



## SUMMARY REPORT

### ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING (ARF SOM)

14 June 2023, Video Conference

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Officials' Meeting (ARF SOM) was chaired by H.E. Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro, Director General for ASEAN Cooperation and ASEAN-Indonesia SOM Leader, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and attended by all ARF Participants and the ASEAN Secretariat. The List of Delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

2. In his welcome remarks, the Chair expressed his appreciation towards all ARF Participants for the support rendered to Indonesia thus far, particularly in light of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ARF. Cognisant of the ARF's success as a platform for dialogue on security issues of common concern in the region since its establishment, the Chair noted that with the current geopolitical tensions and emerging security challenges, the role of the ARF is currently being put to the test on whether it can fulfil expectations to address these challenges. In this respect, the Chair underscored that it is now an opportune moment for the ARF to review and reflect on its achievements, and to consider steps that need to be undertaken for directing the future of the ARF.

#### AGENDA ITEM 1: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

3. The Meeting adopted the Agenda, which appears as **ANNEX 2**.

#### AGENDA ITEM 2: BUSINESS ARRANGEMENTS

4. The Programme of Activities appears as **ANNEX 3**.

**AGENDA ITEM 3: REPORT OF THE ARF DEFENCE OFFICIALS' DIALOGUE (DOD), 30 MAY 2023 AND PREPARATION FOR THE 20<sup>th</sup> ARF SECURITY POLICY CONFERENCE (ASPC)**

5. The Meeting noted that discussions at the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD) co-chaired by Indonesia and Timor-Leste on 30 May 2023 in Dili, Timor-Leste, were focused on: (i) the defence sector's efforts in supporting the blue economy for sustainable peace and prosperity; (ii) emerging security challenges resulting from global warming impacts; and (iii) enhancing the region's resilience post-COVID-19 pandemic. Through these sessions, the ARF DOD noted that the defence sector has a critical role in supporting blue economy efforts and that there is a need to ensure that defence activities are environmentally sustainable. It was noted that the ARF DOD further underlined that collaboration and cooperation between defence and non-defence sectors are essential to enhancing resilience and addressing global challenges.

6. The Meeting was updated on the preparation of the 20<sup>th</sup> ASPC, scheduled to be held on 21 June 2023 in Jakarta, with the theme "Navigating a Bright Future for Sustainable Peace, Prosperity, and Security". It was noted that discussions at the 20<sup>th</sup> ASPC will focus on three issues: (i) future regional and global security challenges, (ii) regional cooperation to support the blue economy and mitigating climate change impacts, and (iii) Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) towards maintaining peace, prosperity, and security in the region.

**AGENDA ITEM 4: REPORT OF THE ARF INTER-SESSIONAL SUPPORT GROUP MEETING ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY (ISG ON CBMS AND PD), 31 MAY 2023 AND REVIEW OF THE ARF CBMS AND PD MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR 2022-2023**

7. The Meeting noted that the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD, co-chaired by Indonesia and Timor-Leste, reviewed the progress of cooperation under the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of ICTs (ISM on ICTs Security), ISM on Maritime Security, ISM on Disaster Relief, ISM on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC), ISM on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (NPD), and the ARF DOD, and took note of updates for upcoming ARF meetings and activities. With regard to the implementation of the ARF Work Plans under each ARF area of cooperation, the Meeting was pleased to note that ARF Participants continue to propose CBMs initiatives and encouraged all ARF Participants to continue participating in the activities. Noting that discussions on proposals for Track I activities in the next Inter-Sessional Year (ISY) 2023-2024 are ongoing, the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD noted that the

respective proponents should complete the procedural matters and aim to accommodate substantive input from other ARF Participants prior to the ARF SOM. With regard to the proposed draft Statements and other outcome documents of the 30<sup>th</sup> ARF, the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD noted that negotiations are ongoing and that proponents would continue leading the discussion on their respective proposals. It was noted that proponents were requested to inform the ARF Chair and the ARF Unit on the progress of the discussion prior to the ARF SOM.

