On the national level, Indonesia has enacted a law on Anti-Trafficking in Persons comprising four main pillars: prevention, prosecution, and victims' protection, and the international cooperation in curbing this heinous crime.

Indonesia has also established the Task Force for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons, comprised of relevant related government agencies. The Task-Force main approaches are advocacy, public awareness, protection, and joint training.

Indonesia also views that to effectively combat trafficking in persons, a global and collective response, as well as a greater understanding of its root causes are of importance. To that end, Indonesia is standing ready to work together with other countries within the framework of ARF and beyond.

g. **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

Indonesia continues to be committed to the DRR agenda and it is reflected in the establishment of Indonesia's 2020-2044 Master Plan for Disaster Management (RIPB) and Indonesia's 2020-2024 Mid-Term National Development Plan, in which disaster management and risk reduction are among priority development programs. These instruments are investments to protect economic growth and human development.

At the global level, Indonesia's remains firmly committed to the strengthening of the implementation of international frameworks for disaster risk reduction. This includes the commitment on the outcome of the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) that is the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015 – 2030. Indonesia stresses the importance of international cooperation to ensure the implementation of SFDRR to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to promote best practices, knowledge sharing and technology transfer. Indonesia also emphasizes the strategic importance of monitoring frameworks at the global and regional levels such as the Global Partnership for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) and the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) to ensure the implementation of SFDRR.

h. **Maritime Security**

Indonesia puts great interest in the maritime sector and seeks to promote maritime cooperation at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral, levels. The

White Book of Indonesian Maritime Ocean Policy remains to be the main document of reference for Indonesia's maritime priorities, which are: 1) Management of Marine Resources and Development of Human Resources; 2) Defence, Security, Law Enforcement and Safety at Sea; 3) Ocean Governance and Institutions; 4) Economic and Infrastructure of the Marine Sector and Prosperity Enhancement; 5) Management of the Ocean Space and Protection of Marine Environment; 6) Maritime Culture; and 7) Maritime Diplomacy.

The Asia-Pacific region continues to face challenges to maritime security. Indonesia regards regional and international cooperation as an important component to address those challenges. As an example, the issue of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU Fishing) is one of the most common transnational crimes in the region. Hence, various efforts have been pursued in the regional and multilateral levels.

At the regional level, ASEAN Maritime Forum has been instrumental in providing a platform to discuss various maritime issues under the three pillars of ASEAN (Political Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural). In this regard, Indonesia also plays an active role in pursuing norm-setting efforts in other regional forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, Indian Ocean Rim Association, and Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process).

At the multilateral level, Indonesia has been active in conducting norm-setting and mainstreaming transnational crime issues at sea in various multilateral forums such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), Conference of the Parties to United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (CoP UNTOC), and Crime Congress.

As an archipelagic country with a vast ocean and sea coverage, Indonesia puts great interest in protecting its territory and upholding its sovereignty over the

activities of IUU Fishing. Indonesia views that IUU Fishing is a problem related to the management and conservation of fisheries resources, which at present has not been regulated comprehensively under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) mechanism. The scope of FAO and RFMOs regulations has not yet included the possibility of transnational organized crime occurring when conducting (TOC) fisheries governance, research, data collection as well as determining fisheries quota. In this regard, Indonesia has also pursued efforts to mainstream the issue of IUU fishing as a TOC in various multilateral forums.

Indonesia is currently developing a security policy paper for port and terrorism potency threat under United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Cooperation which will provide the national legislations of maritime security. This document will contribute to the Maritime Security module of Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS), which is also related to the development of port facility security plans.

Indonesia continues to showcase its leadership in promoting regional cooperation in tackling IUUF and mainstreaming it as a TOC. We continue to maintain active participation in various international forums, which among others include:

- ARF Workshop on Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation
- Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC.
- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), which recently convened in 8 – 12 May 2023.

i. Information Communication Technology Security

The continuous development of cyberspace provides both opportunities and challenges for Indonesia, the Asia-Pacific region, and the world at large. The dynamic presented from the development of cyberspace comes with challenges. Cyber threats and cyberattacks pose as a serious challenge that can undermine regional security.

Indonesia recognizes the need to enforce international law in cyber space and pushes for international cooperation in facing multiple challenges and threats in cyber space through dialogue, capacity building as well as confidence building measures (CBMs). Cooperation in the form of sharing of information and best practices through activities such as webinar, seminar, as well as workshop, is a step that can be taken to create a safe, peaceful, and open cyber space for all stakeholders.

Indonesia continues to strengthen its national legislation on the security of information technology through the adoption of two regulations, namely Law No.27 Year 2022 on Personal Data Protection and Presidential Regulation No.82 on the Protection of Vital Infrastructure Information. Furthermore, Indonesia is also constructing a National Security Strategy that will lay the foundation for determining the direction of national policy. The national policy that is formulated will become a common guideline for all stakeholders to develop policies related to cyber security in their respective institutions.

The National Cyber and Crypto Agency (BSSN) plays a vital role in strengthening Indonesia's cyber security throughout 2022 – 2023. Initiatives and engagements such as security testing of electronic systems, installation of detection and monitoring devices on network devices at ISPs and site events, early detection of cyber threats, implementation of incident response efforts and digital forensic incident response have been carried out to mitigate threats and enhance the protection against cyberattacks.

Indonesia, through BSSN, continues to develop Computer Emergency Incident Response Team (CSIRT) as an effort to mitigate cyber security incident. The development of CSIRT is part of the National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020 – 2024, as stipulated in Presidential Regulation No. 18 Year 2020. In the advent of addressing cyber threats and attacks in the ASEAN region, Indonesia supports the formation of ASEAN-CSIRT that is hoped to be able to conduct cooperation with National CSIRT of each ASEAN dialogue partner countries. This is done to enhance the region's cyber security, which in turn will positively impact national cyber security.

Furthermore, Indonesia has also been active in conducting cooperation and collaboration with various stakeholders from the public and private sectors, to strengthen the role and share information regarding cyber security as efforts to create a conducive national cyber security environment. The National Cyber and Crypto Agency (BSSN) has proactively participated and contributed in ASEAN forums on cyber security. These forums and activities include:

ASEAN Regional Forum

- a) ARF workshop on Norm Implementation in ICTs, 9 – 10 March 2023 via video conference.
- b) 10th ARF Open Ended Study Group (OESG), 2 March 2023 via video conference.
- c) 4th ARF Intersessional Meeting on ICT (ISM on ICTs), 3 March 2023 via video conference.
- d) 11th ARF OESG on ICTs Security, 27th April 2023 in Moscow, Russia.
- e) 5th ARF ISM on ICTs, 28th April 2023, in Moscow, Russia.
- f) ARF Workshop on Fostering Cybersecurity Professionals, 13th June 2023 in Hanoi, Vietnam.
- g) ARF Workshop on Terminology in the Field of Security and in the Use of ICTs in the Context of Confidence Building, 21st June 2023 via video conference.

ASEAN-US Cyber Policy Dialogue

- h) Indonesia co-chaired the 3rd ASEAN-US Cyber Policy Dialogue on the 1st of February 2023 via video conference.

ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group

- i) 1st ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting, 14 – 15 February in Tagaytay, the Philippines.
- j) 2nd ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting, 23 – 24 May in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei.

Active participation in ASEAN Cyber Coordinating Committee and ASEAN Network Security Action Council (ANSAC) have been pursued by Indonesia as means to strengthen its cyber security capacity. Indonesia's participation through ASEAN Cyber CC and ANSAC contributes to the documents adopted in the ASEAN Digital Senior Officials Meeting (ADGSOM), which includes:

- a) ASEAN Regional Action Plan on the Implementation of the UNGGE Norms of Responsible State Behaviour in Cyber Space, a document initiated by Malaysia.
- b) ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy 2021 – 2025 and the establishment of ASEAN CERT in ADGSOM/ADGMIN that was held in 24 – 28 January 2022.
- c) Draft Operational Framework on ASEAN Computer Emergency Response Team (OF ASEAN CERT).

Proposal to develop ASEAN Cyber Security Assessment Model (ACAM) that was delivered during the 2nd ADGSOM-ATRC Leaders Retreat 2022. ACAM is proposed to function as a general reference to compare, evaluate, and identify the challenges and way forward to address the gaps in developing a safe and robust cyberspace in the ASEAN region. ACAM is adopted voluntarily and is not a binding. It consists of two key documents: ACAM Framework and Implementation Plan 2023.

IV. The Role of ARF

ARF remains important as an inclusive forum in the Asia-Pacific region for fostering constructive dialogue and cooperation among the Participants on political and security issues of common interest and concern.

Strengthening regional peace and security will provide a conducive environment that is essential for the success of national development in each participating country. This will ultimately encourage an increase of economy of the community in the region. The pursuit of narrow national interests, at the expense of multilateralism, will only widen strategic distrusts and major power rivalries in the region.

In the face of an evolving regional architecture, ARF must keep up its relevance by fully leveraging its potential and demonstrating its uniqueness. One of the strong points of the ARF is that it has built a foundation for political security dialogues that encompasses both civil and military elements.

It is essential to understand that the ARF is not only an institution, but also a process through which countries in the Asia Pacific region strive to maintain dialogue and carry out activities to promote CBMs, preventive diplomacy, and conflict resolution mechanisms. A more robust, substantive, proactive, and action-oriented ARF is therefore instrumental to the process. Indonesia is strongly committed to contribute to this cause by continuously generating initiatives and actively participating in the work of the ARF.

On the whole, Indonesia envisions a more robust, substantive, proactive and action-oriented ARF. Indonesia will therefore continue and remain committed to contribute to the realization of the ARF's potential through active participation, initiatives and the development of innovative ideas.

JAPAN

The region has developed a multi-layered framework of cooperation centred on ASEAN, including the ASEAN+3, East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), each of which has its own mechanism to advance cooperation based on its unique characteristics. Japan recognizes the importance of the ARF, which aims to improve the regional security environment, and will continue to promote mutual confidence building through dialogue and practical cooperation in the ARF and other ASEAN-led frameworks, while supporting ASEAN centrality and unity.

I. Japan's Overview of the Regional Security Environment

Turning our eyes to the vicinity of Japan, Japan's security environment is as severe and complex as it has ever been since the end of WWII. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has easily breached the very foundation of the international order. Japan condemns Russia's aggression in the strongest terms, and strongly urges Russia to cease its attack and withdraw its forces from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine immediately and unconditionally. The possibility cannot be precluded that a similar serious situation may arise in the future in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in East Asia. Across the globe, historical changes in power balances, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, are occurring. In addition, in the vicinity of Japan, military buildups, including those of nuclear weapons and missiles, are rapidly advancing, coupled with mounting pressures by unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. Moreover, grey zone situations over territories, cross-border cyberattacks on critical civilian infrastructures, and information warfare through spread of disinformation, are constantly taking place, thereby further blurring the boundary between contingency and peacetime. Furthermore, the scope of national security has expanded to include those fields previously considered non-military such as economic, technological and others, and thus the boundary between military and non-military fields is no longer clear-cut either.

Maritime issues including those surrounding the East and South China Seas are linked to the peace and stability of the region and are legitimate concerns of the international community. Attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion in the maritime and air domain including in the East and South China Seas have been intensified, such as intrusions into the territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands. Such attempts are totally unacceptable. Japan will continue to respond calmly and resolutely while

strengthening coordination with the relevant countries, along with strengthening communication in order to make the East China Sea a “Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship.”

China has been intensifying its military activities in the sea and airspace surrounding Taiwan, including the launch of ballistic missiles in August 4 2022, five of which landed within Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), followed by Chairman’s Statement of the 29th ARF expressing concerns over the recent cross-Strait development. Japan reiterates the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.

It is necessary for the international community to cooperate for the maintenance and development of open and stable seas, including the South China Sea. Japan has advocated the “Three Principles of the Rule of Law at Sea”: (i) making and clarifying their claims based on international law; (ii) not using force or coercion in trying to drive their claims; and (iii) seeking to settle disputes by peaceful means. Most recently, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio called for these three principles in his speech to announce the new plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” in March 2023. These three principles gained supports from many countries, and Japan will consistently support relevant actions. In this context, Japan calls for full implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) of 2002, and takes note of the progress of the negotiations towards an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). COC should be consistent with international law in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and should not prejudice the legitimate rights and interest of all stakeholders. Diplomatic efforts such as COC should lead to demilitarization and a free and open South China Sea.

The international community, including Japan, has expressed serious concerns about the situation in the South China Sea, including militarization of disputed features, dangerous use of coast guard vessels and coercive activities. Japan has to date consistently supported the full adherence to the rule of law in the South China Sea, and places importance on freedom of navigation and overflight as well as assistance for safe sea lanes. In this context, Japan has emphasized the importance for all the concerned parties related to the South China Sea to work toward peaceful settlement of disputes based on international

law, in particular UNCLOS. In this regard, the award rendered by the Arbitral Tribunal under UNCLOS on July 12, 2016 is final and legally binding on both parties to the dispute. It is also of critical importance for each state to clarify grounds of maritime claims, through invoking the relevant provisions of UNCLOS on which the claims are based. Japan strongly hopes that the parties' compliance with the award will eventually lead to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea.

North Korea has not dismantled its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). In 2022, North Korea launched a record number of at least 59 ballistic missiles with unprecedented frequency and in new ways in violation of relevant UNSC resolutions. This year North Korea has continued its provocations and launched multiple ICBM-class ballistic missiles including the April 13 launch of a new-type solid-fuel ballistic missile. As the launch of ballistic missiles have made the situation even more tense, such series of North Korea's actions threaten the peace and security of Japan, the region and the international community, and are totally unacceptable.

To this end, it is imperative for each country to fully implement the relevant UNSCRs. From this perspective, Japan will continue to steadily take measures for their implementation. The Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) and the Japan Coast Guard are conducting information gathering activities for vessels suspected to be in violation of UNSCRs including ship-to-ship transfers with North Korean-flagged vessels. JMSDF has found several activities strongly suspected to be ship-to-ship transfers in the East China Sea, and Japan shared information with Partner countries such as the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, France, Germany, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), notified the UNSC 1718 Committee and the Panel of Experts and published the information. Partner countries have also engaged in monitoring and surveillance activities against illicit maritime activities including ship-to-ship transfers. Japan will continue to cooperate with the US, and trilaterally with the US and the Republic of Korea (ROK), and coordinate closely with the international community, aiming for the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

With regard to Japan-North Korea relations, Japan's basic policy remains unchanged that it seeks to normalize its relations with North Korea, through comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, and settling the unfortunate past in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration.

Japan expresses serious concern about the deteriorating security, humanitarian, human rights, and political situation in Myanmar, further extension of the state of emergency without taking positive steps towards achieving political progress, and deregistration of the National League for Democracy (NLD) under the Political Parties Registration Law which will further exclude the NLD from the political process, while the expansion of martial law orders for additional townships has intensified violence in some regions causing a large number of civilian casualties including children. Japan has consistently urged the Myanmar military to take concrete actions to immediately stop the violence, release those who are arbitrary detained, and swiftly restore Myanmar's democratic political system. To improve the situation, Japan will continue to work closely with the international community and support ASEAN's efforts to the maximum extent, so as to ensure the steady implementation of ASEAN's "Five-Point Consensus".

Amid the ongoing difficult conditions, humanitarian assistance for the people of Myanmar is an urgent challenge. Since the coup, the Government of Japan has provided over US\$108 million in humanitarian assistance through international organizations, NGOs etc. Japan will continue to actively provide humanitarian assistance and pay close attention to the needs of the people of Myanmar, who are facing difficult circumstances, while urging the Myanmar military to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

Regarding terrorism, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida and their affiliates remain a threat to international peace and security, and the return to home countries or relocation to third countries of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) who had been under its influence has spread the threat of terrorism and violent extremism around the world including Asia. In April 2019, simultaneous terrorist attacks, one of the largest cases in Asia in recent years, took place in Sri Lanka, which resulted in deaths of more than 250 people including a Japanese. Later in December 2019, a Japanese doctor was killed by a gun attack in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the form and background of terrorism has been

diversified, as can be seen from cases in which the perpetrators' videos were disseminated via social media at once.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

a. Japan's Security Policy

The free and open international order based on the rule of law is facing serious challenges amidst historic changes in balance of power and intensifying geopolitical competition. With mounting pressures by unilaterally changing the status quo by force around Japan, Japan's security environment is the most severe and complex it has been since the end of WWII. In response to this situation, Japan formulated the National Security Strategy and other documents in December 2022.

The following points describe the fundamental principles of Japan's national security, and are prerequisites for the execution of the associated policies that strive to protect of our national interests.

- Japan will maintain the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on international cooperation. In order to further embody this principle in the international community and to protect our own national interests in the time ahead, and based on the recognition that the primary responsibility for defending Japan lies with itself, Japan will squarely face the ever-changing security environment by decisively taking on necessary reforms and reinforcing our national security capabilities and roles.
- Japan will execute its security policy in a manner that maintains and upholds universal values such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law. As one of the most mature and stable advanced democratic countries in the world, even amidst a complex and severe security environment, Japan will strive to maintain and uphold universal values and principles in cooperation with other countries, and lead the international community by example.
- As a peace-loving nation, Japan will adhere to the basic policy of maintaining an exclusively national defence-oriented policy, not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries, and observing the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.

- The Japan-US Alliance, including the provision of extended deterrence, will remain the cornerstone of Japan's national security policy.
- Japan will attach importance to coexistence and co-prosperity alongside other countries, cooperation with like-minded countries, and multilateral cooperation.

Japan, as a major global actor, will join together with its ally, like-minded countries and others to achieve a new balance in international relations, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. In doing so, Japan will prevent the emergence of situations in which any one state can unilaterally change the status quo easily, and redouble efforts to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

To this end, the National Security Strategy first identifies diplomatic capabilities as one of the main elements of Japan's comprehensive national power for security. Backed by Japan's long record of diplomatic and economic activities for peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community, Japan will prevent crises, strengthen efforts to resolve various concerns, including, territorial issues with neighbouring countries and regions. Japan will proactively conduct strong diplomacy for creating a peaceful and stable international environment.

Japan's post-war stance as a peaceful nation remains entirely unchanged. Our basic policy remains the same: to maintain an exclusively national defence-oriented policy; not to become a military power that poses a threat to other countries; and observe the Three Non-Nuclear Principles. Japan's foreign policy of pursuing prosperity together with other nations will also remain unchanged.

b. Japan's Defence Policy

i. The National Defence Strategy

On December 16, 2022, the Government of Japan approved the National Defence Strategy, and the Defence Buildup Program as replacements to the National Defence Program Guidelines (NDPG), and the Medium Term Defence Program (MTDP).

The Strategy states Japan's three defence objectives and three approaches to achieve those objectives. Japan's defence objectives are as follows;

- 1) Shape a security environment that does not tolerate unilateral changes to the status quo by force.
- 2) Deter unilateral changes to the status quo by force and such attempts that concern Japan's peace and security, and should such an eventuality occur, swiftly respond as required to bring the situation under control at an early stage so that it does not lead to an invasion of Japan.
- 3) Should deterrence fail and an invasion of Japan occur, rapidly respond to the aggression in a tailored and seamless manner to disrupt and defeat the invasion, taking primary responsibility to deal with the situation while receiving support from the ally and others.

The three approaches to realize Japan's defence objectives are stated as follows:

- 1) Fundamentally reinforce Japan's defence capabilities, which constitute the core of national defence in an effort of strengthening of Japan's own architecture for national defence.
- 2) Further reinforce joint deterrence and response capability of the Japan-US Alliance by further strengthening cooperation with the United States, our ally.
- 3) Reinforce collaboration with like-minded countries and others with whom Japan cooperate to uphold and reinforce a free and open international order.

In the complex security situation, Japan needs to squarely face the grim reality and fundamentally reinforce Japan's defence capabilities, with a focus on opponent capabilities and new ways of warfare, to protect the lives and peaceful livelihood of our people. Japan also needs to strengthen Japan's architecture for national defence that integrates various elements of national power. It is this undertaking that provides the way forward to bolster Japan's deterrence capabilities and further strengthen the Japan-US Alliance, and which forms the foundation of security cooperation with like-minded countries and others.

ii. The Defence Buildup Program and Defence-Related Expenditures

The Defence Buildup Program is the first five-year defence buildup plan developed to achieve the targeted levels of defence capabilities as set forth in the National Defence Strategy. The expenditure earmarked from FY2023 to FY2027 amount to approximately 43 trillion.

In addition to the cost of maintaining and operating the JSDF, defence-related expenditures in Japan also include the cost of improving the living environment in the vicinity of defence facilities and support for US forces stationed in Japan. As the FY2023 defence-related expenditures budget is based on the National Defence Strategy and the Defence Buildup Program, it includes an array of projects aimed at the establishment of a Multi-Domain Defence Force.

Excluding the costs related to the Special Action Committee on Okinawa or SACO (the cost of implementing the SACO Final Report to mitigate the impacts on people in Okinawa), the US forces realignment-related expenses (the portion allocated for mitigating the impact on local communities), and expenses for the introduction of new government aircraft, the expenditure budget for FY2023 has been increased by 1,421.3 billion yen (or 27.4 % growth) from the previous fiscal year to 6,600.1 billion yen, marking the eleventh consecutive year of growth.

Including these expenses, the total expenditure budget for FY2023 amounts to 6,821.9 billion yen, an increase of 1,421.4 billion yen, or growth rate of 26.3% from the preceding fiscal year. The FY2023 defence-related expenditure is 1.15% of gross domestic product increasing to 1.19% with the inclusion of SACO related expenses, US forces realignment related expenses, and expenses for the introduction of new government aircraft and new government aircraft. The FY2023 defence-related expenditure includes expenditure which will be transferred to and Digital Agency (33.9 billion yen).

c. Japan-US Security Arrangements

Given an increasingly severe security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, securing the forward deployment of US forces based on the Japan-US Security Treaty and strengthening Alliance deterrence and response capabilities are essential not only for

the security of Japan, but also for peace and stability in the region. Japanese government formulated its new strategic documents in December, 2022. Japan's decision to fundamentally reinforce its defence capabilities under the strategic documents will lead to more effective employment of US capabilities and will further strengthen Alliance deterrence and response capabilities. In concrete manner, the two countries will expand and strengthen cooperation in a wide range of areas, such as ballistic missile defence, cyberspace, outer space, and information security.

In light of the recent security environment, the US will strengthen its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, and Japan will assume larger roles and responsibilities in the Alliance with its fundamentally reinforced defence capabilities. Japan and the US will further enhance cooperation with allies and partners in the region.

III. Japan's Contributions to Regional Security

a. Maritime Security

Japan is a maritime nation that has achieved economic growth through maritime trade and development of marine resources, and has pursued "Free, Open and Stable Seas." For Japan, maritime rights and interests, which are the basis for economic survival, including the freedom of navigation and overflight, and development of marine resources, are of great importance toward securing peace and security. To ensure these maritime rights and interests in the long-term and in a stable manner, it is indispensable to maintain a maritime order and ensure safe maritime transport. Furthermore, "Free, Open and Stable Seas," which are upheld by a maritime order governed by law and rules and not by force, are essential for peace and prosperity not only of Japan, but also of the international community as a whole. To maintain and develop "Free, Open and Stable Seas," Japan contributes actively to maintaining and strengthening maritime order and ensuring safe maritime transport through various initiatives such as counter-piracy measures in Asia and Africa as well as close coordination and cooperation with other countries.

As part of its efforts to secure the safety of navigation in Asia, Japan had advocated the establishment of a forum to provide EAS participating countries with the opportunity to discuss maritime cooperation and maritime issues in the region, which born fruit in the form of the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) as a Track 1.5

forum. At the 10th EAMF, which was chaired by the Philippines in December 2022, Japan introduced its activities to realize a rules-based maritime order and emphasized the importance of the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law, in particular UNCLOS.

In addition, Japan took the initiative in establishing the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). Japan has been actively contributing to the implementation of the ReCAAP by sending Executive Director until March 2022 and Assistant Director to the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) from its inception and supporting ReCAAP ISC's efforts in the area of information sharing and capacity building assistance through making financial contributions among others. For instance, at the fifth Capacity Building Executive Programme (CBEP), held virtually on September 2022, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Japan Coast Guard explained its vision on 'Free and Open Indo Pacific (FOIP)' and shared its experience of cooperation with Asian littoral states.

ARF plays an important role in ensuring the rule of law at sea, the freedom and safety of navigation and overflight, and peaceful settlement of disputes based on international law. In this context, Japan welcomes a number of initiatives that have been taken within the framework of ARF such as official events to discuss maritime security issues in the region. Japan co-chaired the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ARF ISM on MS) with the Philippines and the United States from August 2014 to August 2017. Together with the co-chairs, Japan worked on revising the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security. Furthermore, Japan serves with Malaysia as the lead countries for "confidence-building measures based on international and regional legal frameworks, arrangements, and cooperation," which is one of the priority areas for the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security. In this context, Japan hosted the ARF Seminar on Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery in Asia, in Tokyo in March 2015 (co-chairing with the US, Malaysia, and India), ARF Seminar on Regional Confidence Building and Law of the Sea, in Tokyo in December 2015 (co-chairing with Vietnam and India), the First ARF Workshop on International Cooperation on MDA in Tokyo in March 2018 (co-chairing with Malaysia), and the Second ARF Workshop on International Cooperation on MDA in Tokyo in February 2020 (co-chairing with Viet Nam).

b. Disaster Relief

Japan has provided active support in response to large-scale natural disasters in the Indo-Pacific region. About the disaster including the volcanic eruption and tsunami disaster in Tonga 2021, Japan dispatched the Self-Defence Force Units as Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) Team for transporting relief goods and providing desalinated water. During FY 2022, Japan provided emergency relief goods in ten cases to assist the people damaged by major natural disasters in addition to the oil spill disaster off the Coast of Mindoro Island, Philippines for which the Expert Team was deployed as Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) Team for providing advisory on oil removal and control. Japan will continue to work with other ARF participants and contribute to ARF activities in order to make regional disaster relief cooperation more practical and effective.

In addition, Japan is an active player in other regional frameworks as well. Within the framework of Japan-ASEAN cooperation, Japan provides mainly three types of assistance through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). The first type of assistance concerns the Disaster Emergency Logistic System for ASEAN (DELSA). DELSA has been developing a framework for stockpiling emergency relief supplies at specific locations and transporting these items to disaster-hit areas. Under the DELSA, the AHA Centre also has enhanced the supply chain management for emergency response of ASEAN through innovation, utilization of technology and capacity development. The second type of assistance concerns the capacity building of the Regional ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT). This has helped further enhance a coordinated response to disaster emergencies by the ASEAN-ERAT. The Third type of Japan's assistance through the AHA Centre concerns a human resources development project (ACE Programme) in DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction). This project involves training programs for officials at the DRR organization in ASEAN Member States.

c. Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime

In the field of counter-terrorism, Japan continues to make efforts against international terrorism and violent extremism in cooperation with the countries and the regional and international organizations concerned. In this regard, at the Japan-ASEAN Summit Meeting held in Vientiane, Laos in September 2016, then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that Japan would provide approximately 45 billion yen over the next three years for Asia as comprehensive counter-terrorism measures consisted of (i) improvement of counter-terrorism capacity, (ii) measures to counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism, and (iii) social and economic development assistance for creating a foundation for a moderate society. He also stated that Japan would help develop 2,000 personnel for counter-terrorism over the next three years. In September 2018, Japan had already achieved this goal one year ahead of its goal. Japan has continuously held multilateral and bilateral counter-terrorism consultations with nations in the Indo-Pacific region and elsewhere, primarily with Southeast Asian countries, to enhance international counter-terrorism cooperation. Japan held the consultations with ASEAN and U.K. in 2019 and with Australia and US in 2022. Furthermore, in June 2021, Japan and Indonesia held the 1st Counter-Terrorism Dialogue. To help build counter-terrorism capacity, Japan supports projects in such areas in the field of border control, aviation security, maritime security, and law enforcement under dialogue frameworks such as, the ASEAN-Japan Counter-Terrorism Dialogue (AJCTD), the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime plus Japan (AMMTC+Japan), and the Senior Official Meeting on Transnational Crime plus Japan (SOMTC+Japan). The center of ASEAN-Japan cooperation in this area is the ASEAN-Japan Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Crime, which was adopted by the 17th Japan-ASEAN Summit Meeting in Myanmar in November 2014 and expanded its scope to include international organized crime. In order to implement this declaration, SOMTC+Japan adopted its updated “SOMTC-Japan Work Plan for Cooperation to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Crime (2018-2022)” in October 2018, based on which SOMTC+Japan has further strengthened cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism and transnational crime. Currently, SOMTC+Japan is working to develop the updated Work Plan for 2023 and beyond.

Japan has also been stepping up its efforts to combat transnational crimes in the Indo-Pacific region in three major aspects. The first aspect is strengthening transnational

legal frameworks. For example, Japan has been tackling drug problems in alliance with ARF members through measures such as the exchange of information on synthetic drugs, including new psychoactive substances (NPS), and investigative cooperation in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 and other drug-related treaties. The second aspect is supporting capacity building to combat illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and cybercrime in Southeast Asia through financial contributions to the projects of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) 2.0 and INTERPOL. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) continued to strengthen mutual learning and networking for anti-trafficking in persons under the COVID-19 pandemic including by inviting relevant personnel engaging in measures against trafficking in persons in ASEAN countries to online-seminar to share challenges and measures of trafficking in persons in ASEAN countries.

JICA also started a “Project for Strengthening Regional Network for Combating Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Mekong Region” including support for the Mekong Region Workshop, which is scheduled from January 2022 to January 2025, and implemented the “Project for Strengthening the Operation of the Hotline for Counselling and Supporting Trafficked Survivors” in Viet Nam from November 2018 to March 2022.

Japan also continued to contribute to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Fund (CPCJF) managed by UNODC for implementation of a project to enhance the criminal justice capacity such as responses to increasing threats faced by vulnerable groups, including protection of such groups, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, Japan has been providing support for maritime law enforcement capacity building in the Indo-Pacific region through its contribution to the Global Maritime Crime Programme of the UNODC.

The third aspect is promoting policy coordination with various countries and international organizations. Japan actively participates in multilateral frameworks such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime

(AMMTC). In addition, Japan makes financial contributions to the website maintenance for the Bali Process, a forum for policy dialogue, information sharing and practical cooperation on irregular migration and trafficking in persons. Japan also hosted the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in March 2021 in Kyoto to advance crime prevention and criminal justice in furtherance of our effort to promote the rule of law and achieve the SDGs.

d. Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

As the only country to have suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan has the responsibility to lead international efforts to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. Last year, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio participated in the 10th NPT Review Conference for the first time as a Japanese Prime Minister. At the Conference, he presented the "Hiroshima Action Plan" rooted in five actions which would take us from the "reality" of the harsh security environment to the "ideal" of a world without nuclear weapons. Japan will continue to advance realistic and practical efforts including the "Hiroshima Action Plan".

The global security environment has become even more severe in recent years. There exists an apparent divergence of views on how best to advance nuclear disarmament, a divergence that exists not only between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States but also among non-nuclear-weapon States that are exposed to the threat of nuclear weapons and those that are not. Considering these circumstances, it is necessary to persistently advance realistic and practical efforts with the involvement of nuclear-weapon States in order to promote nuclear disarmament.

It has become increasingly important under the current severe security environment that the international community maintains and strengthens the NPT. Japan has made a series of efforts to this end, such as the submission of the United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the elimination of nuclear weapons, as well as close cooperation through the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) and the Stockholm Initiative for nuclear disarmament and the NPT.

Furthermore, Japan will continue to work on promoting effective nuclear disarmament measures such as the universalization and early entry into force of the

CTBT, the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT, and building a reliable international verification mechanism.

Taking into consideration serious challenges to the international non-proliferation regime, Japan is engaged in outreach activities in the Indo-Pacific region with the aim of achieving three key objectives: (i) promoting the universalization of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and reinforcing their implementation at the national level, inter alia IAEA Safeguards are the fundamental component of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and it remains our key objective to increase the number of States with the Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement (CSA) and the Additional Protocol (AP); (ii) establishing and strengthening export control systems and promote the implementation of UNSCR 1540. As one of these activities, Japan supported a regional workshop for the implementation of UNSCR 1540, hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia; and (iii) raising awareness of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and enhancing related efforts. As part of these activities, Japan has been hosting a range of meetings each year, including the Asia Senior-Level Talks on Non-Proliferation (ASTOP) and Asian Export Control Seminar. Japan has also actively participated in PSI exercises and related conferences including PSI rotation exercise in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, Japan has actively contributed to the capacity building in safeguards implementation to share its experience and knowledge, including through the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network (APSN).

e. Cyberspace and Outer Space

Cyberattacks are becoming increasingly diversified and sophisticated. How to develop systems and capabilities to protect states, and the lives and property of the citizens from such cyberattacks constitutes a major challenge from both national security and economic perspectives. To this end, Japan is working with other countries concerned to promote a mutual understanding of these issues in a number of areas.

Countries in Indo-Pacific Region are discussing cyberspace issues under frameworks such as ARF and ASEAN+3 meetings. The ARF Work Plan on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), which was endorsed at the 22nd ARF Ministerial Meeting in 2015, calls for confidence-building measures, awareness-raising, capacity building support, regarding cybersecurity. Japan is

proactively participating in international meetings on these issues to boost cybersecurity in the region. From the viewpoint of the increasing importance of the situation surrounding cyberspace, ARF recognizes the value of continuing to exchange views from a comprehensive standpoint with the aim of promoting a peaceful, secure, open, and cooperative ICT environment, and preventing conflicts and crises through capacity-building trust and assistance while building confidence among nations.

In addition to these efforts, Japan has continued to provide capacity building support mainly to ASEAN countries. For example, since 2017, Japan has established the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC) and conducted cybersecurity exercises, among other initiatives. Japan also contributes to the World Bank's Cybersecurity Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which is dedicated to capacity building support in the field of cybersecurity in developing countries. Japan will continue to promote human resource development and other relevant efforts. Based on the experience Japan have cultivated to date through support for ASEAN member states and interstate relations with the region, Japan will enhance support in area other than ASEAN, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific region according to the "Basic Policy on Cybersecurity Capacity Building Support for Developing Countries".

In order to maintain space security, Japan is proactively engaged in rule-making efforts in multilateral fora, in close cooperation with partners including ARF members. Especially, Japan is committed to reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. In this regard, it is important to mention that the resolution entitled "Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours", co-sponsored by various countries including Japan and the United Kingdom, was adopted in 2021 at the UN General Assembly with widespread support of 150 countries. Japan also decided not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) missile testing in order to actively promote discussions in the international fora concerning the development of norms of responsible behaviour in outer space in September 2022. As one of the leading space-faring nations, Japan has promoted bilateral dialogues on space with such as ARF members as European Union, India and the United States.

f. Confidence building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy

Japan believes it is important for ARF to make steady progress from the first stage of the “promotion of confidence-building measure” to the second stage of “development of preventive diplomacy” and further to the third stage of “approaches to dispute settlement.” However, despite the cumulative efforts of the ARF members have so far succeeded in facilitating confidence-building measures to a certain extent, progress toward the development of preventive diplomacy has only just begun. Japan has long been committed to conflict prevention and peace building through human resources development and other modalities means. Japan will take advantage of its expertise in these areas to further contribute to the ARF’s efforts to promote preventive diplomacy.

g. ADMM-Plus Initiatives

The ADMM-Plus provides a framework for addressing a wide range of security issues common to the region. Japan is committed to this framework with the aim of developing the forum into a key pillar of regional security cooperation. Within the ADMM-Plus, seven Experts’ Working Groups (EWGs) have been established to increase concrete military-to-military cooperation in handling security issues common to the region. Japan is taking part in each ADMM-Plus EWG to further enhance regional security cooperation by actively exchanging views with other countries and making proposals as follows;

- In the first cycle, from 2011 to 2013, Japan acted as a Co-Chair of the EWG on Military Medicine with Singapore, and conducted field training exercises on HA/DR and military medicine in Brunei in June 2013.
- In the second cycle, from 2014 to 2017, Japan was a Co-Chair of the EWG on HA/DR together with Lao PDR. During this period, efforts were made to formulate a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the establishment and management of a Multinational Coordination Centre (MNCC) so as to amplify the activities of assisting foreign forces that are accepted by disaster-affected countries in the event of natural or other disasters. In August 2015, for example, a table top exercise (TTX) was conducted in Lao PDR. In September 2016, exercises on HA/DR and military medicine, AM-Hex 2016, were conducted in Thailand in order to test the final draft of the SOP. At the 9th EWG meeting on HA/DR in December 2016, the SOP was adopted and it has

been on the track of discussion in the framework of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) since then.

- In the third cycle, from 2017 to 2020, Japan actively participated in and contributed to each EWG.
- In the fourth cycle, from 2021 to 2024, Japan assumed with Vietnam the role of Co-Chair of the EWG on PKO, and successfully convened the first EWG meeting under the new cycle in April 2021 by taking up Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as the main discussion topic. This led to the establishment of the WPS Platform under the fourth cycle of the EWG on PKO. Japan will continue its active contribution to international peace and stability by enhancing the capabilities of ASEAN member states in PKO through its strong initiatives as a Co-Chair of the EWG on PKO.

The ADMM-Plus is a vital framework that provides the member countries with opportunities to conduct multilateral talks on a wide range of regional security issues in an open manner. Japan believes it is important to keep this framework open without putting any restriction on the issues to be addressed in the forum, while allowing the participating countries to discuss a wide range of issues in a candid manner.

IV. Future of the ARF

As a framework for candid discussion on the political and security issues of the entire Indo-Pacific region, ARF has steadily contributed to confidence-building in the region. In recent years, various initiatives have been put forward in a wide range of areas, including maritime security, disaster relief, counter terrorism and transnational crime, non-proliferation and disarmament, preventive diplomacy, cyberspace, and outer space.

To further develop ARF as an action-oriented framework instead of making it serve merely as a forum for dialogue, ARF members that co-organize each initiative need to establish practical agenda items and programs with the cooperation with stakeholders, including relevant international organizations and experts. Also, member states need to work more closely with one another to avoid duplications among initiatives and produce favourable outputs. In addition to these efforts to improve ARF functions, it is also important to strengthen cooperation with other regional security frameworks in pursuing effective synergy. The edge of the wedge is the area of disaster relief. In this particular area, similar

activities are increasingly conducted under different regional frameworks such as ADMM-Plus. Member states need to streamline such activities from the viewpoint of reducing personnel and financial costs for participating countries and pursuing practical initiatives.

The ARF should also address issues of the international community and members should not shy away from voicing their strong opposition to actions that undermine principles of the international community and the ASEAN charter, such as unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force.

Japan will proactively contribute to ARF while continue to exercise initiatives in various areas, and believe that this contribution improve the regional security environment.

V. 50th year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation

Japan was the first country in the world to become a partner of ASEAN. In the half century since then, Japan and ASEAN have been working together not only as close business partners, but also as true friends with “heart to heart relations,” and cooperated hand in hand for peace, stability, and prosperity of the region, even in times of difficulty.

Encouraged by the dramatic development of the ASEAN countries, our region has now become the centre of the ever-expanding global economy. It is important that Japan and ASEAN continue to grow together based on mutual trust and respect, upholding diversity and inclusiveness, and to lead the way in this new era.

Japan promotes the vision of Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and ASEAN promotes the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The shared principles such as openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and respect for international law, are essential in this new era, and close cooperation between Japan and ASEAN based on these principles is becoming increasingly important.

Japan will take the opportunity of the 50th commemorative year to robustly support ASEAN to mainstream AOIP in close dialogue with ASEAN and its member states.

MYANMAR

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

1. The challenges posed by geopolitical shifts in the Asia-Pacific region involve traditional and non-traditional security challenges, social and economic ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic and other trans-boundary issues. We need to deepen defence collaboration in contribution towards tackling the challenges. And then, we need to uphold the principles of ASEAN Centrality and respect for ASEAN principles of non-interference, sovereignty and territorial integrity, consensus-based decision making.
2. ASEAN member states are working together for the lasting peace, security and stability, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and social progress by adhering to the ASEAN Charter, goals and consensus. ASEAN is a geographically important region as it connects the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Nowadays, some countries perceive ASEAN as a crucial part of the Indo-Pacific region and are endeavouring to gain influence in the region. Hence, some countries have been persuading ASEAN countries in various means, focusing on their own interests and goals. As a consequence, it is likely to occur deviations from original ASEAN's goals and stance. Particularly, the formation of blocs in the Indo-Pacific region brings about the different responses and disagreements among ASEAN members. Similarly, some external countries could initiate issues that can deviate from the ASEAN consensus, provisions and could lead to the disunity among member countries.
3. After the Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy that intends to influence in the region through close ties within military, trade, and people-to-people sectors, the Asia-Pacific strategy was developed and adopted. In other words, it is the expansion of military, political, and socio-economic issues into the Indian Ocean. With the development of Indo-Pacific strategy, the way of finding solutions among countries that are involving in the South China Sea disputes have been changed. Thus, the Indo-Pacific strategy, with the strong multifaceted rivalry has led to the confrontation rather than the peaceful negotiation in the settlement of disputes. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the potential impact on the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states that are included in the principles of ASEAN.

4. The Indian Ocean is a critical place of global trade and navigation, especially the important place between the North Atlantic and the Asia-Pacific region. As a result, some countries are increasingly interested in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, including the Indian Ocean and the attitudes towards security issues have also changed in these regions. After the emergence of Indo-Pacific strategy, as economic, trade, defence and security, especially maritime security have been focused, various stances of the region have been shifted.
5. The superpowers later sought to influence and control political and military matters through the increasing competitions for economic projects in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, maritime operations are conducted in the region by giving reasons to become free and open Indo-Pacific region. The ASEAN region has become a major hub for competition for power which could have a significant impact on the unity and security of ASEAN countries. ASEAN member states should consider first to focus on security, stability and interests of the ASEAN region in accordance with the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Vision, ASEAN Consensus at a time of increasing competition from external powers in the ASEAN region. Interference of external powers can only be avoided, especially if there is a united stance on security in the ASEAN region. In order not to change our stances on ASEAN Charter, goals and common agreements, all ASEAN member states shall adhere to them together. At the same time, ASEAN should constantly monitor the differences between member countries and should steer the changes in stance, the decreases in compliance with common agreements and other commitments. In these matters, Myanmar, as a member of ASEAN, has been actively cooperating with ASEAN member states in order to stand with ASEAN unwaveringly and strongly.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

1. Myanmar Tatmadaw upholds the three main national causes as the national policy and always takes the responsibility of national security and defence. Regarding the defence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the article 42 of State Constitution (2008) has clearly promulgated that:
 - i. The Union shall not commence aggression against any nation.
 - ii. No foreign troops shall be permitted to be deployed in the territory of the Union.

2. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar lays down the following National Defence Policies to safeguard the national interests of the Union as well as the citizens:
 - i. To prevent all acts detrimental to the three main national causes which are non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of the national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty.
 - ii. To formulate the National Defence with the People's War Strategy centred at Tatmadaw as pillar depending on the synergy of entire people.
 - iii. To valiantly and effectively prevent foreign aggression and interference in the internal affairs of the Union, deploying various ways and means while avoiding interference in the internal affairs of other nations.
 - iv. To employ a defence system that has oriented towards friendly relations with other nations in accord with the five principles of peaceful co-existence.
 - v. Not to permit forming military alliance with other nations and the deployment of any foreign troops in the territory of the Union.
 - vi. To cooperate with international community in non-traditional security issues and anti-terrorist affairs and to render assistance when calamities occur in the Union.

III. Defence Budget (Military Expenditure)

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar allocated De-fence Budget about US\$1.7 billion for 2022-2023 fiscal year.

IV. National Contributions to Regional Security

1. For the security of the region in multiple aspects, Myanmar is actively participating in and contributing her efforts to the international/regional organizations and institutions. Myanmar became a member of ASEAN in 1997 and in the same year it also joined the Bay of Bengal Initiative of Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation – BIMSTEC. In 2014, Myanmar successfully served its ASEAN chairmanship for the first time since her membership. As a member of ASEAN, Myanmar has been participating in the dialogues and workshops organized by the ASEAN Regional Forum – ARF since the establishment of the institution in 1994 which hosts the countries inside and outside the region.

2. Myanmar perceived that any act of terror is still remaining a big challenge for the security in the region especially within the ASEAN. Myanmar has decisively opposed the terrorist groups designated by some ASEAN countries and will continue to oppose it. For anti-terrorism measure, Myanmar was a member of the team of formulating the bill but also a signatory nation of the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Among Like-Minded ASEAN member countries, and the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism-ACCT. Tatmadaw is now preparing to co-chair the ADMM Plus Expert Working Groups – EWGs with Russia on Counter Terrorism for 2020-2023 period. Myanmar is very concerned about the potentiality of making the sovereign land of a country as a safe haven of any terrorist group, and always cooperating with the like-minded countries to make sure that no terrorist group can station in the region.
3. For eradication of narcotic drug production and trafficking, as an observer, Myanmar has been attending the annual Meetings of ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matter - ASOD even before the member of the ASEAN, and has been implementing its resolutions after becoming a member of the regional organization. For narcotic drugs control, Myanmar has signed an MOU with China, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia in 1993, and MOU for Centre of Information Sharing in Asia-Pacific with ASEAN member states and the Republic of Korea in 2014. Myanmar is closely cooperating with countries within the Greater Mekong Sub Region as well as with ASEAN member states in striving to combat narcotic drugs.
4. Additionally, there are joint endeavours with Yangon based US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) Thailand, Australian Federal Police (AFP) and with National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC) of China and have set up Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) along Myanmar-China, Laos and Thailand borders. These serve as main centres for exchanging information relevant to combat narcotic drugs. Myanmar has also signed Bilateral Agreements with India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Russia, Lao PDR, China, and Thailand and the United States of America to jointly combat narcotic drugs. To enforce the anti-narcotic measure of the country, the Department of Narcotic Drugs Elimination was transformed into Myanmar Police Force Narcotic Drug Suppression Division in 2013.
5. Myanmar had successfully hosted the meeting of ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter Terrorism-EWG CT Middle Planning Conference of Table Top Exercise and

Field Training Exercise on 6 to 7 December 2022 by video conferencing. Myanmar and Thai Air Force held The Exchange visit in Squadron Level exercise with ATR 72-500 aircraft from 7 to 8 February 2023 in Mingaladon Air Force Base Command.