8. The Meeting also noted that the next ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and ARF DOD will be co-chaired by Lao PDR and New Zealand in 2024, and that the issue of co-chairmanship for the next cycle of the ARF ISMs on CTTC and Disaster Relief would be further discussed at the ARF SOM. With regard to the future direction of the ARF, it was noted that the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD briefly discussed the importance for all ARF Participants to remain aware of the three stages of the ARF outlined in the Concept Paper of the ARF, namely promotion of CBMs, development of preventive diplomacy mechanisms, and conflict resolution, and to ensure that the application of these approaches would bring maximum benefit for the ARF.

## **AGENDA ITEM 5: CONSIDERATION AND ENDORSEMENT OF ARF CBMs AND PD INITIATIVES**

### **5.1. List of Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2023- 2024**

9. The Meeting noted that in accordance with the ARF processes and procedures, only proposals with complete co-chairmanship arrangements and have obtained consensus will be included in the draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the ISY 2023-2024 that would be submitted to the ARF Ministers. In this connection, the Meeting noted that several activities scheduled to be convened in the current ISY including, among others, the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF Experts and Eminent Persons' (EEPs) Meeting and the ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy for Addressing Climate Change, would be carried forward to the next ISY.

10. The Meeting was updated on the current status of several proposals and noted that deliberations and consultations on these proposals are ongoing. The Chair requested for proponents of the respective activities to inform the ARF Chair on the status of their proposals by 1 July 2023. The Meeting also noted the suggestion that to ensure all ARF Participants are able to take part in the activities, Co-Chairs of the respective activities should aim to accommodate all administrative arrangements accordingly, including timely issuance of visas.

## **5.2. Co-Chairs of ARF Meetings and Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024**

### **5.2.1. ARF ISG on CBMs and PD, and ARF DOD**

11. The Meeting noted that as the incoming ASEAN Chair, Lao PDR will assume the co-chairmanship of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and the ARF DOD alongside New Zealand. Noting that both meetings are scheduled to be held in New Zealand in 2024, one ARF Participant requested for the incoming Co-Chairs to provide written assurances for equal and unhindered access to the meetings for all ARF Participants.

### **5.2.2. ARF ISM on Disaster Relief**

12. Taking into consideration that the current co-chairmanship period of the ARF ISM on Disaster Relief is set to expire this year, the Meeting noted that a new set of co-chairs would need to be identified. In this connection, the Meeting took note of Sri Lanka's interest to assume role as co-chair for the upcoming cycle and that Sri Lanka is seeking an ASEAN Member State to co-chair this ISM.

### **5.2.3. ARF ISM on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime**

13. Noting that the current co-chairmanship cycle of the ARF ISM on CTTC will end this year, the United States expressed its interest to assume role as co-chair of this ISM for the 2024-2026 period. The Meeting noted that the United States is seeking an ASEAN Member State to co-chair this ISM.

## **5.3. Proposed ARF Statements and Outcome Documents for the 30<sup>th</sup> ARF**

### **5.3.1. ARF Statement on the Commemoration of 30 Years of the ARF**

14. In commemoration of the ARF's thirtieth anniversary, Indonesia informed the Meeting of its intention to propose the issuance of a Statement, which would reflect on the ARF's achievements thus far as well as to chart the future direction of the ARF. The Meeting also noted that the draft Statement will be circulated in due course for comments and input.

### **5.3.2. Statement of the 30<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum on Strengthening Maritime Non-traditional Security Cooperation**

15. The Meeting noted that the draft Statement proposed by China was intended to deepen cooperation among ARF Participants through practical measures in

responding to non-traditional maritime security challenges. The Meeting also noted that Cambodia and Myanmar expressed their intention to co-sponsor the draft Statement. Taking into consideration that several ARF Participants have expressed reservations regarding several elements and language of the draft, the Meeting was informed that an online consultation will be held to further discuss the proposed draft Statement.

### **5.3.3. ARF Statement on Nuclear Risk Reduction**

16. The Meeting noted that the draft Statement proposed by Russia was intended to encourage ARF Participants to reflect on the general approaches towards nuclear risk reduction measures and reflect ARF Participants' political will to continue working on nuclear risk reduction. The Meeting also noted that Myanmar expressed its intention to co-sponsor the draft Statement. It was noted that several ARF Participants have expressed reservations on the proposed draft and suggested that consideration of the draft be deferred to the next ISY.

### **5.3.4. Guidance on Nuclear Risk Reduction: In Pursuit of a World Without Nuclear Weapons**

17. The Meeting noted that the Guidance Document proposed by the Philippines and Australia, was intended to compile non-binding practical nuclear risk reduction measures which ARF Participants may consider undertaking to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons. The Meeting also noted that some ARF Participants have expressed reservations on the proposed document and that consultations on the draft are ongoing.

18. In view of the similarities of topic between the proposed Document and the proposed Statement, the Meeting took note of the suggestion that in the event of no consensus on both drafts, discussions for both could be continued in the next ISY.

### **5.3.5. Collection of Documents Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN Regional Forum**

19. The Meeting noted that the publication proposed by China was intended as a compilation of milestone ARF documents to review past achievements and analyse the current challenges. The Meeting also noted that Singapore, Lao PDR, and Myanmar expressed their interest to co-sponsor this initiative.

### **5.3.6. ARF Work Plan for Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime 2023-2025**

20. The Meeting was informed by Malaysia, the European Union and New Zealand, as the current Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on CTTC, that the draft ARF CTTC Work

Plan 2023-2025 was developed based on the current Work Plan and that the priority areas of the current Work Plan would be retained due to its continued relevance. The Meeting noted that further comments and input to the draft will be provided to the Co-Chairs in due course.

#### **5.3.7. Concept Paper on the Establishment of an Expert Group on Ferry Safety**

21. The Meeting noted that the Concept Paper proposed by China and co-sponsored by Thailand, was intended to generate further exchange of views among ARF Participants on the development of a Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on Ferry Safety (EG on FS). The Meeting noted that further comments and input will be provided to the proponent.

#### **5.3.8. Concept Paper on ARF Counterterrorism Information Sharing Cooperative**

22. The Meeting noted that the draft Concept Paper proposed by the United States, was intended to establish an ARF Counterterrorism Cooperative which aims to facilitate open dialogue and collaborative approaches to countering terrorist use of emerging technologies. The United States further informed that it is currently seeking an ASEAN co-sponsor for this initiative. Noting that the concept paper was only circulated recently, one ARF Participant suggested to continue discussion in the next ISY so as to allow more time to deliberate and study the proposal.

23. Taking into account the divergent views and the importance of the issues raised in the various proposed documents, the Chair encouraged for consultations on all documents be continued and for all ARF Participants to demonstrate utmost flexibility in their discussions. The Chair further requested for each proponent to inform the Chair and the ARF Unit on the result of consultations by 1 July 2023.

### **AGENDA ITEM 6: FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF**

#### **6.1. Implementation of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025)**

24. The ASEAN Secretariat informed the Meeting that there is minimal progress in the implementation of the Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) (HPOA II), with 37 action lines have been considered implemented while 70 action lines remain pending for implementation in the next two years, thus bringing the current overall implementation rate at 34.5%. It was also noted that thus far, input to monitor the implementation of the HPOA II have been received from six ARF Participants. In this regard, the Co-Chairs of the respective activities and initiatives were encouraged to

provide their inputs on the progress of the implementation of the HPOA II in the near future.