6. Regarding non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Myanmar has signed the additional protocol of the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty – SEANWFZ, and actively following the Plan Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the SEANWFZ (2023-2027).
7. There are no ASEAN militaries' meetings and exchanges hosted by Myanmar from June 2020 to April 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As for Myanmar, the Union is actively participating in matters relating to counter terrorism regional forums, workshops, and conferences in cooperation with other ASEAN member states and international communities. ASEAN member states have to enhance the bilateral and multilateral relations and deepen military and security co-operation to respond to the challenges relating to acts of terror which we are now confronting and to support us building our future nations to be peaceful, tranquil and developed. Coordination among countries will surely support for dissolving the problems and enable to confront the challenges. Moreover, the betterment of the relationship among the ASEAN member states will ensure the successful implementation processes of counter terrorism.

V. Role of ASEAN Regional Forum

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) plays a vital role in promoting stability and security in the region by providing an important forum to discuss current security issues and ways of cooperation. To address regional security challenges, ASEAN member states should continue to emphasize joint actions towards a more secure and stable region.
2. With regards to the role of ARF, the contributions of the ASEAN member states based on the principles of coordination and cooperation to the stability and peace of the region are critically required. In responding to the regional security challenges by the cooperation and principles of joint actions, the role of the ASEAN member states should continue emphasizing on a more stable and secure region. Moreover, the non-traditional security threats such as natural disasters, terrorism, maritime security and transnational crimes, epidemics, food and energy security, human security, cybercrimes, climate changes and global warming are still regional concerns and the

ASEAN member states should continue conducting the information sharing, capacity building, joint exercises and trainings.

3. ASEAN member states should continue enhancing peace and stability of the region in cooperative manner, encourage the nuclear weapon states to sign the additional protocol of the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ), cooperate more in areas of traditional security challenges and non-traditional security challenges that will impact regional peace and stability, such as the risk of extremists and terrorists, disaster management and information security, drug trafficking, human and arms smuggling, transnational crimes, illegal migration, money laundering, sea piracy and maritime security, climate change and epidemics like Zika, Ebola and COVID-19 Coronavirus etc..

NEW ZEALAND

I. Overview of the regional security environment

- a. The Indo-Pacific region is central to Aotearoa New Zealand's security and economic well-being. The region faces a number of serious challenges. New Zealand meaningfully engages with the regional security architecture on the key strategic and security issues and risks facing the region, and supports regional economic integration and resilience, including the reinstatement of regional connectivity.
- b. New Zealand values our participation in ASEAN-led architecture, including the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus). These channels provide us with the means to coordinate our efforts with ASEAN and regional actors and work collectively to secure a more stable, prosperous and resilient Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN centrality is a core tenet of Aotearoa New Zealand's approach to the Indo-Pacific region, in line with New Zealand's overarching objective of regional peace, prosperity and stability. Effective regional architecture plays an important role in shoring up such centrality.
- c. Regional bodies such as the ARF, EAS, and ADMM-Plus have an important role to play in promoting the principles, rules and norms that New Zealand values in the Indo-Pacific region, such as openness and inclusivity, ASEAN centrality, transparency, freedom of navigation and overflight, adherence to international law, open markets, and respect for sovereignty.
- d. In addition to promoting a strong rules-based system, close regional cooperation on security threats is increasingly important as the nature of threats continues to evolve. New Zealand is working to ensure that we – as a country and as a region – are equipped to deal with the emerging risks posed by the increased use of technology, security impacts of climate change and actors seeking to challenge the existing regional and international rules and norms.
- e. Challenges to the rules and norms that underpin our shared security and prosperity in the region have the potential to undermine all our efforts to date. We must continue to use the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) for dialogue and cooperation to

build confidence and capacity, to manage differences, and to ensure there are no misunderstandings that might lead to conflict.

- f. Key security issues occupying the ARF membership include the illegal and unprovoked invasion by an ARF member, Russia, of its neighbour Ukraine. This attack has serious implications for global peace, security and economic stability, including in our Indo-Pacific region. We call on President Putin's regime to act in a manner consistent with all its international obligations and responsibilities and end this war immediately. New Zealand will continue to stand with Ukraine, and work to uphold the rules-based international system that is critical to ongoing peace and security in our region.
- g. Similarly, New Zealand strongly condemns the military coup in Myanmar. We continue to call for immediate cession of violence and a return to civilian rule. New Zealand supports the ASEAN's efforts of working to fully implement the Five-Point Consensus.
- h. We remain seriously concerned about developments in the South China Sea. We have consistently called on all claimant states to cease actions that escalate tensions and to settle disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law, in particular the UN Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) as the constitution for the oceans. Prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific region depends on a secure maritime environment and the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. All ARF members have an interest in avoiding miscalculations and the maintenance of the regime of maritime zones and the freedoms of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea, in accordance with international law, in particular UNCLOS.
- i. New Zealand has a strong interest in peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We are concerned by increased tensions and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.
- j. The Korean Peninsula remains one of the greatest long-term threats to regional security. We are concerned at the increased intensity of DPRK's ballistic missile tests, in contravention of multiple UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions and are deeply

troubled by reports that the DPRK may be preparing for a seventh nuclear test. It is critical that there is a strong, unified international response condemning the DPRK's actions if it conducts a nuclear test. New Zealand continues to engage actively with international efforts to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of North Korea, including through the full and effective implementation of sanctions in accordance with all relevant UNSC Resolutions.

- k. In addition to responding to these specific geographical challenges, New Zealand remains committed to the work of the ASEAN Regional Forum in building cyber-security resilience in and against the spread of misinformation and disinformation, and prioritising functional cooperation and preventive diplomacy in areas of counter-terrorism and trans-national crime, non-proliferation and disarmament, maritime security, and disaster relief. We are concerned at the increased attempts to disrupt and destabilise the international rules based order through the spread of mis- and disinformation.
- l. The ongoing economic recovery from the pandemic provides us opportunities to shape and build resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economies. New Zealand is strongly committed to an open, rules-based trading regime and considers that enhanced economic integration is one of the most effective means of ensuring longer-term regional security and prosperity. New Zealand is committed to pursuing multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral trade agreements that support this goal. New Zealand also aims to strengthen the broader regional trade architecture to ensure it is resilient to future shocks. As the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Chair in 2021, New Zealand led and delivered on a progressive agenda to facilitate an inclusive and resilient economic recovery in the region.
- m. New Zealand attaches considerable importance to the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which entered into force in 2010. Upgrade negotiations launched in late 2020 to ensure it remains relevant and fit-for-purpose in an evolving global environment. Text negotiations concluded in March 2023, and signing is planned for August 2023. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), signed by the ten ASEAN members plus Australia, China, Japan, Korea and New Zealand, covering 30% of global GDP, is the biggest trade agreement

in the world. With its entry into force in January 2022, the rules and norms set by the RCEP will make trade simpler to navigate and provide greater confidence to businesses.

- n. Several ASEAN members are also part of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which is in force for New Zealand, Mexico, Singapore, Japan, Canada, Australia, Viet Nam, Peru, Malaysia and Chile. Brunei has ratified the agreement. In addition to regional agreements, New Zealand has other bilateral FTAs or Closer Economic Partnerships with many other ARF members, including China, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei.
- o. In addition to the traditional security threats, the impacts of climate change on human security, on secure supply chains, on access and servicing of critical infrastructure cannot be underestimated. Climate change is one of the greatest threats to the livelihoods, security, and well-being of peoples in the Indo-Pacific. The ARF membership does have a role to play in considering climate change issues in the Confidence-Building Measures and Preventative Diplomacy work plan of the ARF.

II. New Zealand's security and defence policy

Overview of national security and defence policy

1. As a founding member of the United Nations, respect for international norms and law is fundamental to New Zealand's approach to promoting security, stability and peace. While geographically isolated, New Zealand is not distanced from the accelerating and intensifying impacts of geostrategic competition and transnational threats such as climate change, terrorism, arms proliferation, organised crime, and cyber-attacks. Recognising this, New Zealand is highly committed to multilateral solutions to security threats and the promotion of effective international rules. New Zealand takes a multi-layered approach to security that includes strong bilateral relationships, multilateral avenues, regional partnerships, and support for regional architecture and institutions. ASEAN-centred regional security architecture has an increasingly important role in bringing countries together and providing a forum for discussions. Our view is that these forums fulfil an important role promoting understanding, imbedding habits of dialogue and facilitating practical military-to-military cooperation.

2. New Zealand has a strong interest in fostering and maintaining a network of robust international relationships, which include:
 - New Zealand's alliance with Australia;
 - the Five Power Defence Arrangements (New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and the United Kingdom);
 - the Five Eyes partnership (New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States);
 - close bilateral ties with Pacific Island neighbours, including those for which New Zealand has constitutional responsibilities;
 - close and growing bilateral ties with a number of Indo-Pacific partners from North Asia to South and Southeast Asia; and
 - Pacific and Indo-Pacific regional security architecture such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM), the ARF and the ADMM Plus, in addition to the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (the Bali Process).

3. New Zealand defence policy settings are articulated in the Strategic Defence Policy Statement 2018. This statement describes Defence's value to New Zealand in terms of its contributions to the community, the nation and the world, with emphasis on community and environmental resilience. It also provides perspective on the evolving strategic environment; specifying the priority for the Defence Force being able to operate in the South Pacific (to the same level as that for New Zealand's territory, the Southern Ocean and Antarctica); featuring a set of principles for Defence; and underscoring the importance of contributing to New Zealand's key security partnerships. The statement reaffirmed that the ADMM-Plus remains New Zealand's principal forum for multilateral defence engagement in Asia. The Statement has been supplemented by standalone assessments such as The Climate Crisis: Defence Readiness and Responsibilities. With a worsening geostrategic environment, Defence has reviewed its policy settings. The Defence Assessment 2021 concluded that the two principal challenges to New Zealand's defence interests are strategic competition and climate change.

III. New Zealand's contribution to regional security

1. New Zealand remains firmly committed to countering and preventing terrorism and violent extremism in all forms, and to combatting transnational organised crime. Under the NZ Transnational Organised Crime Strategy 2020-2025, New Zealand aims to unify through a system-wide governance model to prevent, detect, and dismantle TNOC threats. A strong focus of the Strategy is partnerships and New Zealand engages to prevent, detect, and respond to these threats. New Zealand is engaged at the multilateral, regional, sub-regional and bilateral levels, with a particular focus on the Indo-Pacific region.
2. To support achievement of New Zealand's global security priorities, including assisting with capacity building in neighbouring states, New Zealand has a number of specialised security funds, including dedicated Global and Pacific Security Funds. The specialised security funds assist New Zealand's achievement of its Plan of Action with ASEAN, particularly in areas of border control; legislation; law enforcement; policy; irregular migration; and prevention/counter radicalisation and countering the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Ongoing collective effort is required to prevent FTFs from relocating to other conflict zones or to effectively manage their return home through targeted rehabilitation and reintegration support.
3. In line with our commitment to reduce the risk of South East Asia being a target or source of terrorism we are sharpening our strategic focus, and plan to strengthen efforts to support partners to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks, to counter the root causes of violent extremism by building resilient communities, and help invigorate mechanisms that promote coherence and coordination of counter-terrorism policy and practice within governments and across the region.
4. Breaking down the silos that impede cooperation within governments and the barriers that hinder cooperation between governments is necessary to tackle these significant and complex transnational security threats. New Zealand seeks to work closely with our partners in the region to help achieve coherence in policy and practice, including ASEAN-centred initiatives such as those under the umbrella of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

5. New Zealand's co-chairing of the ARF work stream on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime along with Malaysia and the EU is indicative of the importance that we place on this regional mechanism, especially as a forum for advancing broader regional efforts to counter violent extremism online.
6. On a bilateral basis, capacity building in South East Asia is a significant focus of New Zealand's global counter-terrorism engagement. We have long-standing relationships with institutions in the region such as the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation and the South East Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (Malaysia). New Zealand also contributes Defence personnel to the Counter Terrorism Information Facility located in Singapore.
7. Courses scheduled for delivery by New Zealand Police continue to be delivered, largely via in-person training, including:
 - Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) through Community Policing Course – delivered in person in March 2023 and focused on community engagement as a tool to prevent violent extremism. This New Zealand Police led course was delivered by two trainers through the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC).
 - Cyber Crime Investigation Skills course – This is a course delivered alongside the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to participants from across Southeast Asia, focused on addressing knowledge and skills gaps among those working in Cyber and Technology Enabled Crime (TEC) Investigations. The next course is currently expected to be delivered in June 2023.
 - New Zealand Police also contributed towards the virtual Victoria University of Wellington STIK (Indonesian National Police Higher Education) Masters Course, delivered in December 2022 to students from Indonesia National Police.
 - Transnational Organised Crime Skills course - in February 2022 the New Zealand Police along with Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and New Zealand Customs delivered the Transnational Organised Crime course to the

Indonesian National Police through the JCLEC with a view to expanding this to other ASEAN countries. This course will again be delivered in the 2022/23 financial year.

- Transnational Organised Crime Regional Cooperation Course – between 20 June and 1 July 2022 the New Zealand Police along with Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and New Zealand Customs delivered the inaugural TNOG Regional Cooperation course for ASEAN Countries at JCLEC (8 Countries, 15 organisations). The International TNOG Course focused on vulnerabilities in the maritime domain and was delivered at the strategic/management level. Another Transnational Organised Crime Regional Cooperation Course is scheduled for delivery in May/June 2023.
 - Building Police Leadership Capacity – Women In Leadership – between 20 – 24 June 2022 the New Zealand Police along with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the UK Government delivered the inaugural in-person Building Police Leadership Capacity – Women In Leadership Course to female leaders from across Asia through the JCLEC.
 - New Zealand Police has provided trainers to assist with a People Smuggling course delivered at JCLEC, including three courses delivered with AFP and RCMP, with a course delivered in Jan/Feb 2023 and a further course expected to be delivered in June 2023.
 - Additionally, the New Zealand Police Senior Liaison Officer (SLO) in Bangkok, the two New Zealand Police Liaison Officers (PLO's) in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, and the four Irregular Migration Liaison Officers based in the region have continued to participate in localised training and presentations, to maintain and strengthen partnerships.
8. New Zealand remains concerned about irregular migration and its regional impact. As part of our contribution to managing the security and humanitarian challenges posed by irregular migration, New Zealand is an active member of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (the Bali Process).

This includes co-chairing the Working Group on Disruption of Criminal Networks Involved in People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons, alongside Viet Nam, which focuses on concrete, action-oriented activities for enhancing law enforcement and border security coordination. New Zealand provides support for regional capacity building, including targeted capacity building assistance to ASEAN members on people smuggling, and transnational organised crime.

9. New Zealand also works closely with the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering to support the coordination of technical assistance and training in the Pacific to combat transnational organised criminal and terrorist groups, by targeting their financial systems and processes. Since 2017, New Zealand has funded APG's "Pacific Cell" to improve implementation of Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Financing of Terrorism ('AML/CFT') standards across 11 Pacific jurisdictions.
10. Additionally, New Zealand has funded and organised a number of regional capacity building workshops for ASEAN countries on key issues, including anti-money laundering/counter-terrorist financing standards, cyber security, terrorist prosecutions, chemical and nuclear security, major event security, and maritime and aviation security. These efforts are complemented by significant bilateral work to build individual national capability, especially within law enforcement agencies.
11. New Zealand participates in multilateral initiatives which engage on counter-terrorism projects in the region, including the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), for which we are pleased to support CVE initiatives in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.
12. In addition to its work in South East Asia, New Zealand also works with Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to help strengthen resilience and build capacity to respond to a range of shared security challenges. In 2018, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders endorsed the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, which affirms an expanded concept of security, recognising climate change as the preeminent security threat to the region. This expanded concept of security encompasses traditional and non-traditional challenges encountered by the region, prioritising human security, environmental security, transnational crime, and cyber security. New Zealand strongly supports the

implementation of the Boe Declaration, and channels this through existing programmes related to climate change, information sharing, leadership training, cyber security, transnational crime, and national security policy development. These programmes are in addition to the number of initiatives New Zealand supports through the Pacific Islands Forum, including regional discussions and consensus building on disaster response, Transnational Organised Crime and climate security.

13. In 2022, PIF Leaders adopted the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which sets out the region's plan over the next 30 years to secure our people, place and prospects. This includes setting the ambition for a resilient region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity.
14. New Zealand works closely with and funds Pacific regional law enforcement agencies such as the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Secretariat, Oceania Customs Organisation and the Pacific Immigration Development Community, and contributes to their consideration and responses to regional security issues. New Zealand also provides technical assistance, capacity building, and mentoring for law enforcement and border agency officials in the region.
15. One growing challenge the region faces is the unprecedented use of social media by terrorist groups. This has forced states to adapt, with many adopting sophisticated counter-messaging protocols and systems to enable them to convey another view to would-be terrorists. In response to the use of social media as part of the 15 March 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand developed (with France) the Christchurch Call to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online. The Call represents a unique effort to have technology companies and countries work together, with civil society, to tackle the shared problem of this content and its harmful effects, while protecting a free and open internet and human rights online.

Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

16. New Zealand has a long-standing commitment to nuclear disarmament and non proliferation. New Zealand is a strong supporter of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty.

17. New Zealand is a key proponent of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). New Zealand ratified the TPNW in 2018 and, as one of its Core Group members, works to encourage non-signatory states to sign, and signatories to ratify the Treaty. New Zealand has continued its active promotion of nuclear disarmament more generally, including through its membership of the New Agenda Coalition.
18. New Zealand is a strong proponent of nuclear weapon-free zones in view of their role in reinforcing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation commitments. New Zealand is party to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (Treaty of Rarotonga) and has had legislation in place since 1987 creating a New Zealand Nuclear-Free Zone. New Zealand strongly encourages all Nuclear Weapons States to ratify the Protocols to Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones, including the South East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and the Treaty of Rarotonga, without any reservations or interpretative declarations.
19. New Zealand supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as an important contribution to regional and global security. New Zealand has welcomed ratification of the CTBT by Annex 1 and 2 states in the region and encourages ratifications by all ARF participants.
20. New Zealand is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which provides the global focal point for nuclear cooperation and safeguards. New Zealand recently served as a member of the IAEA Board of Governors (2020-22), the Agency's primary policymaking organisation. New Zealand is in full compliance with its safeguards obligations and supports international projects involving the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We routinely urge all states to sign Additional Protocol agreements with the IAEA.
21. New Zealand joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) in 2007, and, alongside over 80 GICNT partners, is committed to preventing nuclear or radiological material falling into the hands of terrorists. New Zealand has contributed to the GICNT in the Indo-Pacific region by: developing a table-top exercise kit for use by other GICNT partners in testing their own national response systems; supporting radioactive source security projects in Southeast Asia; providing funding support to

GICNT workshops in the Indo-Pacific region; and helping its Pacific island neighbours address the risk of nuclear/radiological security.

22. New Zealand is a strong proponent of enhancing nuclear security. In 2016, New Zealand ratified two key nuclear security treaties: the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. In 2016, New Zealand also enacted a new Radiation Safety Act to ensure its legislative framework for the safety and security of nuclear and radioactive material meets current international best practice. New Zealand has provided financial support for nuclear security capacity-building projects in the Indo-Pacific region. Additionally, we make annual voluntary contributions to the IAEA's Nuclear Security Fund.
23. New Zealand is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. We have provided financial assistance to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to strengthen the Organisation's physical and cyber security infrastructure and support its assistance and protection programmes, and have spoken out strongly against the use of chemical weapons in Malaysia, Syria, Russia and the UK.
24. New Zealand has in place a comprehensive national export control regime. This is informed by our active membership of the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Australia Group, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee. New Zealand was the chair of the Missile Technology Control Regime 2019-2020.
25. New Zealand's involvement in the Proliferation Security Initiative, including our membership of the Operational Experts Group (the PSI steering committee) and participation in exercises and capacity building initiatives has enhanced New Zealand's capabilities to prevent proliferation activity both nationally and in collaboration with partners. New Zealand has developed (and shared with PSI partners) a Model National Response Plan which provides easy-to-follow guidance on the range of issues that need to be considered in developing a framework for responding to proliferation situations. As part of the PSI Asia-Pacific exercise rotation, New Zealand hosted a PSI

table-top exercise in Wellington in 2015 and is currently scheduled to host an exercise in 2023. New Zealand would welcome further adherence to the PSI throughout the Indo-Pacific as part of a coordinated effort to reduce the threat of WMD proliferation.

26. Given the role played by the unregulated global arms trade in fuelling conflict, New Zealand is a strong supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which we ratified in 2014. The ATT is an important contributor to international and regional peace, security and stability. New Zealand has been engaged in a breadth of initiatives that support broader membership, and greater implementation, of the Treaty, including as current Chair of the Treaty's Voluntary Trust Fund which has as its core objective the assistance of States Party to implement the Treaty. In our national capacity New Zealand has sponsored the development of ATT model legislation and a model control list, both of which can assist countries to implement their domestic obligations under the ATT. New Zealand hosted a conference in Auckland in 2018 to promote greater adherence to the ATT and other conventional arms treaties among Pacific Island countries, and co-sponsored – with significant support from Australia – a follow-up conference in Brisbane in 2019. New Zealand looks forward to continuing to work closely with its ARF partners on reinforcing the ATT.

27. New Zealand strongly supports the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Anti-Personnel Landmine Ban Convention (APLMBC). Landmines and cluster munitions are indiscriminate weapons that – in New Zealand's view – breach International Humanitarian Law. As such, New Zealand is pleased to have worked with many ARF States on practical mine clearance operations, including in Cambodia and Lao PDR – some of the most mine-contaminated States on the planet, but which are making large and promising steps to meet their clearance obligations. New Zealand is the coordinator for national implementation measures in the CCM, and we have produced model legislation for possible use by small states with no history of use or contamination. New Zealand continues to work closely with ARF participants that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to both Conventions. In 2019, New Zealand sponsored and co-hosted alongside the governments of the Philippines and Sri Lanka, a regional workshop on CCM universalisation and implementation hosted in Manila, which included the participation of eight South Asia and Pacific States who are not yet signatories of the Convention.

28. New Zealand has a strong legacy of supporting Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) clearance in the Indo-Pacific region for nearly 20 years. New Zealand also provides technical assistance for the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, and has previously funded mine action work in Myanmar. New Zealand is supporting a package of work in Lao PDR and Cambodia that aims to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of mines and explosive remnants of war.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

29. The Indo-Pacific region continues to be afflicted by natural disasters that underline the need to continue deepening practical and effective cooperation in relation to disaster reduction, response and recovery. New Zealand has been an active participant in ARF and EAS discussions about preparing for and responding to regional disasters. New Zealand has also provided targeted humanitarian assistance for natural disasters in the South East Asia region, including Timor-Leste floods in 2021 and Typhoon Rai in the Philippines in 2022.

30. New Zealand is continuing to play its part in deepening regional capacity to prepare and respond to disasters, including drawing on lessons learned from the Christchurch earthquakes and Cyclone Gabrielle in early 2023. New Zealand is committed to further cooperation and implementation of work plans in ARF, ADMM-Plus and EAS contexts. Disaster Risk Management is a priority study area for our knowledge and skills investments in the Indo-Pacific region. New Zealand and Singapore will be co-chairing the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on HADR for the 2024-2027 cycle.

31. New Zealand has been a solid proponent of the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) Centre since its inception, and has trained ASEAN officials in disaster response leadership at the University of Canterbury and contributed technical expertise to the Centre. We currently support work strengthening the AHA Centre's professional development programmes to reduce the impact of disasters through design and implementation of e-learning solutions.

Maritime Security

32. Maritime Security, including the preservation of secure and sustainable oceans, is fundamental to New Zealand's security. Accordingly, New Zealand released a Maritime Security Strategy in 2021 to combat increasingly complex challenges to our maritime domain and borders and deliver guardianship over our maritime domain for future generations. New Zealand is not alone in facing these complex challenges. We value our maritime cooperation with ARF partners and have been actively involved in the implementation of the ARF's maritime security work plan, and in sharing our experiences on various maritime security-related issues, including upholding the rules-based system relating to the oceans, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, transnational crime, and marine environment issues.
33. In May 2018, New Zealand co-hosted with Singapore the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue. The dialogue included thematic sessions on maritime counter-terrorism, counter-terrorism interagency cooperation, and chemical, biological and radiological defence. More recently, New Zealand participated in the virtual 4th ARF Workshop on Enhancing Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation, and co-hosted the 4th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to address Emerging Maritime Issues alongside Viet Nam, Australia and the EU in November 2022. New Zealand continues its active involvement in the ADMM-Plus Experts Working Group on Maritime Security and the ARF Maritime Security workstream.

ICTs Security

34. Connectivity is a crucial driver of our region's growth. However, with increased connectivity comes increased exposure to cyber threats. New Zealand remains concerned by the growing number of cyber incidents globally, including activity undertaken by both state and non-state actors. These incidents underscore the importance of adherence to and implementation of the framework of responsible state behaviour online, comprised of international law, norms of responsible state behaviour, confidence-building measures, and capacity-building.
35. New Zealand sees the ARF as an important forum to support implementation of the framework of responsible state behaviour online, and to improve transparency, understanding and confidence among regional partners in cyber space. To this end, we were pleased to participate in the Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the use of ICTS in April 2022, and the associated Study Group on Confidence-Building

Measures. We welcome Indonesia and Australia's confidence building proposal to host an ARF Workshop on Implementing Norms of Responsible States' Behaviours in Cyberspace, and look forward to further cooperation in this area.

36. New Zealand remains committed to building regional cyber security capacity, including through membership of the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, with a particular focus on our Pacific and South-East Asian neighbours. We continue to deliver initiatives under New Zealand's NZ\$10 million Cyber Security Support to the Pacific programme, and support the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence.
37. Former New Zealand Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern signed the Europol Agreement on 1 July 2022, which symbolises our shared strong commitment to privacy and seeing justice for victims of crime. The Agreement reinforces New Zealand's strong data protection framework and means New Zealand will have access to more information to disrupt and respond to the victims of serious crime and terrorism. This information will help disrupt and respond to transnational organised crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, child sexual exploitation, cybercrime, violent extremism, and terrorism.

IV. Role of ARF

a. New Zealand's contributions to enhancing the ARF and regional security

- i. For New Zealand, the ARF is a key mechanism for security engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and part of our broader relationship with the ASEAN region. It contributes to building an environment of dialogue and cooperation on a wide range of regional security issues. The ARF is also contributing in an important way to the development of international norms and principles on security that are directly relevant to this region. The number and diversity of practical ARF projects under implementation during the current intersessional year reflects the ARF's ability to respond to contemporary security challenges facing this part of the world.

- ii. New Zealand also attaches considerable importance to working with its ARF partners to advance the ARF's preventive diplomacy agenda, in line with the ARF's three-stage evolution. In the 2023-24 ARF intersessional year, New Zealand will be co-chairing the Intersessional Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventative Diplomacy (ISG on CBMs and PD) and the Defence Officials' Dialogue alongside Lao PDR. We value the opportunity to contribute to dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest, and to contribute to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region.

- iii. New Zealand is committed to working with its ASEAN partners to ensure coherence between the ARF and other pieces of the regional architecture, in particular the EAS and ADMM-Plus. We recognise this is a particular priority during Indonesia's term as ASEAN Chair in 2023. While the ARF and ADMM-Plus have their distinct mandates and different memberships, greater functional coordination between them on issues that straddle multiple fora, such as disaster relief/management, cyber security and maritime security, would help to achieve streamlining and eliminate unnecessary duplication of activities. New Zealand also actively supports efforts to strengthen the EAS, to ensure it can fulfil its role as the region's premier forum for leaders to address strategic issues and risks.

b. Future of ARF

- i. The ARF is a forum that was established with the aim of fostering habits of constructive dialogue on issues of concern. At the ARF's outset it was envisaged that the Forum would move as part of its evolution from a confidence building phase to preventive diplomacy, and finally to conflict resolution. The ARF has constructed a solid base of confidence building measures and made progress in the field of preventive diplomacy. It has the potential to do more.

- ii. New Zealand supports the ARF in increasing its capacity and effectiveness in the preventive diplomacy space, and encourages all participants to keep an eye to the future to ensure we are well-equipped when we move into the conflict resolution phase.

- iii. New Zealand remains committed to the principles of peace and security underpinning the ARF. We encourage dialogue and capacity building among members to achieve our collective aims in strengthening regional security. At a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, our ability to come together, engage in dialogue and share experiences to resolve tensions is more important than ever.

PAKISTAN

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

Today, entire world is in flux due to indomitable threats including climate change, poverty, starvation, pandemics, terrorism, Islamophobia, Xenophobia, migration from conflict zones, civil strife, transnational organized crime, security of trade routes, cybercrimes and abuse of social media. Our region is no exception. The situation has further aggravated with the failure of international comity and actors, in resolving long standing disputes, such as the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK).

As Existing conflicts exacerbate, new threats have emerged. Competing interests of regional and extra regional powers are deepening long standing gaps, and widening the fault lines, even as the tragedy of Palestine and Kashmir continues to fester. In these uncertain times, the global community appears to be in desperate quest for sustainable future.

Pakistan considers peaceful coexistence with neighbours critical for its long-term prosperity and regional peace. However, strategic stability in South Asia is increasingly under threat due to inherently escalatory nature of Pakistan-India ties, growing doctrinal imbalances and development of provocative limited war strategies.

Situation in South Asia

Home to nearly a quarter of the world population, South Asia has a complex historical context, immense regional diversity and unresolved territorial disputes. This region faces some of the toughest, conventional and non-conventional, security challenges in the world today. For the last several decades, the region has faced instability and challenges to peace & security due to the situation in Afghanistan and the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Pakistan has time and again reiterated its desire for peaceful and cordial ties with all its neighbours, including India. It believes that durable peace and stability in the region cannot be achieved without the resolution of unresolved disputes, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in line with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The illegal and unilateral actions of changing the demography of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir region and the gross

human rights violations by the Indian occupation forces have endangered the regional security environment.

Heavy military deployment in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir has only exacerbated the security risk. Jammu and Kashmir has been rightly described as a “nuclear flashpoint”. A slight miscalculation can take the region to the brink of a war.

In the broader regional context, increasing acquisition of modern weaponry by some countries has the potential to destabilize the strategic balance in South Asia. The imprudent Indian launch of supersonic missile into Pakistani territory on 9 March 2022 had jeopardized the peace and security environment of the entire region. Pakistan rejected the untenable explanation provided by India and sought joint-probe of the matter while simultaneously apprising the international community of India’s irresponsible conduct in maintaining strategic weapons.

Pakistan has maintained that the resolution of the core issue of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute can open new vistas of regional cooperation and bring about peace in the region. Peace between the two nuclear armed neighbours is critical for us to focus our attention and resources on economic development.

Similarly, Peace and stability in Afghanistan are essential for the long-term stability and prosperity of our region. It is important for the international community to come together to arrest the impending humanitarian catastrophe unfolding there. Pakistan has consistently called for de-linking humanitarian assistance from political considerations. Promoting sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan would require uninterrupted humanitarian aid, trade facilitation, continuous practical engagement and capacity-building programmes in various sectors. Until there are viable banking channels in Afghanistan, the Afghan economy would not be able to sustain itself.

Pakistan continues to underline the importance of Afghan inclusivity, human rights including women rights, and re-opening of girls’ schools. Pakistan believes that diplomatic and political engagement of the international community with Afghanistan is essential for achieving lasting peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. It has provided essential humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, including wheat, medicines and relief goods. Pakistan

has also facilitated the United Nations and third countries in providing assistance to Afghanistan.

Pakistan continues to play an active role in Afghanistan-centred forums, such as Troika Plus, Moscow Format and Regional Countries forum (which was Pakistan's own initiative) for the shared objective of regional peace and security. Since August 2021, Pakistan has played an active part in addressing economic and humanitarian challenges in Afghanistan. It initiated an important regional forum at Foreign Ministers' level to forge regional consensus for addressing the situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan hosted 17th Extraordinary Session of OIC-CFM and 48th Session of OIC-CFM in Islamabad on 19 December 2021 and 21 March 2022 respectively to explore avenues for humanitarian support to the people of Afghanistan.

Emergence of new alliances and closed bloc structures in Asia-Pacific pose serious risks to regional and global security and undermine the stability of the world order. Pakistan supports building of an equitable, open and inclusive security system in the Asia-Pacific region which promotes peace, stability and prosperity.

Pakistan categorically rejects India's self-assumed role as a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean Region. Pakistan believes that a recently-formulated geopolitical construct will only incite divisions and confrontations, exacerbate arms race and lead to instability in the region and beyond. In addition, the militarization of Indian Ocean Region and acquisition of new defence technologies are adding to the risks faced by the region.

The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Pakistan is deeply concerned at the onset of military conflict between Russia and Ukraine which reflects the failure of diplomacy. The developing countries are the worst affected because of this conflict with rising oil and food prices in the international market. Pakistan remains committed to the universal and consistent application of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, sovereign equality of states, the right of self-determination of peoples, non-use or threat of use of force against territorial integrity or political independence of States, and peaceful settlement of disputes to ensure durable peace.

Pakistan believes that a diplomatic solution in accordance with relevant multilateral agreements, international law, and the provisions of the UN Charter is critical in the Ukrainian context. There is a need for immediate cessation of hostilities, establishment and maintenance of humanitarian corridors, provision of humanitarian assistance, sustained dialogue and continuous efforts for a diplomatic solution.

Pakistan has been in regular contact with the leadership of Ukraine and Russia and other partner countries in urging continued dialogue and diplomacy for settlement of the conflict. It believes that ARF has a role to play in bringing an end to this conflict through diplomatic means.

Counterterrorism

For the last two decades, Pakistan has fought valiantly against the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism. It has made enormous sacrifices in countering terrorism, both in human and economic terms, with over 83,000 lives lost and US\$126 billion cost to our economy. Pakistan has thus partnered with countries in Asia Pacific and beyond to fight against the forces of terror.

Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism planned, supported and sponsored from across our borders. With sheer resolve and determination of our people, we have managed to turn the situation around. This was made possible due to concerted efforts and sacrifices of our security forces and an all-of-society response.

We believe that a sustainable effort to end the menace of terrorism entails a comprehensive approach, that necessitates special attention to eliminate the root causes and drivers of radicalization leading to extremism and violent conduct.

Pakistan strongly believes that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any race, religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. The rise of populist and supremacist ideologies and fascist forces has emerged as a new threat to international peace and internal harmony within societies. Pakistan is also deeply concerned about the rising incidents of xenophobia and islamophobia and is partnering with likeminded countries to counter this threat.

Islamophobia

The growing global problem of religious intolerance, discrimination and violence has been a cause of great concern to our region as well. While people of all faiths and religions have been victims of heinous acts of this plague, Muslims and Islam particularly borne the brunt, especially after 9/11.

Islamophobia has emerged as a new form of racism characterized by Xenophobia, negative profiling and stereotyping of Muslims across the world. Today, the sounds of “clash of civilizations” still reverberate.

Frequently, anti-Muslim acts are either an outcome of securitization of policies or in some cases due to incendiary rhetoric deployed by public office holders for electoral gains. Sections of mainstream and social media have willingly or unwittingly become amplifiers of prejudice, extremist ideologies, disinformation and hatred. Deliberate defamation of religious as well as revered religious personalities and symbols under garb of free speech and press freedom is condemnable.

The condemnable actions of wilful denigration of our Holy Prophet (PBUH) and desecration of Holy Quran in various parts of the world have hurt religious sentiments of millions of Muslims, and promote hatred and unfounded hostility, resulting in real-time discrimination, xenophobia and violence. Pakistan believes that therefore in our enlightened interest to demonstrate mutual respect for and understanding of all religions, faiths and cultures.

Nuclear Non-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

As a responsible nuclear state, Pakistan subscribes to the mutually reinforcing objectives of ensuring equal and undiminished security for all and preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. It has put into place a robust legislative, administrative and enforcement mechanism to regulate the transfer of sensitive goods and technologies while ensuring their 360-degree safety and security.

The following measures have been undertaken by Pakistan in this context:

- Enacted Exports Control Act 2004 - to guarantee the controls over export, re-export, trans-shipment and transit of goods, technologies, material and equipment related to nuclear and biological weapons and missiles, prohibiting the diversion of controlled goods and technologies etc. with stringent penal provision to counter the violations.
- Strategic Export Control Division (SECDIV), set up in 2007, leads inter-agency consultation to take immediate effect to the decisions taken by the UNSC, and the rules under the Export Control (Licensing and Enforcement) notified in 2009. These rules set out complete procedures for licensing, enforcement, investigation, prosecution and implementation of the Act.
- In August 2018, Pakistan established Inter-Agency Committee for Coordination, Review and Monitoring Committee (CRM Committee) to effectively implement, supervise and monitor the enforcement of UNSC resolutions/decisions on countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Pakistan has also declared adherence to NSG Guidelines and shown keen interest in joining the four export control regimes i.e., NSG, MTCR, AG and Wassenaar Arrangement.
- Pakistan has joined Nuclear Security Contact Group (NSCG) to contribute to advancing implementation of nuclear security commitments and building a more strengthened, sustainable and comprehensive global nuclear security architecture.
- As a participant of Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) since 2007, Pakistan has been proactively participating in its various activities.
- Nuclear security regime of Pakistan includes not only technological systems, but the human resources needed to manage, operate, administer and maintain equipment.
- Pakistan Centre of Excellence for Nuclear Security (PCENS) has been established for human resource development and technical support for effective nuclear security. PCENS imparts trainings at the regional and global levels under IAEA aegis.
- Pakistan is also party to the international conventions and treaties on nuclear safety and security such as Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS), Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident, Convention on the

Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its Amendment and IAEA code of conduct on the safety and security of radioactive sources.

- Pakistan actively participates in the meeting of the UNSC 1540 Committee and annually submits its reports. Pakistan has submitted 6 reports to the Committee so far, regularly including one comprehensive matrix. Moreover, In-line with the provisions of UNSCRs 1540 (2004), 1810 (2008), and 2325 (2016), Pakistan also offers technical assistance to several countries to help them in implementing the provisions of the UNSCR 1540 (2004).
- Pakistan is committed to its obligation under UNSCR 1540 (2004), with a view to strengthening the global framework to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological and radiological material to the non-state actors, however at the same time maintains that there is a dire need to strike a proper balance between non-proliferation related obligations of the States and their inherent right to have access to dual-use material and technologies imperative for their socio-economic development.
- Pakistan also calls for fair and equitable access to new and emerging technologies for the developing countries and contends that if undue restrictions on access to the new and emerging technologies is not removed, developing countries are likely to remain even further behind.
- Being fully aware of unregulated military applications of new and emerging technologies such cyber and Artificial Intelligences (AI) and their impact on global peace and security, Pakistan calls for a treaty-based mechanism to ensure the responsible uses of new and emerging technologies in military domain.

Chemical Weapons Convention:

- Pakistan established the National Authority on Chemical Weapons Convention (NA CWC), under CWC Implementation Ordinance-2000 which regulates export and import of chemical weapons related materials and equipment. It oversees implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, ensures chemical safety and security and conducts regular national and international trainings and awareness/outreach programmes. It also coordinates OPCW inspections in Pakistan. Till date, OPCW has conducted 25 inspections in Pakistan.
- Pakistan continuously updates its regulatory framework and is currently in the process of updating CWC Implementation Rules (2010) to further broaden the

scope of safety and security procedures and guidelines in procurement, production, storage, transfer, usage, import and export of chemicals.

Biological Weapons Convention:

- Since ratification of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) in 1974, Pakistan has instituted a comprehensive legislative, regulatory and administrative framework to regulate life sciences in Pakistan and to strengthen export control systems on biological agents and toxins. Additionally, Pakistan has strengthened the national export control system on biological agents and toxins and brought it in conformity with the Australia Group.
- Pakistan regularly submits Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) under BWC as a useful tool for increasing transparency and building trust among States Parties in implementation of the Convention.

II. Pakistan's Role in the UN Peacekeeping Missions

Peacekeeping is a key tool at the disposal of the United Nations and the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. Much of the United Nation's success in the domain of peace and security is owed to peacekeeping. UN has undertaken 71 peacekeeping operations since 1948. This includes the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), one of the first UN peacekeeping missions, that continues to monitor ceasefire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

Peacekeeping has progressively evolved and adapted itself over time to correspond to the changing nature of conflict. Traditional peacekeeping, which continues in several missions, comprises mostly of truce supervision and separation of warring sides in inter-state conflicts. Since the end of the Cold War, UN Peacekeeping mission have been increasingly deployed to handle intra-state or internal conflicts and civil wars. These missions have multidimensional mandates designed to address the political, security, humanitarian and development dimensions of complex crises, and often to ensure the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements.

1. Pakistan's role in peacekeeping

Pakistan has a longstanding commitment to UN peacekeeping, as a leading troop contributor, and has significant stake in its success. Our participation in UN peacekeeping, spanning over five decades, is the most tangible manifestation of contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, Pakistan's role in peacekeeping is underpinned by national consensus and is an integral part of our foreign policy.

Pakistani peacekeepers have earned respect and repute for their professionalism and devotion to duty. Pakistan is proud of its role in some of the notable successes of peacekeeping – Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Liberia. 172 Pakistani peacekeepers have made the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of world peace.

Currently, Pakistan is ranked fifth, contributing 4344 personnel (as of May 2023) deployed in 09 ongoing missions, Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Western Sahara (MINURSO), United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei is a United Nations peacekeeping force in Abyei, and United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS)

Pakistan has gained valuable experience in handling diverse and difficult conflict and post-conflict situations. Our personnel have supported implementation of peace agreements, deterred spoilers through robust peacekeeping, assisted host states with rule of law, institution building, disarmament and demobilization of rebels, and security sector reform, protected civilians, facilitated humanitarian assistance, provided social services, built infrastructure, and carried out quick impact projects. We have seen first-hand the inter-linkages between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and the importance of credible peace processes in order for peacekeeping to deliver.

Pakistan's contribution to peacekeeping on ground has been complemented by our sustained engagement at the policy level in the UN. Pakistan has worked with other member states and the UN Secretariat to promote shared objectives and reach common ground as we continue to evolve peacekeeping policy and practice and strengthen the peacekeeping architecture in face of the changing nature of conflict, new requirements and merging trends.

Pakistan has also been at the forefront of norm setting in peacekeeping. We engage constructively in the premier policy making body of the UN in the field of peacekeeping, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), Resolution 2086 on Multidimensional Peacekeeping, adopted under Pakistan's Presidency of the Security Council in January 2013, is considered a landmark.

Pakistan is also host to one of the UN's first peacekeeping missions, UNMOGIP, which continues to monitor the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, a task, which we greatly value as a contribution to peace and security in our fraught region.

2. Pakistani Women in Peacekeeping

Our women have also been outstanding in the field. Shahzadi Gulfam of Pakistan Police was the first ever recipient of International Female Police Peacekeeping Award in 2011. Pakistan Army is in the process of progressive enhancement of women participation in UN assignments. Currently 85 female officers are serving in various peacekeeping missions

III. Transnational Organized Crime

Transnational organized crimes pose serious challenge to the international community. They undermine rule of law, threaten peace and security, violate human rights and impede sustainable development in varying degrees in different countries across the globe. The transnational organized crimes can be broadly categorized into drug trafficking, smuggling of migrants, human trafficking, money-laundering, trafficking in firearms, counterfeit goods, wildlife and cultural property, and cybercrime.

Pakistan is fully committed to combating transnational organized crimes in all their forms and manifestations. We are cognizant of the fact that peace and stability, and rule of law are a pre-requisite for social and economic development at the domestic, regional and international levels. With this in mind, Pakistan has actively contributed to global efforts as well as policy discussions on transnational organized crimes at the United Nations and other multilateral forums.

1. Drug Trafficking:

Despite the fact that Pakistan itself is a poppy Free State since 2001, still it is a major victim and transit country of illicit drugs produced in the region. Strict drug law enforcement has resulted into domestic drug proliferation which has further added to the challenges.

Pakistan has a strong political resolve and policy of zero tolerance against any manifestation of Drug Trafficking. A dedicated act of Parliament 'Control of Narcotics Substances Act 1997' lays down the basic legal framework of Pakistan Counter Narcotics (CN) efforts. Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), Pakistan works as the premier drug law enforcement agency. Pakistan formulated a National Anti-Narcotics policy 2019 in order to effectively address the domestic drugs abuse. Main pillars of this Strategy include Drug Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation, Community Participation in Drug Demand Reduction, Mass Awareness Campaigns.

Pakistan is a signatory of United Nations and SAARC conventions of Drug Control. We have signed MOUs on drugs and psychotropic substances with 33 countries and Extradition treaties with 29 countries. Pakistan has also taken measures to promote judicial cooperation and extending Mutual Legal assistance to requesting countries.

Pakistan believes that the World Drug Problem needs to be addressed in a multilateral setting through effective and increased cooperation. It demands a multidisciplinary, mutually reinforcing, balanced and comprehensive approach to supply and demand reduction strategies. The overarching goal should be to

promote “a society free of drug abuse” based on the principle of ‘common and shared responsibility’

2. Smuggling of migrants and Trafficking in Persons:

Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in persons (TIP) are horrendous forms of transnational organized crimes. They adversely affect many countries around the world in varying degrees by undermining rule of law, promoting corruption and violating human rights. The massive scale of these crimes and the resultant multi-faceted challenges they pose to the global community can be gauged by the fact that according to UNODC’s Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022, more than 250,000 victims and 300,000 (suspected) offenders were detected worldwide between 2003 and 2021.

Being a country of origin, transit and destination, Pakistan has taken a number of policy, legislative and administrative steps to check irregular migration and TIP. Pakistan is a party to United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and also acceded to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) protocol of the convention in November, 2022. Pakistan is also considering accession to Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) Protocol of the UNTOC Convention. Domestically, In May 2018, Pakistan passed two separate legislations on smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons (i.e. the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Ordinance, 2018 and the Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act, 2018).