25. In effort to raise the implementation rate of the HPOA II, the Meeting also took note of the following observations and recommendations:

- i. While ARF Participants continue to propose workshops and initiatives, it is observed that on average, more than ten activities are carried forward annually to the next ISY. It is also observed that almost all of the ARF meetings and activities are convened in the first half of the year, while only 2-3 meetings or activities are convened in the second half of the year. Taking into consideration that the ARF follows an inter-sessional calendar which begins after the ARF Ministerial Meetings, it is recommended for Co-Chairs of respective meetings and activities to evenly spread out their meetings and avoid tight schedules or hold back-to-back meetings, so as to allow ARF Participants ample time to consider the outcomes of meetings.
- ii. On the implementation of the HPOA II, it is recommended for the Co-Chairs of each ARF ISM, ISG and DOD, to include an agenda item to specifically discuss ways to implement the HPOA II in their respective meetings so as to provide an opportunity for ARF Participants to exchange views and share ideas on the matter. The Co-Chairs of the related meetings could identify the action lines to be discussed and subsequently to ensure proper follow-up of the discussion. This could potentially assist the ARF in moving towards an action-oriented forum and provide tangible outcomes beneficial for the region.
- iii. While more than 35 activities have been convened since the adoption of the HPOA II in 2020, less than half of their Summary Reports were made available. It was noted that the absence of Summary Reports hinders the ARF Unit's duties as the depository of documents and institutional memory of the ARF. In this regard, Co-Chairs of workshops and seminars are requested to submit the final Summary Report of their activities to the ARF Unit, as this would assist the ARF Unit in determining whether the outcomes of the activities contribute to the implementation of the HPOA II.
- iv. To facilitate a more focused discussion on the objectives and parameters of proposals in the ARF as well as assist in the identification of the correlating action lines of the HPOA II, the ARF Unit could be tasked with developing a standardised template for concept papers as well as draft Statements.

26. The Executive Summary of the Implementation of the ARF HPOA II appears as **ANNEX 4**.

27. The Meeting underscored the significance of the ARF as a key platform to foster constructive dialogue, promote exchanges of information, sharing of best practices, enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and facilitating cooperation in the region. Recognising the importance of sustaining the momentum of promoting confidence-building measures within the ARF, the Meeting encouraged ARF Participants to undertake further preventive diplomacy activities. The Meeting further reaffirmed the role of ASEAN as the main driving force of the ARF in the evolving regional security architecture. The Meeting also emphasised the importance of upholding the principles of decision-making by consensus, non-interference, and moving at a pace comfortable to all ARF Participants and reiterated the necessity of equal and inclusive participation and cooperation of all ARF Participants. The Meeting recognised the need for all ARF Participants to continue working together in creating a favorable environment for peaceful dialogue and functional cooperation. In this connection, the Meeting looked forward to further discussion on the future direction of the ARF with the view to strengthening the ARF's relevance and efficiency in contributing to the region's collective security objective.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 7: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

28. In light of the evolving international and regional security landscape, the Meeting underscored the importance of promoting stable and constructive relations among major powers, particularly through enhancing peaceful dialogue and consultations. Expressing support for multilateralism and underlining the need to ensure inclusivity and transparency, the Meeting encouraged ARF Participants to support ASEAN Centrality and focus on commonality and cooperation toward realising the shared purpose of achieving lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

29. On post-COVID-19 recovery, the Meeting noted with satisfaction the progress of cooperation across all ARF workstreams and commended the measures undertaken by all ARF Participants and the ARF Unit to ensure the continuity of cooperation and operations of the ARF during and after the pandemic. The Meeting also expressed support for the region's recovery from the pandemic toward a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future.

30. While underscoring the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety, the Meeting was encouraged by the progress of the substantive negotiation on the Single Draft Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) Negotiating Text (SDNT), particularly the completion of its second reading. The Meeting looked forward to the conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is consistent with

international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

31. Noting the serious concerns expressed by some ARF Participants on complex developments and incidents in the South China Sea, the Meeting emphasised the need to maintain an environment conducive to the COC negotiations and underlined the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities, and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting further noted that all concerned parties are intent on continuing to fully and effectively implement the DOC and advancing the COC consultations. On this note, the Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and unimpeded commerce, and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and prosperity.