With a view to assisting and protecting victims of human trafficking, the Federal and Provincial Governments in Pakistan allocated more than 10 billion rupees in 2022. Pakistan’s Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), the lead national agency for controlling illegal migration and TIP, investigated 1501 cases on sex trafficking, forced labour and unspecified exploitation and prosecuted 1104 cases in 2022. The specialized unit of TIP established in FIA in 2022 coordinates between Federal and Provincial stakeholders for anti-trafficking efforts. National coordination Committee on Trafficking in persons has been constituted in February 2022, comprising of all Stakeholders. Provincial and District, Anti Human Trafficking and Anti Bonded Labour Monitoring Committees were also constituted during 2022 and are functional now.

On numerous occasions, the Government of Pakistan has launched nation-wide awareness campaigns to educate people about harms and dangers associated with irregular migration & TIP. The relevant Government departments have evolved elaborate mechanisms to encourage and ensure that migrant workers do not fall prey to human smugglers and traffickers. Cognizant of the transnational nature of the problem, FIA regularly collaborate with its counter-parts in different countries, especially along the most frequented routes of human smuggling and trafficking.

To check forced labour/child labour exploitation, the Provincial Governments have passed legislation prohibiting employment of children, in general, and at brick kilns in particular. Thousands of brick kilns and factories have been prosecuted for non-implementation of relevant labour laws.

3. Illicit Financial Flows/Money Laundering:

Illicit financial flows (IFFs) caused by tax evasion, corruption and transnational organized crimes have been recognized as a key challenge for the international community in mobilizing resources for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). IFFs affect developing countries disproportionately due to the lack of governance structures and expertise required to detect and counter them. As per estimates, seven trillion Dollars are parked in the financial “haven” countries.

Pakistan is among strident voices on international level to strengthen International Framework against Illicit Financial Flows. Pakistan has called for multiple steps under United Nations auspices; Initiate negotiations on new international tax cooperation and anti-money laundering legal instruments, like UNCAC, adopt common principles that will apply to all financial transactions and establish a UN Coordination, Adjudication and Mediation Mechanism on Illicit Financial Flows. Pakistan is an active member of Asia Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering. We've also been consistent in the implementation of the (40+9) recommendations of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Money Laundering and Terror Financing.

Pakistan has introduced strict anti-money laundering Efforts in the past decade to curb this Menace. The Anti-Money Laundering Act was passed in 2010. The financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) created under this act works with several Law enforcement agencies that are responsible for enforcing financial crime laws, including the National Accountability Bureau, the Anti-Narcotics Force, the Directorate of Customs Intelligence and Investigations (CII) and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). FIA operates a dedicated Wing i.e. Economic Crimes Wing (ECW) for curbing Money Laundering.

4. Cyber Crime and Cyber Security:

The trend of growing use of ICTs for malicious purposes/Cyber Crime undermines international security and stability, place strains on economic growth and sustainable development, and hinders the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Although some regional Conventions are in place on Cyber Crime, No Universal Convention yet exists. Pakistan welcomed the formulation of United Nations Ad-hoc Committee to formulate a comprehensive International Convention on use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for criminal purposes established in 2020, and is positively contributing towards the formulation of an International Convention. We have also been actively engaged in the negotiations in the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (OEWG) under the United Nations Framework which collaborates on the issue of Cyber Security.

Pakistan introduced National Cyber Security Policy in 2021 which provides a comprehensive direction for protecting cyber infrastructure, emerging global cyber trends, technological advancements and cyber security governance framework at large. The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) was formulated in 2016 which deals with unauthorized data access (hacking), Denial of Service (DoS) assault (DOS Attack), Electronic forgery and electronic fraud,

Cyber terrorism. Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) operates a dedicated wing to counter Cyber Crimes.

IV. Role of ARF

Future of ARF and National contributions to enhancing the ARF and regional security

Pakistan is a consistent proponent of multilateralism and an active participant in the UN and other global and regional organizations and groupings. It considers ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as an important platform for peace and security in Asia-Pacific. Pakistan thus strives to contribute constructively to its agenda-setting, policy formulation, and normative development. It is a leading voice on issues of sustainable and equitable development, climate change, debt relief, illicit financial flows, maritime security and peacekeeping. Pakistan has always maintained that the international community needs to coordinate efforts in averting risks to international peace. However, it is concerned that multilateral mechanisms and groupings are at times in competition with each other due to certain powers that wish to impose their agenda, ignoring the spirit of multilateralism and cooperation.

The ARF faces unprecedented challenges today in the face of myriad conflicts and tensions across the globe, including Ukraine-Russia conflict, growing US-China rivalry, lingering dispute of Jammu and Kashmir, Palestine, economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and situation in Myanmar. On all these issues, Pakistan's position has been consistent and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN charter. Its contributions to international peacekeeping, global campaign against transnational organized crime, terrorism and extremism, its support for the right of self-determination of Kashmiris and for peace in Afghanistan and South Asia are inspired by these ideas.

We believe that all disputes must be settled peacefully through dialogue and within the confines of international legal norms. Conflict and war are not in the interest of any country especially the developing countries which face greatest difficulties because of the instability in markets that arises because of the conflict. The ARF can contribute more meaningfully to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific if it undertakes to scale down

specific tensions or disputes in the region and attempts to bring the stakeholders to the conflict closer.

THE PHILIPPINES

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

The Indo-Pacific has increasingly become an arena for the geopolitical struggle between and among major powers, and ASEAN is in an inevitable position to play a central role in balancing the interests of big and small states. Great power rivalries create a complex web of relationships geared toward outcompeting the gains of the other. The continued implementation of grand policies of major powers, be it geopolitical or economic, has created diverging strategies, policies, and views that compel smaller states to navigate their interests and pragmatically engage the major powers while expanding their relations with other partners.

Corollary to these realities are other issues that exacerbate the security uncertainties in the region, which limit the probability of cooperative actions between and among states. These include longstanding interstate territorial and maritime disputes, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the persistence of domestic political challenges with regional repercussions. One such domestic challenge is the political tensions in Myanmar brought about by the 2021 coup d'état, which elicited strong reactions from the international community.

Two years since the military authorities took over Myanmar, the political and humanitarian situation in the country remains a serious concern. The lack of concrete positive developments, such as constructive dialogue among all parties and cessation of violence under ASEAN's Five Point Consensus, continues to be the stumbling block for ASEAN.

Apart from this, the rapid increase of tensions from the territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea unremittingly challenges regional peace and stability. The intensified implementation of grey-zone tactics through the swarming of Chinese maritime militia vessels and the militarization of strategic waters, coupled with the elusiveness of a finalized Code of Conduct, reinforce distrust in the region. These destabilizing actions blatantly violate international rule of law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS), and undermine the

commitments to the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC).

Another development is the brewing tension in the cross-strait relations that, if left unresolved, will embroil the region into full-blown armed conflict. In addition, the newly established AUKUS has received polarizing opinions among state actors in the region amid concerns that it could further escalate military competition, trigger an outright arms race, and aggravate the proliferation, testing, and existence of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, the Indo-Pacific region continues to face challenges emanating from non-traditional security issues such as terrorism, transnational crimes, natural disasters, humanitarian crises, and cybercrimes. These post-Cold War security threats require practical interstate cooperation, transparent intraregional policy coordination, and the execution of timely, efficient, enduring, and people-centred solutions.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be one of the most critical non-traditional global security issues, exposing the vulnerabilities of states, particularly in the health sector. Its effects drastically impacted economies by closing borders, which plummeted international and intra-regional manufacturing and trade relations. Adopting the new normal, countries are regaining the economic losses from the pandemic through the successful and effective inoculation of the COVID-19 vaccines that enabled the reopening of borders, societies, and international trade and economy. Nevertheless, the unequal distribution of vaccines and the disparities in research and development sectors among developed and developing countries prove that the poorest nations are the most vulnerable during pandemics.

With the rapidly evolving landscape in the international arena, maintaining global peace and stability is a daunting endeavour. Therefore, it should be imperative for each state, external partners, and stakeholders in the region to make constructive dialogue and cooperation an integral part of their strategies to manage and address both traditional and non-traditional security issues effectively. Transparent communication among states must come hand in hand with genuine intent and action on the ground. This calls for all states to explore new forms of confidence-building measures to strengthen cooperation in addressing critical contemporary international issues today:

1. Maritime Security Challenges

As a maritime and archipelagic country, the Philippines underscores the importance of balancing the exploitation of marine resources against protecting coastal and marine ecosystems to allow continued and sustained benefits for future generations.

Threats to free, open, and sustainable seas are multidimensional and trans-boundary. These include piracy and armed robbery at sea; maritime kidnapping and terrorism; trafficking in and smuggling of weapons, drugs, and persons; illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, including poaching; intentional destruction of the marine environment; climate change; and engaging in manoeuvres that increase the risk of collisions.

Disputes over maritime rights and entitlements also threaten maritime security. They hamper the capacity of coastal states to exploit their marine resources and address crimes at sea. Disregarding international law and undertaking unilateral actions, including militarizing offshore outposts and using military and paramilitary assets and technologies to assert sovereignty claims, while short of war are still coercive, increase tensions, and undermine regional stability.

To address maritime security threats, strengthening states' maritime law enforcement capabilities and capacities should be prioritized. However, since these security threats are trans-boundary in nature, sustained constructive regional dialogues are needed. These efforts must be complemented with meaningful cooperation grounded in international law, particularly the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as shared values and common maritime interests.

2. Situation in the Korean Peninsula

Since becoming a democracy in 1987, the March 2022 presidential election of the Republic of Korea (ROK) was its tightest race to date. This crucial election was won by Yoon Suk-yeol of the People Power Party (PPP) with 48.56 % of the votes, besting the ruling Democratic Party candidate Lee Jae-myung with 47.83 %.

As a presidential candidate, President Yoon promised to adopt a more aggressive strategy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) by emphasizing the abolition of DPRK's nuclear program as a prerequisite for any engagement with them. Yoon Suk-yeol's assumption in May 2022 ushered in significant foreign policy changes for the ROK and the Korean Peninsula. In his inaugural speech in May 2022, President Yoon highlighted that DPRK's denuclearization would greatly contribute to lasting peace and prosperity in the Peninsula. This point was reemphasized in Yoon's speech during ROK's 77th Liberation Day on 15 August 2022, where he also launched the "Audacious Initiative"—a plan to significantly improve DPRK's economy and its people's livelihoods in stages should DPRK halt the development of its nuclear program and embark on a genuine and substantive process for denuclearization.

Based on news reports, DPRK conducted more than ninety (90) missile launches in 2022, with most of these tests as cruise and ballistic missiles. In September 2022, the DPRK, through its parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly (PSA), passed a new law that enshrines its right to use pre-emptive nuclear strikes to protect itself. This law cements DPRK's nuclear status as "irreversible" and implies rejecting further denuclearization talks. Aside from these actions, five (5) drones from DPRK crossed over the Military Demarcation Line toward ROK last 26 December 2022 after being detected in the skies of Gimpo.

With DPRK's apparent rejection of Yoon's "Audacious Initiative," its more than 90 missile launches in 2022 alone, its new pre-emptive nuclear strike law, a looming seventh nuclear test, and other provocations, ROK is responding by strengthening its security response capabilities, and intensifying its security cooperation with the United States (US) and Japan. US, ROK, and Japanese warships performed a missile defence exercise in the Sea of Japan last October 2022, days after DPRK sent a ballistic missile over Japan.

In February 2023, the US and ROK conducted a joint military exercise simulating a response to a nuclear strike by DPRK. Further military exercises between the two countries were held for eleven (11) days, starting 13 March 2023, which is the longest uninterrupted exercise between the two allies, according to ROK media. As

part of the 70th anniversary of the US-ROK alliance in June 2023, ROK plans to hold its "largest-ever" live-fire drills involving mobilizing high-tech military equipment with the US. However, the ROK's strengthening of its security cooperation with the US and Japan could be perceived as a provocation by DPRK, creating a more heightened security dilemma in the Peninsula. In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, a robust security environment between the ROK and DPRK should cultivate sustainable peace and verifiable denuclearization.

3. Regional Power Dynamics

The competition among major powers to expand their spheres of influence is palpable in their attempt to strengthen their relations with other states through development aid, trade and investment, and health initiatives. However, these initiatives have been accompanied by asymmetrical military strategies and the use of economic carrots and sticks, which have caused great alarm in the region.

There are competing visions for regional order and norms that will govern future regional affairs. Initiatives, such as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), underscore the region's strategic and economic importance. The AUKUS, QUAD, and Five-Eyes are minilateral security arrangements that may affect the political affairs in the Indo-Pacific region. These new ideas and concepts for a regional security architecture must be harmonized to complement and enhance existing mechanisms, ensure mutually beneficial cooperation, and maintain inclusiveness. Furthermore, Southeast Asian states must delicately navigate through the complexities of this developing regional political arena and ensure that balance is kept.

Amidst regional power competition, maintaining ASEAN Centrality is vital to managing the impact of unilateral actions of major powers and their interactions in the region. Should major powers desire an active role in shaping global governance rules, it must be through international and regional organizations such as ASEAN. To play this role, however, ASEAN must demonstrate collective and coherent action.

Equally important, all states must strive to become responsible stakeholders in the global community and abide by the international rules-based order. Regional peace

and stability will rest on the commitment and efforts of all states for a stable, open, and rules-based order.

4. Terrorism

As countries in Southeast Asia begin to recover from the pandemic, the threat of terrorism in the region remains a significant challenge. In the Philippines, a complex constellation of IS-aligned factions continues to operate and has shown remarkable resilience despite the government's relentless counterterrorism efforts. The situation is more complicated because these factions often work independently, with varying levels of coordination and communication.

Among the IS-aligned factions, the Dawlah Islamiyah in Lanao, Dawlah Islamiya-Maguindanao, and Dawlah Islamiya-Soccsksargen in South Cotabato, Sarangani, and General Santos City have been particularly active in recent years. Other groups include the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and its IS-aligned elements in Basilan and Sulu, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and rogue factions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Despite the elusiveness of the designated emir of IS in Southeast Asia, Fahrudin Hadji Satar alias Abu Zacariah, Dawlah Islamiyah is expected to continue its terror campaigns in the region.

Terrorist groups in the Philippines and the broader Southeast Asian region have become adept at using various methods to indoctrinate and recruit new members, with social networks playing a crucial role in these efforts. These extensive social networks are essential not only for recruiting new members but also for financing and mobilizing terrorists.

It is crucial to highlight, however, that these recruitment and financial networks are not the only factors contributing to the resilience of terrorist groups in the region. Other variables contributing to this are weak local institutions and law enforcement mechanisms, porous borders, local grievances, social divisions, and weaponizing new technology.

While the Philippine government's successful counterterrorism efforts have weakened violent extremism in Mindanao compared to previous years, according

to the 2023 Global Terrorism Index, the government cannot afford to be complacent, given the ability of terrorist groups to utilize technological advancements. Artificial intelligence, 3D printing, autonomous vehicles, and cyber defence systems are already being weaponized in other parts of the world and may soon fall into the wrong hands. The government's counterterrorism strategy must evolve as quickly as terrorists' adaptation to the changing technological landscape and intensify cross-border cooperation.

Despite the localized concentration of terror and counterterror operations in maritime Southeast Asian countries, terrorism remains a transnational threat because their networking activities cut across national borders. Therefore, the persistence of terrorism in the Philippines necessitates the government's stronger collaboration with neighbouring countries, development partners, local government units, religious leaders, and the community. Communities in terrorist-prone areas must be empowered to play an active part in recognizing and reporting potential threats. This can be accomplished through public awareness campaigns, education and training, and the development of trust between communities and government agencies.

Additionally, national governments in the region must strengthen security laws and border controls, increase intelligence-sharing, encourage defection, strengthen the reintegration program, and improve community capacities.

As the Philippines slowly recovers from the onslaught of the pandemic, it remains imperative to strengthen social and economic institutions to build inclusive, just, and resilient communities.

5. Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Recent developments, notably the protracted Russia-Ukraine conflict, have renewed the risk of nuclear weapon use. Nuclear weapons have returned to prominence in national security strategies, and all nuclear-armed states continue extensive and expansive programs to modernize their nuclear warheads, delivery systems, and nuclear weapon production facilities. Further deterioration of the global security environment, erosion of the arms control architecture, and the

unwillingness of the parties to engage in meaningful strategic dialogue further increase the possibility of conflict between nuclear-armed states and those that rely on extended nuclear deterrence. These trends, combined with the disappointing outcome of the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), have fuelled concerns about the non-proliferation regime's fragility and future. Unsurprisingly, ASEAN has reinvigorated discussions on the signing of Nuclear Weapon States onto the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty.

6. Taiwan Strait Issue

There has been a deterioration of relations between Taiwan and China following the visit of the former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August 2022. In March and April 2023, Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen visited the US House of Representatives. This brought another swift condemnation from China which conducted military exercises and declared its troops' readiness to counter any form of "Taiwan independence" or foreign interference attempts.

The current cross-strait dynamics present continued security challenges for the ASEAN region. Tensions between Taiwan and China could escalate into a military conflict, which would have far-reaching consequences for regional peace and stability. Any escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Strait could have adverse economic implications for ASEAN countries since Taiwan is a significant regional economic player and a crucial trading partner for many ASEAN member states. Strategically, the Taiwan Strait is an important maritime corridor through which significant global trade passes. Any military conflict would impact maritime security, including freedom of navigation. Ultimately, ASEAN should maintain its call for all parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and refrain from provocative action.

7. Trafficking in Persons

The increasing use of technology in facilitating people smuggling and trafficking in persons is an urgent concern. In the Philippines' experience, nationals are illegally recruited through spurious job offers online and trafficked by criminal syndicates. Once recruited purportedly as customer service representatives, they are flown

abroad on tourist visas and then sent to remote areas to work as online cryptocurrency scammers. Some victims report that they have a daily investment quota and were being meted corporal punishment for failing to meet these.

An ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Persons Caused by The Abuse of Technology was issued during the 42nd ASEAN Summit in May 2023, providing impetus for closer cooperation to address this emerging issue.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

A. Overview of National Security and Defence Policy

The Philippines' National Security Council is finalizing the draft National Security Policy (NSP) 2023-2028. The NSP contains the statement of principles that sets the strategic policy goals and objectives of the Marcos, Jr. administration so that all instruments of national power will be used to strengthen Philippine national security. The NSP complements the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, which is the comprehensive roadmap of policies and programs toward attaining the country's long-term economic vision of becoming a "prosperous, predominantly middle-class society where no one is poor."

In line with the President Marcos, Jr. administration's promise of a stronger and better Philippines, the Philippines' Department of Defence (DND) released its 10-point agenda in July 2022, covering the following areas:

- Sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Internal security and stability;
- Disaster resilience and climate change adaptation;
- Cyber defence;
- Modernization;
- Capability and capacity development;
- Security cooperation and engagements;
- Reserve Force development;
- Welfare of soldiers, veterans, and civilian human resource;
- Legal and legislative agenda; and,
- Protection of cognitive domain.

The DND's 10-point agenda underscores the development of the defence sector's capacity to operate across an entire spectrum of operations and address the multifaceted nature of national security.

B. Data Contribution to the ARF Arms Register

i. Total defence expenditure on an annual basis

1. Defence expenditure

For the fiscal year 2023, the total new appropriations available for the DND amounts to PhP204.56 billion. More than one-half (67.7 %) or PhP138.5 billion is allocated for personnel services; about PhP59.47 billion (29.07%) will go to maintenance and other operating expenses, while PhP6.592 billion (3.22%) will be used for capital outlay. The approved defence budget is a 7.22% decrease from PhP220.48 billion in the previous year. The defence budget also makes up 3.88 % of the total government budget of PhP5.268 trillion for 2023.

2. Defence expenditure as a %age of gross domestic product (GDP)

The Philippines' 2022 defence expenditure (PhP220.86 billion/USD4.052 billion) was 1 % of its GDP (PhP22.024 trillion/USD404.079 billion).

3. Defence expenditure per capita

In 2022, the Philippine defence expenditure per capita was PhP2,019.69 (USD37.05), an increase from PhP1,775.63 (USD36.05) in the previous year.

ii. Total number of active military personnel in the national armed forces and its %age in the population

Philippine Army	103,200 (0.09%)
Philippine Navy	24,500 (0.02%)
Philippine Air Force	17,648 (0.016%)

III. National Contributions to Regional Security

A. Counterterrorism

The Philippines improved its standing in the 2023 Global Terrorism Index¹ (GTI). Still, the impact assessment remains high as it is the second country most affected by terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region. The report finds that although terrorism deaths have decreased by 9%, outside of Afghanistan, terrorism deaths have increased by 4% in the rest of the world. The lethality of attacks has increased by 26 %, and unknown jihadists have become a leading cause of terrorism deaths. The report also notes that the Islamic State and its affiliates remain the world's deadliest terrorist group.

The Philippine government's counterterrorism strategy involves a mix of military operations, law enforcement efforts, and social programs aimed at addressing the root causes of extremism. The primary focus remains to be on countering the threat posed by extremist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Dawlah Islamiyah, the Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), who continue to collaborate with local terrorist groups (LTG) to carry out terror attacks.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) conducted a series of military and law enforcement operations in various parts of the country in February 2023, neutralizing a total of 123 local terrorists and insurgents and seizing 136 weapons during the operations.² The AFP continues to conduct intelligence-driven operations to address the root of insurgency and violent extremism.

On the social front, the AFP is actively working to improve its understanding of radicalization and counter extremist views. The AFP is participating in seminars and symposia on violent extremism and engaging with local communities. The AFP executes its Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism (PCVE) framework³ through community-based and proactive programs. These include the four-day Community Support Program (CSP-PCVE) Operations Course in the Unified Commands to educate participants on Islam, radicalism, and violent extremism, instilling cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness, and educating participants on CSP-PCVE.⁴

¹ Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2023: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism* (Sydney: March 2023), <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GTI-2023-web-270323.pdf>

² Priam Nepomuceno, "AFP: 123 terrorists neutralized, 136 weapons seized in February," *Philippine News Agency*, March 6, 2023, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1196685>

³ Joviland Rita, "Philippines ranks 2nd most affected by terrorism in Asia Pacific – Global Terrorism Index," *GMA News Online*, March 23, 2023, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/864798/philippines-ranks-2nd-most-affected-by-terrorism-in-asia-pacific-global-terrorism-index/story/>

⁴ Philippine Mission to the United Nations, *Measures Undertaken by the Philippine Government to Eliminate International Terrorism* (May 2020), https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/75/int_terrorism/philippines_e.pdf

The Philippine government is committed to its whole-of-nation approach to address, mitigate, and eliminate terrorism as a national security threat. The Department of National Defence (DND) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) are leading efforts to promote a people-centred approach to counterterrorism and encourage interfaith dialogues. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), under the supervision of the DND, continues to strengthen its cooperation among government agencies to combat terrorism.

The Philippines has been working closely with other countries and international organizations in the fight against terrorism, particularly through information sharing and capacity-building. For instance, the United States (US) has donated US\$3.3 million worth of state-of-the-art equipment to the Philippine National Police (PNP) to help boost its counterterrorism capability.⁵ The equipment, which includes bomb suits, digital scanners, and X-ray sources, will enhance the PNP's capabilities in detecting, preventing, and responding to terrorist threats. The US State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security has provided training and equipment to the Philippine government since 1986, providing the PNP with over US\$100 million in assistance. This 2023, the US government's Antiterrorism Assistance Program invested more than USD5 million in the PNP.

The DND is actively involved in addressing terrorism at the international level by sharing its knowledge and expertise through cooperative activities and initiatives with the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Experts' Working Group (EWG). Moreover, it has played a significant role in establishing sub-regional initiatives aimed at strengthening counterterrorism cooperation in Southeast Asia, such as the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA) among the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The TCA is a crucial collaboration expected to enhance security in the "tri-border" area, which is vulnerable to extremist movements, kidnapping, and piracy across the three countries.

On the other hand, the DFA has been collaborating with various government units and the United Nations to enhance the country's ability to combat terrorism. The DFA organized significant visits such as the UN-Counterterrorism Executive Directorate Visit to the Philippines (CTED Visit) and the UN Countering Terrorist Travel (UNCTT) Program

⁵ Christopher Lloyd Caliwan, "PNP receives \$3-M counter-terrorism equipment from the US," *Philippine News Agency*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1196372>

Technical Assessment Visit, which aimed to reassess the country's terrorism and extremism threats. The DFA maintains its unwavering dedication to combat terrorism through global partnerships.

The DND and the DFA have been working together in facilitating the major expansion of the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Alliance (EDCA) under the US-Philippines alliance. The expansion will give the US access to four additional Philippine military bases. Under the agreement, US forces can build facilities at the military bases, preposition equipment, and rotate troops through them. The strategic locations of the bases are deemed to facilitate counterterrorism operations along with other focus areas, such as disaster relief and maritime security.⁶

In the cyberspace domain, public-private partnerships (PPP) are expected to build capacity to address the risks of cyber terrorism. The Philippines' Cybercrime Investigation and Coordination Centre (CICC) is collaborating with Binance, the world's leading blockchain ecosystem and infrastructure provider, to open the National Cybercrime Hub. The hub, operating under the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), aims to reduce the Philippines' cybercrime rate. Binance will leverage its expertise in blockchain forensics and cybercrime prosecution to aid the CICC.

B. Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

The Philippines' staunch commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is anchored in its constitution. Article II, Section 8 of the 1987 Constitution declares that "the Philippines, consistent with the national interest, adopts and pursues a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons in its territory." Regionally, the Philippines commits to preserving Southeast Asia as a region free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). The Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty of the SEANWFZ (2023-2027) identifies the actionable measures that can be adopted by the state parties to ensure compliance with the undertaking of the Treaty.

⁶ Gregory Poling, "The Transformation of the US-Philippines Alliance," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, February 2, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/transformation-us-philippines-alliance>

Rejecting the notion that nuclear weapons contribute to international stability and security, the Philippines was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force on 22 January 2021. The Philippines further showed its full support to working with the international community toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons through its active participation in the first meeting of State Parties of the TPNW held on 21-23 June 2022 in Vienna, Austria.

The Philippines affirms the complementarity between the TPNW, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The TPNW provides the legal framework for the implementation of Article 6 of the NPT and further operationalizes the disarmament measures identified in the 13 practical steps in the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the 64-point action plan in the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

After several postponements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 NPT Review Conference took place from 1-26 August 2022 in New York. The NPT Review Conference convened against the backdrop of heightened tensions, the brandishing of nuclear threats, and doubts about the credibility of the multilateral systems to secure peace. In the conference, the Philippines, through its coalitions and partners, endeavoured to affect change and bridge differences among the nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states.

On 22-23 March 2023, the Philippines and Australia co-chaired the second ARF Workshop on Nuclear Risk Reduction in Brisbane, Australia. The workshop sought to develop a shared understanding of nuclear risks; discuss the different approaches to risk reduction, including through collaborative work between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states; and consider the path forward to addressing these risks. A draft ARF Guidance Document on Nuclear Risk Reduction was circulated to the ARF members for their inputs and comments, and is envisioned to be endorsed by the ARF Foreign Ministers at their next meeting in July 2023.

The Philippines, on its own, has been hosting the Regional Secretariat of the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative (CBRN CoE) for Southeast Asia since 2013. The country also actively strengthens regional cooperation and preparedness, response, and assistance in

addressing CBRN threats by holding several workshops and table top exercises on issues such as biological threat reduction; bio-risk management; disease detection and surveillance; preparedness and response to a biological event; countering illicit trafficking of CBRN materials; and raising awareness on CBRN risk management.

On the national level, The Philippines implements a unified and whole-of-government approach to counter the threat of weapons of mass destruction under the CBRN National Action Plan. The country's diplomatic, security, health, science, and technology sectors closely coordinate to improve standards, processes, and regulations for threat reduction, risk management, preparedness, and response. The Armed Forces of the Philippines, in particular, follows the *Joint CBRN Operations Interim Manual (JCBRNO)* and the *Medical Prepared Plan in Response to CBRN and High Yield Explosives Emergencies Standard Operating Procedures*.

The Philippines also continues to strengthen its national implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540. The Strategic Trade Management Office (STMO), the dedicated agency on all matters relating to strategic trade management, launched the Philippines' e-Licensing Platform in February 2023. The e-Licensing Platform is envisioned as the one-stop shop for all strategic trade-related services, including registration and application for authorization to export strategic goods and technologies.

To raise awareness of the Philippine Strategic Trade Management Act (Republic Act No. 10697) and increase compliance by the industry, the STMO has reached out to more than 500 companies in the country. One-on-one consultations have also been provided to address specific concerns about registration and authorization requirements, setting up an Internal Compliance Programme (ICP), and classifying strategic commodities based on the Philippine National Strategic Goods List (NSGL). The STMO adopts a phased implementation approach, with registration already operational since 2019; exports authorization since 2020; transit or transshipment in 2024; re-export or re-assignment to be available in 2025; and related services and import in 2028.

C. Transnational Crime

i. Proliferation of Illicit Drugs

The nexus between drugs and crime continues to challenge the peace and order of states and threaten human security.⁷ With the ultimate goal of preventing the spread of illicit drugs, the Philippines implements its Philippine Anti-Illegal Drug Strategy (PADS), serving as the government's blueprint to harmonize the efforts of national and local government agencies against illegal drugs while upholding the rule of law.

Concomitantly, the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB)—the primary agency tasked to oversee the Philippine illegal drugs situation—has been an active institution in implementing various development-based policies, programs, and services by engaging the youth, family, employment, educators, health professionals, and other sectors through scientific and evidenced-based education, knowledge and information-sharing on the effects and consequences of illegal drugs to the lives of people and society.⁸

The Philippines views the spread of illicit drugs as a health problem. In this light, the Philippines continues to implement the Community-Based Drug Rehabilitation Programs (CBDRP), which recognize the vital role of local communities in creating a conducive environment for the treatment and rehabilitation of people who use drugs (PWUDs)⁹. This effort runs in congruence with the government's advocacy of creating drug-resistant and self-policing communities through the implementation of the Barangay Drug Clearing Program (BDCP) aimed at reducing drug-affectation by restricting the supply, demand, and harm mechanism brought by illegal drugs.

This people-centred initiative is made possible by establishing the Integrated Drug Monitoring and Reporting Information System (IDMRIS) that monitors the implementation of anti-drug programs by national agencies, local government units, and partner groups and organizations. The government's Integrated Drug Abuse Data and Information Network (IDADIN) is an online data pooling and collection system used by Treatment and Rehabilitation Facilities nationwide for the treatment, rehabilitation, and aftercare of drug dependents. Moreover, the

⁷ Susanne MacGregor, Editorial: "The Drugs-Crime Nexus, Drugs: Education, Prevention, and Policy", Taylor & Francis Group, 2000.

⁸ Dangerous Drugs Board, "Philippine National and Regional Initiatives, Efforts and Achievements in Combating the Spread of Illicit Drugs January 2022 - March 2023", 18 April 2023.

⁹ Ibid.

enactment of Republic Act No. 1152 on 29 January 2021 strengthens the government's judicial position in prosecuting drug-related cases by intensifying the investigation of unscrupulous financial transactions of drug-related activities.

At the regional level, the Philippines supports ASEAN initiatives such as the ASEAN Drug Monitoring Network (ADMN) and the ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025. In the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters, the Philippines continues to commit itself to the policies and best practices on institutionalizing treatment and rehabilitation initiatives that it benchmarked as the Chair of the Treatment and Rehabilitation Working Group. The country has also collaborated with The Colombo Plan on implementing the Universal Prevention Curriculum (UPC) with the Department of Education and the ASEAN Training Centre for Preventive Drug Education in meeting the demands for evidence-based practices in substance abuse prevention.

At the global level, the Philippines adheres to the anti-drug policies enshrined in various international protocols, laws, and standards, such as the United Nations (UN) General Assembly 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation toward an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem. The country also supports the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's policy of establishing an Early Warning System (EWS) within states. The Philippines believes that establishing EWS will bolster its national capacity to address the rapidly evolving flow of the synthetic drug market in the region.

ii. Trafficking in Persons

The Philippines retained its Tier 1 status in the 2022 State Department Report on Trafficking in Persons, denoting that the country has fully met the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons under the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 by demonstrating serious and sustained efforts to address the problem during the covered period. The report acknowledged the government's capacity in anti-trafficking despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

The country recognizes the changing trends observed in cases of trafficking in persons, especially with the rise of online markets. Efforts to address these through the passing of laws and strengthening cooperation amongst government agencies and partners in the region have been taken to combat the issue.

In response to growing exploitation on the internet and to maximize technology in prosecuting this crime, Republic Act No. 11862, or the "Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022," was passed on 23 June 2022. This act allows for internet intermediaries, including social media platforms and financial and e-commerce industries, to be held accountable for knowingly or by gross negligence allowing their infrastructure to be used for human trafficking purposes. The measure would also enable law enforcers to pursue investigations of violations involving the use of the internet and other digital platforms upon a written order from the court. It provides measures for dealing with crime in the context of the pandemic, disasters, and other humanitarian crises. Finally, it seeks to provide the rescue and subsequent rehabilitation of trafficking victims.

On 14 June 2022, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) and the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) was signed to strengthen their cooperation and coordination in the investigation and prosecution of money laundering and trafficking in persons. Through the strengthened partnership of these two bodies, they can exchange information vital to the investigation and prosecution of these crimes and carry out joint training to ensure the interoperability of their respective personnel.

The Philippines hosted the 8th Manila International Dialogue on Human Trafficking: "Strengthening Cooperation in South East Asia" last 13 December 2022. ASEAN countries explored how to build complementing and formal mechanisms to strengthen international cooperation in combating trafficking in persons.

The Philippines continues to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts in the prosecution of traffickers and the rescue of victims. The Bureau of Immigration reported that in 2022, 472 Filipinos who deferred from departure were "found to be victims of human trafficking or illegal recruitment."

The Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Centre (PICACC), in 2021 alone, has rescued 154 victims and arrested 48 suspects, and more than 500 since 2019. The PICACC is a result of the collaboration between the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine National Police, the Australian Federal Police, the UK National Crime Agency, the National Policy of the Netherlands, and the

International Justice Mission to strengthen global law enforcement collaboration in combating the online sexual exploitation of children.

Comprehensive services to trafficked victims for their physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society are also paramount. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has a Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons, which provides temporary shelter, counselling, and legal assistance to trafficking victims, as well as skills training and job placement services.

In ASEAN, the Philippines in its capacity as lead shepherd for cooperation against trafficking in persons under ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) is spearheading the development of a Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against Trafficking in Persons 2023-2028, the successor plan to the Bohol TIP Work Plan 2017-2020. The Philippines also led the adoption of Terms of Reference of National Representatives for the Implementation of the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) in September 2022. The national representatives will be tasked to coordinate on the implementation of the ACTIP at the national level.

D. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

Situated in the Western Pacific typhoon belt, the Philippines is constantly exposed to various natural disasters, including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tropical storms. The Philippines has lost over US\$10 billion within the last ten years due to climate-related hazards. According to the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), an average of 22 tropical cyclones enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility every year. In 2022, the country was beset by 18 tropical storms, 5 of which made landfall. The most significant typhoons were Tropical Storms Agaton, Karding, and Paeng.

The Philippines continues to be guided by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (NDRRMP) 2011-2028. It serves as the compass for the country to execute proactive policies and initiatives to tackle the impact of climate change, as well as natural and human-induced hazards. The NDRRMP is anchored on various global, regional, and national development and policy frameworks, including the Paris Agreement, UN Sustainable Development Goals, ASEAN Agreement on Disaster

Management and Emergency Response, and the Philippine National Climate Change Action Plan.

The Philippines also partners with different ARF members to build its capacity and coordinate activities for timely emergency response. In 2022, the Philippines and Australia conducted HADR exercises in Manila as part of the latter's flagship regional maritime engagement activity, Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2022. On 9 February 2023, the Philippines and Japan signed the Terms of Reference (TOR) concerning Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief activities, which aims to simplify procedures on visitations by the Japan Self-Defence Forces to the Philippines during natural disasters. The Philippines-US Balikatan military exercises are also an example of intra-ARF partnerships that include capacity-building in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

The Philippines is one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world but also one of the most vulnerable to climate-related hazards. As such, the Philippines is committed to the fight against climate change by supporting initiatives and mechanisms that address climate-related issues. The Philippines has been very active in its commitment to the Paris Agreement and other international cooperation mechanisms. The country has identified its goal of a 75% greenhouse gas emission (GHG) reduction by 2030 in its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement.

Chapter 15 of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, entitled "Accelerate Climate Action and Strengthen Disaster Resilience," provides a comprehensive plan of action involving the government, the general public, and respective stakeholders. In line with this, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) has committed to updating and strengthening programs and mechanisms that will enable the Philippines to reach its goal of mitigating climate-related hazards. While Chapter 15 provided a targeted framework for the Philippines' plan of action towards climate-related threats, other climate change-related action points were also iterated in other chapters of the PDP, further reflecting the holistic nature of the issue.

In November 2022, the Philippines and other ASEAN Member states joined the 27th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP-27), held in Egypt, to reaffirm their commitment to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. The Philippines also echoes the Joint Statement of ASEAN in its call for collective action toward mitigating and addressing the climate crisis.

The country supports the ASEAN State of Climate Change Report and other regional efforts to address the climate crisis.

Climate change-related natural disasters require a collective regional approach. International cooperation should be encouraged and intensified to ensure an effective, comprehensive response to these challenges. Through enhanced capacity-building, information-sharing and joint activities, the Philippines and ASEAN can achieve more in their goals toward regional resilience and stability.

E. Maritime Security

As a maritime and archipelagic state, the Philippines regards maritime security highly in its priorities. The country remains fully committed to the amicable resolution of territorial and maritime disputes, effective management of crimes at sea, freedom, and safety of navigation, and the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and in cooperation with regional partners and the international community. The country also seriously addresses issues such as piracy and armed robbery at sea; maritime kidnapping and terrorism; trafficking in and smuggling of weapons, drugs, and persons; illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, including poaching; intentional destruction of the marine environment, especially coral reef ecosystems; climate change; and engaging in manoeuvres that increase the risk of collisions at sea.

The South China Sea Issue

The Philippines aspires to realize a peaceful, stable, secure, and prosperous South China Sea. The country emphasizes the importance of the peaceful settlement of disputes which involves the non-threat and non-use of force, friendly and cordial consultations, and negotiations in good faith, and promoting a healthy environment conducive to dispute settlement. It ensures that these aspirations are upheld under international law and the rules-based international order, including the Charter of the United Nations and the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes.

Promoting the rule of law is paramount to the Philippines. It firmly believes that the 1982 UNCLOS and the Award on the South China Sea Arbitration of 12 July 2016 set a clear framework for a peaceful, fair, just, and equitable solution for all maritime disputes. In his remarks during the 6th anniversary of the Award in 2022, Foreign Affairs Secretary

Enrique A. Manalo stressed that the Award is final, and the Philippines rejects attempts to undermine it. The Philippines appreciates the growing support from other states for the Award.

Aside from UNCLOS, the Philippines also adheres to the principle of ASEAN Centrality. As a member of the regional bloc, the Philippines reaffirms its commitment to maintain and promote peace, security, and stability in the region, as well as to the peaceful resolution of disputes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with international law.

The Philippines, as a signatory to the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), underscores the urgency and importance of the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) consistent with international law, including the UNCLOS. The Philippines welcomes the continuation of the negotiations on the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) and the commitment of the parties to expedite the conclusion of the COC. The Philippines commits to collaborating closely with Myanmar as the Country Coordinator for the ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations for 2021-2024 to ensure continued progress in the COC negotiations.

In addition, the Philippines reiterates the importance of promoting and maintaining a conducive environment for the COC negotiations. Actions that coerce, intimidate, provoke and escalate tensions undermine mutual trust and confidence, violate state sovereignty and sovereign rights and jurisdiction guaranteed by international law, particularly the UNCLOS, and only impede the progress of COC negotiations. The Philippines encourages all parties to continue exploring practical avenues for maritime cooperation under the 2002 DOC

On functional cooperation, the Philippines hopes for substantive regional cooperation from the 2017 Declaration for a Decade of Coastal and Marine Environment Protection in the South China Sea (2017-2027), which affirms the commitment of the ASEAN-Member States and China to preserve and sustainably manage coastal and marine ecosystems in the South China Sea.

International Initiatives on Maritime Security

To manage other various maritime security threats in the Indo-Pacific region, the Philippines supports ASEAN-led maritime security fora, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ARF-ISM on MS), the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

In the ARF, the Philippines is co-chairing a three-part ARF Training Series on the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code with India, Papua New Guinea, and the United States. The training series aims to increase understanding and implementation of the ISPS Code among ARF members, with a view to developing a regional manual highlighting best practices of implementation, identifying compliance drills and exercises, and providing resources for technical assistance. Part 1 of the training series was held in September 2022 at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, United Kingdom, while Part 2 was held in April 2023 in Mumbai, India. A Best Practices Manual, intended as the outcome of the Training Series, is expected to be completed in Part 3 in Papua New Guinea.

The Philippines hosted the 2nd EAS Workshop on Maritime Cooperation on 30 August to 01 September 2022. The workshop featured experts from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC) where they discussed the current status of the oceans in East Asia and the Indo-Pacific regions, and how EAS states are implementing regional and international commitments concerning ocean sustainability. The workshop participants reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening regional cooperation in achieving "clean, healthy, and sustainable oceans."

In December 2022, the Philippines hosted the 12th AMF and the 10th EAMF. The iteration of the 12th AMF featured an evaluation of the implementation of the 1982 UNCLOS in its 40th anniversary: assessment of maritime-related activities in ASEAN and exchange of views on regional maritime developments. The Philippines stressed that cooperation under these ASEAN-led fora facilitates a clear path in realizing the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

Acknowledging the importance of regional efforts to protect and preserve the marine environment, the Philippines hosts the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in Los Baños, Laguna. ACB fosters collaboration among ASEAN Member States on biodiversity conservation, such as through the ASEAN Heritage Parks Program. The Philippines also recognizes the roles of the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) in bolstering regional cooperation on sustainable marine economic development and marine environmental protection.

The Philippines advocates for greater cooperation among regional coast guards and maritime law enforcement agencies. In November 2022, coast guards from the ASEAN-Member States signed the ASEAN Coast Guard Declaration cementing and formalizing their commitment towards promoting "safe, peaceful, and secure ASEAN seas." By the 2nd quarter of 2023, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) will host the Expert's Working Group Meeting of ASEAN Coast Guards.

The Philippines is pleased with the conclusion of the Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty or the High Seas Treaty adopted last 04 March 2023. This monumental, legally binding international agreement under the 1982 UNCLOS sets forth the equitable, holistic, and sustainable management of marine resources on the high seas.

Bilateral Maritime Cooperation

To complement ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms, the Philippines also utilizes bilateral channels in dealing with other claimant states in the South China Sea to discuss regional developments, issues, and pragmatic maritime security cooperation, among other concerns. The Philippines and China hold the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea (BCM). Announced through the Philippines-China Joint Statement following former President Rodrigo R. Duterte's state visit to China in 2016, it is a confidence-building mechanism for the regular exchange of views on maritime issues and discussion on maritime areas of cooperation, including security, fisheries, and environment. In the most recent BCM held in March 2023, the Philippines and China explored new initiatives for practical maritime cooperation while reaffirming their adherence to international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

Exclusive economic zone boundary agreement with Indonesia, the two states held the First Special Meeting of the Joint Permanent Working Group on Maritime and Ocean Concerns (JPWG-MOC) on the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf Boundary in July 2022. In October 2022, the Philippines and Indonesia signed the "Principles and Guidelines" document marking a significant step for the continental shelf boundary delimitation between the two states. This document serves as the cornerstone for delimiting their continental shelf boundary. The parties also reaffirmed that the provisions under the 1982 UNCLOS will be the basis of the delimitation process. The Philippines considers this maritime boundary delimitation agreement with Indonesia a valuable example of peaceful and rules-based dispute settlement under the 1982 UNCLOS.

With Vietnam, the Philippines held the 10th Meeting of the Philippines-Vietnam JPWG-MOC in Ha Long City on 15-16 May 2023. Both sides agreed to explore a broad range of maritime cooperation activities to enhance their strategic partnership, as well as strengthen coordination on maritime issues in regional and multilateral bodies, especially in working towards the conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct on the South China Sea (COC). They committed to work together to protect their rights and legitimate interests under 1982 UNCLOS, and enhance confidence-building measures between relevant agencies.

Regarding maritime cooperation with non-ASEAN partners, the Philippines met with Australia in June 2022 at the 2nd Philippines-Australia Maritime Dialogue. They agreed to strengthen maritime cooperation in fisheries, maritime domain awareness, marine environmental protection, defence, and marine science. This agreement was reaffirmed during the 6th Philippines-Australia Strategic Dialogue in November 2022. The Philippines and South Korea held their inaugural Maritime Dialogue in September 2022, discussing possible cooperation in maritime domain awareness, marine environment protection, and the ocean economy. The Philippines and Japan co-organized their 5th Maritime Dialogue in March 2023. The parties exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, including regional efforts to maintain peace and stability, climate change, and the vital waterways of the two states. The Philippines looks forward to the 2nd Maritime Dialogue with the United States set this 2023. The planned dialogue aims to provide an opportunity to explore potential areas of maritime cooperation. These bilateral engagements will expand as the Philippines deepens its maritime cooperation with like-minded states.

convergence of all government agencies in implementing it. It outlines steps for coordination through the National Cybersecurity Inter-Agency Committee (NCIAC) and establishes two national-level Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs).¹⁴ The ambitious endeavour is seen to be achievable through the collaboration of government agencies, the private sector, and all branches of government.

The ardent resolve of the Philippines to strengthen its cybersecurity posture is also in line with its commitment to boost the capacity of the intra-ASEAN cybersecurity landscape through the ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy (2021-2025) as the bloc continues to capacitate itself in facing threats emanating from digital industrialization.¹⁵

The Philippines also hosted the Third ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings on 06-10 February 2023 in Boracay, Aklan, which provided a venue for discussion on ICT-related issues among others.

IV. Role of the ARF

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the inception of the ARF. Over three decades, the ARF has been constantly adapting to the ever-changing security challenges. Apart from engaging stakeholders to discuss matters involving traditional security issues such as maritime security and non-proliferation and disarmament, the ARF has also given importance to the discussion of non-traditional security concerns such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), counterterrorism, cybersecurity, transnational crime and drug trafficking, and marine environmental protection. The expansion of issues being tackled in the ARF also broadens the opportunity for cooperation. The region has more to gain with a peaceful and stable environment than one fraught with unresolved conflicts, brewing tensions, and miscalculations. Hence, the Philippines reaffirms its commitment to play an active role in the endeavours of the ARF as a platform for confidence-building and preventive diplomacy.

The country will continue collaborating with the ARF and its partners to strengthen existing institutional mechanisms for crisis management and raise awareness on critical issues. The Philippines has been engaging in multi-track diplomacy. Track 1 efforts of the

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ ASEAN Secretariat, "ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy (2021-2025)", ASEAN Digital Sector, n.d, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/01-ASEAN-Cybersecurity-Cooperation-Paper-2021-2025_final-23-0122.pdf. See also ASEAN Indonesia 2023 Chairman's Statement wherein AMS lauded the progress made on the implementation of the ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy (2021-2025).

Department of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies continue to be complemented by Track 2 and 1.5 initiatives of various think tanks and academic institutions through timely research studies and recommendations on issues and problems with foreign policy implications, including conflict analyses and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Looking ahead, the ARF must not only provide mechanisms for collaboration among nations while asserting the principle of ASEAN Centrality but also deliver tangible and measurable results that address shared concerns. It must achieve its primary goal of developing effective preventive diplomacy (PD) mechanisms and conflict resolution. The future and relevance of ARF will depend on its ability to shape the discourse and take action toward a direction that contributes to regional stability and development. For its part, ASEAN must be able to balance the interests of various external partners and ensure that outcomes benefit all stakeholders. ***

REPUBLIC OF KOREA (SOUTH KOREA)

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

Today, this region and the world are faced with a polycrisis—major power rivalry and geopolitical tensions are placing the rules-based international order under increasing strain while non-traditional security challenges continue to pose significant risks to the global and regional efforts for economic recovery, public health resilience and climate change mitigation and adaptation among others.

As the regional security environment becomes increasingly uncertain and complex, dialogue and confidence-building efforts will be important to successfully navigate through the challenges. It is against this backdrop that ASEAN set forth the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific which provides a guide for ASEAN's engagement in the region for peace, stability, and prosperity. Based on its firm support for ASEAN Centrality and the principles of the AOIP, the ROK is committed to working with partners in the region to promote freedom, peace and prosperity. Given the ASEAN Regional Forum's unique role in confidence-building and preventive diplomacy over the past 30 years, and as the founding member of the forum, the ROK is committed to strengthening the ARF's role to advance peace and stability in this region.

a. Korean Peninsula

Despite its economic hardship and dire food situation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) continues to escalate tensions with a series of missile provocations. Since last year, the DPRK has launched over 100 ballistic missiles, including more than ten intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launches. These missile launches are not only clear violations of and flagrant disregard for UN Security Council resolutions but also pose a serious threat to the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula, the entire region, and beyond.

It is particularly concerning that the DPRK revealed its intention to further accelerate the advancement of its nuclear and missile programs. The DPRK significantly lowered the bar for potential nuclear use and is becoming increasingly bold with its nuclear threats. For example, in March and April 2023, the DPRK launched a solid-fuel ICBM,

tested an underwater nuclear attack drone, and unveiled a tactical nuclear warhead called Hwasan-31 for the first time. It even threatened to "use the Pacific as its firing range."

This year somberly marks the 30th anniversary of the DPRK's withdrawal from the NPT. Over the last three decades, the international community has been earnestly calling for the DPRK to return to the path of complete denuclearization. However, the DPRK has been blatantly ignoring these calls. In April 2023, during his address to a joint session of the US Congress, the ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol has reaffirmed his proposal "Audacious Initiative" for the DPRK. However, the DPRK continues to ignore the ROK and US' calls for dialogue, while continuously developing its nuclear and missile capabilities.

In the face of this disturbing situation, the international community must unite and send a clear message: it will never accept the DPRK's possession of nuclear weapons or tolerate its blatant provocations. It is deeply regretful that the Security Council has failed to adopt a resolution on the DPRK's repeated ICBM launches despite its mandate from previous resolutions and overwhelming support from its members.

The international community's united and firm response is crucial for curbing the DPRK's incessant destabilizing activities. As the DPRK gears up to reopen its borders, full implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions should be prioritized. Particular attention must be given to UNSC Resolution 2397 (2017), which requires UN Member States to repatriate all DPRK labourers earning income in their jurisdictions, unless repatriation is prohibited by applicable national or international law. UN Member States should ensure that no work authorizations are renewed or granted to overseas DPRK labourers consistent with UNSC Resolution 2375 (2017) and address the DPRK's attempts to evade sanctions.

Furthermore, overseas DPRK IT workers continue to use forged identities and nationalities to evade UNSC sanctions and earn income, which funds the DPRK's unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs. It is deeply concerning that the DPRK supports these programs also by stealing and laundering funds as well as gathering information through malicious cyber activities. According to the UN Panel of Experts,

the DPRK attempted to steal as much as 2 billion USD between 2015 and 2019 through cyber means. Private industry estimates suggest the DPRK stole up to 1.7 billion USD in cryptocurrency in 2022 alone.

While the ROK-US combined defence posture remains solid and fully prepared to respond to any further provocations by the DPRK, the Alliance is also committed to the complete denuclearization of the DPRK. The door to dialogue remains open. In his state visit to the US in April 2023, President Yoon Suk Yeol, alongside President Joe Biden, reiterated the ROK and US' commitment to diplomacy with the DPRK as the only viable means of achieving lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula and called on the DPRK to return to negotiations. President Biden also reaffirmed his support for the goals of the ROK's Audacious Initiative, which will significantly improve the DPRK's economy and livelihood once Pyongyang halts its nuclear program and begins a substantive denuclearization process.

Meanwhile, the DPRK's human rights and humanitarian situation remains deeply concerning. In this context, the ROK government is strengthening cooperation with the international community to improve the human rights situation in the DPRK. In July 2022, the ROK government appointed an Ambassador for International Cooperation on North Korean Human Rights and returned as a co-sponsor of the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council resolution on North Korean Human Rights. In addition, as part of its efforts to enable the international community to be better informed about the grave human rights situation in the DPRK, the ROK government has recently published the "2023 North Korean Human Rights Report." The ROK government will continue its efforts to promote human rights in the DPRK.

b. ROK's Vision for Regional Cooperation

For over three decades, the ROK has been a steadfast partner of ASEAN and active participant of ASEAN-led mechanisms. The ROK takes part in various ASEAN platforms including the ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, East Asia Summit (EAS), ADMM+, EAMF as well as the ARF to promote peace and growth through dialogue and a habit of cooperation among countries the region. In this regard, the ROK is committed to providing

steadfast support for ASEAN Centrality and a rules-based multilateral order in this region.

Recently, this region is witnessing growing uncertainties in the security environment. There is growing concern about democratic backsliding, challenges to universal values such as the rule of law and attempts at unilateral change of the status quo by force. To strengthen a regional order that enables countries in the region to cooperate and prosper together, it is imperative to foster a peaceful environment that upholds and international norms and universal values.

To this end, the ROK set out its foreign policy vision as a “global pivotal state” that actively seeks out agenda for cooperation work with other key nations to build a sustainable and resilient regional order. Under this vision, the ROK announced the Strategy for a Free, Peaceful and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region, at the 23rd ASEAN-ROK Summit in Phnom Penh in 2022. It underscores ROK’s commitment to increase its role and contribution in the region, based on three principles of cooperation-inclusiveness, trust, and reciprocity.

The strategy highlights ROK’s commitment to deepen bonds with ASEAN, as a key partner in building peace and shared prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. To put this commitment into action, the ROK-launched the Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative (KASI), as a regional policy tailored to ASEAN within the framework of our Indo-Pacific Strategy. KASI is anchored in ROK’s firm support for ASEAN Centrality and the AOIP (ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific). It also aims to foster a more comprehensive partnership with ASEAN by broadening our cooperation which has been largely focused on economic and socio-cultural areas to include traditional and non-traditional security fields as well as future and emerging issues.

Also, recognizing the effectiveness of sub-regional approach in addressing development gaps, the ROK has been strengthening sub-regional cooperation with ASEAN Member States as well. In the Mekong sub-region, the ROK focuses on cooperation in areas such as human resources development, infrastructure, and environment with a view to promoting the region’s sustainable economic and social

development. The ROK also established partnership with the BIMP-EAGA to contribute to promoting inclusive and balanced growth in the maritime sub-region.

Furthermore, the ROK seeks to generate synergy by strengthening cooperation and coordination among the policies and initiatives of ASEAN and dialogue partners. Over the years, many countries in the region have stepped up engagement with the Indo-Pacific region under various strategies, policies and initiatives. Sharing common values of openness, inclusiveness, transparency, and respect for international norms, coordination among these strategies, policies and initiatives is expected to generate synergy in safeguarding a rules-based order and promoting greater stability.

The ROK has been committed to working together with ARF partners in implementing such initiatives. In addition to harmonizing ROK's policy on ASEAN with ASEAN's major initiatives and plans, including the AOIP and ACRF, the ROK held policy dialogues with US, Australia, and the EU to explore areas of collaboration to promote public health, connectivity, maritime security, and digital transformation among others in the Indo-Pacific region.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

a. Overview of the ROK's National Security and Defence Policy

The ROK government has established and been promoting its National Security Strategy that includes the vision of a Peaceful and Prosperous Korean Peninsula in the security domain. While maintaining robust security, the ROK government is determined to realize denuclearization and establish permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The ROK military has established and promotes defence policies to realize the vision of Competent Security, Robust Defence. The ROK will maintain its robust security posture in support of the establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, and will continue its efforts in developing a science and technology-based military power. Furthermore, the ROK seeks to foster an advanced military culture in order to build a trusted military that stands by the people.

b. Data Contribution to the ARF Arms Register (The ROK's defence expenditure in 2022)

- i . Total defence expenditure : KRW 54,611 billion
- ii . Defence expenditure as a %age of the GDP : 2.53%
- iii . Defence expenditure per capita : KRW 0.001 billion

III. National Contribution to Regional Security

The ROK has been working with ARF participants both bilaterally and multilaterally to address ongoing and emerging security threats in the region. The ROK has taken the initiative to address disarmament, non-proliferation, and ICT security issues; engage actively in maritime security and disaster management issues; and doubled its efforts to fight against terrorism and transnational crimes.

a. Counter-terrorism

Terrorism and violent extremism continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. With the global increase in the use of the Internet and social media during the pandemic, terrorists and violent extremists are stepping up their attempts to spread violent extremism content through online platforms. The ROK stands firm by its position that terrorism should be eradicated and not be tolerated in any form and has been doubling its efforts to combat terrorism at the national, regional, and global levels.

Recognizing the challenges and opportunities related to new technologies in countering terrorism, the ROK government is working closely with the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) to make the world safer and less vulnerable to technology-enabled terrorism through the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Specifically, the ROK government is funding the UNOCT Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Cybersecurity and New Technologies to support UN Member States in cybersecurity activities.

The ROK government is also working with UNOCT to help countries strengthen their border security and increase their capacity for countering and preventing terrorism

through its joint project with the UN Counter-Terrorism Center (UNCCT), namely the Initiative to Expand the UNCCT Border Security and Management Good Practices in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a follow-up activity, the ROK government co-hosted the regional workshop with the UNOCT for the Southeast Asia region to promote the best practices in border security and management in October 2022.

The ROK government is also actively participating in the global fight against terrorist financing. The ROK has worked together with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to prevent illegal financial transactions and encourage member states to implement relevant policies. The FATF's Mutual Evaluation Report published in April 2020 recognized that the ROK had improved its legal framework since its last evaluation, including its terrorist financing offenses and confiscation regime. Along with its international contribution, the ROK faithfully implemented UN Security Council resolutions 1267, 1988, 1989, and 2253 to prevent terrorist-related financial flows into domestic institutions.

b. Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control, and Disarmament

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their means of delivery continue to pose grave challenges to the global community, and the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programs remain a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. To counter such circumstances, the ROK will continue to faithfully implement relevant UN Security Council Resolutions until the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the DPRK has been achieved.

The ROK remains firmly committed to the full implementation of the Non-Proliferation of the Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT), which has been the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The ROK will actively contribute to maintaining and further strengthening the NPT regime. The ROK has actively participated in the last NPT review process and will continue to work with other states parties for balanced progress across all of its three pillars. In order to facilitate progress in nuclear disarmament, the ROK is also actively participating in the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament Initiative as one of the co-chairs of the subgroup 2, the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, and

the Stockholm Initiative. The ROK will closely cooperate with its partners to achieve concrete deliverables. In addition, the ROK will continue to seek an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and call for an immediate start of the negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

In response to the growing risk of WMD terrorism, the ROK is working toward a full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540. The ROK welcomes the extension of the mandate of the 1540 Committee to November 2032, based on UNSCR 2663. As preventing WMDs and related materials from falling into the hands of terrorists is vital, the ROK has been making efforts to implement UNSCR 1540 effectively. Such efforts include chairing the 1540 committee in the 2013-2014 term, hosting industrial outreach conferences in September 2016 and September 2018, and providing financial assistance for the UNSCR 1540 online education program in 2018 and 2019 and for the project on applying emerging technologies to help strengthen UNSCR 1540 implementation in 2022.

As one of the original States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the ROK has actively participated in international efforts to support and strengthen the regime and prevent chemical weapon use. As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the ChemTech Centre project in 2017, the ROK has since continued to make financial contributions on an annual basis. The ROK has also been hosting the Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry annually with the OPCW to facilitate regional cooperation in chemical safety and security since 2012. With the resumption of in-person events in 2022, the ROK looks forward to the eleventh workshop in 2023.

The ROK has also contributed to supporting the Biological Weapons Convention since its ratification. The ROK welcomes the adoption of the Final Document at the 9th BWC Review Conference in 2022. During the Review Conference, the ROK held a side event on bio risk management and presented the outcome of the ARF Table Top Exercise on Response Capabilities to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Incidents, which the ROK, the Republic of the Philippines, and the United States of America co-hosted. The ROK will actively participate in the Working Group discussion on strengthening the Convention and continue its contribution to reinforcing the BWC.

Moreover, fast-paced technological advancements in new domains, such as autonomous weapons systems and outer space, are becoming a new sphere of strategic competition, posing severe challenges to the current international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In response to these challenges, the ROK has actively participated in the relevant fora on specific disarmament issues, such as the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, to contribute to developing norms in these areas. As such, the ROK sponsored the UN General Assembly First Committee's resolutions on "Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours" (A/RES/75/36, A/RES/76/231) as well as the resolution on "Destructive direct-ascent anti-satellite missile testing" (A/RES/77/41). The ROK will constructively engage in relevant fora including the UN Open-ended Working Group.

As a reliable and long-standing supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the ROK imposes strict control over illicit transfers and diversion of conventional arms while respecting the principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Drawing on its advanced national control system and best practices, the ROK now serves as the President of the 9th session of the Conference of States Parties to the ATT. As President, the ROK is actively promoting the treaty's universalization, effective implementation, and transparency among State Parties and private sector entities. The ROK reaffirms its commitment to establishing the highest possible common standards for arms transfers.

The ROK has relentlessly sought ways to strengthen the global counter-proliferation regime and actively participated in relevant international efforts such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). As part of such efforts, the ROK has been attending the annual PSI Operational Experts Group meetings and Asia-Pacific Exercise Rotation (APER) exercises. In May 2023, the ROK held a High-Level Political Meeting (HLPM) of the PSI to mark the 20th anniversary of its launch. Alongside the HLPM, the ROK also hosted APER exercise, Eastern Endeavour 23, to enhance the interdiction capabilities of the participating countries. The ROK will continue working closely with the PSI partners to strengthen global counter-proliferation efforts.

Since 2002, the ROK and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs have co-hosted the annual ROK-UN Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues. The 21st conference held in November 2022 brought together disarmament and non-proliferation experts from governments, international organizations, academia, and civil society organizations. Under the theme “Assessing the future disarmament landscape: space security and missile development,” the participants held an intensive discussion on new and emerging challenges in the international security environment in the face of rapidly growing threats to space systems and the recommencement of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s missile tests.

The ROK will continue to seek ways to contribute constructively to the international community’s discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation issues. In December 2021, a resolution titled “Youth, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation” was adopted at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, making it the second ROK-led resolution to be adopted. In addition, the ROK hosted the Disarmament and Non-proliferation Youth Camp on June 2022 in Daejeon, Korea. The camp held two special sessions with experts on new and emerging agendas such as Lethal Autonomous Weapon System and space security, both of which were actively discussed by the thirty young participants. It provided a good opportunity to promote understanding of and to engage youth in the emerging issues. The ROK will explore ways to further increase youth engagement in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation.

c. Transnational Crime

ASEAN SOMTC (Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime) has been a major platform to discuss transnational crimes such as terrorism, arms smuggling, illicit human and drug trafficking. It facilitates exchange of best policies and experiences on related issues, and enable the participating countries to collaborate on capacity building, training and sharing of information.

In this regard, the ROK participated in the 15th ASEAN SOMTC + ROK in July 2022, and the 3rd AMMTC + ROK. ROK shared its preventive measures and responses to

effectively deal with such crimes, and stressed the importance of effective regional and international cooperation in law enforcement, investigation, and monitoring.

The ROK has been stepping up its efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers pursuant to its Criminal Act and, by doing so, to identify and protect victims of human trafficking. The ROK amended its Criminal Act in 2013 to introduce a new provision on trafficking as part of its efforts to meet the standards of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). In August 2016, the ROK's National Human Rights Commission developed the Indicators for the Identification and Protection of Trafficking in Persons, which were distributed to relevant government branches and recommended for use as guidelines for identifying and protecting victims. The ROK enacted the Act on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Victim Protection in March 2021, which requires establishing government-wide measures to prevent trafficking in persons and enhance support for the victims. In February 2023, the ROK actively engaged in Executive Policy and Development Symposium on Transnational Organised Crime held by the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA). The ROK presented its policy on prevention and punishment of human trafficking, and how it is implemented.

Furthermore, the ROK is putting in a special effort to prevent human trafficking and violation of human rights by workers in the marine and fishing industry. For instance, the ROK annually conducts annual crackdowns to protect the victims of human trafficking and prevent humanitarian crimes.

In 2019, the ROK participated as a co-sponsor in the EAS Leaders' Statement on Cooperation to Combat Transnational Crime, which was adopted at the 14th East Asia Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand. Through the statement, the ROK reaffirmed its commitment to advancing applicable international instruments such as UNTOC, developing effective policies, and taking regulatory and operational responses to transnational crimes. In 2020, the ROK also participated in the Conference of the Parties to UNTOC held to mark the 10th anniversary of the adoption of UNTOC and the Protocols thereto.

Drug trafficking is another urgent issue that affects not only one country, but the surrounding regions and continents which is linked via drug flow routes. Illicit drug crimes undermine political and economic stability and it is imperative that countries maintain close coordination in both information exchanges and regulatory responses.

To tackle this issue, the ROK has been maintaining close cooperation with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In 2020, the ROK signed the MOU to strengthen common efforts in the prevention of and fight against corruption and money-laundering. From 2020 to 2022, the ROK set an annual budget of over 1.5 million USD to support UNODC's programs related to capacity building and strengthening legal systems tailored to ASEAN countries. Further to such effort, the ROK joined South East Asia Justice Network (SEAjust) in January 2023 to enhance judicial cooperation with ASEAN countries, and held the first in-person meeting in Seoul in April this year.

d. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

The ROK has actively responded to humanitarian needs caused by emergency disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, infectious diseases, and protracted humanitarian crises in conflict areas such as Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. To alleviate the sufferings of the affected people and to minimize damage from disasters, the ROK government provided approximately US\$220 million in humanitarian assistance in 2022.

In response to unexpected disasters, which are growing in size and frequency due to factors such as climate change, the ROK government provided approximately US\$7 million to help relieve the damage caused by unexpected disasters —such as the flooding in Pakistan, and the fire incident in Cuba. It also helped ASEAN countries overcome natural disasters including Typhoon Rai and the earthquake in the Philippines as well as the earthquake in Indonesia. In addition, the ROK provided approximately US\$100 million in response to humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Regarding protracted humanitarian crises such as those in Yemen and Syria, it provided about US\$45 million to improve the humanitarian situation in these countries.

Given the vulnerability of this region to natural disasters, the ROK is playing a constructive role in strengthening regional cooperation in disaster management and relief. While serving as co-chair of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief along with Thailand in 2018, the ROK contributed to drafting the ARF Work Plan for Disaster Relief 2018-2020. As a follow-up to the work plan, the ROK supported countries such as Bangladesh, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam to develop disaster risk reduction strategies in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The ROK is also seeking to share business models, best practices, and localized approaches to raise awareness on potential disaster risks and to take further steps in establishing contingency measures at the local and national levels. In 2022, the ROK further strengthened cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) by providing unearmarked funding in a multi-year format in order to support UNDRR's core mandates stated in its Work Programme 2022-2023 and its new Strategic Framework 2022-2025.

Moreover, the ROK government is supporting the capacity building of ASEAN member states in disaster management through the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund. Specifically, the ROK has been carrying out the Operationalizing the ASEAN Standards and Certification for Experts in Disaster Management (ASCEND) project with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management since 2020 to create a regionally recognized certification scheme for disaster management professionals and ensure and promote higher standards and quality in managing disasters within the region. The ASCEND project will benefit the general public of the ASEAN region by improving the quality of disaster management and emergency response, thereby contributing to reducing the damage caused by disasters and improving the resilience of communities.

The ROK will continue its efforts to address the gap between growing humanitarian needs and available resources and to ensure that the resources efficiently reach those in the greatest need.

e. Maritime Security

Maritime security covers a wide range of issues. One of the most critical is countering and preventing piracy and armed robbery against ships. To help address this problem, the ROK has actively participated in regional maritime security forums, including the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM-MS) and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP).

The ROK became a party to ReCAAP in 2006 and has been closely cooperating with the ReCAAP Information Sharing Center by sending Korean staff to the centre since 2007. Moreover, the ROK has made voluntary financial contributions to ReCAAP to support regional capacity building. The ROK provided approximately 90,000 US dollars annually from 2008 to 2012 and, from 2013 onwards, the ROK's annual contribution has reached 130,000 USD—nearly a fifty % increase—to broaden its role and scope in combating piracy in Asia.

In order to take active part in the global efforts against piracy, the ROK has deployed the Cheonghae Anti-Piracy Unit to the high seas off the coast of Somalia since 2009. The Cheonghae Unit has been conducting convoy missions as part of the Combined Task Force under the command of the Combined Maritime Forces. The Cheonghae Unit has also been participating in the European Union Naval Force's Operation Atalanta since February 2017 to protect the vessels of the African Union Mission, the World Food Programme, among others.

Since 2009, the ROK has played an important role in the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities (originally, the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia). Specifically, the ROK made financial contributions to the group to help strengthen the capacity of coastal states in countering piracy. Until the group announced its plan to close the trust fund by 2021, the ROK had contributed a total of US\$1.7 million to the fund. To facilitate international cooperation promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, the ROK also has been a member of the G7++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea since 2013. The ROK participates in working groups focusing on maritime domain awareness, education, training, exercises, and operations.

Moreover, the ROK made financial contributions totalling US\$800,000 to the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Djibouti Code of Conduct Trust Fund to strengthen the judicial capacity of Somalia and its neighbouring countries in tackling piracy from 2009 to 2017. The ROK also provided US\$100,000 annually to the IMO West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund from 2018 to 2020 and, in light of the recent rise in piracy attacks near West Africa, US\$200,000 in 2021. The ROK assisted training programs together with the IMO for maritime security officers from the Gulf of Guinea countries and provided equipment to facilitate communication between the region's maritime operations centres. In 2023, ROK plans to extend the assistance to more coastal States in the Gulf of Guinea.

f. Cybersecurity

Information and communications technology (ICT) provides immense opportunities for social and economic development. However, the recent increase in the number of malicious cyber activities and the level of sophistication of such activities pose significant challenges to international peace and security.

In order to address these growing threats, the ROK launched the National Cybersecurity Strategy in April 2019 and is currently preparing to launch a new version of this Strategy. The new Strategy will set out the ROK's vision and goals in cybersecurity.

Given the transnational nature of cyber-attacks and threats, strong partnerships at the bilateral, regional, and international level are key to protecting cyberspace from malicious cyber activities. The ROK remains committed to promoting mutual understanding and working together to address cyber security challenges. In this regard, the ROK has engaged in bilateral cyber consultations with 13 countries and two organizations (the EU and NATO). In particular, the 6th ROK-US Cyber Policy Consultations was held in Washington, D.C. in 2022 for the first time in four years to reaffirm the commitment to promoting international cyberspace stability and deepen bilateral cooperation on cybersecurity.

The ROK has also been an active and constructive member of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ISM on ICTs Security) and the ARF Open Ended Study Group on Confidence Building Measures. The ROK is co-chairing the ISM on ICTs Security in 2021-2023 along with Indonesia, Australia, and Russia. The ROK hosted the 4th ISM on ICTs in 2022 with Indonesia and Australia. The meeting provided an opportunity for member states to exchange their views on regional CBMs. The ROK's proposal for hosting the Workshop on Fostering Cybersecurity Professionals was adopted during the meeting.

The ROK expects that the confidence building measures adopted at the recent ISM on ICTs Security will produce a synergy effect with the ROK-led capacity building projects currently underway in the ASEAN region, such as the training sessions held by the Asia-Pacific Cybercrime Capacity Building Hub (APC-Hub), and the regional education and training program of the Asia Pacific Information Security Centre. The ROK is also implementing the "Capacity Development Project for Nurturing Cybersecurity Professionals in Indonesia" in cooperation with the US

At the international level, the ROK actively participated in the work of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and contributed to producing a consensus-based final report. The ROK will continue to participate in OEWG 2021-2025 and, to this end, will continue contributing to the drafting of the Annual Progress Report.

In addition, the ROK has continuously contributed to elaborating a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes at the Ad Hoc Committee of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. In 2022, the ROK participated in discussions to discuss existing international instruments and new international legal responses to the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes. In order to strengthen international cooperation on cybercrime, the ROK also submitted a letter of intent to the Council of Europe in 2021 and with the views to acceding the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) in the near future.

IV. Role of the ARF

a. Contributing to Advancing the ARF and Regional Security

As a founding member, the ROK is committed to realizing the ARF's vision of promoting confidence building measures, developing preventive diplomacy, and elaborating approaches to conflicts in the region. The ROK actively participated in the ARF's various confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy activities during the inter-sessional year of 2022-2023, which include the Inter-Sessional Support Group Meeting, Inter-Sessional Meetings, and the Defence Officials' Dialogue, along with other workshops and seminars.

In particular, the ROK co-chaired the fourth and fifth ARF ISM on ICTs Security on May 2022 and April 2023 respectively and contributed to promoting information sharing and confidence building on cyber security issues. The ROK is also co-hosting the ARF Workshop on Fostering Cybersecurity Professionals this June with Vietnam, to share best practices and knowledge and support training of cyber-security experts. The ROK expects such efforts will contribute to narrowing the digital gap within the region and building a safer cyber security environment.

Furthermore, the ROK will chair the 16th Meeting of the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) for 2023-2024. This meeting will serve as an opportunity to vitalize the ARF's track II activities and exchange views on how to strengthen the ARF mechanism.

The ROK looks forward to working closely with ARF participants in securing peace and stability and building confidence in various fields such as counter terrorism, maritime security, transnational crime, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and other security related areas.

b. Future of the ARF

Since its establishment in 1994, the ARF has played an essential role in promoting regional peace and stability as a unique intergovernmental forum for multilateral security cooperation. Even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the ARF has served as an effective

platform for exchanging views on common security threats, identifying common ground as well as difference for confidence-building among countries in the region.

Moreover, today's dynamic security landscape in the region requires the ARF to harness its strengths to the fullest. Also, the growing complexity of the security environment has increased the importance of working in concert with other regional mechanisms, such as the ADMM+ and the East Asia Summit.

It is also essential that ARF participants strive to make the forum more efficient and effective. In addition to candid and open exchange of views and active participation of ARF participants, the voices of the private sector and the youth, who are also important stakeholders in the future of this region, need to be heard as well.

In line with its objectives under KASI, the ROK will continue to contribute to making the ARF a platform for enriching and expanding our understanding of security and bringing views together to strengthen peace in the region.

RUSSIA

I. Regional Security Situation

As a multipolar world is taking shape, the Asia-Pacific region, with its emerging centres of growth and influence, is subjected to an increasing pressure from external forces that seek to prevent the establishment of a fairer and more balanced international order. The ASEAN-led architecture of inclusive interstate interaction, the backbone of reliable security and sustainable development in East Asia, is in the risk zone. As an alternative, Western selective “Indo-Pacific” structures based on the confrontational logic of deterrence and antagonism are being imposed on the region.

The arbitrary expansion of the “zone of responsibility” of NATO, that is already bringing its military and political infrastructure to the Asia-Pacific region supported by a number of Asian partners, represents a serious regional security challenge. This is what forms the basis of the US-led system of “network deterrence”. The trade, transport and logistics, technological and other chains of interaction in the region are being reoriented to the West so that political opponents and economic competitors of Washington and its allies are left outside of cooperation processes. As a result, there is an increased potential for conflicts and a narrower space for constructive cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

US’ persistent attempts to build a Washington controlled “axis” from Australia to South Korea are destabilizing, lead to increased tension and provoke an arms race. Japan’s policy of strengthening its national military power, including via the acquisition of its own missile capability to deliver strikes “against enemy territory”, causes concern.

Russia’s position remains unchanged in favour of settling territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) through diplomatic means within the framework of international law, including on the basis of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the 2011 Guidelines for its implementation. The Code of Conduct in the South China Sea being drafted by China and ASEAM Member States is intended to become an effective mechanism for resolving disputes. We believe that outside involvement in resolving problems is counterproductive, as it only contributes to the growth of tension in these waters.

Sustained commitment to the principles of non-interference in internal affairs should be a prerequisite for international efforts at resolving the situation in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. We oppose attempts to employ UN tools and use the UN Security Council as a platform for putting pressure on Myanmar. We welcome ASEAN's desire to provide additional impetus to the collective effort to implement the provisions of the Five Point Consensus in close cooperation with the Myanmar side.

We are concerned about the US policy to strengthen sanctions against Nay Pyi Taw and to support the Myanmar opposition at the same time, in particular, by helping equip armed anti-government groups. Such destructive steps undermine the efforts by the regional community to restore peace in the country and, given the cross-border nature of the covert operations to arm militants, pose a direct threat to the security of neighbouring states and Southeast Asia as a whole.

We note the deteriorating situation around the Korean Peninsula. Within its so-called "extended deterrence" concept, the United States, together with Japan and the Republic of Korea, almost continuously conduct exercises near the DPRK borders. Pyongyang responds to every threat with new missile tests. We believe that toughening sanctions pressure against the DPRK is futile, broad interpretation of international restrictive measures is inadmissible, and it is necessary to limit the negative humanitarian consequences of the current restrictions against the population of North Korea.

All parties involved need to refrain from actions that lead to an escalation of tensions and to resume the dialogue on confidence-building, normalization of bilateral relations, security guarantees and peace-building in Northeast Asia.

It is only in this context that the denuclearization issues may be constructively debated. This work may be based on the Russian-Chinese "action plan" for a comprehensive settlement of the problems in the Peninsula aimed not only at creating a multilateral system of peace and security in the subregion, but also at building mutually beneficial economic ties and developing humanitarian cooperation.

It is noted that Australia's and New Zealand's policies in the South Pacific are becoming increasingly neo-colonialist. The attempts by Canberra and Wellington to limit the right of the small island developing states of this subregion to an independent foreign policy and

choice of international cooperation partners clearly demonstrate the intention to continue to decide on the fate of island peoples.

More than a year and a half after the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, the situation there remains tense. A significant negative factor is the presence of ISIS and other terrorist organizations – the Islamic Movements of Uzbekistan and Eastern Turkistan, Jamaat Ansarulla, Al Qaeda, who use illegal drug production and trafficking for financial support (up to 80% of the world's opiate suppliers). We note the efforts by the Government of Afghanistan to stop the threats of terrorism and drug trafficking. It is stepping up efforts to combat ISIS to ensure relative military and political stability in the country.

We attach great importance to the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The steps taken within the Moscow format of consultations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), mechanism of Afghanistan neighbouring countries, etc., play an important role in the settlement in Afghanistan and its integration into regional systems of economic development.

II. Defence Policy of the Russian Federation and International Military Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific

The activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Asia Pacific region are carried out in compliance with international norms and bilateral agreements and aimed at strengthening peace and security in the region by developing bilateral and multilateral military contacts with the Asia-Pacific countries.

A special role in enhancing regional stability is given to the mechanism of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meetings-Plus (ADMM-Plus), where Russia (together with Myanmar) is responsible for the counter-terrorist agenda in 2020-2023. Its work is focused on the issues of anti-terrorist security in the Asia-Pacific region and worldwide, as well as sharing experience in combating international terrorism, including such international terrorist groups as Al Qaeda and ISIS. Preparations for the ASEAN-supported table-top and field exercises scheduled for the latter half of 2023 are underway despite the opposition from Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and the USA.

The Russian Defence Ministry develops ties with key partners in the Asia-Pacific, primarily China and India, as well as Mongolia and ASEAN states, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Maritime Cooperation-2022, a joint Russia-China naval military exercise in the waters of the East China Sea in December 2022, as well as joint flights of heavy bombers was an important component contributing to regional and global security.

Military and military-technical cooperation with India both in bilateral and multilateral formats, first of all, within the SCO, keeps getting stronger. Contracts for the supply of S-400 missile systems and construction of multi-purpose frigates are being implemented on schedule. Gradual transition to joint-venture start-ups to produce defence goods is underway.

The interaction with Pakistan is aimed at strengthening its counter-terrorism capacity.

In June 2022, Russian navy's Pacific Fleet ships called at the Cam Ranh port and, in December 2022, a Russian Defence Ministry delegation attended the Vietnam Defence 2022 exhibition to contribute to strengthening military ties with Vietnam.

The experts from the International Mine Action Centre of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation continued to provide assistance in clearing the Laos territory of explosive remnants of the Indochina War and training de-miners from among the Lao military personnel. In November and December 2022, a regular Russia-Laos tank crew exercise "Laros" took place in Laos.

In August 2022, representatives from Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Vietnam participated in the 10th Moscow Conference on International Security.

The participation of Asia-Pacific states (China, India, Laos and Mongolia) in the command-post exercise "Vostok-2022" in September 2022, International Army Games 2022 (Cambodia, China, India, Iran, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar and Vietnam) and International Military-Technical Forum ARMY 2022 (India, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan and Vietnam) in

August 2022 organized by the Russian Defence Ministry helped strengthen the ties with these countries in the defence area.

III. Nuclear and Missile Disarmament, Nuclear Security, and Non Proliferation of WMD in the Asia-Pacific

Strict compliance with international arms control treaties and agreements remains one of the basic principles of Russia's foreign policy enshrined in its doctrinal documents, including the new Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation adopted on 31 March 2023.

A party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Russia strictly observes all of its provisions. Although the regular NPT review cycle came to its end without adoption of a final document, the NPT remains the most important element of the international security system and a major condition of the preservation of the nuclear non-proliferation system for all the States Parties.

Russia urges the Western nuclear powers to strictly adhere to the substance and logic of the Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races of 3 January 2022, which declares the priority of preventing war and any military confrontation between nuclear States as well as mutual recognition of interests and concerns of each other in the area of security.

Russia has ensured timely compliance with quantitative ceilings provided for by the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), and continues to strictly observe the limits set up by the treaty. However, the United States manipulatively declared a considerable amount of its SOAs "converted" or changed their names to bring them out of the scope of treaty definitions. Against the backdrop of the West-instigated sharp aggravation of the Ukrainian crisis and the dramatic decline of Russian-American relations in 2022-2023 caused by Washington, US' violations of the letter and spirit of the Treaty became ultimately intolerable. For this reason, on 21 February 2023, Russia suspended the New START and expressed its intention to continue to adhere to the ceilings as regards SOAs and inform the United States of its launches of ICBMs and SLBMs.

The Russia-declared unilateral moratorium on placing the ground launched intermediate- and shorter-range missiles in those regions where similar US-produced weapon do not appear continues to be effective. However, it was not supported by relevant reciprocal steps on behalf of NATO countries and comes under serious pressure due to the destabilizing military programs actively implemented by Washington, as well as a result of aggressive actions by the United States and their allies to project power towards Russia's frontiers.

US policy on building a global anti-missile defence system and deploying its elements in the Asia-Pacific Region, as well as Tokyo's rapid military build up, which in reality is not limited to defensive purposes, undermine the security interests of regional states and strategic stability.

The Republic of Korea's declared interest in hosting US nuclear weapons or developing its own nuclear capability undermines the integrity of the NPT regime, creates dangerous preconditions for further degradation of the situation on the Korean peninsula and contributes to increased tensions in the Asia-Pacific.

For the same reason, there are concerns about the plans of the AUKUS military partnership (the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom) to pump weapons into Australia (from nuclear-powered submarines to hypersonic missiles) and create shared infrastructure in the country for deployment of nuclear weapon delivery vehicles, as well as to enhance US military groups deployed on rotation, and expansion of the US Air Force in the South Pacific with the help of Canberra. It has a destabilizing effect on the NPT regime and could trigger an arms race in the region.

Russia is open to consultations with ASEAN countries to institutionalize the nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia as soon as possible and reaffirms its readiness to sign the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty with standard reservations, the relevance of which is only increasing in the context of a deteriorating international security environment.

The threat of an arms race in outer space is of serious concern. The draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects, proposed by Russia and China, aims at countering this negative trend.

At the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, our resolution entitled "No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space" (NFP) was co-sponsored by Cambodia, China, DPRK, Laos and Vietnam, among others. Moreover, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Laos, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are full-fledged NFP participants who made the relevant commitment in bilateral statements signed with Russia.

IV. Combating International Terrorism and Transnational Crime in the Asia-Pacific

With the increasing number of global problems and a broadening range of trans-border threats, the Russian Federation remains focused on expanding cooperation with Asia-Pacific nations on a full range of issues related to fighting terrorism, transnational organized crime, piracy, armed robbery at sea, illicit drug production and trafficking. Special emphasis is traditionally put on combating ISIS, Al Qaeda, and affiliated terrorist organizations, as well as foreign terrorist fighters, suppressing terrorist financing and the spread of terrorist and extremist ideology, including online.

We note the negative trends of terrorism merging with transnational organised crime and increased terrorist ICT uses for criminal purposes.

We support the intention of Asia-Pacific countries to combat the global drug threat in accordance with the three relevant UN conventions. We welcome the initiative of ASEAN to create a drug-free South-East Asia. We are interested in continuing the close coordination of positions on anti-drug issues in the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the SCO and the ASEAN-led platforms on the basis of the 2021 Statement of ASEAN and the Russian Federation on Cooperation Against Illicit Drugs Trafficking, which provides a solid foundation for developing practical cooperation between the competent authorities.

We believe to be unjustified the attempts to shift the focus from countering and preventing terrorism to other issues, including human rights and gender-related matters, as well as to erode the pivotal role of states in combating terrorism and extremism by promoting the concept of violent extremism, aimed at substituting the existing international legal regime for some "rule-based order" that allows interference in the internal affairs of states.

We consider it unacceptable for the collective West to encourage xenophobic, nationalistic, neo-Nazi and other radical manifestations in certain countries in order to destabilize the situation and to undermine regional political and economic ties for the sake of advancing its own geopolitical interests.

In such circumstances, the further strengthening of non-politicized, equitable and pragmatic international cooperation within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership, including the ASEAN-Russia Consultations of the High Representative for Security Issues, is of particular relevance.

We advocate greater cooperation on common security threats between ASEAN and other regional organisations, in particular the SCO and the CSTO.

V. International Information Security in the Asia-Pacific

Cooperation in the field of international information security (IIS) with Asia-Pacific nations both within relevant multilateral frameworks and at the bilateral level is a priority of the Russian foreign policy. We are convinced that the regional mechanisms should take into account the central role of the United Nations and the objective to establish a fair international legal regime governing the information space, including in the field of combating the use of ICTs for criminal purposes. Attention should be paid to ensuring the secure and stable functioning and development of the Internet on the basis of equitable participation by states in its governance. It is also important to use the resource of regional frameworks to promote cooperation between the competent authorities of states and to coordinate confidence- and capacity-building measures.

The abovementioned approaches guide the interaction with Asia-Pacific partners at relevant UN negotiating fora, notably within the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021-2025, and the UN Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes.

We attach particular importance to the development of practical cooperation in that area within the ARF. As co-chair of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meetings on Security of and in the

Use of ICTs 2022-2024, we focus on promoting a pragmatic and depoliticized agenda. This is illustrated by the workshops we have proposed on ICT security terminology and on countering the use of ICTs for criminal purposes.

We are strengthening dialogue with ASEAN on issues related to ICT security. The second ASEAN-Russia Dialogue on ICTs Security-Related Issues (videoconference, December 2022) confirmed their readiness to deepen inter-agency cooperation. We note the contribution of major regional conferences on information security, in particular the VII Singapore International Cyber Week (October 2022), to regional security.

Russia, together with China, is the Coordinator in the priority area “Security of and in the Use of ICTs” of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). On our initiative, the CICA Summit (Astana, October 12-13, 2022) adopted a leaders' statement on this issue.

VI. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in the Asia Pacific

Russia continues to promote regional cooperation in disaster management and humanitarian assistance to Asia-Pacific countries.

Increased attention is being paid to building practical cooperation and sharing experience in this area within the ARF. During the 20th Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (May 2022) representatives of EMERCOM of Russia joined the discussion on mitigating the consequences of natural disasters, improving mechanisms for regional cooperation, and providing humanitarian assistance in the context of COVID 19. Russian experts participated in the ARF Earthquake Response Exercise (videoconference, June 2022), and in the 5th Workshop on Urban Search and Rescue (videoconference, November 2022).

We attach great importance to the functioning of the APEC Emergency Preparedness Working Group, which promotes a more disaster-resilient environment in the region and whose regular meeting in the context of the APEC Senior Disaster Management Officials Forum was attended by representatives of EMERCOM of Russia (August 2022).

EMERCOM specialists shared their experience with colleagues within the SCO, in particular during a workshop for disaster management agencies (October 2022).

We place special emphasis on developing emergency response cross-border cooperation with neighbouring states. We work closely with Mongolia to prevent and respond to trans-boundary wild-land fires, and we promote the development of diving services and the training of specialized personnel.

On the margins of the 3rd International Fire and Rescue Congress (Moscow, August 2022) Memorandum of Understanding on exchanging of experience in warning and overcoming emergencies was signed between the Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam and EMERCOM of Russia. Discussions were held with representatives of Myanmar on the establishment of a joint humanitarian response centre in the country.

We continue to provide humanitarian assistance within the UN framework. In 2022, Russia made an earmarked contribution of US\$2 million to the UN World Food Program to assist Sri Lanka. In September 2022, 35 tons of humanitarian supplies were delivered on a bilateral basis to Pakistan for flood victims.

VII. Regional Security Architecture and Trends of Multilateral Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific

Active attempts by the collective West to undermine ASEAN's effectiveness, scrap the system of ASEAN-led mechanisms and remove from their agenda practical initiatives that could contribute to a de-escalation of increasing tensions in Asia pose a serious challenge to the existing ASEAN-led regional architecture of security and cooperation.

Russia has always stood for preserving and strengthening the system of interstate cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region based on international law, the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes and a culture of compromise and mutual respect. An important crisis response regulator is the expert consultations on security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region held within the East Asia Summit framework.

We view the ASEAN Regional Forum as a key regional platform for developing confidence-building measures and introducing preventive diplomacy tools, and call for further consolidation of the ARF and increasing its practical value. The necessary prerequisite for this is an atmosphere of constructive and equitable dialogue, as well as the willingness of all participants without exception to follow ARF's high standards of inclusivity.

A positive factor in regional development is the efforts to establish the Greater Eurasian Partnership. The solid integration resource built into its basis with the idea of consolidating the potential of continent-wide cross-platform cooperation frameworks, including the SCO, ASEAN and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) serves the interests of creating a comfortable and safe foreign policy environment and promoting joint constructive work on various vectors of connectivity in the Eurasian space.

SINGAPORE

I. **Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

We are facing intensifying global challenges, including major power rivalry, nationalistic and protectionist tendencies, and a weakening of the multilateral rules-based order. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, on which ASEAN Foreign Ministers have issued three statements, has also brought into focus the importance of the fundamental norms of international law and the UN Charter which prohibit acts of aggression against a sovereign state. Non-traditional security threats such as transnational crime and terrorism remain unabated and increased reliance on digitalisation further exacerbated society's vulnerabilities to cybercrimes. It is all the more important that ASEAN and its partners continue to make use of ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), East Asia Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to strengthen mutual confidence and trust, and enhance practical cooperation among the key stakeholders of our region to tackle common challenges. ASEAN can only be relevant and effective as a regional bloc if it remains at the core of the regional architecture. It must stay innovative and continually reinvent itself to meet the needs of our citizens as security threats evolve. Singapore will continue to work towards strengthening ASEAN-related initiatives and mechanisms with ASEAN Centrality as our guiding principle.

II. **National Security and Defence Policy**

Singapore's defence policy is built on the twin pillars of deterrence and diplomacy. Singapore believes in the need for a strong defence to ensure that we enjoy peace and security. A strong defence also provides us with the space and freedom to act independently and safeguard the interests of our people. Hence, Singapore has invested steadily and prudently in defence over the years to build up a professional and capable Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). To overcome our small size and lack of resources, Singapore makes use of technology as a force multiplier to augment our well-educated conscript force and to train our soldiers to fight effectively. The SAF has also played an important role in assisting in domestic contingencies, such as supporting Singapore's COVID-19 response efforts by augmenting civilian frontline services. Singapore's defence expenditure in FY2021 stood at 2.7% of our Gross Domestic Product.

III. National Contributions to Regional Security

Singapore firmly believes in the value of diplomacy and dialogue to enhance regional and international stability by minimising the potential for misunderstanding and miscalculation, as well as enhancing responses to common security challenges. As a small country, Singapore's security and prosperity are highly dependent on regional peace and stability. Through extensive bilateral and multilateral cooperation, Singapore seeks to establish strong and friendly ties with defence establishments and armed forces regionally and globally. Singapore also believes in the importance of a rules-based, open and inclusive regional security architecture that encourages countries to engage constructively in dialogue and practical cooperation. As such, Singapore actively participates in ASEAN-led platforms like the ADMM, ADMM-Plus, EAS, ARF as well as other multilateral fora like the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) and the Five Power Defence Arrangements.