32. Expressing concerns on the recent developments in Myanmar, the Meeting urged for all concerned parties to exercise maximum self-restraint and called for the immediate cessation of violence so as to create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogue. The Meeting further called for the full and effective implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) and expressed support for ASEAN's leading role and efforts, including its continued engagement with all stakeholders to implement the 5PC. The meeting expressed support for Indonesia as the ASEAN Chair and the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy on Myanmar to lead ASEAN's endeavour in this regard. Recalling the duty to protect the country from terrorist and disruptive attacks, the concerned Participant shared that it will continue to uphold the national constitution and reaffirmed commitment to restore democracy in the country. The Meeting further reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN's leading role in the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need in Myanmar.

33. The Meeting highlighted the need to ensure sustainable and inclusive development for all communities in Rakhine State and encouraged further engagement and cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh to ensure the voluntary return of displaced persons in a safe, secure, and dignified manner. The Meeting underlined the importance of ASEAN's enhanced role in facilitating the repatriation process. The Meeting also expressed condolences to Myanmar and Bangladesh over the recent devastation wrought by Cyclone Mocha and affirmed readiness to support humanitarian needs.

34. Several Participants expressed deep concerns on the crisis in Ukraine and underscored the significance of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Some Participants shared the view that the crisis had implications for the global economy by increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity,

and elevating financial stability risks. In this context, the Meeting called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and expressed hope for a peaceful resolution through dialogue.

35. The Meeting took note of concerns raised by several ARF Participants on the recent developments in the Korean Peninsula, including the continued intercontinental ballistic missile tests and ballistic missile launches. The Meeting stressed the importance of dialogue and diplomacy among all concerned parties in order to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. The Meeting noted international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and further reiterated the commitment to the full implementation of relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. Some Participants also emphasised the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns, of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abduction issue.

36. The Meeting reaffirmed the common interest to maintain and promote a peaceful, stable, inclusive, and prosperous Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, and acknowledged the importance for ASEAN in mainstreaming the four priority areas outlined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). The Meeting acknowledged the need to promote tangible cooperation on the four priority areas to ensure that the Indo-Pacific region is resilient and less vulnerable to disruptions.

37. ARF Participants also exchanged views on other relevant regional and international security issues, including the need to build the region's resilience towards the adverse impacts of climate change. The Meeting also exchanged views on strengthening cooperation in addressing transnational crimes, ICT security, terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, and nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and highlighted the important role of the ARF in promoting cooperative efforts in response to these security challenges.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8: OTHER MATTERS**

### **8.1. ARF Annual Security Outlook 2023**

38. The Meeting noted that the 2023 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) will be issued at the 30<sup>th</sup> ARF.

### **8.2. Preparations for the 30th ASEAN Regional Forum**

39. The Meeting noted that the 30<sup>th</sup> ARF is scheduled to be convened on 14 July 2023 in Jakarta, Indonesia and that documents that would be submitted to the Ministers for consideration, will be circulated in due course.

## CLOSING REMARKS

40. In his closing remarks, the Chair expressed appreciation to all ARF Participants for their active participation and productive discussion which contributed to the success of the Meeting.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

41. The Meeting expressed gratitude and appreciation to Indonesia for its effective chairmanship and excellent arrangements made for the virtual Meeting.

## ISSUES REQUIRING FOLLOW-UP ACTION

No.	Key Decision/Issues	Timeline	Follow-up By
1.	To finalise draft Statements and Outcome Documents, seek co-sponsorship, and reach consensus	By 1 July 2023	Proponents of statements and outcome documents
2.	To finalise concept papers of proposals for activities, seek co-chairmanship and reach consensus`	By 1 July 2023	Proponents of concept papers
3.	To identify Co-Chairs of ARF ISM on CTTC and ARF ISM on Disaster Relief for the next cycle	By 1 July 2023	ARF Participants
4.	To finalise the draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the ISY 2023-2024	Prior to the 30 <sup>th</sup> ARF	ARF Chair