The ADMM is the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN which aims to promote regional peace and stability through dialogue and practical cooperation. Singapore actively contributes to the ADMM and ADMM-Plus. Under the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) Defence Experts, Singapore contributes to strengthening regional capacity to deal with CBR threats. Since its inaugural meeting in 2019, the Network has kept up a steady momentum of meetings, training and workshops in each CBR domain, covering topics of interest such as scientific cooperation to deal with COVID-19. Regional and international experts are invited as resource speakers to exchange views and experiences. Last year, Singapore hosted the ADMM-Plus CBR Conference to underscore the importance of international cooperation in this area. Another area of contribution is in the cyber and information domains. Singapore established the ADMM Cybersecurity and Information Centre of Excellence (ACICE) in 2021, in order to enhance information sharing and capacity building among defence establishments against cyber and information threats. The ACICE is also complementary to the ASEAN Cyber Defence Network (ACDN) in promoting regional exchanges, interactions and cooperation on cybersecurity.

The ADMM-Plus enables practical cooperation among the 18 ADMM-Plus countries through the Experts Working Groups (EWGs). The EWGs focus on maritime security (MS), humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), peacekeeping operations (PKO),

counter-terrorism (CT), military medicine (MM), humanitarian mine action (HMA), and cyber security (CS). Singapore is committed to sustaining military-to-military cooperation and building trust among militaries through the EWGs and looks forward to the commencement of the fifth three-year EWG cycle in 2024.

Singapore is also an active proponent of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) among militaries and defence establishments. CBMs are useful guidelines particularly to reduce miscalculations and preserve a peaceful and stable regional security environment. Under Singapore and the ROK's co-chairmanship of the EWG-MS from 2017-2020, the ADMM-Plus navies agreed to collectively adopt the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES). CUES is regularly practised at several ASEAN naval exercises, including the 2018 ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise, the 2019 ADMM-Plus Maritime Exercise, the 2021 ASEAN-Russia Naval Exercise, and the 2023 ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise (AIME). Another CBM proposed by Singapore and adopted by the ADMM is the Guidelines for Air Military Encounters (GAME). GAME is the first multilateral air-to-air confidence-building measure of its kind. It provides airmen with a set of guidelines to enhance aviation safety and reduce miscalculations or unintended incidents between military aircraft. The ADMM has practised GAME on several occasions, most recently during the 9th ASEAN Air Forces' Junior Officers Interaction Programme hosted in Singapore in 2022. Singapore will work with the ADMM to explore opportunities for the expansion of GAME to the ADMM-Plus.

Singapore also hosts the annual SLD organised by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Since its inception in 2002, the SLD has established itself as the foremost defence and security conference in the Asia-Pacific region. After a two-year-hiatus due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 19th SLD was held from 10 to 12 June 2022. It was attended by 37 Ministerial-level delegates and more than 30 senior defence officials, including Chief of Defence Forces, and prominent academics from 42 countries. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio delivered the keynote address where he shared Japan's vision for a rules-based international order built through dialogue and the need for a free and open Indo-Pacific. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered a virtual Special Address, where he spoke on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. This year marks the 20th edition of the SLD, which will be held from 2 to 4 June 2023. In the lead-up to the yearly SLD, the IISS Sherpa Meetings supplement the SLD process by providing an inter-

sessional platform for senior officials to engage in frank discussions on security issues, have been held annually.

i. Counter-Terrorism

Terrorism and its underlying ideologies pose complex and long-term challenges. Modes of radicalisation have evolved with rising consumption of digital content. Continued vigilance and international cooperation are vital to deal with this threat.

Since the 1997 Declaration on Transnational Crime, ASEAN's counter-terrorism efforts have made much progress. Singapore was one of the first AMS to ratify the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (ACCT) in 2007, which is the first regional legally-binding anti-terrorism pact. Recognising the importance of preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism, Singapore supported the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism 2018-2025 in 2018. More recently, Singapore actively contributed to the drafting of the Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism 2019-2025 ("Bali Work Plan") and supported its adoption at the 13th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime in November 2019. Singapore also supported the ARF Statement on the Treatment of Children Recruited by or Associated with Terrorist Groups in 2020. Singapore welcomes these significant achievements by ASEAN, which enhance regional cooperation and commitment to the global strategy on counter-terrorism.

Singapore is committed to strengthening the regional counter-terrorism security architecture. We support the ASEAN "Our Eyes" (AOE) initiative that was adopted by the 12th ADMM in 2018 and its Standard Operating Procedures that was adopted by the 14th ADMM in 2020. The AOE enhances strategic information exchange on counter-terrorism among ASEAN defence establishments. To complement the AOE, we operationalised the Counter Terrorism Information Facility (CITF) in January 2021 as an operational level CT information-sharing initiative. Singapore's Network of ASEAN CBR Defence Experts also facilitates information exchange and cooperation between CBR experts from all 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS) through its secure web portal and workshops, contributing to regional counter-terrorism preparedness against CBR threats.

In 2019, Singapore seconded a senior Police Officer to kick-start the work of the INTERPOL Regional Counter-terrorism Node for Asia and South Pacific (RCTN ASP) located in the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation (IGCI), Singapore. Singapore's seconded officer heads the RCTN ASP, covers as Head of RCTN Americas (including US, Canada and Latin America) and oversees the CT representation of 74 member countries. The RCTN ASP works with police units in the Asia-Pacific region to encourage the transfer of intelligence concerning terrorist activities. It also has access to 18 INTERPOL databases that provide information including on foreign terrorist fighters, the social media platforms that terrorists use, and their travel patterns and mode of transport. Singapore has been actively engaging INTERPOL to shape the RCTN and its mission in four main areas: (i) intelligence; (ii) border management and operations; (iii) capacity building; and (iv) incident response. Singapore's seconded officer to the RCTN was appointed the mission leader of the INTERPOL Incident Response Team to support the Sri Lankan authorities in their investigations into the Easter Sunday Bombings in May 2019.

ii. Non-Proliferation, Counter-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

Singapore is active in combating the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). We ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1976 and concluded a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1977. Singapore also ratified the IAEA Additional Protocol (AP) and adopted the modified Small Quantities Protocol in March 2008. Singapore supports the universalisation of both the CSA and the AP, and works closely with the IAEA on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Singapore is currently a member of the IAEA's Board of Governors (BOG), and has hosted regional workshops on topics such as emergency preparedness and response, nuclear regulatory law, and nuclear safety and security. Singapore is also party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and supports its early entry into force.

Singapore joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism in May 2010 and subscribed to The Hague Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles in August 2011. In September 2014, Singapore acceded to the Convention on the

Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and accepted the 2005 Amendment to the CPPNM. Singapore ratified the International Convention on the Suppression of Nuclear Terrorism in September 2017.

Singapore signed the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the first legally binding international instrument that regulates the international transfer of conventional arms, on 5 December 2014. This reaffirms Singapore's commitment to the elimination of the threat posed by the illicit arms trade, and to international disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives that promote global peace and security.

Singapore strongly supports counter-proliferation initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), and recognises the importance of preventing rogue groups, such as terrorist organisations, from acquiring WMD. Singapore has actively participated in the PSI since its establishment in 2003. Singapore is one of the 21 members of the PSI Operational Experts' Group (OEG). As part of the PSI Asia-Pacific Exercise Rotation (APER) grouping, we have hosted PSI exercises and meetings. In October 2021, Singapore hosted Exercise Deep Sabre, which was the fourth time Singapore hosted a PSI exercise. More recently, Singapore participated in the Italy-hosted OEG meeting in October 2022, as well as the US-hosted Exercise Fortune Guard in Hawaii in August 2022 alongside other APER partners.

Singapore fully supports the efforts of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to further develop capabilities and readiness against the threat of chemical weapons. We participated in the 27th Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in November 2022. Pursuant to Article X of the OPCW, Singapore has been conducting the Emergency Response to Chemical Incidents training course on a biennial basis since 2009. The sixth instalment of the course was conducted in December 2019, which benefitted 24 participants from 10 of the OPCW Member States in Asia, and Singapore will continue to conduct the seventh run of the course in 2023. The course has been a platform for the sharing of experiences on the management of hazards. In addition, Singapore had contributed experts to serve on the Scientific Advisory Board of the OPCW between 2017 and the Technical Requirement Team of the OPCW ChemTech centre between 2020 and 2021. Singapore is also committed to the non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons.

We participated in 9th Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in November 2022, and have submitted returns on the BWC CBMs annually since 2012.

As a reflection of our commitment to prevent WMD proliferation, Singapore adheres to a robust and enhanced export control regime. The Strategic Goods (Control) Act controls the transfer and brokering of goods capable of being used to develop, produce, operate, stockpile or acquire WMD, along with strategic goods and related software and technology. The Act's control list is regularly updated to ensure that it keeps abreast of technological developments and remains aligned with the four multilateral export control regimes. In May 2018, Singapore Customs organised the Customs Competent Authority Seminar to enhance awareness of the trading community on the regulatory requirements for various controlled goods and recent developments.

iii. Transnational Crime

In today's world, security challenges are increasingly transnational in nature. These cannot be adequately addressed by individual countries' domestic policies. Singapore has therefore actively worked towards facilitating a concerted regional effort to combat transnational crimes.

Under the aegis of the ASEAN Ministerial and Senior Officials' Meetings on Transnational Crime (AMMTC & SOMTC), Singapore is the ASEAN Voluntary Lead Shepherd for international economic crime (IEC). Singapore conducted an annual ASEAN Workshop on International Economic Crime to equip relevant investigators with the competencies required for the investigation of commercial crime. These workshops reviewed the latest trends, threats, and challenges facing law enforcement agencies in the area of commercial crime and provided updates on the latest developments in white-collar crime. The last workshop was organised in 2019, and covered common concerns such as international fraud, payment systems fraud and money laundering).

Additionally, the Singapore Police Force's Commercial Affairs Department (SPF/CAD) runs the annual International Economic Crime Course (IECC). This course was attended by local and foreign participants from ASEAN countries and our regional partners such as Hong Kong, and Australia.

The Singapore Police Force actively supports various INTERPOL operations aimed at tackling transnational financial crime.

- Operation First Light 2022, March to May 2022 – CAD alongside LEAs from 75 other countries took part in the international operations to clamp down on organised crime groups behind telecommunications and social engineering scams. CAD is participating in a similar operations, taking place from March to May 2023.
- FATF-INTERPOL Roundtable Engagement (FIRE), 12-13 September 2022 – CAD participated actively in this inaugural event in Singapore on tackling global financial crime through enhanced international collaboration and enabling greater asset recovery. CAD shared on its work to drive positive outcomes on asset recovery and combatting cyber-enabled fraud. The second FIRE will likely be scheduled in September 2023.
- Operation HAECHI III, June-November 2022 – Singapore participated in Project HAECHI-III which saw police across 30 countries arrest almost 1,000 suspects and seize US\$129.9 million worth of virtual assets. Additionally, during the conclusion meeting in Singapore in November 2022, CAD hosted the attendees at the Anti-Scam Command office to see work live in action including the co-location sharing with banks.
- Project TORII Course, 9 to 11 November 2022 – CAD supported the course, which is a continuation to the first run in December 2021 that seeks to establish stronger collaboration against illicit financial flows derived from transnational financial crimes in Southeast Asia. For this run, CAD invited speakers from the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) and Association of Banks Singapore (ABS) to provide insights from Singapore's perspective. Additionally, CAD representatives

attended the course which deepened participants' knowledge on open-source best practices as well as knowing the available recovery channels for illicit funds to be returned to the rightful owners.

SPF also participated in the following events under the Asset Recovery Interagency Network – Asia Pacific (ARIN-AP)

Between June and September 2021, Singapore participated in Project HAECHI-II which saw police across 22 jurisdictions arrest more than 1,000 individuals and intercept a total of nearly US\$27 million of illicit funds. In December 2021, SPF/CAD partnered with INTERPOL on Project TORII, a capacity-building initiative which aims to establish stronger collaboration against illicit financial flows derived from transnational financial crimes in Southeast Asia.

Singapore takes a serious view of trafficking-in-persons (TIP) crimes. An inter-agency taskforce, jointly led by Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Manpower, was formed in 2010 to coordinate whole-of-government strategies to fight TIP. The Taskforce works closely with the law enforcement agencies and embassies of countries that victims may originate from. Information-sharing and upstream enforcement against human traffickers also prevent the exploitation of the innocent.

Singapore supports regional and international efforts to combat TIP. Singapore cooperates with other AMS through platforms such as the AMMTC and SOMTC, which oversees the region's effort to combat TIP. Singapore worked closely with other AMS on the development of the ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP) which was signed by ASEAN Leaders at the 27th ASEAN Summit in November 2015. Following the signing of the ACTIP, Singapore also worked closely with other AMS on the development of the ASEAN Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (APA) and the Bohol Trafficking in Persons Work Plan, which were endorsed in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The APA and Work Plan complement the ACTIP by outlining specific actions and policies to address the challenge of combatting TIP.

Singapore is firmly committed to the regional and international fight against drug trafficking. Singapore contributes actively at regional platforms such as the AMMD and ASOD which oversees the region's effort to combat drug trafficking. We have also supported capacity building efforts in the region. In 2022/2023, the Central Narcotics Bureau organised three training workshops – 2 virtual and 1 physical - for their international partners. In total, 60 officers from 20 countries attended these workshops, of which 3 were from ASEAN Member States. CNB will be organising the 4th Integrated Narcotics Enforcement Programme (INEP) for ASEAN Member States in November 2023. Having secured membership to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) for the term 2024 to 2027, we are committed to enhancing our contributions in capacity building and sharing of best practices, to boost AMS' capabilities to tackle drug trafficking.

Beyond ASEAN, Singapore works with partners such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as well as the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking (GOF) in New York and Geneva, to explore more effective ways to combat TIP. In 2019, Singapore attended the 5th Ministerial Breakfast Meeting hosted by the GOF in New York on the sidelines of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Singapore also co-sponsored an event organised by Belarus on behalf of the GOF in Geneva on combatting TIP in the context of armed conflict held on the sidelines of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 2019. Singapore is a party to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol), which seeks to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons while protecting victims and promoting cooperation among State Parties.

iv. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

Disasters can affect any country without warning. As a good neighbour and friend, Singapore contributes to HADR missions when the need arises.

Singapore is the co-chair of two out of three of the working groups of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM). ACDM Working Group (WG) on Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PRR) and Global Leadership (GL). The ACDM

WGs oversee the implementation of the five priority programmes including projects and activities enhancing regional cooperation in all aspects of disaster management including humanitarian assistance response.

Singapore successfully concluded the Chairmanship of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) in 2021 that saw the launch of three new ASEAN Plus One mechanisms with China, Japan and ROK which will contribute towards the enhancement of the regional capacities and capabilities in disaster management and resiliency. The 6th ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Partnership Conference held in June 2021 generated pledges close to US\$11 million from 21 partners to support the implementation of the AADMER Work Programme 2021 – 2025. ASEAN also rallied support to operationalise the ASEAN Leaders' mandate for ASEAN's humanitarian assistance to Myanmar to be delivered through the AHA Centre in support of Point 4 of the Five-Point Consensus.

The ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT) is the official resource of ASEAN and designed to support National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) of the affected ASEAN Member State in the aftermath of a disaster. In 2019, Singapore deployed two officers to be part of two ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) missions. The first mission was in support of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre)'s efforts to conduct a preliminary needs assessment to identify possible areas where ASEAN could support the repatriation process in the Rakhine State in March 2019. The second mission was to support the Myanmar Delegation's 2nd High Level Visit to Bangladesh in December 2019. In 2022, Singapore deployed one officer to participate in the deployment to Philippines in November 2022 to conduct a Rapid Needs Assessment in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis. Two officers from Singapore's Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) will also be facilitators for the AHA Centre's ERAT Course in 2023.

In April 2023, Singapore co-organised two ASEAN-ERAT Level 2 courses with the AHA Centre, which was held in Singapore, namely the (a) ASEAN Humanitarian Logistics Training and (b) Civil Military Coordination Course, for 14 ASEAN-ERAT members.

Upon completion of the Humanitarian Logistics course, participants were recognized as ASEAN-ERAT Humanitarian Logistics Specialists within ASEAN-ERAT.

In August 2023, Singapore would be hosting the inaugural ASEAN Disaster Resilience Forum (ADRF), a biennial forum which provides an avenue for ASEAN and non-ASEAN stakeholders to discuss topics related to disaster resilience in the region. The ADRF is one of the modalities to deliberate on to promote synergy and coordination among the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, ASEAN Centres and Entities. The ADRF will be held back-to-back with the ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management (SPDDM) 2023, which has been held since 2015. The ASEAN SPDDM charts long-term strategies for the ACDM and sharpens ASEAN's policy direction, strategic engagements and thought leadership in disaster management. In addition, Singapore organises the ASEAN Senior Executive Programme in Disaster Management, (SEPDM) annually to nurture the planning and crisis management capacities and facilitate networking of the senior leadership cadre within each AMS' National Disaster Management Organisation.

Singapore launched the RHCC in September 2014 which aims to provide a platform for both military-to-military and civil-military coordination in HADR, and to support an Affected State. The RHCC's coordination focus complements existing disaster response institutions – such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the AHA Centre. RHCC's OPERA Computer Information System fuses information on assessed ground needs, status of deployments and key logistics movements to aid its partners and the Affected State in coordination and planning functions. Singapore is appreciative of like-minded countries that have supported and partnered with the RHCC. These countries include Australia, Brunei, Canada, China, France, India, Lao PDR, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, the ROK, Russia, Thailand, the UK, the US, and Vietnam, which have attached International Liaison Officers (ILOs) to the RHCC or exchanged contact points for disaster relief.

Exercise Coordinated Response (Ex COORES) is RHCC's flagship multilateral table-top exercise simulating the conduct of multinational coordination centre operations in response to a natural disaster. Previous iterations of Ex COORES built military linkages, enhanced mutual understanding and interoperability, and strengthened

military cooperation in disaster relief between international organisations, governmental agencies and non-government organisations. The next iteration of Ex COORES will be held in late 2023.

Since 2015, Singapore has been hosting the annual Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management (SPDDM) to chart long-term strategies for the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and sharpen ASEAN's policy direction, strategic engagements, and thought leadership in disaster management. In addition, Singapore organises the ASEAN Senior Executive Programme in Disaster Management, (SEPDM) annually to nurture the planning and crisis management capacities, and facilitate networking of the senior leadership cadre within each AMS' National Disaster Management Organisation.

v. Maritime Security

As a maritime nation, Singapore has a strong interest in keeping the international sea lines of communication open, safe, and secure. Singapore takes a serious view of any threats to the freedom and safety of navigation. To this end, Singapore works with like-minded countries to uphold universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and plays an active part in fostering regional maritime security cooperation and enhancing port security.

As a major hub port and one of the top ten ship registries in the world, Singapore is committed to the security of seaborne cargo. As one of the first States to implement the International Maritime Organization (IMO) International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, Singapore has contributed actively to capacity building programmes at various regional forums to assist countries in their implementation of the ISPS Code. Singapore is also party to the IMO's International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA Convention 1988), and the 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms located on the Continental Shelf (SUA FFP 1988).

Given the existence of vital sea lines of communication in the region such as the South China Sea (SCS), the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS), the Lombok Strait and the Sunda Strait, Singapore cooperates closely with key stakeholders to uphold maritime security and freedom of navigation. To this end, Singapore remains fully committed to the following three principles, which have gained broad consensus amongst regional stakeholders: (i) primary responsibility for the security of regional waterways lies with the littoral States; (ii) the international community, including major user States and bodies, like the IMO, have an important role to play; and (iii) new cooperative measures should be developed in accordance with the 1982 UNCLOS and other international conventions. Singapore is also supportive of ASEAN's approach towards the maritime issues encapsulated in the Bali Concord II, signed in October 2003, which reiterates the trans-boundary nature of maritime issues and the need to address them in a holistic, integrated and comprehensive way.

These principles have translated into cooperative efforts at a regional level. Singapore is part of the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP), a joint undertaking by the littoral States of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, to enhance maritime security in the SOMS. Since its inception in July 2004, the MSP has substantially reduced the incidence of piracy and armed robbery against ships occurring in the SOMS. The 14th MSP Joint Coordinating Committee was conducted from 15 to 16 January 2020, where members discussed possible measures to strengthen information-sharing and operational coordination to deter and disrupt sea robberies within their respective territorial waters in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

Apart from conducting air and sea patrols, Singapore also believes in enhancing maritime awareness and ensuring systematic and timely exchanges of information to keep sea lanes safe. In this regard, the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) established in April 2009 seeks to facilitate information-sharing and collaboration to enhance maritime security. With operational linkages to 100 partners across 43 countries, the IFC serves as a platform for multinational and inter-agency collaboration to resolve common maritime security concerns, including piracy and armed robbery against ships, hijacking, search and rescue, weapons proliferation, human/arms trafficking, and smuggling. The IFC fuses, sense-makes, and disseminates maritime information

through its Real-time Information-sharing System (IRIS) to enable rapid collaboration between maritime agencies and the shipping community. The IFC also supports broader efforts to enhance regional capacity for maritime security through the conduct of exercises, workshops and other training activities. These include the annual Regional Maritime Practitioners' Programme (RMPP) and the biennial Maritime Information Sharing Exercise (MARISX). The IFC is also the permanent secretariat for the ASEAN Navy Chiefs' Meeting.

Singapore is a founding member of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), the first intergovernmental initiative that promotes and enhances cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. At present, 21 States are Contracting Parties to the ReCAAP. Singapore has hosted the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) since its inception in November 2006, and has renewed its commitment to host the ISC for another 5 years, from 2022 to 2027. Over the years, the ReCAAP ISC has established itself as a go-to authority on trends and analyses of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia, and continues to play an instrumental role in disseminating timely and accurate information for governments and industry members alike.

The ReCAAP ISC has collaborated with partner organisations and the industry to produce useful practice guides for the maritime community, such as the Regional Guide 2 to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia in March 2021 and the Guidance on Abduction of Crew in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and Waters off Eastern Sabah in July 2019. The ReCAAP ISC has also supported numerous capacity building efforts to improve the capability of regional governments to combat piracy and armed robbery against ships in the region. The ReCAAP is held up as a successful model of regional cooperation in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships by the IMO and has inspired other similar initiatives, such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden (GoA).

vi. ICTs Security

Cyber threats are a transboundary and cross-cutting challenge to all AMS. At the same time, cybersecurity is also a key enabler of economic progress, job creation and better living standards as AMS step up their digitalisation efforts.

Under Singapore's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2018, the first ever ASEAN Leaders' Statement on Cybersecurity Coordination was endorsed by Leaders to reaffirm ASEAN's commitment to a secure and resilient rules-based cyberspace. Since 2016, Singapore has also been hosting the ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity (AMCC), held on the side-lines of the Singapore International Cyber Week (SICW). AMS subscribed in-principle to the 11 voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs at the 3rd AMCC in 2018, making ASEAN the first and only region to do so. At the 7th AMCC in 2022, participants shared their national perspectives and efforts in managing cyber threats and attacks, and suggested ways in which AMS could work with one another to strengthen collective, regional response. Participants also expressed their support for Singapore's efforts to establish the ASEAN Regional Computer Emergency Response Team ("ASEAN CERT")

As set out in the 2018 ASEAN Leaders' Statement, Singapore worked closely with ASEAN to draft the initial proposal for better cybersecurity policy coordination in ASEAN. The proposal to establish an ASEAN Cybersecurity Coordinating Committee (ASEAN Cyber-CC) comprising representatives from relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies overseeing cybersecurity issues was considered at the ADGMIN in 2019. Its objective is to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination on cybersecurity while preserving the exclusive work domains of the sectoral bodies. The third ASEAN Cyber-CC meeting was held in November 2022.

At the 10th ASEAN Network Security Action Council (ANSAC) Meeting and 2nd Telecommunications and IT Senior Officials-ASEAN Telecommunications Regulators' Council (TELSOM-ATRC) Leaders Retreat in August 2019 in Bangkok, the methods for the implementation of the ASEAN CERT was noted, and the scope of work for the ASEAN CERT was agreed on. Singapore was tasked to continue the study on its implementation model. With the endorsement of the ASEAN CERT Implementation

Paper at ADGMIN 2022, the next steps are to work out the Terms of Reference and financing details for the ASEAN CERT for a period of minimally 10 years.

Singapore has also been convening an annual ASEAN CERT Incident Drill (ACID) for the last 17 years to strengthen the cybersecurity preparedness of AMS, reinforce regional bbcoordination drills, and enhance regional cooperation.

Alongside Malaysia and Japan, Singapore co-chaired the ARF Inter-Sessional Mbeeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies b(ARF ISM on ICTs Security) from August 2018 to July 2021. The ARF ISM on ICTs Security abnd its Open-ended Study Group (OESG) focuses on the adoption of CBMs bbto facilitate communication, information sharing as well as the exchange of know-how anbd best practices. In so doing, we can reduce the risk of cyber conflict, and build inter-country trust and confidence in cyberspace. For the intersessional year 2023-2024, Singapore is co-sponsoring two proposals. The first is on a workshop on Protectbbion of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructures with the European Union, and the second is on a workshop on the National Survey of Implementation of UN recommendations on responsible use of ICTs with Australia and Malaysia.

In support of international and regional capacity building efforts, Singapore has also organised several programmes under the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE). The intent is to continue to work with fellow ARF Member States to enhance our collective competencies and exchange of perspectives in the policy, operational, technical and diplomacy domains of cybersecurity. Some examples of key capacity building activities include the United Nations-Singapore Cyber Fellowship (UNSCF) Programme which is co-organised with the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs. The UNSCF is open to all UN Member States, including ARF Member States and is targeted at Cyber Ambassadors and/or the heads/deputy heads of national agencies overseeing cybersecurity. Singapore will be hosting two runs of the UNSCF in May and August 2023. Singapore has also organised two Norms Implementation Checklist Workshops in 2022 in support of the practical implementation of 11 voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible State behaviour. The next series of Workshops will be held over the course of 2023 to 2025

Multilaterally, Singapore participates actively in international discussions, including at the UN Singapore has participated in and contributed to strengthening the rules-based multilateral order at the 6th UN Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE) on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security and the inaugural Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Developments in the Field of ICTs in the Context of International Security. Both processes concluded in 2021 with their respective consensus reports were adopted by the UN General Assembly. The reports contained specific recommendations on how countries should work together towards an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace. Singapore chairs the ongoing five-year UN OEWG on Security of and in the use of ICTs (2021 – 2025), which builds on the work of the inaugural UN OEWG and the sixth UN GGE. The OEWG (2021 -2025) adopted its first Annual Progress Report by consensus in 2022. This sets out a clear roadmap for the next steps that the OEWG will take to foster practical international cooperation on areas such as rules, norms and principles, international law, capacity building, and CBMs towards a safe and secure cyberspace.

Within the defence sectoral, the ADMM-Plus EWG on CS, is a platform for defence establishments from ASEAN and Plus countries to enhance cooperation in addressing challenges to cybersecurity . Singapore actively participates in the EWG on CS to foster understanding, strengthen practical cooperation and support capacity-building efforts in the region.

The ACICE is part of Singapore’s contributions to strengthen cooperation amongst ASEAN Member States (AMS) in building a safe, secure, stable and accessible cyber and digital space. Since September 2021, ACICE has circulated monthly reports to AMS to raise shared situational awareness, provided updates on recent developments and trends, as well as tactics and techniques used by malicious actors in the cyber and information domains. These reports are also published on ACICE’s website. In February 2023, ACICE launched a Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) for AMS to access, read and share real-time information on cyber malware and other relevant cyber threats. The timely sharing of cybersecurity threat information leverages the collective knowledge of AMS for early warning, timely

response and mitigation of cyberattacks. The inaugural ACICE Advisory Board meeting was held via video conference in November 2022, with nominated representatives from all AMS as well as the ASEAN Secretariat in attendance. The Meeting exchanged views on how ASEAN defence establishments could cooperate in the cyber and information domains, as well as the research areas, activities and products that ACICE could work on. ACICE is located in Singapore, and the Centre is expected to be ready by second half of 2023.

As a co-sponsor of the Programme of Action (POA) Proposal for long-term institutional dialogue on cybersecurity issues at the UN, Singapore also looks forward to working with international partners to explore how the POA and OEWG can complement their work and build on the strong foundation of past GGE and OEWG consensus reports.

In our capacity as the ASEAN Voluntary Lead Shepherd on Cybercrime, Singapore has been working closely with other AMS and key stakeholders, such as INTERPOL, to identify priority areas of common interest to harmonise ASEAN's competencies in combating cybercrime. Singapore has also organised training programmes and meetings for AMS to encourage information sharing and build a close network of cyber experts within the region. The initiatives proposed to combat cybercrime are in close alignment with the objectives in the ASEAN Political-Security Blueprint 2025. On 28 November 2019, Singapore was formally appointed a permanent member of the INTERPOL Cybercrime Directors Workshop during the 10th edition of the Workshop. Members would convene twice a year to exchange operational information and experience in tackling various types of cybercrimes and cyber threats in the region. The 11th and 12th Cybercrime Directors Workshop took place on 23 April 2020 and 20 January 2021 respectively via video conference.

In order to bolster our regional efforts to effectively address the growing cybercrime threat, Singapore has continued to work closely with the INTERPOL ASEAN Cybercrime Operations Desk (ASEAN Desk), which currently has seconded officers from Singapore and Vietnam. In February 2021, the ASEAN Desk published its 2nd ASEAN Cyber Threat Assessment Report that provided analyses and insights on the latest cyber threat landscape in ASEAN and highlighted strategies and the way

forward for the region. The ASEAN Desk also coordinates intelligence-led joint operations in the region targeting cybercriminals. In 2022, a global operation codenamed “Killer Bee” led by the ASEAN Desk targeted malware cyber fraud across the region. Cooperation between INTERPOL, various law enforcement agencies in the region, private-sector partner Trend Micro and Nigeria’s Economic and Financial Crimes Commission led to the arrest of three suspected global scammers.

We have also actively contributed to capacity and awareness building efforts. In conjunction with the Singapore International Cyber Week (SICW), the 5th ASEAN Cybercrime Prosecutors’ Roundtable Meeting (ACPRM) and the 8th Senior Officials Roundtable on Cybercrime (SORC) were organised in October 2022. The former allows cybercrime prosecutors and law enforcement officers to share best practices and chart the way forward for better cooperation in this domain, while the latter provides a platform for high-level discussions among the ASEAN SOMTC Leaders and the Plus Three Dialogue Partner countries, industry experts and academia to discuss the latest threats, trends and solutions on cybercrime. In November 2022, Singapore co-organised the Course on Cybercrime with Italy. The 3-day course, held in Rome for ASEAN Member States and ASEANAPOL, explored the cybercrime fighting efforts of the Italian agencies and discussed strengthening cooperation between Italy and the ASEAN region.

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) CyberCrime Command (CCC) also organised the ASEAN Plus Three Cybercrime Conference (APTCC) in 2022. The APTCC provides a platform for ASEAN cybercrime agencies to take stock of new and emerging cybercrime threats in ASEAN and to exchange information with the Plus Three Dialogue Partners (People’s Republic of China, Japan and Republic of Korea) on the latest prevention measures, law and regulatory policies; as well as best practices on cybercrime forensics and investigations to strengthen ASEAN’s overall cybercrime response. The APTCC started as a workshop in 2016, followed by in-person conferences in 2018 and 2019 and a virtual conference in 2021.

From 9 to 10 November 2022, the SPF CCC organised the 5th APTCC. Held virtually, the theme of the conference was “Building Resilience – Overcoming Shared Challenges Together”. About 50 participants from the ASEAN Member States and

Plus Three Dialogue Partners took part in the two-day virtual conference. The virtual conference saw speakers from private companies such as Blackpanda, Group-IB, Kaspersky Lab and Chainalysis share their insights on tackling cybercrime, as well as the United States Department of Justice which presented on the importance of international cooperation.

1) ASEAN Plus Three Cybercrime Conference (APTCC)

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2) HSI – SPF Cyber Symposium

- The inaugural HSI-SPF Cyber Symposium, co-organised by CCC and the United States Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) was held from 12 to 14 July 2022.
- During the symposium, speakers shared on cryptocurrency, dark web and ransomware with participants from SPF, local external agencies as well as law enforcement agencies from Malaysia and Thailand.

IV. Role of ARF

Since its inception in 1994 as an open and inclusive forum to discuss key political and security issues, the ARF has evolved from Stage I Promotion of CBMs to Stage II Development of Preventive Diplomacy (PD) mechanisms. As the 2010 Hanoi Plan of Action (POA) to implement the ARF Vision Statement expired in 2020, ARF Participants developed a new POA (2020-2025), which will guide ARF’s future progress in accordance with universally recognised norms and principles of international law. This is a timely initiative as the world grapples with the political, economic and social consequences of a global pandemic.

Against this backdrop, we should be prepared to face more complicated regional security challenges. More than ever, recovery and success would depend on greater confidence and trust among ARF Participants, fostering closer collaboration and candid dialogue, as well as responding collectively to the complex post-pandemic landscape. ASEAN will have to ensure our continued Centrality and unity through initiatives, including at the ARF, that assert our relevance. The regional architecture is constantly in flux and the increasing complex geopolitical environment has intensified some centrifugal forces. The ARF must be vigilant and renew our value as an open and inclusive platform for engaging all friendly partners. To this end, Singapore remains fully committed to the ARF and its role as a key pillar in the multi-layered regional security architecture.

THAILAND

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

On 5 May 2023, the World Health Organization had officially declared that COVID-19 is no longer a "public health emergency of international concern". However, its massive toll on human lives all around the globe, the economy, and social dynamics cannot be overstated. With over 805,729 deaths in Southeast Asia alone, the region still suffers the lasting effect of the 3-year long pandemic and struggles to recover in the post COVID-19 world.

The great-power rivalry continues to pose geopolitical uncertainties and increasing risks of miscalculation and escalation, turning Southeast Asia into a major potential flashpoint. Reactivation and formation of security alliances has further intensified competition between major powers. To make matters worse, the situation in Ukraine has heightened uncertainty and unsettled commodity markets. According to the World Bank, while the region's direct dependence on Russia and Ukraine for imports and exports of goods, services, and capitals, is limited, the situation and sanctions against Russia are likely to increase international prices of food and fuel, hurting consumers and growth. The conflict has exacerbated yet another global existential threat: food insecurity.

ASEAN, as a regional grouping comprising small and medium sized countries, has been able to work with major powers and play a central role in building strategic trust and confidence, focusing global efforts on socio-economic recovery in the post COVID-19 era.

Implementation of ASEAN's initiatives in response to COVID-19 has enhanced partnerships and forged closer cooperation with external partners. Positive and concrete developments include procuring COVID-19 vaccines through the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund; operationalisation of the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies; proposal to establish the APT Reserve; progress of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) implementation; and operationalisation of the ASEAN Travel Corridor.

The launch of ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) has reinforced ASEAN's collective efforts to strengthen regional capacity in responding to future pandemics. Thailand hosts the ACPHEED Secretariat and also serves as an ACPHEED Secretariat Office for the "Response" pillar, while Viet Nam for "Prevention" and Indonesia for "Detection" pillars respectively. ASEAN is currently expediting the conclusion of

the Establishment Agreement of ACPHEED to start the operationalisation of the 3 offices at the earliest.

ASEAN Centrality in the Evolving Regional Architecture

The COVID-19 crisis together with major powers rivalries and multiple shocks in the global economy offer ASEAN an opportunity to recalibrate the ASEAN-centred regional architecture. The strengthening of such architecture is supported by shared norms and principles of international law, as enshrined in key instruments such as the ASEAN Charter, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), the Declaration of the East Asia Summit on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations, among others. With wider recognition of its governing principles in inter-state relations in response to security challenges in the uncertain geopolitical environment, the TAC has become ever more relevant. Reinforcing the TAC and its principles will strengthen regional norms and the promotion of peace and stability.

The long-term goal is to realise a strategic new equilibrium that will be conducive to peace, security and prosperity for all in the Asia-Pacific region, from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean. The 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in November 2019 adopted the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) which is “ASEAN’s Vista” on the evolving regional geo-strategic landscape anchored on existing norms and principles including those enshrined in the TAC, and on engagement with its dialogue partners. It aims to promote win-win cooperation in areas that are mutually beneficial, based on the principle of inclusiveness and the 3Ms: Mutual Trust, Mutual Respect, and Mutual Benefit.

The ASEAN-centred regional architecture comprising the ASEAN Plus One, the ASEAN Plus Three, the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has provided ASEAN with a strong regional convening power and a multi-layered platform to establish rules and norms for a regional order. These fora have provided venues for key players to engage in dialogue for the enhancement of strategic trust, the strengthening of confidence-building measures and the promotion of preventive diplomacy, focusing on win-win cooperation and concrete deliverables. They will ultimately contribute to attaining “sustainable security” within the ASEAN region and beyond.

II. Regional Security Environment

Asia-Pacific's strategic landscape has become more volatile as a result of more intense competition amongst various states in order to gain geo-strategic advantages in the region. Geopolitical uncertainties and confrontations could potentially affect regional peace and security as well as undermine prosperity in the region, especially efforts to recover from COVID-19 and attain long-term sustainable growth.

Additionally, the region is also encountering various challenges that could potentially affect regional peace and stability as well as hinder our economic progress. Disputes emanating from historical roots or in relation to border issues are likely to re-emerge, which pose risks for regional instability and growing tension among countries. In addition, non-traditional security issues, namely; transnational crimes, terrorism and violent extremism, cyber attacks, maritime security as well as health security, in particular the adverse effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, have brought new challenges and posed threats to our security landscape.

In the maritime domain, maritime security and cooperation have assumed greater importance for Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, challenges that would compromise safety and security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) need to be addressed effectively. Other increasingly crucial maritime issues, such as marine resources management, including combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU Fishing), transnational crime at sea, piracy and armed robbery, people smuggling and wildlife smuggling also require closer cooperation. To complement these efforts, practical cooperation, maritime domain awareness (MDA), information sharing and intelligence exchange must also be enhanced.

On the South China Sea, increased tensions and provocative incidents in the area may undermine regional peace, security and stability. It is therefore necessary for all parties concerned to exercise self-restraint and avoid activities that may lead to miscalculation, confrontation or even conflict. ASEAN Member States and China are encouraged to maintain trust and confidence in the region through practical confidence-building measures, continued dialogue and win-win cooperation under the ambit of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). The completion of the second reading of the Single Draft Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) Negotiating Text in May 2023 by the ASEAN - China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (JWG-DOC) is welcomed as it signals a positive momentum towards an early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC.

Meanwhile, all parties concerned should create an environment conducive to the peaceful resolution of disputes, consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. It is also pertinent to pursue full and effective implementation of the DOC and properly implement its measures, as well as ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight the South China Sea.

The region continues to be vulnerable to the threats and exploitation of transnational organised crime, terrorist groups, and smugglers, including trafficking in persons and people smuggling, irregular migration and particularly illicit drug trafficking. Illicit drug markets in the region have expanded and diversified and appeared to be largely exacerbated by the pandemic outbreak. This landscape requires ASEAN to enhance its border management cooperation through enhanced coordination in all aspects, from information sharing and intelligence exchange, institutional capacity building, implementing appropriate measures to ensure safety and security from land, air and sea border challenges, to catalysing joint action to help address multifaceted dimensions of transnational crime, with a view that it is an enormous task no single country can tackle alone. Nevertheless, there is a need to ensure a balanced approach between safety and security, including health security, and cross-border trade facilitation and the seamless movement of goods and people.

The ever-increasing digital connectivity worldwide has been accompanied by trends where the use of ICTs for criminal purposes has become more intensified, sophisticated and less preventable. According to the UNODC, the increased digitalisation of society, compounded by the COVID-19 outbreak, has contributed to a recent 600 % rise in cybercrimes in Southeast Asia. The criminals target not only individuals, but increasingly focus on critical national infrastructure and business of all sizes in both private and public sectors.

The establishment of ASEAN Cybersecurity Coordinating Committee (ASEAN Cyber-CC) and the three ASEAN Cyber-CC meetings in November of 2020, 2021, and 2022 respectively, reflected the importance of strengthening cross-sectoral regional coordination on cybersecurity, including through the implementation of a list of voluntary, practical norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment. Equally important is cybersecurity training and capacity building, and this is where the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC) plays an important catalytic role to enhance the capacity of cybersecurity experts and specialists in the region.

In spite of the declining regional trend of terrorist attacks due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, terrorist groups are likely to resume their activities and strengthen their

organisations once the situation has improved. Meanwhile, the use of social media and online platforms to disseminate violent extremism and racism to the public have drastically increased along with growing risks of potential lone-wolf terrorist attacks. In 2023, there are still threats of local terrorist groups, especially those associated with the Islamic State (IS), in some parts of Southeast Asia.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula remains a pressing security issue in the region. On 4 February 2022, ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a statement entitled “The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Missile Tests” expressing grave concerns over the continued ballistic missile tests conducted by the DPRK, which may escalate tensions and threaten regional peace and stability. The said statement also called on the DPRK to fully comply with all relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, taking into account the international community’s calls for diplomacy, and reaffirmed ASEAN’s readiness to play a constructive role, including through utilising ASEAN-led platform such as the ARF, to promote a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue amongst concerned parties to bring about a complete, verifiable, irreversible, and peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. On 10 June 2022, ASEAN Foreign Ministers also issued a statement entitled “The Recent Surge of Missile Testing on the Korean Peninsula” expressing grave concerns over the recent surge in DPRK’s Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) testing and ballistic missile launches. Said statement urged the DPRK to exercise self-restraint and reiterated ASEAN’s call to the DPRK to fully comply with all relevant UNSC resolutions and ASEAN’s readiness to utilise ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ARF to play a constructive role to de-escalate tension to bring about a complete, verifiable, irreversible, and peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

On 17 February 2022, ASEAN Foreign Ministers also issued a statement welcoming the Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapons States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Race. The Statement reflects Thailand’s firm belief that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee against its use and threat of use.

ASEAN reaffirms its leading role in helping Myanmar return to normalcy, renew the path to democracy and revive its development track. In this regard, the ASEAN Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to expediting the progress of the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, through the adoption of the ASEAN Leaders’ Review and Decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in November 2022 in Phnom Penh. Thailand continues to render its full support to the

ASEAN Chair in moving forward the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. Thailand joins other ASEAN Member States in calling for immediate cessation of violence in all forms, in order to create an environment conducive for inclusive national dialogues as well as the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those most in need in a timely and effective manner. Thailand looks forward to the phase 2 delivery of humanitarian assistance, led by the ASEAN Coordination Centre of Humanitarian Management (AHA Centre) and the Secretary-General of ASEAN.

As a close neighbour of Myanmar, Thailand is gravely concerned over the rising trend in transnational crimes from the prolonged conflict, including trafficking in persons and drug trafficking, which have affected security and stability of the region and its people. The complexity of the situation requires pragmatic and step-by-step approach that is Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned. Thailand believes in ASEAN way of engagement, non-interference, and mutual respect, as well as 3Cs principles of Consultation, Cooperation and Consensus to guide our collective efforts in helping Myanmar find a peaceful political solution. In that spirit, Informal Discussions on Myanmar were convened on 22 December 2022, 25 February 2023 and 19 June 2023 respectively to provide a diplomatic space for candid, frank and constructive discussion to find practical resolution to the situation in Myanmar. Although they were not convened under the ASEAN Framework, the Informal Discussions could complement and support ASEAN's collective efforts in addressing the situation.

Thailand also attaches importance to resolving the situation in Rakhine State in a comprehensive and holistic manner, through a multi-pronged approach that combines sustainable development to address the root causes and promoting durable peace, stability and harmony between local communities. Thailand reaffirms its commitment and support for the implementation of projects identified under the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) in Rakhine State. Thailand's International Cooperation Agency (TICA) has implemented three projects under the PNA, one of which on provision and promotion of agriculture machinery was finalised in October 2022. Thailand also reaffirms its support for repatriation of displaced persons in Rakhine State in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner, and welcomes the progress between Bangladesh and Myanmar cooperation in conducting the pilot project on this matter.

Finally, the escalation of hostilities and the use of military force in Ukraine has led to the loss of lives and destruction of property and civilian infrastructure. The current humanitarian situation in Ukraine and humanitarian consequences of the crisis are of grave concerns. The adverse ramification of the situation, including food insecurity, energy crisis, and displaced refugees, is severely felt by the Asia-Pacific region. All relevant parties must cease all hostilities and violence

as well as to exercise utmost restraint before the conflict could reach the point of no return. Diplomatic means must be fully exhausted to find a peaceful settlement through dialogue. Moreover, it is important to support the proposal of the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) to establish effective humanitarian corridors to guarantee safe passage for people and the needed supplies. ASEAN Foreign Ministers have issued three statements regarding the situation in Ukraine, with the latest one dated 8 April 2022 expressing deepest condolences to the people of Ukraine and support the UNSG's call for an independent investigation of all alleged atrocities against innocent civilians, including in Bucha.

III. National Security and Defence Policy

In relation to Thailand's national security and defence policy, the Ministry of Defence has published its policy statement in an effort to promote transparency and enhance trust and confidence between Thailand and ASEAN Member States, as well as other partners within and beyond the Asia-Pacific. The mission of the Ministry of Defence covers wide range of issues including, amongst others, enhancing defence cooperation with neighbouring nations, ASEAN Member States and international organisations, both at bilateral and multilateral levels, enhancing the integration of strengths and capabilities with every sector, maintaining capability of the armed forces and national defence system, increasing armed forces capability in order to counter non-traditional threats and strengthening defence industry.

In addition, the Ministry of Defence attaches great importance to participation in cooperation frameworks which will provide opportunities for the armed forces of the region to engage in practical cooperation to promote mutual interest of participating countries and enhance capabilities for the future. The activities of the ADMM's initiatives and the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups include the enhancement of defence establishments' role in supporting border management to collectively respond to transnational challenges, and strengthening maritime security cooperation to build trust and confidence as well as practical cooperation in the maritime domain of the region.

The ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM), a subsidiary body under the ADMM, has contributed to the region's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief frameworks as well as complemented the work of the AHA Centre in improving the region's response and coordination mechanism. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the ACMM has played an active role in monitoring and responding to the situation. The important implementing plan of ACMM in 2023 includes the meeting on Maritime Security Operations in Military Medicine, Endemic concern Post

COVID-19 Management, and Health Needs Assessment on 13-17 March 2023 which led to the drafting of Maritime Security Operations in Military Medicine Guideline and Post COVID-19 Management Manual, and the amendment of ACMM Standard Operating Procedures 002 to be in line with AHA Centre.

IV. National Contribution to Regional Security

Joint Exercise

Cobra Gold is one of the largest multinational exercises in the Asia-Pacific region which has been held annually in Thailand since 1982. It is known to be one of the largest theater security cooperation exercises in the Asia-Pacific region which aims to strengthen military ties, and improve capabilities and interoperability of participating countries. The 42nd iteration of the Cobra Gold theater exercises took place during 27 February - 10 March 2023, providing a training for 7,394 participants from 30 countries. The training aimed for a military planning in enforcing peace by using military forces, including the training to support non-traditional security namely humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and cyber security. The training course was comprised of training on command, individual's assistance project namely construction project and table top exercise, and physical training.

Peacekeeping

Thailand has been a steadfast troop-contributing country to UN peacekeeping missions since 1950. Over 27,000 Thai military and police personnel, men and women, have served in more than 20 peacekeeping and related missions of the UN. At present, Thailand contributes an engineering company of 273 personnel, including 8 female personnel, to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as military and police officers to two UN peacekeeping missions, namely UNMOGIP in India and Pakistan and UNMISS in South Sudan. Thailand has also been consistently deploying female military and police officers to UN peacekeeping missions worldwide. In 2023, 10 female military personnel and 5 female police personnel are currently being deployed in two UN peacekeeping Missions, namely UNMOGIP in India and Pakistan and UNMISS in South Sudan.

As part of UNMISS, the Thai Horizontal Military Engineering Company (HMEC)'s main responsibilities include road reconstruction and building infrastructure. Thai peacekeepers also endeavour to promote development initiatives and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) initiated by His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great to assist in achieving

sustaining peace which complements Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peaceful and inclusive societies, justice and accountable institutions. Previous missions in Timor-Leste and Darfur were a case in point where SEP was successfully applied.

The Peace Operations Center (POC) of the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTARF) has collaborated with other countries in exchanging trainers and instructors, and providing training courses, namely (1) UN Staff Officers Course (UNSOC) and (2) Child Protection Course for both pre-deployed Thai and foreign officers to enhance awareness on child protection in conflicting areas with an aim to establish a Centre of Excellence on peacekeeping and child protection in ASEAN. In line with the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy (2021-2028), POC aims to promote the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda by increasing participation of female peacekeepers and implementing the UN Triangular Partnership Project 2022-2023, and enhancing cooperation on capacity building and joint training.

WPS

Regarding the WPS agenda, Thailand developed National Measures and Guidelines on WPS 2017-2021 and propelled in action through the establishment of Children and Women Coordinating Center in Southern Thailand. The National Measures and Guidelines is currently in the process of being reviewed to extend its implementation to 2023-2026 with an aim to develop into National Action Plan on WPS. The important measures of the Action Plan include prevention, protection and recovery, capacity building and empowerment and participation.

Counter-terrorism

The improvement of COVID-19 pandemic situation, the exploitation of cyberspace by terrorist groups for propaganda and recruitment, and the volatile situation in certain regions, especially in Afghanistan, have contributed to the rebounding of global and regional terrorist threat. Therefore, the international community should prepare for and remain vigilant to such circumstances.

The number of terrorist incidents in Southeast Asia in 2021 declined due to the continued efforts of authorities in pursuing their operations and law enforcements. However, there are still threats of local terrorist groups, especially those associated with the Islamic State (IS)/Daesh. In addition, there is also a growing concern of reconnection of networks between

local and global terrorists after the ease of travel restrictions and re-opening of borders as well as the resurgence of global terrorist groups, namely IS and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Issues to be monitored and properly addressed include (1) threat from IS-associated groups in the region (2) movement of international terrorists after the ease of travel restrictions (3) repatriation or relocation of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) (4) reconnection of terrorist networks (5) act of terrorism by lone actors, wolf packs, and radicalised women and youth, and (6) spread of violent extremism via social media platforms.

It is crucial to undertake a comprehensive and sustainable solution to terrorism by addressing root causes through soft and hard approaches in a balanced and holistic manner; encouraging international cooperation; and promoting interfaith dialogues and values of moderation and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies.

Thailand has ratified 12 out of 19 existing conventions and protocols related to counter terrorism under the UN framework, and has recently adopted the Counter-Terrorism Action Plan of Thailand (2023-2027) of which the concepts of prevention response, and rehabilitation are core approaches. The Action Plan also highlights the importance of inter-agency cooperation and multi-stakeholder to combat terrorism.

In 2022, the Thai Cabinet approved the National Guidelines on Strengthening Co-existence Amidst Social Diversity. By translating Thailand's commitment to counter-terrorism in regional and international frameworks, particularly the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, into national action, the Guidelines aim to promote the integration of efforts between government agencies and stakeholders to address the issues of violent extremism in a comprehensive manner, including through socio-economic and psychological measures and respect for human rights.

Conventional Weapons- Arms Control

As a result of past conflicts, landmines have long posed threats to safety and security and hindered economic development in the region. As a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), and a member of the Universalization Coordination Group (UCG) under such framework, Thailand fully supports the universalisation of the APMBC to reduce the risk associated with anti-personnel mines and put an end to the decades of sufferings. Currently, Thailand has no stockpiled anti-personnel mines and has successfully returned more than 99% of safe land to its people.

Abandoned mines are not only a problem of a single country but also a regional problem. The remaining mines placed along the border pose risks to life and health of the people and halt cross-border connectivity and economic development. Efforts to carry out demining operations along the border areas can be challenging, especially in the areas yet to be demarcated. Therefore, Thailand supports the drafting of the “Non-Binding Guideline on Cross-Border Humanitarian Demining” within the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC) framework. We believe that this would benefit the humanitarian mine action efforts in the region.

As the chair of the Committee on Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance under the APMBC framework, Thailand supports international cooperation and assistance at the regional level, including sharing of experiences and best practices related to humanitarian mine action operations within ASEAN. This will help improve the efficiency of mine action operations, leading to the enhancement of safety and security, as well as economic prosperity, and contribute towards the mine-free goal of ASEAN.

Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

Thailand upholds the policy not to develop, acquire or proliferate any kind of WMD and their means of delivery, as well as fully observes commitments and obligations on non-proliferation of WMD.

On nuclear disarmament, as one of the first three countries to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 20 September 2017, the entry into force of the TPNW on 22 January 2021 has marked a historic milestone and the triumph of multilateralism. Each TPNW State Party never undertakes at any circumstance to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Thailand welcomes the successful conclusion of its First Meeting of States Parties on 21-23 June 2022 in Vienna. Given that 92 states have signed the TPNW and 68 states are parties to the Treaty at the time of writing, it is crucial to promote further ratification and accession to the TPNW, so as to achieve inclusiveness and universality of the Treaty. At the same time, Thailand reaffirms the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone for nuclear non-proliferation. The failure to adopt an outcome at the 10th Review Conference of the NPT has made it more important than ever for all parties to reaffirm their commitments towards implementing their obligations and undertakings under the NPT in all three pillars in a balanced manner.

Thailand recognises the complementarity between the TPNW and the NPT, as both share the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. TPNW is fully in line with the obligations on nuclear disarmament under the Article VI of the NPT, which requires States to pursue negotiation in good faith on general and complete disarmament. As such, Thailand and the Republic of Ireland have taken the role of informal co-facilitator on “Complementarity”, to further explore and articulate possible areas of tangible cooperation between the TPNW, the NPT and other instruments.

In this regard, Thailand looks forward to substantive outcomes of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW, as well as the Eleventh Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which will play a crucial role in strengthening the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

At the regional level, Thailand played a leading role in the establishment and the implementation of the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) or the Bangkok Treaty of 1995, and in initiating the cooperation of the ASEAN Network of regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM). Thailand is committed to supporting and advancing both initiatives, including with the Nuclear Weapon States on the signing of the SEANWFZ Protocol and with ASEAN Member States and friends on cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology, as its contribution to promote ASEAN non-proliferation efforts.

On 16-17 May 2023, Thailand co-chaired the 14th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ISM on NPD) with the United States and Sri Lanka. The meeting offered an opportunity for the ARF to serve as an inclusive platform to constructively discuss pressing regional and international issues and promote a conducive atmosphere for dialogue. The focused discussion covered the three priority areas of the ARF NPD Work Plan, namely Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. in addressing cross-border crimes

Thailand welcomes the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament under the ‘Securing Our Common Future’ concept and its three outlined priorities on the control and disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, and remaining vigilant of new and emerging technologies and their effects on peace and security. In this connection, Thailand looks forward to tangible cooperation and meaningful engagement between all UN agencies, Member States, and other stakeholders in realising this Agenda. Thailand stands ready to facilitate the exchange of views and best practices on disarmament and non-proliferation issues

and will continue to act as a bridge-builder between ASEAN and other regional and international groupings to bring about a safer and more secure world.

Transnational Crime

The Asia-Pacific Region continues to face threats posed by transnational organised crime groups who exploit higher degree of global and regional connectivity. The ease of travel restrictions, re-opening of borders and the impacts of recent economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic are key factors luring more people to enter into transnational crime, especially drug trafficking networks which still remain highly active in the region. Other illegal activities such as people smuggling, human trafficking, illicit wildlife and timber trafficking continue to pose potential threats in Thailand and countries in the region.

The National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Transnational Organised Crimes still plays a central role in Thailand efforts to combat transnational crimes. In addition, domestic laws addressing organised crime, money laundering, human trafficking, and cybercrime also serve as policy guidelines and frameworks for Thailand's relevant security agencies.

Thailand is of a firm belief that the "ASEAN Border Management Cooperation Roadmap", adopted at the 15th AMMTC on 29th September 2021, will help lay an important groundwork in advancing cooperation on border management as well as addressing transnational crime in ASEAN as reflected in the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 with the ultimate goal being the establishment of an ASEAN-wide border management cooperation arrangement to ensure border security and facilitate trade in tandem. Earlier this year the National Security Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, has adopted the Action Plan on Border Security Management (2023 - 2027), which aims to ensure that border areas are safe and secure, suitable for economic, social, and human security development draw. The Action Plan draws elements from and aligns itself to the Roadmap's Priorities, for example, Priority V. Explore leveraging advanced technologies by border security agencies and Priority VIII. Explore the development of "risk-based" approaches in enhancing border management, which will help open up opportunity for us to further expand cooperation in this matter with ASEAN.

On 28 February – 1 March 2023, Thailand and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) co-organised the 'Border Management Cooperation Dialogue for the ASEAN Region' in Pattaya, to provide a platform for ASEAN Member States to share information on the latest trends of transnational crime and discuss national and regional preparedness in tackling the issues—as well as to review the implementation of Roadmap over the past 2 years. Over 70

participants from ASEAN Member States' relevant agencies were engaged in sharing experiences, best practices, obstacles, and challenges, as well as views on the possible way forward—with Recommendations to complement the Roadmap.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand continued to be resolute in carrying out the national agenda of zero tolerance towards human trafficking, which was adopted since 2014. In 2021, the Government had allocated more budget for preventing and suppressing human trafficking, increasing by 10.69% from 2020. Thailand also attaches great importance to ensure the safety and protection of victims and implementing preventive measures to protect various vulnerable groups from human trafficking. Thailand provides assistance and protection of all victims of trafficking in accordance with Thai laws and victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches. These have included improving services in the shelters, introducing the mobile application “PROTECT-U” to increase access to protection and assistance, providing legal assistance in shelters, providing capacity-building training for shelter staff members, and providing protection and assistance for LGBTQI victims.

As a country of transit and destination for irregular migration, Thailand has been affected by mass influx of irregular migrants from within and outside the region. Although Thailand is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Thailand has long been committed to humanitarian cause and will continue to work closely with the UNODC, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Illicit drug trafficking remains a grave challenge for ASEAN due to an increase in opium cultivation, heroin production and methamphetamine tablets and crystalline methamphetamine manufacturing in the Golden Triangle. Thailand is therefore fully committed to implementing the 4-year Mekong Drug Control Joint Operation Plan (2019-2022), in collaboration with Lao PDR, Myanmar, Cambodia, Viet Nam and China. The Plan is a continuation of the Safe Mekong Operation launched in 2015, aimed to comprehensively address illicit drug production and distribution in the Golden Triangle area. Thailand also hosts Safe Mekong Coordination Centre (SMCC) in Chiang Mai and together with Australia established the “Taskforce Storm” in 2016 to oversee joint operations in suppressing illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and transnational crimes. This Taskforce has succeeded in arresting several drug syndicate criminals and seizing their proceeds of crime. As a lead shepherd for illicit drug trafficking, under the SOMTC, Thailand will continue to promote cooperation and activities in a concerted manner according to the ASEAN Cooperation Plan to Tackle Illicit Drug Production and Trafficking in the Golden Triangle 2020-2022.

In 2019, Thailand enacted two laws to support Thailand's digital economy, namely Cybersecurity Act B.E.2562, leading to establishment of the National Cybersecurity Committee (NCSC) and other frameworks to prevent and respond to cyber threats against Critical Information Infrastructures (CIIs), and Personal Data Protection Act B.E 2562, aimed to standardise mechanisms and supervisory measures to protect online personal information both in the government and private sector. At present, the NCSA has finalised a new 5-year National Policy and Plan on Cybersecurity (2022-2027) which comprises 4 strategic goals, namely enhancing government agencies' cyber capabilities, strengthening CIIs protection and resilience, deepening collaboration with stakeholders, and incubating knowledge and technology.

The region has been increasingly interconnected due to the digital transformation accelerated by the spread of the COVID-19. The connectivity in cyberspace comes at a price to public safety. It is imperative for ASEAN to enhance cyber capabilities and strengthen common understanding to reduce cyber risks. On this note, Thailand welcomes the adoption of Regional Action Plan on the Implementation of UNGGE Norms of Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace (Cyber Norms) at the 2nd ASEAN Cyber-CC in 2021, and the launch of the ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy 2021-2025 at the 2nd ADGMIN in 2022. This reflects opportunities for ASEAN to synergise efforts on cybersecurity cooperation across frameworks.

The ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC) has continued to serve as a training centre for authorities and information infrastructure operators in ASEAN on three issues: Cyber Defence Exercise with Recurrence (CYDER), digital forensics and malware analysis. As of February 2022, the AJCCBC has organised 19 training courses, including 9 online courses since the COVID-19 outbreak. The Centre has held 14 technical training sessions and four Cyber SEA Games in which the 4th Cyber SEA Game was held online due to the COVID-19. In addition to its main activities, the Centre also organised the Threat-Hunting Exercise and Exercise for SOC Analysts, sponsored by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications: MIC for 44 ASEAN professionals, and the Online Self-learning Course on Establishing a CSIRT and Cybersecurity Awareness for 135 ASEAN professionals. Under 3rd Party Collaboration, the Centre hosted the Secure Provision training course with the Government of Switzerland during 14-15 March 2022. The Centre also plan to host on CSET training course with Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) with the United States, and multiple activities throughout 2023 to 2024.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and its Work Programme 2021-2025 form the basis for cooperation amongst ASEAN Member States to prepare and respond to disaster emergencies in a concerted manner. The signing of the “ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response” in 2016 confirms that AADMER is the common platform for the Declaration. Thailand, as a Party to the AADMER and a member of the Governing Board of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), will continue to strengthen ASEAN’s efforts in the area of disaster management and reaffirm its support to an active role of the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) and other ASEAN tools to deal with HADR challenges.

As the Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) in 2022, Thailand attached great importance to enhancing ASEAN’s efforts in disaster prevention and mitigation. The overarching theme of Thailand’s chairmanship is “BALANCING ACT” which comprises accelerating the implementation of the AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Bangkok Principles, taking public health emergency, gender and inclusion, localisation, and climate action into account.

Thailand supports regional efforts to enhance capacity in disaster response and disaster management in line with the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on Disaster Health Management, adopted at the 31st ASEAN Summit in Manila. The Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA) launched on 7 December 2012 is a key mechanism to allow for swift provision of relief items to ASEAN Member States facing post-disaster emergency situations. DELSA’s establishment and operations have been supported by the Government of Japan, while the AHA Centre works closely with WFP - UNHRD on logistics technical aspects.

During the 34th ASEAN Summit in June 2019, Thailand by the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation officially launched the DELSA Satellite Warehouse in Chai Nat Province. The Warehouse serves as a stockpile during emergencies in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Thailand. Recently, the Warehouse delivered 2,900 Personal Hygiene Kits to support COVID-19 response in Cambodia in 2020 as well as 500 family tents, 2,000 mosquito nets, and 1,500 personal hygiene kits to Thailand in 2021. Further, the stockpile of relief materials from the Warehouse has been deployed to affected communities in Myanmar.

Maritime Security and Cooperation

The Asia-Pacific region continues to face maritime security challenges, including piracy, armed robbery against ships and various forms of transnational crime as well as issues related to marine environment and IUU fishing. An increase in the number of incidents in 2021 in comparison to 2020 reflects that piracy and armed robbery against ships remains a prevailing security concern. Such incidents are the result of active criminal activities in several areas and vulnerability of important sea lines of communication, notably the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, which connect two major waterways, namely, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Tensions between regional powers also pose challenges to international trade and maritime connectivity.

Given the complex and wide-ranging nature of maritime security issues, Thailand enacted the Maritime National Interests Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019) to promote better coordination and consolidate responses to deal with emerging threats. Under the Act, Thai Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Centre has been upgraded to become Thai Maritime Enforcement Command Centre (THAI-MECC) with augmented role and greater authority in managing maritime security-related affairs. The Centre participated in the National Crisis Management Exercise 2020 (C-MEX 20) to articulate understanding amongst relevant agencies in preparation for interception of WMD, addressing water pollution, and tackling IUU fishing. Since October 2019, THAI-MECC has joined efforts on COVID-19 prevention and control in maritime transport, including through National Single Windows (NSW) for reporting formalities from ships arriving in and/or departing from ports.

Thailand has participated in regional efforts such as the Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrols since 2008, the air patrol “Eyes in the Sky” since 2009, as well as the secondment of rotating officers to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP ISC). Moreover, Thailand has actively taken part in regional maritime security and cooperation fora such as the EAS, the ADMM-Plus which Thailand is currently co-chairing with the United States the ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group on Maritime Security (EWG on MS) under the theme “Strengthening Maritime Security Cooperation for Sustainable Development of ASEAN Member States’ Economies”, the ARF, the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and the Expanded AMF (EAMF) with a view to paving the way towards substantive cooperation, particularly in the areas of capacity building, maritime domain awareness and maritime connectivity.

Under the ADMM-Plus EWG on MS, Thailand hosted the 18th ADMM-Plus EWG on MS and Table Top Exercise on 20-24 February 2023 in Bangkok to review progress of the current Work Plan,

provide an update on the region's maritime security environment, further discuss the Roadmap and exchange views on sustainable Blue Economy development and Maritime Security Environment in the Indo-Pacific Region. Upcoming activities include the 2nd Maritime Security Conference and the Future Leaders' Programme which aims to build network amongst young officers and defence officials within the ADMM-Plus community in September 2023, the latter held back-to-back with the 19th ADMM-Plus EWG on MS in Hawaii.

Thailand has embarked on a comprehensive reform of the fishery sector, resulting in the European Union's lifting of a yellow card for import ban of seafood products from Thailand in 2019. Building on such success, the ASEAN Network for Combating IUU Fishing (AN-IUU) was established in 2020 with Thailand as the host country and coordinator of the AN-IUU Network Centre and the AN-IUU Interactive Platform. Thailand hosted and co-hosted a number of meetings, including the 1st Meeting of the AN-IUU Focal Point in December 2020 via videoconference, and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd ASEAN Meeting on Combatting IUU Fishing in Partnership with the EU virtually in 2019 and 2021. At the 3rd Meeting, Thailand was tasked to take lead in developing the Guideline on sharing, access to, and use of IUU fishing related information. The AN-IUU Guidelines were adopted at the 44th Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) on 25 October 2022. Thailand also plans to organise a workshop on the use of AN-IUU Interactive Platform to familiarise users to effectively use website and its full functionality.

Thailand has remained committed to promoting marine environmental protection, particularly on marine debris issue. Following the adoption of the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris (ASEAN RAP) at the Meeting of ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment on 1 March 2021. Thailand will co-chair with the United States and China the

“ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions” to raise awareness on components of developing, financing, and implementing solid waste management plans, and share best practices and case studies on scalable solutions to address regional marine debris challenges.

At the national level, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has developed a Roadmap “Plastic Waste Management 2018-2030” as a policy framework for the national plastic waste management. The Roadmap's main objective involves strengthening collaboration amongst all stakeholders in preventing and addressing plastic waste problem in an integrated manner to reduce and stop using certain types of plastic, such as plastic wrapping and water

bottle lid within 2019 and plastic bag, Styrofoam container, plastic cup, and plastic straw within 2022. Several activities under marine debris management project have also been organised, such as “Everyday Say No to Plastic Bags” campaign in cooperation with private sector to end distribution of single-use plastic bags by department and convenience stores.

V. Role of the ARF

National contributions to enhance the ARF and regional security

The ever-challenging global situation has provided an opportunity for the ARF to demonstrate its relevance and efficiency as a primary forum for constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. The Ha Noi Plan of Action II (HPoA II) at the 27th ARF in 2020 covers a period of 5 years, unlike the previous PoA which covered 10 years. Thailand has therefore spared no efforts in actively implementing the HPoA II and related Work Plans of each Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM). Further, Thailand has followed the Guide to ASEAN Regional Forum Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol, approved at the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, in conducting ARF initiatives and activities.

As for the inter-sessional year 2022-2023, Thailand co-chaired the 14th ARF ISM on NPD and will co-chair the following activities in accordance with ARF’s purposes and principles: (1) ARF Workshop on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes, with Russia and China, (2) ARF Workshop on the National Survey of Implementation of United Nations recommendations on responsible use of ICTs by states in the context of international security, with Australia and Malaysia, (3) 2nd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building, with China, and (4) ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions, with the United States and China.

Future of the ARF

With the diverse expertise of the Participants, the ARF can serve as an inclusive platform for concrete and practical cooperation on issues affecting regional security, ranging from public health emergencies, cybersecurity, maritime security, transnational crime, terrorism, and disaster relief. In the past year, despite the pandemic, it has been encouraging that Participants delivered on activities, expressed high interest in undertaking co-chairmanship of ISMs, proposed new concrete activities, and developed new ISMs Work Plans. It is even more encouraging that there has been progress on issues which Participants may have divergent

views, but able to discuss and seek practical way forward by consensus, making progress at a pace comfortable to all.

The HPoA II comprises shorter implementation period than the first PoA which on the one hand, allows ARF Participants to be adaptable to emerging challenges. On the other hand, it requires Participants to be more focused and effective in its implementation. Utilising the work of national and regional think tanks as well as ARF Experts and Eminent Persons is underscored in the HPoA II. Engaging and networking directly with other actors such as Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), and ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS), including regional and international organisations, and listening to voices that embody diversity and inclusivity will help advance the HPoA II implementation as well as enhance the ARF's relevance.

In realising the ARF's full potential and objective, greater attention should be given to reviewing the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy adopted in 2011, with a view to identify gaps and challenges in moving the ARF process forward from Stage I - Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to Stage II – Preventive Diplomacy (PD), as well as enable a more efficient and effective policy response to emerging challenges. It is imperative to increase the capacity and capabilities of the ARF in the area of PD which includes helping prevent disputes and conflicts from arising between states and minimise the impact of such disputes and conflicts on the region. PD measures/mechanisms must be subject to a step-by-step approach, non-coercive, voluntary and conducted in accordance with universally recognised norms and principles of international law, and inter alia, in line with the UN Charter and the TAC.

Moving forward, the ARF needs to continue positioning and revitalising itself to address emerging challenges in a holistic manner. A novel idea should be explored so that the ARF can truly serve as a platform for constructive dialogues on security issues affecting the region. Maintaining the ARF relevance and significance as an action-oriented forum is also imperative. In this regard, the ARF needs to enable its work to be synergised with other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as ADMM-Plus and the EAS, as well as to promote cooperation with other regional and international bodies such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In so doing, the ARF will remain relevant and credible in bringing regional players and stakeholders together in constructive dialogues and security cooperation in the region.

TIMOR LESTE

The contribution to the Annual Security Outlook (ASO) of 2023 is to reaffirm Timor-Leste's strong commitment to work with all ARF participants to promote peace, stability, security, and prosperity in the region. The Annual Security Outlook is an effective channel to promote confidence, understanding, transparency, and the exchange of views among ARF participants. It is also a useful publication to strengthen public awareness of the efforts of individual ARF participants towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the region

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

The current regional security environment remains unpredictable and fragile affected by the dynamic change in the balance of power in the region. International order is being disrupted by the intensified power rivalry characterized by the latest escalation of tensions affecting the region and beyond. The regional security environment is becoming severe and uncertain as powerful States with outstanding military capabilities has a clear tendency of further reinforcement of military capabilities and acceleration of military activities.

At this critical juncture, ARF remains an effective ASEAN-led mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation for participating countries to reaffirm their collective commitment to the region's continued development and prosperity. In this regard, harnessing the full potential of the ARF as a platform for dialogue on security issues will be important to address the challenges facing the region, and build confidence among states so as to create an environment that is conducive to peace and prosperity.

Timor-Leste has manifested its interest to integrate into regional mechanism of ASEAN through the accession into ASEAN community. Timor-Leste has been granted observer status in December 2022 and recently, during the ASEAN Summit of 2023, ASEAN Leaders adopted the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN in the near future. Timor-Leste has, therefore, shared the view of ASEAN and respect the ASEAN Centrality in the promotion of peace and stability in the region in line with the guiding principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

The Myanmar Political Crisis

The prolonged political crisis in Myanmar has dragged the People of Myanmar into humanitarian sufferings without certainty for an immediate solution of the crisis. Timor-Leste is deeply concerned with the ongoing violence in Myanmar and urge the immediate cessation of all forms of violence and the use of force to create a conducive environment for the safe and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Despite the current challenges, there is still space for finding a solution where ASEAN Member States must play a creative and constructive leading role in resolving the crisis in accordance with the ASEAN Way principles and ASEAN existing mechanisms. Therefore, Timor-Leste has supported the efforts of the Chair of ASEAN to find a peaceful solution through an all-inclusive dialogue engaging all stakeholders in Myanmar and to encourage all parties to implement the Five-Point Consensus.

The Russia-Ukraine war

The Russia-Ukraine war and its ramifications have gone far beyond the impact on Europe. Its escalation and spill over effects have multidimensional and multidirectional effects across the globe including Indo-Pacific region. The war has disrupted the international order and systems and also caused shortage of energy and food security. It has posed such a geopolitical and geo-economics challenges that has made nations rethink their strategic position in the region. The recent escalation of tensions of the war has led to a security dilemma which will only perpetuate the conflict.

The prolonged and intensified war has caused significantly greater economic damage around the world. Timor-Leste believes the right solution is through peaceful means and dialogue. All parties to the war must exercise maximum restraint and make utmost efforts to pursue dialogues through all channels, including diplomatic means to contain the situation, to de-escalate tensions, and to seek peaceful resolution in accordance with international law, the principles of the United Nations Charter. Timor-Leste has been consistent to abide by the principles of mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and equal rights of all nations. Timor-Leste, therefore, condemns any aggression over the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in accordance with its internationally recognized borders.

Apparently, the US and EU could not solve the war alone as they are involved in the conflict, an alternative path must be taken. Alternatively, Timor-Leste's President Dr. Jose Ramos Horta has urged the middle power countries namely Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey, South Africa, and India to use "middle power diplomacy" to pursue multilateral solutions to end the Ukraine-Russia war. It is believed that Middle powers help maintain international order by building coalitions, serving as mediators and 'go-betweens', and through international conflict management and resolution activities such as UN peacekeeping.

Denuclearization of Korean Peninsula

Korean Peninsula Missile tests has been an issue of grave concern for Timor-Leste and the region. The recent relentless ballistic missile tests conducted by Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) indicates how fragile we are living in such a high-risk security environment. The provocation and exhibition of nuclear threat which has escalated tensions and threatened regional peace and stability, especially for neighbouring countries such as Japan and South Korea. These tests of missiles may have discouraged regional efforts to achieve regional security goals on non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in the region.

Timor-Leste, however, continues to believe in the power of peaceful dialogue and constructive role played by ARF to promote a conducive atmosphere for a peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Timor-Leste detests any justification of the use of nuclear weapons for the sake of self-defence or deterrence weapon for other threats.

In this respect, Timor-Leste re-affirms its support for the Statement by ASEAN Foreign Minister's on the 4th of February 2022 on DPRK to comply fully with all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and take into account the international community's call for diplomacy and in the interest of maintaining peace and security in the region.

South China Sea Conflict

On the dispute of South China Sea, the best solution for conflicting parties should be to respect the principle of rules based international order and resolve the dispute peacefully in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Above all, a conducive atmosphere must be maintained

prior to dialogue for solution. Hence, all parties must exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoid excessive actions that may lead to open conflict.

Timor-Leste continues to support ASEAN to create a conducive atmosphere and lead negotiations towards a fair resolution of the dispute. The conclusion of the Code of Conduct (COC) is the crucial step to regulate actions of parties in the South China Sea. It is expected that ASEAN and China would reach an agreement on the Code of Conduct concerning several contentious issues, including its legality, the scope of geographic and maritime activities and the role of other powers that have increased their presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

II. Timor-Leste's National Security Policies

As the nation building and state building efforts are underway, Timor-Leste continues upgrading its national security system to respond to the emerging regional and global security challenges. Timor-Leste's National Security Policies has been based on the National Security Law (2010) which established an Integrated National Security System to act under a democratic control and to approach national security matters in a holistic and integrated way.

In the context of international relation and in its best interests, Timor-Leste adopted a cooperative security approach which allows Timor-Leste to work cooperatively with its regional partners through various platforms and mechanisms to address common security challenges faced in the region and beyond.

2.1. New Superior Council for Military Defence's Regulations

The Council of Ministers approved the draft Decree-Law referring to the new Superior Council for Military Defence's Regulations to make the Superior Council for Military Defence's Regulations compatible with the National Defence Law in force. The Superior Council for Military Defence will be integrated by Generals out of active service who have served as Supreme Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Deputy Supreme Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces or Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, to ensure the transition and implementation of the development objectives outlined in the strategic documents of defence.

The Council has also the mandatory in matters concerning the amendment of the organic structure of the F-FDTL, the proposals for appointment and dismissal for the positions of Supreme Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Deputy Supreme Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and the F-FDTL Military Build-Up.

Early this year, the Ministry of Defence also made another important upgrade in the defence with the approval of the Military Programming Law. The National Parliament approved “The draft law on the Military Programming Law which would help to frame the budget for public spending on equipment and weapons, with aim of building the military capabilities needed to sustain the National Defence Force (F-FDTL).

2.2. Professional Status of Timor-Leste National Police

On internal security affairs, The Council of Ministers has approved the decree-law on the professional status of the personnel with police functions in the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL). The decree-law provides the PNTL with a professional statute for its staff, with the perspective of improving the working conditions, to elevate the motivational framework and the self-esteem of the PNTL police officers, reinforcing their ability to face the growing responsibility, demand and need for efficiency in the provision of public security services.

The Decree-Law on the remuneration scheme of the National Police (PNTL) was also amended to increase the basic remuneration of the PNTL members by 15% in 2023. In addition to the planned increase in basic remuneration, the decree-law is also updated, taking into account the amendment to the Organic Law of the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL).

In addition, the legislative intervention was made to make the military career more attractive, with a salary condition consistent with the modernization and growing professionalization of the armed forces. Hence, the Council of Ministers approved, with amendments, the draft Decree-Law regarding the new remuneration regime for FALINTIL – Timor-Leste’s Defence Forces (F-FDTL) with a salary increase of around 5% in all military posts and the updating of salary supplements.

2.3. Disaster risk management guidelines

Timor-Leste is located in the northern subduction zone between the Eurasian and Australian plates makes it highly vulnerable to natural hazards. Timor-Leste also experiences the cyclical effects of El Niño-related weather anomalies, which are linked to droughts. Thus, the Government of Timor-Leste is committed to developing its response capacity to the natural disasters.

The partnership between OIM and Civil Protection Authority of Timor-Leste has focused on developing disaster risk management guidelines and capacity building for Civil Protection officers to respond to disasters. Early this year, International Organization for Migration (IOM) together with the Secretariat of State for Civilian Protection (SoSCP) developed disaster risk management guidelines for Civil Protection Authority (CPA) on early disaster response. The guideline also contributes to implementing a well management on disasters response and can support Civil Protection Authority to be on readiness to support the communities in the emergency in the capital and also at the municipal level.

III. Contributions to Regional Security

Timor-Leste's contributions to regional security will lead to more constructive efforts towards promoting peace, security in the region. As a participant of the ARF, Timor-Leste is committed to contributing to regional security through strengthening the existing cooperative bilateral and multilateral arrangements with its regional partners especially with ARF participating countries.

3.1. Timor-Leste and Australian Defence Cooperation Agreement

Australia as one of Timor-Leste's proximate neighbour and one of the major development partners, has contributed significantly to development of defence and security of Timor-Leste. For many years, Australia has supported Timor-Leste's armed forces and national police and cooperated on regional security issues, including maritime challenges, border security and transnational crime.

The defence cooperation has been enhanced with the signing of an agreement on September 7th, 2022 in Canberra, Australia. The Minister of Defence, Filomeno da Paixão de Jesus and his Australian counterpart, Richard Marles, signed a cooperation agreement on defence, in a ceremony held at the National Parliament of the Commonwealth of

Australia, in Canberra witnessed by the President of the Republic, José Ramos-Horta and the Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese.

This agreement establishes the reciprocal protections, responsibilities and privileges that each country will grant to the military of the other in the territory. Accordingly, Timorese military personnel operating, exercising or training in Australia will receive the same protections, responsibilities and privileges that Australian personnel will receive in Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste and Australia will increase cooperation in the areas of defence and security, especially in the maritime domain, given their shared borders and adjacent maritime areas. It will increase the capacity of the two countries to operate together as required, conduct exercises and training, and cooperate in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

3.2. Japan's Grants to Civil Protection Authority

Timor-Leste continues to enhance its capacity to respond to natural disasters with the financial support of Japan. The Government of Japan through The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has granted US\$40,000, to support the Civil Protection Authorities (CPA) of Timor-Leste to conduct the preparedness in facing the tsunami. This grant will support CPA on tsunami preparedness to empower the training for teachers from schools and CPA's commanders from municipalities to increase their knowledge about tsunamis and how to handle the tsunami. This grant for tsunami preparedness is also provided for 10 other countries in the Asia Pacific region with a total budget of US\$ 1 million, while Timor-Leste receives over US\$40,000, for this year for the preparedness of preventing early tsunami in Timor-Leste.

Japan has been cooperating with the Timor-Leste government through various projects for every cycle of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). It is important to address the DRR-related issues comprehensively to strengthen Timor-Leste's response capacity through the disaster management cycle namely preparedness, response, recovery prevention, and mitigation.

3.3. KOICA and PNTL training on a criminal investigation

Capacity building remains an important pillar of development of Timor-Leste's National Security system including the National Police (PNTL). The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and Timor-Leste National Police (PNTL) cooperated in capacity building activities in the area of criminal investigation targeting Timorese policies in the investigation unit in Timor-Leste.

This annual training focused on empowering Timorese police skills on criminal investigation. The Korean Police Centre sent Korean Central Police Academy Instructors to Timor-Leste to provide capacity building to 20 Timorese police,

The PNTL has developed its capacity in large quantities of force for prevention, mitigation, and response since its inception in 2000. PNTL needs to invest more in the scientific area and identify and discover the activities and modes of criminals through the use of scientific intervention of criminal investigation. Since Korea is a country that is advanced in science and technology, PNTL participation in this annual training provided by KOICA through the CAIT program will pave the way to the defend goal.

3.4. Timor-Leste's Annual Action Plan of Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

Timor-Leste stands ready for the implementation of next WPS National Action Plan starting this year. Upon the approval of Timor-Leste's National Action Plan for WPS of 2023 – 2027 by the Council of Ministers, Timor-Leste will mark another important milestone to implementing the UN Security Council #1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The implementation of the second national plan of Women, Peace and Security is in line with the ARF inclusivity agenda and corresponds to the ASEAN Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

The Joint Statement on WPS (2017) recognizes that peace and security are essential to the achievement of sustainable development, are interconnected, and vital to the future of ASEAN. Therefore, it is in the interest of Timor-Leste to contribute to promoting the WPS agenda together with regional organizations as a collective effort to advance the WPS agenda in the region. Seeing that conflicts are increasingly taking on regional dimensions, there is a need to develop and advance regional commitments to implementing the WPS agenda.

III.5. Timor-Leste's Cooperation Afloat and Readiness Training (CARAT) with The United States.

Timor-Leste and The United States conducted a joint military exercise to further deepen their security partnership by promoting security cooperation, maintaining and strengthening maritime partnerships, and enhancing maritime inter-operability. This longstanding security cooperation may help Timor-Leste strengthen its ability to better monitor its territory, respond to natural disasters, and promote economic development. Moreover, this joint exercise will prepare better Timor-Leste to defend its citizens, protect its sovereignty, and advance its national interests.

The CARAT exercise builds on the growing US-Timorese security partnership, most notably the US commitment of over \$23 million to jointly rehabilitate with the Government of Timor-Leste the Baucau airport. Through the creation of an Air Component, the project will assist the F-FDTL and help the Timorese government better monitor its maritime territory, respond to natural disasters, and promote economic development.

IV. The Role of ARF

Since ARF was founded in 1993 as the first intra-regional security institution encompassing the Asia-Pacific region, it has remained a relevant forum for constructive dialogue between nations and for regional security cooperation. Timor-Leste supports the role of ASEAN to be the main driving force of the ARF in the evolving regional security architecture to maintain the security viability of the region and to prevent regional disorder.

The emergence of new regional mini-multilateralism seemingly has been contesting the role of ARF as the regional security dialogue and cooperation mechanism. Nevertheless, ARF remains the relevant regional forum for dialogue and cooperation in its own unique way. Specifically, ARF has introduced a new norm into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) process of cooperative security that emphasized inclusiveness through the promotion of dialogue among both like-minded and non-like-minded states. In addition, the forum's objective and function is to build confidence and trust as well as develop cooperative norms of behavior by adopting a multilateral approach to prevent potential conflicts in the region.*

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I. **Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

For over 20 years, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has worked to advance stability and cooperation within the Indo-Pacific region. Traditional and non-traditional security concerns continue to pose a challenge to peace and stability in the region, making ongoing engagement through the ARF valuable. The ARF has been successful over time using open dialogue, tangible cooperation, civil society, inclusivity, and results-driven initiatives to find common understandings and solutions to emerging challenges. Through our membership in the ARF, the United States affirms its commitment to finding inclusive and consensus-based solutions in accordance with respect for international law, human rights, and mutually shared priorities. ASEAN centrality plays an essential role in the ARF process, and the United States fully supports a constructive action- and results-oriented ARF with ASEAN at its core. Furthermore, the United States believes that clearly defined, proactive approaches in the ARF will yield the largest benefits to long-term regional stability. Therefore, we pledge to support the ARF to advance its goal of advancing from Confidence Building to Preventive Diplomacy to Conflict Resolution. Furthering coordination between the various ASEAN-centred multilateral fora and streamlined and focused engagements will continue to help the ARF progress to achieve its goals. Therefore, the United States urges all ARF participants to engage with transparency, deliberation, understanding, and vision to deepen our cooperation and advance peace in the Indo-Pacific region for decades to come.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy

Our Indo-Pacific Strategy lays out an affirmative vision for the Indo-Pacific, rooted in shared values, and aims to advance policy priorities important to the entire Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific Strategy is a vision for a region that remains free and open, emphasizes collective capacity through interconnectedness, promotes broad-based prosperity, bolsters Indo-Pacific security, and builds a more resilient region. Perhaps more than any time in modern history, we are seeing a convergence of interests in the Indo-Pacific region. The US Indo-Pacific strategy shares many of the same goals of ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, as well as other partners' strategies like Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Australia's Step Up, ROK's Indo-Pacific Strategy, India's Act East Policy, Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook, Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the EU's Indo-

Pacific Strategy. We will spare no efforts to coordinate and align efforts with those whose values we share. We are in a decisive decade, one that holds both considerable promise and historic obstacles for the Indo-Pacific. Working with our ASEAN partners, we will build the collective capacity for the region to meet the challenges of the present, adapt for the crises of the future, and seize the opportunities of the 21st century.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The United States and ASEAN seek to expand engagement in gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity. Working with the ASEAN Committee on Women, the United States and ASEAN intend to hold a senior officials meeting on gender issues in July 2022, followed by a ministerial level meeting in the fall. The joint statement on gender equality and empowerment of all women will touch on issues such as gender mainstreaming, women's economic empowerment, women, peace, and security, and gender-based violence.

Additionally, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Symposium on Inclusive Processes for Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution took place in Honolulu June 28-30, 2022. The Symposium draws from United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 2250, which recognize that women and youth are often disproportionately affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and displaced persons and that peace outcomes are considered to last longer when these groups are included in the discussions. These unique demographics can meaningfully contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity if inclusive policies are in place.

The DPRK's UN-proscribed nuclear and ballistic missile programs remain a serious threat to international peace and security. The DPRK's sophisticated sanctions evasion tactics continue to allow it to abuse the international financial system, generate revenue, and procure items for its unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs. The United States remains in close contact with the ROK and Japan to coordinate our DPRK engagement; our alliances remain ironclad and ensure peace and stability in the region. All UN Member States must do more to prevent the DPRK from undermining the UN Security Council resolutions aimed at peaceful denuclearization to protect international peace and security.

The United States-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security is the cornerstone of our strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific. The US-Japan Alliance codified by this treaty advances a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. We are committed to peacefully resolving disputes and to opposing coercion and cooperate on a wide range of regional and global security issues. The close cooperation between Japan and the United States in responding to the region's natural disasters demonstrates the importance of our relationship and our exceptional capabilities to respond quickly. We are also moving forward with the Government of Japan to implement our military base realignment and consolidation plan. Progress on force realignment will help us to establish a geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable force posture in the Indo-Pacific region – critical to advancing US national interests and to ensuring peace, prosperity, and stability in the region. We continue to work closely with the Japanese Government to address emerging challenges in space and cyberspace, and to strengthen our missile defence capabilities to counter threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), including trilaterally with the Republic of Korea. In the ARF, Japan has played an active leadership role on Information Communication Technology (ICT) and cyber issues, including as a co-chair of the ARF Intersessional Meeting on Information and Communications Technology Security (ARF ISM on ICTs Security). The United States commends Japan for its strong commitment to add the collective voice of the influential G7 nations to discussions on maritime security challenges, development and humanitarian assistance, disaster relief efforts, peacekeeping operations, global economic resiliency, climate change, cyber policy issues, global health systems strengthening, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, and human rights policies in the Indo-Pacific.

Mutual Defence Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) has been the linchpin of regional security for the last 70 years and represents our ironclad commitment to the defence of the ROK. We will continue to enhance ongoing work within the Alliance to deepen our comprehensive strategic partnership based on our common values and mutual trust. In the past year, we continued diplomatic efforts to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and remain steadfast in our pursuit of dialogue and diplomacy with the DPRK, without preconditions. Recognizing that the DPRK's efforts to advance its unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, as well as its destabilizing

and dangerous rhetoric, have continued, the United States and ROK have taken prudent steps to strengthen our extended deterrence. In 2022, we reconvened the annual Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group. Announced by Presidents Biden and Yoon in April 2023, the Washington Declaration committed the United States to make every effort to consult with the ROK in nuclear crises and created a new bilateral mechanism for nuclear and strategic planning issues. We also agreed to regular, visible strategic asset deployments to the region; strengthened training and exercises; and better integration of ROK conventional assets into US strategic planning. The US and ROK militaries have recently expanded the scope and scale of annual joint training and exercises that enhance interoperability and force readiness. These exercises are purely defensive in nature. We continue to advance US-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation, including resumption of the Defence Trilateral Talks and trilateral military exercises, and are working to build on established cooperation in missile defence. We continue to support information sharing on DPRK missile and nuclear capabilities. The United States has also prioritized efforts to implement the multiple UNSCRs on the DPRK, while leading a multinational effort to counter illicit DPRK maritime activity. The US-ROK relationship has evolved into a global partnership. We are working together, not only on the Korean Peninsula and in the region, but also in places such as Lebanon, South Sudan, and off the coast of Somalia. This collaboration includes global health security, peacekeeping activities, stabilization, and reconstruction activities, WPS, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) efforts.

Australia is one of our most important regional partners. The Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) security treaty is the foundation of defence and security cooperation between the United States and Australia. This cooperation is an anchor for security and stability across the Indo-Pacific. Australia is committed to ensuring a free and open region, and regional partners look to Australia for leadership in the Pacific. The United States and Australia continue to deepen longstanding bilateral security and defence cooperation, particularly in support of Australia's decision to modernize its defence capabilities to meet the needs of the current security environment. Further key lines of effort include optimizing US force posture in Australia and deepening cooperation with other Allies and partners in the region and around the world. The Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) is an annual "2+2" dialogue among the US Secretaries of State and Defence and their Australian counterparts. Interoperability with US forces is

a foundational part of Australia’s military modernization across all domains (Air, Sea, Land, Space, and Cyberspace). Rotations of US Marines and US Air Force aircraft in Australia’s Northern Territory improve interoperability and capacity through bilateral and multilateral training and exercises in the region. Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D) has evolved from a bilateral training activity into a platform for conducting multilateral engagement with countries such as Tonga, Fiji, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Sri Lanka. Discussions during AUSMIN 2020 produced a Statement of Principles on Alliance Defence Cooperation and Force Posture Priorities in the Indo-Pacific that looks to build on the landmark agreement from 2011 establishing MRF-D. AUSMIN 2021 and 2022 built on these principles, as the US and Australia decided to formalize Enhanced Force Posture Cooperation under the Force Posture Agreement and expand efforts to enhance interoperability. The United States and Australia expanded cooperation through additional multilateral groupings, such as the-Australia-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) – with the aim of enhancing regional stability and security. Australia’s November 2022 participation in Malabar naval exercises laid the groundwork for additional maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean with India. Talisman Sabre 2021, the ninth iteration of this exercise, showcased the breadth and depth of the US-Australia mil-to-mil relationship. The biennial exercise is set to take place again in 2023. In September 2021, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom announced AUKUS – a new security partnership. The AUKUS partnership is a modernization of existing partnerships to address the security challenges of the future, and is intended to enhance peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. In March 2023, AUKUS partners outlined the “optimal pathway” for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines under the partnership. The multiphase approach will span decades and culminate in the design and delivery of a new class of nuclear-powered submarine, the SSN-AUKUS. AUKUS partners remain committed to ensuring cooperation on naval nuclear propulsion proceeds in a manner that sets the highest non-proliferation standards and strengthens the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Additionally, AUKUS partners continue to advance cooperation on a range of advanced capability initiatives.

The United States-New Zealand bilateral relationship continues to strengthen and mature. Following the November 2016, visit of the USS SAMPSON, the first United States military vessel to pull into port in New Zealand in thirty years, the United States continues sending

ships to New Zealand, most recently the USS Howard in late 2021. Our two nations conduct joint military exercises more frequently and we continue seeking new opportunities to increase our interoperability, augmented by New Zealand's decision to purchase five Lockheed Martin C-130s and four Boeing P-8s. The annual Strategic Dialogue is the United States' top-level regular policy discussion with New Zealand and was last held in March 2022. The two sides began holding formal defence policy dialogues in 2013 – most recently meeting in December 2022. The United States continues to value its partnership with New Zealand in advancing the ARF's capacity to address regional security challenges through Preventive Diplomacy; New Zealand's leadership on this issue is critical to maintaining the ARF's effectiveness and relevance as a regional security body. New Zealand is also a critical WPS partner for the United States.

The United States-Philippines Mutual Defence Treaty continues to promote stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Our bilateral cooperation continues to contribute to regional peace and stability, with particular focus in the areas of maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, counterterrorism, countering violent extremism, and non-proliferation. The United States-Philippines Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, signed in 2014, supports a joint commitment to advancing mutual security interests by increasing our interoperability, supporting the Armed Forces of the Philippines' defence modernization plans, and improving our ability to respond to natural disasters in the region. The United States will continue to advance this enduring strategic alliance through high-level dialogues, such as the Bilateral Strategic Dialogue. Opportunities for progress also exist where we share a common interest in expanding regional defence and security cooperation through the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM)-Plus and other vehicles. The United States continues to support Philippine participation in joint exercises with other partners in the Southeast Asia and Pacific regions, as well as encouraging the Philippines to invite participation by neighbouring countries in bilateral military exercises, such as Exercise BALIKATAN.

The United States and Thailand have been treaty allies for over 60 years, and we continue to collaborate to address humanitarian and security issues such as counterterrorism, counter narcotics, disaster relief, health and infectious diseases, non-proliferation, and maritime security. The United States is committed to our enduring friendship with Thailand and the Thai people, and we welcome Thailand's role in Southeast Asia and the

Mekong region. Our security partnership with Thailand is bilateral and regional in scope. The US-Thailand Joint Vision Statement 2020, signed by the two defence leaders last November, outlines the joint strategy between the two militaries to achieve our mutually shared goals into the next decade. In support of this strategy, Thailand and the United States co-host Cobra Gold, the Indo-Pacific region's largest annual multilateral military exercise. Since 1950, Thailand has received US military equipment, essential supplies, training, and assistance in the construction and improvement of facilities. As part of our mutual defence cooperation, we have developed a joint military exercise program that engages all the services of each nation and counts an annual slate of more than 400 military exercises and engagements.

The United States and Indonesia address strategic challenges as strategic partners. In 2015, the United States and Indonesia forged a Strategic Partnership to expand cooperation on shared strategic interests in the region and held a strategic dialogue at the ministerial level in 2021. Since 2021, Indonesia has also closely collaborated with the United States as our country coordinator in ASEAN, including cooperation to organize a US-ASEAN Special Summit in May 2022, in Washington DC. To build capacity and readiness, the US and Indonesian militaries conduct regular exercises, such as the Air Force fighter jet exercise Cope West, the Navy-to-Navy exercise Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training in Indonesia, and the Indonesia-hosted multilateral naval exercise Komodo. In 2022 and 2023, the United States and Indonesia expanded Garuda Shield, previously an Army-to-Army exercise, into a joint, multi-national event with all components of the Indonesian National Armed Forces and more than 14 participating countries. The United States military values its close partnership with Indonesia in areas that closely align with United States security interests, such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and HA/DR. Indonesia continues to focus its professional military education on sending students to the United States National and Service War Colleges, United States Service Command and General Staff Colleges, and Maritime Security and Defence Professionalization courses. The United States Coast Guard and Indonesian Maritime Security Agency have been working together closely on maritime security, and the United States funded the construction of a maritime training centre, which will open in 2023.

Singapore is a strong partner of the United States and an active participant —regionally and globally — to ensure peace and stability. Our two countries have close and long-standing defence ties with our militaries participating in several bilateral and multilateral exercises each year. This year, the United States and Singapore commemorated the 30th Anniversary of Exercise COMMANDO SLING. In addition, Singapore hosts the rotational deployment of US military aircraft and ships to conduct a variety of maritime patrol activities to counter piracy and terrorism, as well as provide HA/DR in the region. Singapore has the second-largest military training presence in the United States each year. Singapore was the first and only Asian country to have contributed both assets and personnel to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Additionally, the Singapore Navy has commanded Combined Task Force 151 in the Gulf of Aden on numerous occasions. In recent years, we made significant progress in our relationship, including the renewal the 1990, MOU governing our presence in Singapore; the signing of a non-binding MOU to establish and enduring Singapore fighter training presence in Guam by 2029; the signing of a Foreign Military Sales case for the F-35B, and the signing a MOU concerning cooperation in cyberspace. In 2018, we broadened our relationship by renewing a memorandum of understanding for the Third Country Training Program (TCTP), an ASEAN capacity-building initiative jointly managed by the United States and Singapore. Aimed at bridging development gaps in the region, the TCTP has provided technical assistance and training to over 1,200 officials through more than 40 workshops since its inception in 2012. The TCTP curriculum includes non-traditional security threats such as cybersecurity and cybercrime and smart cities and health security. At the head of government-level meeting in October 2017, and again in September 2019, the United States and Singapore reaffirmed the strong and enduring partnership between our two countries. Recognizing the trans-boundary nature of cybersecurity threats, the two leaders commended the progress made under the 2016, MOU on Cybersecurity Cooperation and celebrated progress under Singapore’s 2018, ASEAN chair year to secure the digital economy as a key engine for future economic growth. In the ARF, Singapore has played an active and strong leadership role on ICT and cyber issues, including as a co-chair of the newly established ISM on ICTs Security. As a like-minded partner on counterterrorism issues, Singapore plays an important role in facilitating regional efforts against terrorism and violent extremism. In 2021, Singapore established the multilateral Counterterrorism Information Facility (CTIF) to bring together like-minded countries to share intelligence, provide early warning, monitoring, and analysis capabilities in a centralized and coordinated manner.

As the world's largest transshipment port, we work closely with Singapore on trade security and counter proliferation efforts, and Singapore continues with its trial of the World Customs Organization's Cargo Targeting System (CTS).

The relationship between the United States and Malaysia has reached new heights in recent years, and the United States is eager to continue working with our Malaysian partners to increase regional and global security. A robust slate of bilateral and multilateral military exercises has enhanced our respective capabilities to promote regional security and respond to humanitarian disasters. The United States values Malaysia's past contributions to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan, and we are working closely on maritime security, counter terrorism, including stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters joining ISIS, humanitarian assistance / disaster relief, and military medical cooperation. The US Coast Guard and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency work closely to address maritime security issues in Malaysia's EEZ. Malaysia is also an important counterproliferation partner and the United States seeks to increase cooperation. The United States looks forward to working closely with Malaysia in advancing our shared priorities and interests in the context of promoting regional cooperation, peacekeeping capacity building, respect for international law, ASEAN centrality, and the maintenance of peace and stability. In the ARF, Malaysia has played an active and strong leadership role on ICT and cyber issues, including in the newly established ISM on ICTs Security. Malaysia also plays an active role in the ISM on Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) and hosted a United States-funded ARF workshop on aviation security and information sharing in July 2019.

United States-Vietnam relations underwent a dramatic transformation since we normalized ties in 1995, and Vietnam has emerged as one of our strongest partners in the Indo-Pacific. Our robust partnership with Vietnam on political, security, economic, and people-to-people ties through a healthy set of annual dialogues continues to grow, spanning issues from human rights to security and defence relations. The United States and Vietnam are cooperating in areas such as security, peacekeeping operations, trade, non-proliferation, health, the environment, science and technology, education, WPS, and human rights. Defence ties have grown rapidly over the past several years, embodied by the lifting of the lethal weapon sales ban in 2016 and the historic March 2018 and March 2020 visits of United States aircraft carriers to Danang. In August 2020, as part of the US

Department of State's Excess Defence Articles program, the United States officially transferred a second high endurance cutter to the Vietnamese Coast Guard, and we are finalizing the transfer of a third cutter. In 2019, the United States and Vietnam signed an MOU strengthening cooperation and joint efforts to combat wildlife trafficking as a serious transnational crime. Criminal justice sector ties have also developed rapidly since 2016, with numerous trainings, exchanges, and workshops to increase Vietnam's capacity and interoperability to combat transnational crime, effectively and fairly prosecute crimes, and enhance maritime security in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The United States-India global comprehensive strategic partnership stands upon shared values and complementary visions of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The United States government views India as a leading partner in safeguarding a free and open Indo-Pacific. The United States holds regular consultations with India on a range of political, economic, and security issues in both bilateral and multi-country formats. The fourth 2+2 Ministerial in April 2022, led by the Secretaries of State and Defence alongside their Indian counterparts, demonstrated how both of our countries seek to promote a resilient, rules-based international order. The United States participated in four Leader-level Summits with India, Australia, and Japan most recently in Sydney on May 24, 2023. Cabinet-level engagements and leader-level meetings and teleconferences are underpinned by numerous high-level dialogues and working groups, including climate, defence, regional security, counternarcotic, counterterrorism, peacekeeping, trade, energy, oceans, health, cybersecurity, and education. Since India's designation as a Major Defence Partner in 2016, we finalized major defence enabling agreements and increased interoperability through numerous military exercises such as the tri-services Tiger Triumph exercise, the Yudh Abhyas and Vajra Prahar exercises, and the Malabar naval exercises with Japan and Australia. We are bolstering robust private industry collaboration through initiatives such as the US-India Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology. We also look forward to working with India and likeminded partners to deepen humanitarian and disaster relief cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and joint peacekeeping capacity-building efforts. India is also an active participant in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus mechanism.

The United States seeks a constructive, results-oriented relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC). We seek cooperation with the PRC where our interests align, such as macroeconomic stability, food security, global health, climate, and addressing the

rise in global synthetic drug production and trafficking. In other areas, we will compete to defend American interests and values like transparency, the rule of law, market-based economic competition, freedom of navigation and overflight, human rights, and religious freedom. We remain concerned with the PRC's articulated national strategy of military-civil fusion, which seeks to develop the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into the world's most capable military, in part through licit and illicit exploitation of its access to the international science, technology and innovation ecosystem, to develop the hard power capabilities to press its agenda. The PRC has openly committed to upholding these and other principles that underpin security and prosperity for the Indo-Pacific. The United States asks that the PRC stand by its word and protect the rights of its people and end its ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang, ceasing human rights abuses throughout the country, violating international obligations in Hong Kong, reaching outside its borders to harass and threaten dissidents for speaking out, making unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea, and engaging in distortionary trade practices. With regards to the South China Sea, the United States has a vital national interest in ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea, respect for international law, unimpeded lawful commerce, and peace and stability. The PRC's provocative reclamation and militarization of disputed outposts in the South China Sea, its attempts to coerce and intimidate, and planned deployments of floating nuclear power plants in areas of competing maritime claims, threaten the sovereign rights of other claimants and undermine regional stability. The United States urges all claimants, including the PRC, to manage and resolve disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. The United States-PRC economic relationship is very important, and the United States is committed to pursuing meaningful, fully enforceable commitments to resolve the PRC's structural issues.

United States defence engagement with Brunei remains robust. Despite the challenges introduced by COVID restrictions on in-person exercises and exchanges, Brunei continues to prioritize our bilateral defence relationship. In addition to continuing our annual bilateral Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise, our annual multilateral naval exercise Southeast Cooperation and Training (SEACAT), this year Brunei hosted Pahlawan Warrior (PW) 2022, the largest bilateral event between the US Army and the Royal Brunei Land Force. The last iteration of PW took place in 2018, with the 2020,

exercise being cancelled because of the COVID pandemic. PW22 represents the resumption of an important element of the US-Brunei defence relationship. Additional defence highlights include the Royal Brunei Navy sending the Darussalam-class offshore patrol vessel KDB Darulehsan (OPV 07) to the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) multinational maritime exercise in 2020, and Brunei agreeing to establish additional Service-to-Service talks to build on the first Airman-to-Airman Talks held in 2020. United States military officers have regularly attended the Royal Brunei Armed Forces Staff College since January 2014. We continue to look for ways to expand our military-to-military cooperation, including through pursuing agreements that would accommodate deeper levels of defence cooperation. On the back of diplomacy and defence cooperation, the promising United States-Brunei relationship aims to help secure mutual security interests in Southeast Asia.

The United States has cooperated with the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) in areas of mutual concern ranging from international peacekeeping, defence reform and professionalization to humanitarian assistance and disaster response. In early 2017, the Royal Cambodian Government suspended all military-to-military exercises with the United States. Since then, they have conducted three joint military exercises with the People's Liberation Army. In response to democratic backsliding, we suspended the delivery of four Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs) and have carefully considered the pace of restoring our military-military relationship until we see progress. We continue to cooperate in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian mine action, medical research, and United States Prisoners of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) personnel accounting.

United States has suspended defence engagement with Burma since the coup. All engagement with and assistance to the Burmese military has been suspended since the February 1, 2021, coup d'état. The United States has reprogrammed aid that had been previously intended to assist the Burmese government to humanitarian, pro-democracy and other efforts that show our continued support for the people of Burma. Nevertheless, the United States continues to use public and private channels to urge the military to cease the violence, release all those unjustly detained, and restore Burma's path to inclusive, multiparty democracy.

Laos' chairmanship of ASEAN and the signing of a Comprehensive Partnership between the United States and the Lao PDR in 2016 provided new opportunities for bilateral engagement. While we continue to address legacy issues, like the important Prisoners of War/Missing in Action accounting mission and helping Laos manage contamination from unexploded ordnance, we are building a new relationship for the 21st century. The many facets of our cooperation—which include health, law enforcement, trade, education, environmental protection, military issues, cultural preservation, disaster preparedness, human trafficking, trafficking illegal drugs, entrepreneurship, energy, rule of law programs, and more—address the country's most critical and systemic needs. Laos served as the United States' country coordinator for ASEAN from 2018-2021 and provided a vital link to the organization.

The United States and ASEAN established a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) at the US-ASEAN Summit in November 2022. Following ASEAN's established process, the United States and ASEAN are finalizing the annex to the current plan of action to reflect this change in the relationship. The CSP builds upon decades of partnership between the United States and ASEAN and will serve as a guide for future close cooperation.

The United States values defence cooperation with Timor-Leste in areas of mutual concern including maritime security, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, border security, defence reform, and professionalization. During the 2018 Bilateral Defence Discussion, Timor-Leste's Minister of Defence requested United States assistance with rehabilitating Baucau Airfield. An MOU for this multi-million-dollar project was signed in June 2021, and the first phase of the Baucau Airfield rehabilitation was completed in 2022. Timor-Leste demonstrated commitment to regional security by participating in several multinational exercises. In 2022, Timor-Leste participated in Pacific Angel with the United States Air Force, which included medical and engineer civil action projects. In February 2023, Timor-Leste participated in Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training/Marine Exercise (CARAT/MAREX), which enhances their maritime security efforts. Timor-Leste Armed Forces (F-FDTL) hosts multilateral exercise Hari Hamutuk, which enhances Timor-Leste's interoperability with the United States, Australia, and Japan. A Navy Seabee detachment has an enduring presence in Timor-Leste since 2009, and partners with the F-FDTL, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education. The detachment recently completed its 105th construction project. The United States hosts several military officers

and ministerial civil servants as part of the International Military and Education Training (IMET) program. As part of the National Guard State Partnership Program, Timor-Leste, and the Rhode Island National Guard (RING) signed an agreement in February 2023, that will enhance professional development, training, an exchange between F-FDTL and RING. In 2022, Timor-Leste celebrated its first United States Army Command and General Staff College graduate. Timorese IMET graduates continue to fill roles of prominence and enhances defence professionalization. Additionally, the United States sponsors an English language-training course in Timor-Leste, which trains 40 military personnel each year. INDOPACOM Commander Aquilino visited Timor-Leste in February 2023, and Timor-Leste Defence Minister Paixão visited the United States and met with Pentagon officials in April 2023. In May 2023, a US government granted Cessna 206 was delivered to the F-FDTL Air Component which will support Timor-Leste's domain awareness capabilities. Timor-Leste became an official observer of ASEAN in 2022, and the United States supports their progress towards full accession.

Papua New Guinea (PNG)'s strategic location makes it a critical partner for the United States and allies in preserving the freedom of navigation in the South Pacific and in advancing other priorities of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. PNG possesses the land area, population, natural resources, and relatively diversified economic base to serve as a policy bellwether within the South Pacific. PNG's security challenges include maritime domain awareness; border security; logistics and resourcing; and policing in districts experiencing high rates of crime, gender-based violence, and/or intercommunal violence. Since the successful and peaceful conclusion of the 2019, Bougainville referendum the United States has continued to engage with partner countries, civil society organizations, and government officials as the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government negotiate the referendum's results. Military forces from both countries participate in regional exercises, work to locate missing US World War II personnel, and advance opportunities to plan for unexploded ordnance removal. Since Papua New Guinea hosted APEC in 2018, United States military personnel continue planning and coordination with the PNG Defence Force to build and develop a variety of facilities at the naval base in Lombrum, Manus. Exchange opportunities ranged from conferences and workshops on common priorities like fisheries enforcement and port security – PNG will host an upcoming port security training as part of an ASEAN Regional Forum series – to exploratory talks between national law enforcement agencies in each country to develop

capacity building training programs. In 2019, the United States Department of Defence established a permanent Defence Attaché Office at the United States embassy in Port Moresby and further expanded defence cooperation capacity with the establishment of a security cooperation office in 2021. Papua New Guinea sent its first cadet to the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York in 2019. Actions taken under the Indo-Pacific Strategy's security pillar complemented other activities that focus on economics (developing a welcoming climate for United States investment and development initiatives) and promote shared inclusive values (including advancing gender equality and women's empowerment; implementing people-to-people education and cultural exchanges; supporting the fight against HIV and polio; protecting environmental equities in PNG's rich biodiversity; and encouraging resiliency and disaster risk reduction). The United States also aided Papua New Guinea's COVID-19 response through the provision of ventilators and training, including support for isolation, containment, and critical care management; risk communication and community engagement; infection prevention and control; and case detection, surveillance, and lab support. Technical assistance for vaccine deployment supports communication and demand generation; policy, planning, and coordination; health workforce support and training; and service delivery.

The United States and the European Union are deepening collaboration with Asian partners to advance regional security and development, and to build regional institutions and support for the rule of law. The United States and the EU share common goals to promote human rights, freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea, and respect for international law in the East China Sea and South China Sea. Recent evidence of this deepening collaboration is seen in the first-ever US-EU joint naval exercise March 23-24, 2023. We are working together to encourage Beijing to deepen its engagement with the international community, act in accordance with international law and standards, and participate responsibly in the global economic order. We are also coordinating our messages to condemn potential DPRK provocations, uphold UNSC Resolutions, and pressure the regime to address its egregious human rights abuses. US-EU cooperation has also played a critical role in supporting Myanmar's ongoing democratic transition, we joint-sponsored in March a UNHRC resolution calling for the creation of a fact-finding mission. We regularly collaborate with the EU through the Friends of the Mekong mechanism as well as other senior-level forums. As Co-Chair of the ARF Intersessional Meeting on Maritime Security, the EU demonstrated a

commitment to strengthening a regional MDA architecture using technology and fusions centres to counter IUU fishing and to strengthen the international maritime rules-based order; these efforts are aligned with United States capacity building and policy goals in Southeast Asia. As we rebalance our interests and investments to the Indo-Pacific, we look forward to continually expanding our coordination with the EU through the ARF and other regional fora, as well as through the biannual, Deputy Secretary of State-led US-EU Indo-Pacific Consultations.

US-Bangladesh relations have strengthened under the Indo-Pacific Strategy, which has increased US support for maritime security. We welcome the release of Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook and look forward to cooperating closely on areas where our visions overlap. The United States is the largest donor in the Rohingya crisis response, providing US\$2.1 billion since 2017. US-Bangladesh counter terrorism cooperation has improved security within the country, and the United States also continues to support Bangladesh's considerable contributions to international peacekeeping. The United States and Bangladesh held a high-level Partnership Dialogue in May, led by U/S Victoria Nuland. Several senior-level US officials held bilateral engagements with Bangladesh in early 2023, NSC Senior Director for South Asia, Eileen Laubacher and SCA Assistant Secretary Donald Lu made separate visits to Dhaka in January; Counsellor Chollet travelled to Dhaka in February; Secretary Blinken met with Foreign Minister Momen and U/S Nuland hosted the US-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue with Foreign Secretary Momen in April in Washington. These important meetings have grown our relationship, although hurdles remain. The United States continues to push for accountability for human rights violations by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). Still, high-level commitment to security and law enforcement cooperation enables us to work together closely in other areas. For instance, the United States and Bangladesh are moving forward on a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). Bangladeshi military students continue to attend premier US military courses of instruction, with 27 students completing courses at various military colleges since 2017. Bangladesh is the second largest Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund partner in South Asia and has received over \$60 million in CT assistance since the 2016 Holey Bakery Attack. The ARF is an important forum for the United States and Bangladesh to improve the welfare of 1.1 million Rohingya in Cox's Bazar and on Bhasan Char.

The US-Sri Lanka security relationship continues to grow amid economic crisis and human rights concerns. After years of mismanagement and taking on debt loads it could not repay, Sri Lanka is currently facing a difficult economic crisis, culminating in Sri Lanka defaulting 2022. The crisis led to protests and the ouster of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa due to the worsening economic situation. Under current President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Sri Lanka secured an IMF board approved program to stabilize the economy. With popular demand for reform, Sri Lanka has started to reform its security services, shrinking the size of the military to create a leaner, more efficient fighting force. The United States is providing technical assistance to Sri Lanka as it undergoes this ‘right-sizing’ effort. The USG supports Maritime Security and interoperability with multilateral partners, Maritime Domain Awareness, Counterterrorism (CT), support for United Nations Peacekeeping missions, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. In October 2021, a second High Endurance Cutter (WHEC) was transferred to Sri Lanka, to supplement the WHEC transferred in 2019. The Montana National Guard and Sri Lanka began a State Partnership Program in 2020 and has seen visits from Sri Lanka to Montana and vice versa. Other key security activities include exercises with the Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force to build cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and maritime security issues toward a safe and prosperous Indo-Pacific. US advisors and assistance continues to assist Sri Lanka in promoting transparency procurement processes, enhance the rule of law, and support government and civil society efforts to promote good governance, accountability, justice, reconciliation, and human rights.

The United States worked to strengthen our engagement with Mekong countries through the Mekong-US Partnership (MUSP). Since launching the MUSP in 2020, the United States strives to build on the development assistance-focused Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) to broaden cooperation across a range of strategic areas, to focus US-Mekong cooperation under a single, whole-of-government umbrella, and to work with like-minded partners and allies on a commitment to the subregion’s security and prosperity. Entering its third ministerial cycle, the MUSP, Mekong country partners, and the United States will continue to execute activities listed in the 2021-2023, Mekong-US Partnership Plan of Action. Four areas of engagement guide the MUSP’s work: economic connectivity; human capital development; trans-boundary water and natural resources management; and non-traditional security, including collaboration on emerging threats such as health security, pandemic response, countering transnational crime, cyber security, and countering

trafficking in people, drugs, and wildlife. MUSP-supported Mekong Water Data Initiative tools, such as the Mekong Dam Monitor, are helping shine a light on how dam operations impact the Mekong River and its tributaries and are benefitting governments and communities. Cooperation to address the scourge of transnational organized crime in the Mekong subregion has also intensified. Last year, the Friends of the Mekong celebrated 10 years and welcomed new member the Mekong River Commission (MRC) Secretariat. The Friends of the Mekong include the United States, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, the European Union, Republic of Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and Mekong River Commission Secretariat. At the 2021 ministerial meeting, India and the United Kingdom attended as observers.

II. National Security and Defence Policy

In March 2021, the White House released the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance (Interim Guidance) that will guide the United States' national security and defence policy until the National Security Strategy is published. The Interim Guidance recognizes that preserving America's security requires a whole-of-government approach that leverages a broad range of instruments of national power. The military has a critical role to play in protecting the security of the United States, particularly as it relates to deterring and if necessary, fighting wars, but it is only one instrument of foreign policy. Diplomacy, development, economic measure, and other forms of statecraft—backed by highly capable armed forces that are equipped to deter our adversaries and defeat threats that emerge—are the tools of first resort to advance America's interests globally.

In March 2022, the Department of Defence transmitted to Congress the classified 2022, National Defence Strategy (NDS). Consistent with the President's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, the classified NDS sets out how the Department of Defence will contribute to advancing and safeguarding vital US national interests – protecting the American people, expanding America's prosperity, and realizing and defending our democratic values.

The Defence priorities are:

1. Defending the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC

2. Deterring strategic attacks against the United States, Allies, and partners
3. Deterring aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary, prioritizing
4. the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific, then the Russia challenge in Europe
5. Building a resilient Joint Force and defence ecosystem.

The NDS reiterates that mutually beneficial Alliances and partnerships are an enduring strength for the United States, and are critical to achieving our objectives, as the unified response to Russia’s further invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated. Answering this “call to action,” the Department will incorporate ally and partner perspectives, competencies, and advantages at every stage of defence planning.

Resources:

- i. Interim National Security Strategic Guidance: https://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021_Interim.pdf
- ii. 2022 National Defence Strategy Fact Sheet: <https://media.defence.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/NDS-FACT-SHEET.PDF>
- iii. A broad range of data is publicly available from the Office of the Undersecretary of Defence (Comptroller) at <https://comptroller.defence.gov/Budget-Materials/>

Annual defense expenditures

Figure 1.1. Department of Defense Budget

<i>\$ in billions</i>	FY 2021 Enacted	FY 2022 Enacted	FY 2023 Request
Total	703.7	742.3	773.0

The President’s FY 2023 Budget Request includes \$773 billion for the Department of Defence. The Budget Request reinforces the Department of Defence’s commitment to the concept of integrated deterrence, allows us to better sequence and conduct operations

around the globe that are aligned to our priorities, modernizes the Joint Force, and delivers meaningful support for our dedicated workforce and their families.

- The budget request reflects the National Defence Strategy and the focus of that strategy on the pacing challenge of the PRC. It will help us prepare for other future challenges, as well, including those posed by climate change. It preserves our readiness and deterrent posture against the threats we face today: the acute threat of an aggressive Russia and the constantly emerging threats posed by the DPRK, Iran, and violent extremist organizations. And it absolutely supports our policy of US global leadership of — and responsibility for — our vast network of alliances and partnerships.

Further information regarding the DoD National Defence Budget can be found at:

<https://comptroller.defence.gov/Budget-Materials/Budget2023/>

Total number of personnel in national armed forces

Table A-5. Active Component End Strength (in Thousands)

Service	FY 2021 ¹	FY 2022	Δ FY21 – FY22
Army	485.0	485.9	+0.9
Navy	342.5	347.8	+5.3
Marine Corps	184.7	184.1	-0.6
Air Force	333.8	327.3	-6.6
Space Force ²	38	6.4	+6.4
TOTAL	1,346.0	1,351.5	+5.5

¹FY 2021 reflects projected end strength levels.
may not add due to rounding.

Number.

²FY 2021 Space Force end strength included in Service numbers (non-add)

Table A-6. Reserve Component End Strength (in Thousands)

Service	FY 2021 ¹	FY 2022	Δ FY21 – FY22
Army Reserve	189.5	189.8	+0.3
Navy Reserve	60.2	58.8	-1.4
Marine Corps Reserve	38.5	38.5	+0.0
Air Force Reserve	70.1	70.3	+0.2
Army National Guard	336.0	336.5	+0.5
Air National Guard	107.7	108.1	+0.4

i. Counterterrorism

The United States is actively engaged in multilateral and regional efforts to strengthen regional partners and allies and to promote continued regional cooperation on counterterrorism measures. The human atrocities and extreme acts of violence committed by ISIS are not isolated to the Middle East. ISIS has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to direct and inspire attacks in Europe and Asia, including the horrific attacks in Indonesia, Philippines, and Sri Lanka. It is critical that United States and partners cooperate purposefully to counter ISIS and its violent extremist outgrowths. The Indo-Pacific is not immune to terrorist influence either; therefore, the United States seeks to encourage and support strategic counterterrorism policies in the region. This approach places a premium on building the institutional capacities of states to promote the rule of law and eliminate the underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

The United States is deeply concerned about ISIS's continued influence in recruiting followers from Southeast Asia and the terrorist group's ability to inspire attacks in the region. We encourage ASEAN member states to increase both internal and external information sharing on known and suspected terrorists (KST), particularly by requiring the provision and use of Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record (API/PNR) data on all airline passengers and by connecting all points of entry to INTERPOL's global police communications network (I-24/7). To help ensure passenger screening against INTERPOL's I-24/7 law enforcement databases, the United States is prepared to assist ASEAN member states in connecting priority ports of entry and automating the reporting of stolen and lost travel documents to INTERPOL. The United States encourages global commitment to implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2396 on countering terrorist travel and addressing the challenges associated with returning and relocating 2396 on foreign terrorist fighters and their accompanying families, which includes obligations to strengthen border security, watchlisting, and information sharing. To this end, the United States is proud to have co-hosted UNSCR 2396-related training workshops with several ASEAN and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) member states since the passing of this landmark resolution in 2017.

The United States encourages partner nations to implement the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy and the recommendations of the Secretary General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism, including developing national action plans to

take a whole-of-society approach to combating this security threat. The United States works closely with regional partners at the United Nations and in regional fora such as the ARF, ADMM-Plus, Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), and APEC to strengthen counterterrorism capabilities. These include efforts to support regional implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy and international instruments related to countering terrorism. The US government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), helped ASEAN establish a comprehensive, multidisciplinary work plan to implement the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism under the Manila Declaration 2019-2025, also known as the Bali Work Plan. USAID continues to support ASEAN's Working Group on Counter-Terrorism in leading the Bali Work Plan implementation effort through the development of the ASEAN Training of Trainers program to address disinformation and promote media literacy, which was launched in January 2022, in collaboration with US Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism. Following up on this program, in May 2022, USAID supported pilot training to customize the program for each member states' context. In August 2022, the United States co-chaired the second Regional Workshop on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Taking Stock of Ongoing and Emerging Threats and Trends and in June 2023, USAID is supporting a third ASEAN-US Regional Workshop on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and a follow-on Multi Sectoral Task Force and ASEAN Partners Meeting for Implementation of the Bali Work Plan 2019-2025.

The ARF Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) Work Plan contributes to regional security through work in its priority areas – Illicit Drugs; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN); and Counter Radicalization. The United States is co-leading efforts to combat illicit drugs and CBRN. The United States partnered with the Philippines and ROK to conduct an ARF TTX on Response Capabilities to CBRN Incidents in 2022.

The US Department of State also works closely with its partners at the US Department of Homeland Security to strengthen global aviation security by engaging foreign partners in bolstering aviation screening at last point of departure airports with direct flights to the United States to identify and prevent known or suspected terrorists from boarding commercial flights. The United States has also provided bilateral counterterrorism

financing for capacity building assistance to several nations in the region, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. The United States continues to support the enabling of its partners and allies to secure the region effectively from potential terrorist threats, including those involving CBRN materials.

ii. Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control, and Disarmament

The United States will continue to fulfil its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to pursue the objectives of the NPT across its three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, science and technologies, and to strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. By no longer complying with its continuing obligations under the New START Treaty, Russia endangers one of the last bilateral instruments of stability and predictability between us and the broader future of US-Russian arms control. Russia's reckless behaviour threatens all countries. The United States supports the treaty's full and mutual implementation. Washington and Moscow have been able to keep strategic stability matters separated from broader security issues for over half a century. We call on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the New START Treaty. The United States will ensure our strategic deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective and that our extended deterrence commitments to our allies and partners remain strong and credible. The United States supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and is committed to work to achieve its entry into force, recognizing the significant challenges that lie ahead in reaching this goal. Challenges like Russian threats to resume nuclear explosive testing. In line with the goals of the CTBT, the United States continues to observe its zero-yield nuclear explosive testing moratorium and calls on all states possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain such a moratorium.

The United States underlines the importance of commencing immediately negotiations of a treaty to ban production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, known as a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), if negotiations are governed by consensus and all the key states participate. Since the early 1990s, the United States has maintained a moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. Pending the conclusion of FMCT negotiations, we call on all states that have not done so to declare and maintain similar moratoria. The PRC remains the

only NPT nuclear-weapon state that has not declared a moratorium on production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons.

In the Indo-Pacific region, the PRC's rapid and opaque expansion of its nuclear arsenal, especially when viewed in the context of the PRC's more assertive foreign policy, is a key concern for the United States and its allies and partners. As the PRC continues its nuclear weapons buildup, it will increasingly undermine the security of the United States, our allies, and our partners in the region and may force the United States or other countries to reevaluate the sufficiency of their defence postures. The PRC's nuclear arsenal does not need to equal the US arsenal to fuel an arms race, nor is symmetry between US and PRC nuclear forces a precursor for Beijing to practice mutual transparency and restraint. We will continue to urge the PRC to engage in substantive bilateral talks on strategic risk reduction measures and crisis communications. We will also continue to pursue concrete risk reduction measures within the P5 process. All such measures reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war, as well as to promote stability through greater transparency of the PRC's nuclear weapon policies, plans, and capabilities.

The NPT remains the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and critical to our common security. While it is regrettable that Russia alone blocked consensus on a final document at the Tenth NPT Review Conference in 2022, the fact that all other States Parties were prepared to accept it is a sign of the enduring support of the international community for this essential treaty. Looking toward the new review cycle, we will build on the good work that was done and continue to encourage NPT Parties to focus on their common interests in each of the treaty's three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We seek the universalization of the Additional Protocol to ensure that IAEA safeguards remain effective and robust, both to provide credible assurances that states are fulfilling their NPT obligations and to uphold the Treaty's integrity by addressing noncompliance. The United States also remains committed to ultimately achieving a world without nuclear weapons, and to engaging in risk reduction measures. While not a substitute for disarmament, risk reduction measures.

The United States supports practical efforts to advance the global capacity for nuclear disarmament verification. A key effort in this vein is the International Partnership for

Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV). The IPNDV brings together 30 states with and without nuclear weapons, plus the European Union, under a cooperative framework to further understanding of the complex challenges involved in the verification of nuclear disarmament and to identify potential solutions to those challenges. Now in its third phase, the Partnership has produced more than 50 reports and technology data sheets highlighting potential verification measures to make possible future nuclear disarmament.

In 2022, representatives from 42 countries continued to participate in meetings of the United States organized Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) Working Group. Due to the ongoing pandemic, meetings of CEND's three subgroups continued to be held virtually for most of the year. However, on the margins of the UN First Committee in October 2022, CEND held its first return to in-person plenary since the pandemic began. After the October meeting, CEND continued to advance its work via virtual meetings for the remainder of 2022. In 2023, CEND continues to work in a virtual format while also aiming to hold at least one, if not several, in-person plenaries. The United States supports practical efforts to create an environment conducive to further progress on nuclear disarmament and fashioning a world in which nuclear weapons are no longer necessary to deter aggression and maintain global strategic stability. The CEND Working Group provides a forum for the meaningful and realistic dialogue that is necessary to address the underlying security concerns that cause countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their security and to pursue effective measures that will help create such an environment. The United States does not support the TPNW, which will not lead to the elimination of a single nuclear weapons, or enhance any state's security, and therefore is not an "effective measure" relating to nuclear disarmament as envisioned by the NPT. The five NPT nuclear-weapon states (P5) have met regularly to discuss nuclear policy, promote mutual confidence, and discuss issues related to the fulfilment of the NPT.

The United States supports the expansion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy in conformity with the NPT and according to international standards of safety, security, and non-proliferation) and believes it can be a clean, reliable source of energy for states seeking to meet increasing energy demands. Such efforts must be conducted in accordance with high standards for international safeguards and in full cooperation with the IAEA. The next generation of reactors, including small modular reactors (SMRs), offer a new nuclear

power pathway for countries. These technologies have economic and safety advantages, can be right sized for the grid capacity, and offer a range of applications beyond electricity generation. The United States will continue its technical outreach and partnership to raise awareness of SMRs' benefits, diverse applicability and related nuclear security, safety, and safeguards considerations. As part of this effort, the United States will continue to raise awareness among regional partners of nuclear non-proliferation and security concerns, including but not limited to the anticipated deployment of floating nuclear power plants in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States is engaged in capacity-building cooperation with agreed ASEAN partners in this topical area as part of the Foundational Infrastructure for Responsible Use of SMR Technology (FIRST) program. The United States intends to co-host with Vietnam an ARF-approved workshop on Nuclear Non-proliferation Safety and Security Standards and the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology and is conducting a series of remote engagements with select ASEAN Member States considering including SMRs in their nuclear power programs.

The IAEA also supports work to promote the non-power application of nuclear science and technologies to help countries achieve national development priorities. The United States is the largest contributor of extra-budgetary funds to IAEA work in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, an important demonstration of our longstanding commitment to global peaceful nuclear cooperation consistent with our obligations under Article IV of the NPT. US extra-budgetary contributions to the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Program and Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI) support IAEA activities that assist in building national capabilities to apply nuclear techniques to meet national development goals in areas such as human and animal health, food security, and water resource management, and to address environmental issues such as climate change. In 2020, the United States announced a new contribution of \$50 million to the IAEA's PUI through 2024, bringing US contributions to the IAEA's PUI to a total of more than US\$117 million. To date, the PUI has supported nearly 200 IAEA projects that benefit people in more than 150 IAEA Member States. In the past few years, US contributions have been allocated to support IAEA programs such as "Rays of Hope" to support Member States in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, and activities in Asia to recycle plastics, the development of electron beam and x-ray technology to enhance food safety and security and sustaining a network of veterinary diagnostic laboratories in Africa and Asia.

We believe that adopting the IAEA's Additional Protocol (AP) to a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement is an important step that states can take to strengthen IAEA safeguards and the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call upon all ARF participants who have not yet done so to sign and ratify the AP and, as appropriate, to modify or rescind any Small Quantities Protocol based on the original outdated model. We stand ready to help states build capacities to fully implement the AP. We recall the commitment at the 2012 ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting to "universalization of the IAEA Additional Protocol as soon as possible." As noted in the November 2013 Joint ASEAN-United States Leader's Statement, the ARF also can play an important role in helping states comprehend the AP and overcome any challenges to its implementation.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery, as well as illicit spread of related materials, threaten the security of the entire international community. The United States seeks to strengthen partner capacity development and implementation of strategic trade control (STC) systems, detect and target illicit procurement networks that utilize regional ports to obtain strategic goods. Principally, the United States will continue to build key relationships and partner capacity on implementing sanctions implementation, enforcing export controls to secure the strategic supply chain, securing key ports of entry/transit, and disrupting illicit activities in the financial, cyber, and maritime shipping arenas. The United States continues to support regional workshops for ASEAN countries to help each government make tangible enhancements to the legal-regulatory foundations of their STC systems that can positively contribute to STC licensing and enforcement, as well as non-proliferation sanctions implementation. These improvements will help reduce risks of illicit proliferation in each country and throughout Southeast Asia.

An additional avenue that the United States uses to support regional approaches in addressing global proliferation challenges is raising awareness about UNSCR 1540 requirements. The resolution's provisions involve preventing WMD, their means of delivery, and related materials from unregulated acquisition by non-state actors and detecting the unregulated transfer of these goods between national borders. The United States and its main regional allies have taken measures to meet all their obligations under UNSCR 1540. These measures and their implementation continue to improve as witnessed in their submissions to the 1540 Committee and by the late 2020 updates to the

Committee's National Matrices, a compilation of measures created by the Committee's experts. Additionally, the United States will continue to partner with other donor countries and entities to build capacity in those countries that request cooperation to implement UNSCR 1540. The United States has also supported efforts in the ARF toward this end and has promoted greater cooperation between the ARF and the UN Security Council 1540 Committee, to ensure that regional partners are able to fulfil their UN obligations.

One international effort that helps states to meet the goals of UNSCR 1540 is the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which to date, 107 countries have endorsed. Many ARF participants have already endorsed the PSI, profiling their concrete commitment to regional peace and security to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, and related materials in the region. Italy hosted a successful virtual Operational Experts Group (OEG) meeting in October of 2020. OEG members discussed upcoming PSI initiatives and potential multilateral opportunities with PSI endorsing countries. Singapore will be hosting, mostly virtual, the PSI Asia Pacific Exercise Rotation (APER) this fall in an ongoing effort to keep up the momentum on regional PSI efforts. The United States encourages all countries concerned with the threat WMD proliferation poses to international peace and security to endorse the PSI.

The United States continues to encourage cooperation among ASEAN members; and ARF participants to strengthen efforts to prevent the use and re-emergence of chemical and biological weapons and their proliferation. The United States calls on all States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention to support the goals of these two treaties and comply with their obligations; and to hold accountable those States Parties who blatantly violate these provisions. The United States urges support for the OPCW and its work; as well as the BWC ISU, and to further support the Universalization of both the CWC and BWC. All ARF states must work together to preserve the international norm against the use of chemical and biological weapons; and to fully implement and adhere to the obligations under these two regimes.

The United States has partnered with ASEAN members in the past year to support implementation of UNSCRs through joint law enforcement investigations, information sharing, the exchange of expertise and best practices, and capacity building engagements.

The United States has and will continue to engage public and private sector counterparts in ASEAN countries to establish and improve national- and institution-level measures to identify and disrupt illicit DPRK sanctions evasion activities, including its illicit shipping practices, abuse of the international financial system, cyber-enabled operations to steal fiat and virtual currencies, the acquisition of luxury goods, and illicit export of labour to fund its WMD programs.

iii. Transnational Crime

The United States augments the capabilities of regional actors and supports the region on a broad range of transnational crime issues through United States federal, state, and local experts and international and non-profit organizations. These programs include capacity building for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges to investigate and prosecute transnational crime cases, cooperate during interdiction efforts on land and in maritime environments, and to facilitate international legal cooperation. Capacity building efforts often focus on specialized topics such as combatting human trafficking, and drug and wildlife trafficking; corruption; money laundering; and financial crimes; as well as supporting reforms to implement international standards, such as the UN Convention against Corruption, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Budapest Cybercrime Convention. In addition, the United States has taken steps to protect the economic interaction in the region against cybercrime and intellectual property piracy, and to disrupt the financial activities of transnational criminals and facilitators.

The International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok, Thailand continues to deliver a platform for developing relationships with United States law enforcement officers through advanced training for civil law enforcement development to ASEAN member states and other members. The ILEA is an important platform to address areas of mutual concern, including transnational organized crime, cybercrime, financial crimes, corruption, and all forms of trafficking. The ILEA promote regional law enforcement networks among our partner states, builds relationships with the US law enforcement community, and increases institutional capacity to address the threats and promote the rule of law. Alumni often serve at the respective countries' highest ranks in the criminal justice sector, including senior police and prosecutors, Supreme Court justices, and

parliamentarians. Since 1998, ILEA Bangkok has trained over 20,000 criminal justice sector professionals throughout Southeast Asia, thus creating and strengthening international operational networks. The ILEA Bangkok alumni are part of a global ILEA alumni network of over 70,000. The United States also deploys law enforcement experts as part of a global network to deliver capacity building and strengthen international cooperation in the fight against cybercrime and intellectual property theft. Three of these International Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property Advisors -- or ICHIPs -- are deployed to assist across the Indo-Pacific, including ASEAN countries, and are located, respectively, in: Bangkok, Thailand; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, People's Republic of China.

Illicit drug production and trafficking are also challenging for all ARF member nations. There are vast networks of highly organized drug trafficking organizations that span the region and threaten regional and US national security through their production and trafficking of illicit synthetic drugs and their precursors. The US government supports partner nation capabilities to disrupt the use, production, and trafficking of these substances by sharing best practices for demand reduction programs and providing training to improve capacity to detect and interdict them. These efforts ensure countries can fight international drug trafficking and related criminal activities in their home countries. In 2019, the East Asia Summit leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to effectively address and counter the world drug problem through a statement on combating the spread of illicit drugs. We further encourage all countries who have not yet done so to implement the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1953, as amended by the 1972, Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, which constitute the cornerstone of the international drug control system.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing has direct food, economic and environmental security impacts on coastal communities and their nations' rule of law, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific region houses the world's most productive and biodiverse marine ecosystems that provide food and income to over 200 million people in the region; however, unsustainable fishing practices threaten the region's biodiversity, food security and livelihoods. IUU-fished seafood accounts for as much as 30 % of the global seafood harvest. In Southeast Asia, severely overfished waters

in the Gulf of Thailand have made it almost impossible for vessels to operate in their historic fishing grounds. Since 1961, the average catch in Thai waters has decreased by 81 %. Fishing operations have moved increasingly farther out to sea — and remain there for longer periods. Fisheries depletion raises the cost of fishing and exerts downward pressure on wages. Fewer people are willing to work under these conditions, which promotes human trafficking for fishing operations.

To further the fight against IUU fishing, the United States is working with international partners to improve global fisheries enforcement by strengthening efforts to detect, identify, interdict, and adjudicate illegal fishing activity and the illicit networks that support it through enhanced cooperation and information-sharing. In 2018 and again in 2019, the United States and Indonesia co-chaired workshops on law enforcement coordination and maritime data analysis tactics and techniques to identify unusual and potentially illegal fishing and vessel activity to enable countries to utilize analytical tools and processes to combat IUU fishing and crime that may be associated with IUU fishing. Another model of this type of effort is the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI), a partnership between the United States Coast Guard, Navy, and local law enforcement agencies in Oceania. OMSI bolsters maritime domain awareness increases law enforcement presence and expands at-sea law enforcement capabilities by matching available Navy ships with Coast Guard law enforcement expertise and local enforcement authorities.

To combat IUU fishing, advance sustainable fisheries, and conserve marine biodiversity across Southeast Asia, USAID Sustainable Fish Asia (SuFiA) supports the development, adoption, and implementation of regional sustainable fisheries policies, standards, and regulatory frameworks in the Indo-Pacific. SuFiA will promote the leadership and goals of regional organizations that advance sustainable fisheries management and counter IUU fishing in Southeast Asia. SuFiA also works in partnership with regional fisheries management organizations and the private sector to accelerate the implementation of fair-labour standards and sustainable fishing practices. In particular, SuFiA works in close collaboration with the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC) to strengthen their organizational capacities so that they can provide their member states with the leadership and services needed to support sustainable regional marine and fisheries ecosystems in Southeast Asia. Further, SuFiA works with the US

Government Interagency and Southeast Asia's regional organizations to understand and address the impact of illegal fishing by nationals of other countries trespassing in the region. In addition, and in coordination with the ASEAN Senior Labor Officials, the US Department of Labour is developing programming to implement recommendations identified in the USAID-supported study to advance a regional, multi-sectoral strategy that addresses human trafficking and forced labor in the fishing industry. Specifically, the Addressing Labor Exploitation in Fishing in ASEAN (ALFA) project will strengthen the capacity of ASEAN sectoral bodies and member countries to coordinate and collaborate to address forced labor and abusive working conditions in the region's fishing industry. ALFA will focus on ASEAN regional policy implementation, and increased engagement with the private sector, worker organizations, and civil society to mitigate forced labor and trafficking, and improve working conditions for a more sustainable, responsible, and resilient fishing sector.

The Oceans project, supported by USAID, strengthens regional cooperation to combat IUU fishing, promotes sustainable fisheries and conserves marine biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Through this project, the US works with public and private sector partners to strengthen electronic catch documentation and traceability (eCDT) that ensures fisheries resources are legally caught and properly labelled. The USG and partners trained over 1,200 regional stakeholders across 12 ASEAN and Coral Triangle countries in program technical areas, including electronic catch documentation and traceability, sustainable fisheries management, public-private partnership development, and human welfare and gender equity. The partnership has leveraged over \$1.4 million in public and private sector partner funding for increased sustainability of program interventions, including from the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch, Thai Union, and Inmarsat. In addition, the USG is conducting comprehensive research to identify and assess opportunities for ASEAN to support the advancement of a regional multi-sectoral strategy to address the challenges associated with forced labor in the fishing industry and to propose ways in which development partners might best support those opportunities. The report from the study is currently under review and it will be finalized this year so the consideration for recommended interventions for ASEAN can be proposed in 2021.

In collaboration with the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center, USAID supported a workshop to explore how existing catch documentation and seafood traceability data could be exchanged within the region to prevent illegitimate trade.

The United States commends progress on the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP), especially for women and children, which entered into force on March 8, 2017, following ratification by the Philippines. We urge all remaining member states to follow the lead of those who have already ratified and promptly deposit instruments of ratification. We also encourage all countries to ratify and to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The United States and ASEAN enjoy a strong partnership on combating human trafficking – a partnership that we look forward to continuing. We seek to continue this partnership and have presented proposals for future collaboration to the SOMTC. We are still committed to assisting member states in developing and implementing victim compensation schemes and funds, as prescribed under ACTIP. The USG continues to support ASEAN on the implementation of the ACTIP through its technical cooperation on developing the ASEAN Regional Guidelines and Procedures to Address the Needs of Victims of TIP, which was launched in April 2019. In collaboration with the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), USAID supported the drafting of a Regional Model Toolkit to provide guidance to practitioners across ASEAN. The toolkit is now translated into six ASEAN countries' languages (Burmese, Indonesia, Khmer, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese) and pilot studies are underway in some member states to develop a strategic approach to formalize and adapt the toolkit at the national level..

Through the USAID regional Asia Counter Trafficking in Persons (ASIA CTIP) program and country-specific activities in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and the Philippines, the USG addresses transnational and regional challenges to combat human trafficking, building upon existing USG-supported CTIP activities in the region. The program strengthens regional platforms for governments, NGOs, and service providers to effectively cooperate across borders and ensures that assistance and support can be provided and accessed in source, transit and destination countries. USAID also partners to promote industry-wide adoption of practices that reduce opportunities and incentives for cheap, exploited,

and forced labor. The Asia CTIP program also builds the evidence base by conducting and sharing CTIP-related research and knowledge in key areas.

We encourage all countries to ratify and to implement the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

1. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

ARF Dialogue Partners experience a variety of natural disasters, such as typhoons, floods, and earthquakes, as well as manmade crises, including civil conflict, which often result in significant financial and human costs. In response to these events, the United States continues to provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations in the region, while simultaneously working to reduce disaster vulnerability in communities and building national, provincial-level, and local response capacities.

In Pakistan, USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's (BHA) focus over recent years has been on disaster preparedness and rapid response efforts as well as early recovery from crises that continue to erode household-level food security and coping capacity among Pakistan's most vulnerable populations. BHA has provided nearly \$7.5 million in active programming in early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience activities. Three BHA partners, Concern Worldwide, WFP and Concern are addressing food assistance through cash-for-work and livelihoods support in Sindh province and capacity building for local disaster response organizations in Khyber Pakhtunwala.

In addition, BHA funded regional programs are also operational in Pakistan. The Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) and international Medical Corps are implementing programs to enhance the availability and accessibility of early warning information to reduce exposure to climate risks and build the local capacity to better coordinate within the humanitarian system and prepare for and respond more effectively to emergency situations.

For example, in Burma, USAID/BHA supports food assistance, both locally and regionally purchased food, as well as cash based-transfers to conflict-affected persons and other vulnerable communities in Rakhine, Kachin, and Northern Shan. Following the February 2021 military coup d'état, BHA partner, the World Food Program expanded their assistance to include newly emerging conflict areas, including Chin, Kayin, Kayah, Sagaing, and Magway. USAID/BHA's support through WFP also includes targeted distributions of fortified blended foods to children under five and pregnant and lactating women. In FY 2021, USAID/BHA provided \$49.7 million in to meet critical humanitarian needs of IDPs and other vulnerable groups in Myanmar. Assistance includes health, nutrition, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and settlements, and protection services, as well as support for COVID-19 prevention and response efforts. Assistance includes health, nutrition, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and settlements, and protection services, as well as support for COVID-19 prevention and response efforts. Assistance includes health, nutrition, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and settlements, and protection services, as well as support for COVID-19 prevention and response efforts.

In Bangladesh, State/PRM programming focuses on three areas: (1) addressing the immediate monsoon/cyclone risks to vulnerable refugee and host communities, (2) developing mid-to-long-term disaster readiness interventions, and (3) ensuring a unified approach to disaster risk management in Cox's Bazar. Other PRM programming works to deliver water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and nutrition services; as well as provide health services, protection for vulnerable women and children, provide comprehensive care for women and girls (including reproductive and childbirth services and support for those who have encountered violence), empower women and adolescents through skills development and raising awareness to prevent gender-based violence, and establish education programs to help children enhance their social and cognitive skills and cope with the emotional trauma they have experienced.

In Malaysia, State/PRM programs reduce and mitigate GBV amongst refugees and asylum seekers in Kuala Lumpur and Northern Peninsular Malaysia through capacity building, as well as protection and emergency support services. Improving access to protection and specialized counseling. State/PRM partners also provided primary health care and mental health services via a static clinic in the Kuala Lumpur area, as well via mobile clinics in

northern and eastern Malaysia and mobile clinics in two immigration detention centres (when they have access).

In Indonesia, State/PRM programming provides comprehensive protection and care for unaccompanied and separated refugee and asylum seeker children and strengthen the resiliency of those transitioning to adulthood. Projects assists beneficiaries by providing shelter, child protection, GBV prevention and response, health services, and education. State/PRM also funds IOM to assist Rohingya asylum seekers arriving by boat from Burma and Bangladesh.

In Thailand, State/PRM partners work in nine refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border. In the camps, health facilities; water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), empowerment programs for women and girls, and livelihood projects are provided. PRM also supports inclusion, mainstream participation of people with disabilities in camp activities, and ensure refugees are aware of risks posed by explosive ordinance and coordinates with health service partners and assists with prostheses. PRM supports direct and tertiary care as well as case management, mental health, psychosocial services, legal counseling, paralegal training, case management, and advocacy services to urban refugees and asylum seekers in Bangkok.

In India, State/PRM partners provide education, healthcare, and basic needs assistance to Burmese refugees as well as supporting the full gamut of Tibetan refugees' basic needs, including healthcare, mental health, education, WASH, and protection. PRM funding in India also supports inclusion for refugees for disabilities and builds capacity to address gender-based violence.

In Burma, State/PRM partners provide humanitarian assistance, including essential items and food supplies, to displaced families, as well as protection shelter, WASH, and emergency healthcare. PRM continues to press for unhindered humanitarian access as violence and population displacement continues across the country, exacerbating humanitarian need.

To mitigate the effects of future disasters on vulnerable populations, the United States supports disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs aimed at saving lives; protecting

livelihoods, assets, and infrastructure before, during, and after a disaster; and increasing community resilience to natural hazards. USAID/BHA's DRR interventions also promote self-reliance, enabling partner countries to lessen the impacts of natural hazards and respond more effectively when disasters strike. The United States supports regional and country specific DRR programs. For example, the US Department of State, INDOPACOM, and USAID/BHA, collaborate on support to the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management and the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) Centre by building its capacity for disaster monitoring and response. In 2019, the USG through USAID supported the AHA Center to establish and convene a working group for disaster management training and curriculum development, manage disaster-related information, develop assessment tools, and assist in the development of a Regional Joint Disaster Response Plan. As part of our cooperation with the AHA Center, USAID also provides critical training in such areas as English language skills for international disaster response coordination and logistics for the procurement and transport of emergency relief supplies, all to increase the timeliness, effectiveness, and efficiency of emergency response in the region. In 2019, USAID, in partnership with the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, and the U.S Embassy Regional English Language Office - Jakarta helped deliver the AHA Centre's English Language Training for ASEAN on Disaster Management. Nineteen disaster management professionals from all ten ASEAN Member States participated to strengthen capacity in technical-language driven communications necessary to coordinate disaster response and management. In 2021, to further strengthen ASEAN's regional disaster management capacity USAID is partnering with AHA Centre to support the development of a humanitarian logistics training program for the National Disaster Management Organizations and assess ASEAN capacity for multi-hazard end-to-end early warning systems for natural disasters.

The United States sponsors and/or participates in numerous HA/DR-related exercises with regional partners every year, including the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise, East Asia Summit (EAS) HA/DR Exercise, the ADMM-Plus HA/DR, exercise Cobra Gold with Thailand, exercise Balikatan with the Philippines, Gema Bhakti with Indonesia, and Angkor Sentinel with Cambodia. In addition, the United States sponsored Disaster Relief Exercise and Exchanges (DREEs) through the Lower Mekong Initiative, further enhancing multi-lateral coordination, communication, and cooperation among the United States, Cambodia,

Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam to enhance response readiness to natural disasters in the Lower Mekong region.

2019, culminated over three years of cumulative and collaborative efforts of the United States and Malaysia co-chairing the most robust exercise of its kind ever to be executed. The exercise tested a real-world scenario utilizing actual communications methods and coordination processes with a crosscutting group of civil and military stakeholders across the 18 ADMM-Plus countries, the humanitarian community, and regional and international organizations. As a result, the USG demonstrated its commitment to the Indo Pacific region, and tangibly and practically advanced One ASEAN One Response, alliances, and partnerships. The United States remains committed to developing ASEAN HA/DR capabilities and streamlining the ASEAN response mechanism. As part of the United States commitment to advancing civil - military coordination in ASEAN and throughout the Asia Pacific region, we recognize the need to further synchronize the defence efforts of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus with the civilian-led efforts in the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and by the AHA Centre. We see this as a critical step toward realizing the vision of 'One ASEAN, One Response,' and we look forward to furthering these efforts in collaboration.

iv. Maritime Security

The Indo-Pacific region and its maritime waterways are critical to US security. Together with our interagency colleagues and regional allies and partners, the United States strives to ensure that the Indo-Pacific will remain open, free, and secure in the decades ahead. To protect free and open access, the United States focuses on three objectives: safeguarding the freedom of the seas, deterring conflict and coercion, and promoting adherence to international law and standards.

The United States has, throughout its history, advocated for the freedom of the seas and airspace. Freedom of the seas includes more than the mere freedom of commercial vessels to transit through international waterways. It also includes all the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses of the sea and airspace for military ships and aircraft as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. The United States will continue to fly, sail,

and operate wherever international law allows, as US forces currently do all around the world.

For 70 years, US military presence in the Indo-Pacific region has played a vital role in undergirding regional peace, stability, and security. We note several continuing trends, including rapid military modernization, growing resource demands, and territorial and maritime disputes, that have the potential to create instability. Many countries across the region are significantly enhancing their naval and maritime law enforcement (MLE) capabilities. Although most nations are using these capabilities in a responsible manner, ongoing provocative actions continue to heighten tensions in the region and raise concerns. Actions such as the use of MLE vessels to coerce rival claimants, and unsafe air and maritime behaviour raise the risk of miscalculation or conflict. Maritime vessels are also increasingly being used to traffic terrorists and illicit materials. Increased screening measures and controls, such as those identified in UNSCR 2396 on foreign fighters to increase aviation security, are also needed to deter illicit and terrorist use of the maritime sector.

The tensions arising from maritime and territorial disputes in the Indo-Pacific are deeply concerning to the United States. The Indian Ocean, East China Sea, and South China Sea are all vital thoroughfares for global commerce and energy. Well over half the world's merchant tonnage flows through the South China Sea, and over 15 million barrels of oil per day transited the Strait of Malacca last year, with most of it continuing onward through the East China Sea to three of the world's largest economies – Japan, the Republic of Korea, and China.

Regarding the South China Sea, the United States has a vital national interest in ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the sea, respect for international law, unimpeded lawful commerce, and peace and stability. The United States insists that such that disputes should be resolved peacefully, without the use of force or coercion, and in accordance with international law. To that end, we urge claimant countries to conform all their maritime claims to international law as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.

The PRC's efforts to assert its unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea threaten the regional rules-based order and undermine international law. China's provocative reclamation and militarization of disputed outposts in the South China Sea, and its attempts to coerce and intimidate other nations undermine regional stability. The United States will continue to stand with Southeast Asian claimants in resisting the PRC's efforts through the China Coast Guard (CCG) and China Maritime Militia (CMM) to enforce its unlawful maritime claims and will continue to protest these claims in international fora and call out PRC actions that prevent other claimants from exercising their sovereign rights to explore, exploit, conserve, and manage the resources in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). The United States urges all claimants, including the PRC, to manage and resolve disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention. The United States encourages all parties to employ diplomatic and other peaceful avenues for resolving disagreements, including the use of third-party dispute settlement, such as arbitration, negotiation, multilateral fora, or other peaceful international mechanisms. In this regard, the United States takes note of the importance of the July 12, 2016, arbitral tribunal ruling in the China-Philippines arbitration, and notes that it could serve as a useful basis for claimants to resolve their overlapping maritime claims.

On negotiations towards an ASEAN-China South China Sea Code of Conduct (CoC), we will continue to advocate for a meaningful CoC that is fully in accordance with international law and protects the rights and interests of third parties. We are concerned, however, at reports that the PRC has been pressing ASEAN member states – behind closed doors – to accept limits on with whom states may conduct military exercises and offshore energy development. These proposals put at risk the autonomy of ASEAN states and pose a direct challenge to the interests of the broader international community, including the United States. The United States urges all negotiating parties to ensure that rights and interests of third parties are respected and that any eventual CoC be crafted in full accordance with international law.

In the East China Sea, we remain concerned about the provocative behavior by the PRC. We support calls for diplomacy and crisis management procedures to avoid a miscalculation or a dangerous incident.

We further believe the ARF can help put in-place supportive diplomatic structures that lower tensions and help claimant states manage these disputes peacefully. This forum needs to play an increasingly important role in reinforcing international law and practice and in building practical cooperation among member states.

The United States is not standing still considering the challenges we face in the maritime domain. There should be no doubt that the United States will employ whole of government resources that includes maintaining military presence and capabilities to protect our interests and those of our allies and partners against potential threats in the maritime domain.

The Department of Defence is pursuing several efforts in support of maritime security:

i. Work together with our allies and partners from Northeast Asia to the Indian Ocean to build their maritime capacity.

- The United States Navy and Coast Guard are building greater interoperability and developing more integrated operations, actions, and activities with our regional allies and partners.
- The United States Pacific Fleet is increasing the size, frequency, and sophistication of their regional exercise program, with a particular focus on increasing the operational exercise complexity with Southeast Asian partners and expanding the multilateral exercise program.
- The United States has also implemented a Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative that enable training and exercises, personnel support, and national level subject matter experts on maritime domain awareness to enhance capabilities for our partners in Southeast Asia.

ii. Leverage defence diplomacy to build greater transparency, reduce the risk of miscalculation or conflict, and promote shared maritime rules of the road.

- The United States is actively seeking to mitigate risks in the Indo-Pacific region, both through bilateral efforts with the PRC, as well as region-wide risk reduction measures.
- The United States Navy and the PRC's Ministry of National Defence have a Memorandum of Understanding on Rules of Behavior for Safety of Air and

Maritime Encounters. This MOU currently includes annexes on ship-to-ship and air-to-air encounters.

- United States Navy and People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLA-N) vessels have also successfully employed the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) during recent interactions, which reduces risk in the region and demonstrates cooperation on the seas.

iii. Strengthen regional security institutions and encourage the development of an open and effective regional security architecture.

- The United States is enhancing its engagement in ASEAN-based institutions such as the ARF, ADMM-Plus, Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) and the EAS. The United States promotes candid conversations about ongoing challenges in the maritime domain and encourages greater information sharing and cooperative solutions.
- The United States, in partnership with our Quad partners, will implement the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) with regional partners to offer a near-real-time, integrated, and cost-effective maritime domain awareness picture. This initiative will transform the ability of partners in the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region to fully monitor the waters on their shores and, in turn, to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific.

In addition to Department of Defence efforts on the seas, the United States regularly conducts maritime exercises with regional partners to build confidence and to enhance regional maritime readiness. Cooperative activities such as the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT), Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT), and the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise foster bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region. These are just a few of several engagements aimed to develop cooperation, promote common seafaring practices, and enhance mutual trust.

Additionally, the United States participated in its fourth Governors' Council meeting with the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) since becoming the organization's 20th contracting party (member) in 2014. The United States has been proactive in assisting the development of a ten-year strategy plan for the future of ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) to become a

Centre of Excellence by 2020. The United States is also working with regional partners to improve the safety and well-being of mariners through the Expanded ASEAN Seafarers Training on Counter-Piracy (EAST-CP) program. The United States is enhancing the capacity of the coast guards, navies, and law enforcement and judicial sectors of partner nations to address not only piracy, but also the broad scope of illicit maritime activity ranging from illegal fishing to human trafficking and the trafficking of arms and narcotics. Training and technical expertise are delivered through a variety of cooperative training programs supported by the United States Departments of Defence, Justice, and State, NOAA, the United States Coast Guard, and USAID. The workshops incorporate the knowledge of technical experts in the maritime transport sector and regional survivors of piracy to address issues ranging from preparedness and survival, ransom negotiations, to post trauma care upon returning home.

iv. Strengthen US naval capacity to ensure the United States can successfully deter conflict and coercion and respond decisively when needed.

- The United States Navy is investing in new cutting-edge capabilities, deploying our finest maritime capabilities forward, and distributing these capabilities more widely across the region.
- The United States Navy will increase the size of the United States Pacific Fleet's overseas assigned forces by approximately 30 % over the next five years to maintain a higher tempo of routine and persistent maritime presence activities across the Pacific region.

v. Work together with our allies and partners from Northeast Asia to the Indian Ocean to build their maritime capacity.

- The United States Navy and Coast Guard are building greater interoperability and developing more integrated operations, actions, and activities with our regional allies and partners.
- The United States Pacific Fleet is increasing the size, frequency, and sophistication of their regional exercise program, with a particular focus on increasing the operational exercise complexity with Southeast Asian partners and expanding the multilateral exercise program.
- The United States Navy has also implemented a Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative that enable training and exercises, personnel support, and national level

subject matter experts on maritime domain awareness to enhance capabilities for our partners in Southeast Asia.

vi. Leverage defence diplomacy to build greater transparency, reduce the risk of miscalculation or conflict, and promote shared maritime rules of the road.

- The United States Navy is actively seeking to mitigate risks in the Indo-Pacific region, both through bilateral efforts with China, as well as region-wide risk reduction measures.
- Recently, the United States Navy and China's Ministry of National Defence concluded an historic Memorandum of Understanding on Rules of Behavior for Safety of Air and Maritime Encounters. This MOU currently includes annexes on ship-to-ship and air-to-air encounters.
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presence, and expand at-sea law enforcement capabilities throughout Oceania. During the exercise, which takes place two to four times per year, sailors have the privilege of working side by side with both Navy teams and Coast Guard Law Enforcement teams. The teams provide invaluable training on Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), to include tactical team movements, tactical combat casualty care, and safe boarding techniques. These are just a few of several engagements aimed to develop cooperation, promote common seafaring practices, and enhance mutual trust.

Additionally, the United States participated in its fourth Governors' Council meeting with the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) since becoming the organization's 20th contracting party (member) in 2014. The United States has been proactive in assisting the development of a ten-year strategy plan for the future of ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) to become a Centre of Excellence by 2020. The United States is also working with regional partners to improve the safety and well-being of mariners through the Expanded ASEAN Seafarers Training on Counter-Piracy (EAST-CP) program. The United States is enhancing the capacity of the coast guards, navies, and law enforcement and judicial sectors of partner nations to address not only piracy, but also the broad scope of illicit maritime activity ranging from illegal fishing to human trafficking, and the trafficking of arms and narcotics. Training and technical expertise are delivered through a variety of cooperative training programs supported by the United States Departments of Defence, Justice, and State, NOAA, the United States Coast Guard, and USAID. The workshops incorporate the knowledge of technical experts in the maritime transport sector and regional survivors of piracy to address issues ranging from preparedness and survival, ransom negotiations, to post trauma care upon returning home.

viii. Information and Communications Technologies

The speed and efficiency of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are of great benefit to commerce and development. At the same time, ICTs introduce vulnerabilities that countries must proactively address, as the risks can impact national and regional security and economic prosperity – especially in Asia, where e-commerce is a significant and increasing portion of many developing countries' economic growth. In a cyber-incident of national significance, the unique nature of the ICTs, including the lack of

external observables of ICTs and the difficulty in determining the nation or entity responsible, may lead states to act precipitously, with significant consequences for strategic ICT stability and international security. To reduce the risk of conflict stemming from ICT incidents, practical confidence building measures (CBMs) are needed to enhance the predictability of state activities and reduce national security risks. This can be achieved by fostering transparency, increasing cybersecurity cooperation, and developing incident response capacity within and among states. These practical measures in the form of CBMs can help reduce the risk of conflict.

In the interest of increasing ARF's budding Preventive Diplomacy role and promoting regional cyber stability, the United States welcomes the establishment of the ISM on ICTs Security and supports continued ARF dialogue on enhancing international ICT stability via the 2015 ARF Work Plan on Security of and in the Use of ICTs. We support further institutionalization of cyber work within the ARF, the development and implementation of cyber CBMs in the ARF and continued ARF discussion on preventive diplomacy's role in cyberspace. The United States will cooperate with other ARF Participants on the development of relevant cyber workshops and projects in 2018 to support the ARF Work Plan.

III. Role of the ARF

a) National Contributions to Enhancing the ARF and Regional Security

The United States remains committed to building institutional capacity in the ARF and strengthening its role in the ASEAN-centred regional security architecture. The United States remains committed to the full and complete implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action 2020-2025 and will work diligently with ARF participants to fulfil the ARF's mandate to advance from confidence-building measures to preventive diplomacy, to effective conflict resolution.

The United States will also continue to work with ASEAN to strengthen and build capacity in the ARF Unit – a critical element of process sustainment and administrative protocol. A reinforced ARF Unit will benefit ASEAN members and all ARF dialogue partners as the engine of a credible and results-oriented organization.

b) Future of the ARF

The ARF serves as an important platform for senior and working level security policy dialogue and working-level technical cooperation on regional security issues. The ARF's inclusiveness, maturing commitments, and growing experience position it to achieve success on a targeted agenda that addresses common issues of interest for all ARF participants. However, its participants should take deliberate steps toward shaping the ARF into an institution that faces important security challenges candidly and head-on, with the capability to conduct effective Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, and inclusive of women, youth, and civil society. Furthermore, continued military assertiveness and militarization within the region highlight the urgent need for the ARF to go beyond just providing confidence-building measures. In this regard, the United States supports efforts to develop the ARF's Preventive Diplomacy capability together with the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR).

It is important to highlight the context of the ARF as one element of a broader regional security architecture that includes the EAS, ADMM-Plus, and the EAMF. The United States is committed to continuing its engagement to help shape a robust and coherent architecture in the Indo-Pacific region – including a key role for the ARF in promoting stability and prosperity – through a transparent and inclusive process

VIETNAM

I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

Over the past year, the regional strategic landscape has undergone rising complexity and uncertainty. While regional economic recovery is rather slow and fragile, the ongoing armed conflicts in some parts of the world, increasing military build-up, heightened major power competition, worrying developments in regional flashpoints and emerging non-traditional security issues are posing unprecedented challenges to the regional security environment.

Geo-political and geo-economic shifts to the Asia-Pacific and the wider Indo-Pacific region continue, with the introduction of various new initiatives and mechanisms by major powers. Those that are beneficial to peace, security, stability, prosperity and cooperation in the region should be welcomed. At the same time, it is important to uphold the key principles and norms enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ), and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), and to further promote dialogue and cooperation, build trust and confidence, and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation. Efforts should also be made to strengthen ASEAN Centrality and the ASEAN-centred regional architecture that is open, inclusive, transparent, and rules-based, anchored in international law.

The situation in the South China Sea (East Sea) remains a source of concerns as it continues to witness complex developments and some activities, including militarization and serious incidents, damage to the marine environment, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and undermined peace, security, and stability in the region. It is, therefore, imperative to continue to uphold international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. All parties concerned must continue to exercise utmost self-restraint and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. ASEAN and China are exerting efforts to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), while working towards the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

The ongoing unrest and tension in Myanmar continue posing challenges to ASEAN's efforts in assisting the country to seek a workable and durable solution to its crisis, particularly through promoting the full and effective implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. As ASEAN is committed to its path of helping its integral member Myanmar, it is important for parties concerned in Myanmar to show further willingness to work with ASEAN while all forms of violence must be ended to create a conducive environment for an inclusive national dialogue and reconciliation, as well as for the secure and timely delivery of ASEAN's humanitarian assistance to those in need in Myanmar.

The military conflict in Ukraine is badly affecting peace, security stability and development of the world. It is essential that the conflict be settled by peaceful means in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, including respect for independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all countries, and non-use or threat to use of force. All concerned parties should put an end to the use of force to avoid causing further civilian casualties and engage in constructive dialogue to find a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict, taking into account the legitimate rights and interests of all parties. Viet Nam stands ready to join efforts to facilitate dialogue and contribute to the international community's common efforts in finding a long-lasting solution to the conflict.

As tension is still rising in the Korean Peninsula, posing a real threat to regional peace, stability and security, it is crucial for all concerned parties to exercise self-restraint and resume peaceful dialogue so as to realize lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. Diplomatic efforts, including the creation of a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue amongst all concerned parties should remain a priority.

Non-traditional security issues such as climate change, maritime security, communicable diseases, water security, cyber security, food security, energy security, as well as those related to emerging technologies are getting more complex than ever. In this context, we look forward to working with partners and friends to strengthen cooperation and coordination through such ASEAN-led mechanisms as the ARF, EAS, ADMM+ to timely and effectively respond to these mounting challenges.

II. National Security and Defence Policy of Viet Nam

a) Overview of National Defence Policy

The overall goal of Viet Nam's national defence is to strongly defend the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Homeland; to protect the national interests and the people; to maintain political stability and a peaceful environment for national construction and development.

In this regard, Viet Nam implements a defence policy that is peaceful and self-defensive in nature. Viet Nam resolutely and consistently settles all disputes and divergences through peaceful means, on the basis of international law; actively and proactively prevents and repulses the risk of war; realises the motto of defending the Homeland from afar, and is prepared to fight against wars of aggression.

Viet Nam consistently advocates neither joining any military alliance, siding with one country against one another, giving any country permission to set up military bases or use its territory to carry out military activities against other countries nor using force or threatening to use force in international relations.

At the same time, Viet Nam also promotes defence cooperation with countries to improve its capabilities to protect the country and address common security challenges. Depending on the circumstances and specific conditions, Viet Nam will consider developing necessary defence and military relations at an appropriate level with other countries, on the basis of respecting each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial unity and integrity as well as fundamental principles of international law, cooperation for mutual benefits and common interests of the region and the international community.

Viet Nam opposes arms race. As a responsible member of the international community, Viet Nam is keen on fulfilling its duties while actively cooperating with other countries to address emerging security issues, contributing to the protection of peace and stability in the region and the world at large.

b) Data contribution to ARF Arms Register

Viet Nam builds its military potential according to a unified strategy as required by the tasks of national defence and construction.

Viet Nam's defence budget is in line with the country's pace of socio-economic development, sufficient enough to strengthen defence capabilities to protect the Homeland, but not to become an economic burden on the country itself.

The combat competency and readiness of Viet Nam's armed forces are reflected in their organisation, structure, weaponry, military art as well as science, technology and logistics warranty facilities. These are maintained, improved, and developed to be ample for safeguarding the Homeland.

III. National Contributions to Regional Security

a) Maritime Security

Preserving and enhancing maritime security is the common interests of and also the shared responsibility of the entire international community. As a coastal state, Viet Nam always pays special attention to maritime security, ensuring that Viet Nam's seas are safe, friendly, and strictly controlled. Viet Nam is deeply aware of the value of the sea and the challenges posed to maritime security. Viet Nam always observes international law and support the protection of free trade, freedom of navigation and overflight, and peaceful economic activities at sea.

As the regional maritime domain continues to witness increasing challenges, Viet Nam stresses the underlying urgency to strengthen maritime security and cooperation in the region. Viet Nam is willing to strengthen cooperative relations with other countries, navies and maritime law enforcement forces with the aim of enhancing confidence building, preventing conflicts, and dealing with common maritime security challenges. Such emerging issues as degradation of and damage to the marine environment, climate change, transnational crimes at sea... can only be addressed through integrated and holistic approaches as well as strengthened cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination.

Viet Nam upholds international law, especially the 1982 UNCLOS, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. UNCLOS is also of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector, and its integrity needs to be maintained.

Viet Nam has made various positive steps in contribution to the maintenance and promotion of peace, stability, security, safety and freedom of navigation and overflight as well as marine

environmental protection in the South China Sea; building and consolidating strategic trust among countries; actively supporting the promotion of a rules-based maritime order and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means on the basis of international law, especially the 1982 UNCLOS; coordinating with other countries on the full and effective implementation of the DOC, actively participating in and substantively contributing to the process of COC negotiation towards the early conclusion of a substantive, effective COC consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. In 2023, Viet Nam hosted the 20th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and 39th Meeting of the ASEAN-China Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the DOC in Ha Long, which provided parties the opportunity to review commitments to implement the DOC, and discuss ways and means to promote substantive COC negotiations.

Viet Nam engages and continues to attach great importance to regional cooperation on maritime security through ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM-MS), the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting/Plus (ADMM/+). These are strategic frameworks for ASEAN and between ASEAN and dialogue partners to exchange views and identify ways to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on maritime security.

Viet Nam supports the work of the ARF in further strengthening the comprehensive and coordinated approach to foster maritime security cooperation through the ISM-MS, especially by enhancing dialogue and cooperation, CBMs, as well as exploring preventive measures to manage situations at sea.

From 30 November-01 December 2022, Viet Nam, Australia, the EU and New Zealand co-chaired the 4th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues in Ha Noi, Viet Nam in a hybrid format. The context in which the Workshop was convened was the marking of the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the UNCLOS, and positive progress on the advancement of BBNJ negotiations. The Workshop: (i) discussed the implementation of the UNCLOS and other international instruments regarding maritime scientific research, new maritime technologies, such as maritime autonomous vehicles, floating nuclear power plants, underwater infrastructure, and

marine environmental protection; (ii) explored different aspects related to climate change in the region, including of the implications of sea-level rise for baselines and maritime zones, and how regional fisheries bodies respond to climate change; and (iii) demonstrated how ASEAN could work to exemplify successful ocean governance under the UNCLOS framework and signified ASEAN's commitment to regional peace and stability, including in the maritime domain.

In continuation of this series of Workshops, Viet Nam, along with Australia, Canada, the European Union and New Zealand will co-chair the 5th ARF Workshop on UNCLOS and other international instruments in the last 4 months of 2023. This Workshop will aim to enhance understanding of contemporary challenges at sea in the region, including emerging ones, and explore different suggestions for cooperation to address such challenges by upholding the UNCLOS as the legal framework for all activities at sea, as well as by taking into account other international legal instruments as needed. The focus remains on regional cooperation and ideas towards that goal, and how we can jointly contribute, constructively, to improve regional maritime security for all ARF stakeholders.

Bilaterally, Viet Nam maintains joint patrols with China in the Gulf of Tonkin and with Thailand and Cambodia in the Gulf of Thailand. In April 2023, the Vietnamese Navy carried out the 47th joint patrol with the Thai Navy, including exercises in search and rescue scenarios, contents of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) and dissemination of information on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The Vietnamese and Cambodian navies also held the 69th and 70th joint patrols in the historical waters of the two countries which included coordination between law enforcement agencies on combatting and preventing crimes at sea like smuggling, drugs, human trafficking... These joint patrols contribute to maintaining peace and security in the waters and fostering cooperation, exchange, mutual understanding, and trust between the two countries.

b) ICTs Security

In 2023, Viet Nam continues to take active part in the on-going progress of ICTs security negotiations to develop an international legal framework on cyberspace, cybersecurity and cybercrime at multilateral forums, under the auspices of the United Nations, including the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on security of and in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) 2021-2025 and the Ad-hoc Committee to Elaborate a

Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes. Through coordinated efforts, Viet Nam wishes to promote international cooperation to tackle global cybersecurity challenges, confidence building measures and the provision of technical assistance for developing countries.

Within the ARF framework, in the first half of 2023, Viet Nam and the Republic of Korea co-chaired the ARF Workshop on Fostering Professionals in the Field of ICTs Security (June 2023), where participants exchanged experience and best practices to address challenges and enhance capabilities in fostering ICTs security professionals of ARF Participants. Viet Nam actively took part in the 5th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of an in the use of ICTs (ISM-ICTs), the 10th and 11th ARF Open-Ended Study Group (OESG) on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs, including in discussions on concrete steps in implementing related confidence building measures as well as exchanges on the latest developments in the field of security of and in the use of ICTs. Viet Nam has also supported many initiatives for the Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024, which contributes to the ARF's efforts in strengthening ICTs cooperation under the ARF Hanoi Plan of Action II (2020-2025).

c) Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

Viet Nam advocates efforts of the international community in providing humanitarian relief and assistance. Viet Nam is willing to share and exchange its experience as well as take part in the region's common efforts in this field.

At the national level, Viet Nam has completed the Master Plan on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control and Irrigation for the 2021-2030 period, with a Vision to 2050. On 20 April 2022, the National Steering Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control – National Committee for Natural Disaster Response and Search and Rescue (VINASARCOM) held a national conference on disaster prevention and control and search and rescue in Ha Noi and online with 63 provinces and cities.

Viet Nam actively cooperates with regional countries to conduct and participate in disaster management training courses to improve management, coordination and response capabilities; establish mechanisms for coordinating and exchanging natural disaster warning, forecasting information, and supporting disaster response; strengthen the support and

transfer of search and rescue facilities and equipment; continue to participate HADR exercises at different levels as well as training courses and other activities on disaster management and HADR.

Viet Nam has strengthened practical cooperation with its partners in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. In particular, VINSARCOM coordinated with the Oregon National Guard, the United States to organize the Disaster Management Cooperation 2023 (DMEA 2023). On 13 October 2022, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the General Department of Disaster Prevention and Control, in collaboration with the Asian Disaster Prevention Centre (ADPC) organized a forum themed “Building Urban Resilience through Early Warning and Early Action”.

Viet Nam actively participates in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief cooperation through various regional mechanisms. Viet Nam has coordinated with Pacific Partners to organize humanitarian assistance and disaster relief training activities under the Pacific Partnership Program 2022 (PP22).

Within ASEAN, Viet Nam actively participates in the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) and the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). In 2023, Viet Nam will host the 11th AMMDM and 12th AADMER. Viet Nam also engages in cooperation in HADR through other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ARF ISM-DR, ADMM+ EWG on HADR, ASEAN Militaries Ready Group (AMRG) on HADR...

d) Counter-terrorism

Viet Nam resolutely condemns and opposes all forms of terrorism, terrorist financing/sponsorship and breeding as well as opposes all kinds of interference in the internal affairs of other countries under the name of counter-terrorism. Viet Nam supports the international community’s cooperative efforts and expands its own cooperation in this field in conformity with international law, the UN Charter as well as Viet Nam’s Constitution, law and conditions.

Viet Nam actively participates and implements the United Nations international treaties on counter-terrorism, is a member of the ASEAN Convention on Counter-terrorism, and has

established many bilateral agreements with countries on mutual legal assistance, extradition, thus contributing to combatting terrorism.

Within the UN framework, Viet Nam has been committed to implementing the UN Global Anti-terrorism Strategy and its international obligations on counter-terrorism. During the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly's Sixth Committee on the Agenda Item 114: Measures to eliminate international terrorism, held on 3 October 2022, Viet Nam firmly denounced all forms of terrorism for any purpose.

At the regional level, Viet Nam engages in practical cooperative activities in the field of counter-terrorism through ASEAN and ASEAN-led frameworks such as the AMMTC, ADMM/ADMM+, and ARF.

Furthermore, Viet Nam is actively fulfilling the obligations of a member of the Asia-Pacific Group on anti-money laundering and working to effectively demonstrate its commitment to contribute to the joint efforts of the international community on the prevention and combat of money laundering and terrorist financing.

Bilaterally, Viet Nam actively collaborates and coordinates with regional countries in the region to combat terrorism. On 23 December 2022, a productive meeting between Viet Nam's Ministry of Public Security and the Indonesian Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) was held. Viet Nam expressed its keen interest in learning from Indonesia's experience in preventing and combating terrorist crimes. Both sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which would facilitate a favourable legal framework for international cooperative activities on terrorism prevention and control.

At the national level, Viet Nam attaches great importance to institutionalizing and incorporating anti-terrorism regulations in relevant legal documents; as well as continuously improving the capacity of the law enforcement agencies. In particular, Viet Nam established the National Training Centre on Terrorism Prevention under the Ministry of Public Security in February 2022, responsible for organizing training and retraining on terrorism prevention and control.

e) Transnational Crime

Viet Nam works to carry out its obligations as a member of the United Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (TOC), the ASEAN Convention of Prevention and Combat of Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (ACTIP), and the Protocol on the Prevention and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. Viet Nam has actively participated in the negotiations of the ASEAN Extradition Treaty; negotiated and concluded a series of agreements on cooperation to combat transnational organized crimes, trafficking in persons and transfer of sentenced persons. Viet Nam is on the final stage of internal procedures to accede to the UNTOC Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air.

Viet Nam has enhanced trust building and high-level information exchange with law enforcement agencies of ASEAN countries within the framework of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drugs (AMMD) through actively and responsibly taking part in developing initiatives, implementing joint cooperation documents in order to promote effective cooperation in crime prevention and control in the region. As the coordinator of the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations for the 2021-2024 period, Viet Nam will co-chair with the ROK the AMMTC+ROK Ministerial Consultation Meeting on Prevention and Combat of Transnational Crime.

Viet Nam strengthens cooperation and dialogue with ASEAN Dialogue Partners in this field through staff capacity building, language training for law enforcement officers, and technical equipment and facilities supporting for combating transnational crime.

With neighbouring countries, Viet Nam proactively and effectively coordinates and engages in bilateral patrol activities. Viet Nam enjoys great partnerships with Laos, Cambodia, China... in terms of cooperation in the prevention and combat of transnational crimes such as human trafficking, drug crimes, money laundering, high-tech crimes, terrorism...

Regarding illicit drugs, Viet Nam and neighbouring countries including Laos, Cambodia, China... have established mechanisms for organizing periodic briefings. Particularly, 21 Cross-Border Liason Offices (BLOs) have been founded to exchange information on the situation and results of drug crime prevention and control, which have seen operations to interdict and prevent

drug trafficking along high-risk routes. Viet Nam maintains a firm stance on zero-tolerance towards drugs and pursuing the long-term goal towards a drug-free ASEAN Community.

In terms of human trafficking, Viet Nam continues to implement cooperation agreements with Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, China... on human trafficking prevention and combat. Viet Nam has regularly briefed on its policies and achievements in combating human trafficking at the Human Rights Dialogue with its partners, which include the EU and Australia.

f) Non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament

It is Viet Nam's consistent policy to support all efforts on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction with a view to achieving general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament. At the same time, Viet Nam underscores the rights of states to research, develop, use and transfer scientific and technological achievements for peaceful purposes. Viet Nam does not manufacture, possess, export or import Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMDs). Viet Nam believes that only complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons can guarantee a world free of nuclear weapons, contributing to regional and international peace.

In realizing its policy of supporting and contributing to the common efforts of the international community for peace, security and disarmament, Viet Nam commits to strictly fulfilling its obligations as a party to conventions, agreements, protocols on non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, and has joined most major treaties as such. Viet Nam has consistently demonstrated its dedication to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament by actively engaging in both regional and international initiatives.

As a current member of the Board of Governors of IAEA (for the term 2021-2023), Viet Nam has been working hard to promote the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, non proliferation of nuclear weapons, and nuclear safety and security. The representatives of Viet Nam to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have actively participated in discussions on draft reports on security, safety and the application of nuclear technology at the regular meetings of the IAEA's Board of Governors; thereby reaffirming Viet Nam's unwavering commitment to supporting the IAEA's three pillars, mainly the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology.

Under the UN framework, Viet Nam joined the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, contributing to discussions on pertinent issues of international concern, including the need to uphold the role of the NPT and underline the humanitarian consequences of using nuclear weapons.

Regionally, Viet Nam actively contributes to the joint efforts of ASEAN countries to build a peaceful, free, neutral and nuclear-free Southeast Asia region; underlining the significance and importance of the SEANWFZ Treaty and working closely with ASEAN Member States to make concerted efforts to resolve any outstanding issues with regard to the signing of the SEANWFZ Protocol by nuclear weapon states (NWS).

In the framework of the ARF, Viet Nam and the US co-chaired the ARF Workshop on Nuclear Non-proliferation, Safety, and Security Standards and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, which (i) provided the opportunity to exchange and share national experiences in the development and implementation of the nuclear safety and security framework, the application of nuclear technology and the potentials of nuclear energy; and (ii) discussed new developments in international policies and standards in the nuclear sector, as well as the potential application of new technologies, including Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) technology in the near future. This would facilitate important knowledge sharing among the ARF Participants in developing national and regional policies in application of nuclear technology in a peaceful, safe, secure and sustainable manner.

Viet Nam will continue to coordinate with other countries to promote cooperation and improve the effectiveness of international mechanisms, especially the role of the United Nations in the field of arms control and disarmament; ensure the rights of countries to research, develop and use nuclear, chemical and biological technologies for peaceful purposes; and call on countries with nuclear weapons to peacefully settle issues related to arms control and disarmament on the basis of respect for international law and the UN Charter.

IV. Role to the ARF

The ARF has proven and remains a key platform for dialogue and consultation on regional political and security issues of common interest and concern, with ASEAN as the driving force.

Over the past 30 years, the ARF has contributed profoundly to the promotion of mutual trust and confidence as well as enhancing dialogue and cooperation, thus contributing remarkably to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It is worth being stressed that this was by no means an easy task to achieve given not only the global and regional dynamics but also the diversity and complexity in relations among the ARF Participants.

As the ARF enters its 30th year of existence and given the current regional and global geopolitical context characterised by major power shifts, geo-strategic uncertainty and the emergence of various security issues, it is crucial to discuss ways and means to make sure that the ARF could enhance its effectiveness and relevance, particularly in shaping a regional security architecture which is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based, anchored in international law, for regional peace, stability, security and cooperation.

The ARF could be said to be the first multilateral forum in the Asia-Pacific to discuss political and security issues, with participation ranging from the small Southeast Asian nations to most major powers, even P5/UNSC members. A forum as valuable as this needs to be effective and institutionalised. The ARF is also first and foremost an ASEAN-led mechanism. Therefore, ASEAN unity and centrality need to be further maintained, strengthened and supported in this regard. Also, the open, inclusive and constructive nature of the Forum must be preserved.

In fact, the ARF is not just a forum. It is a process, one which is gradually transitioning from confidence-building measures to preventive diplomacy, and then eventually to conflict resolution. This process needs to be further facilitated at a suitable and comfortable pace for all.

To this end, Viet Nam remains fully committed to the ARF and its role in the regional security architecture as well as to the realisation of its full potential in the future.



ASEAN MATTERS:
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