



**ASEAN**   
**LAO PDR 2024**  
ASEAN : Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience

# **ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook 2024**

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## FOREWORD



Various regions in the world continue to face a myriad of challenges, including lingering economic and financial difficulties, climate change, natural disasters, and traditional and non-traditional security issues. Even though regions have been gradually recovering from multidimensional disturbances posed by the consequences of COVID-19, among others, the recovery remains fragile.

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was established in 1994 to serve as the primary platform for dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues of common interest and concern in the Asia-Pacific region. Since then, the ARF has contributed significantly to the promotion of mutual understanding, trust, and confidence among its participants as well as to the maintenance of peace, security, and cooperation in the region.

The publication of the ARF Annual Security Outlook since 2000 has been a useful non-classified document that has made an important contribution to the achievements of the ARF over the past 31 years.

It is my great pleasure and honour, as Chair of the 31<sup>st</sup> ARF, to present the ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) 2024, comprising contributions from ARF participants. I am confident that the ARF ASO 2024 serves as a useful document in promoting understanding, confidence and transparency among the ARF participants, thereby contributing to further strengthening and moving the ARF forward for the common cause of maintaining and promoting peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world at large.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to ARF participants for their support and contributions to the ARF cooperative activities under the Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship, including the publication of the ARF ASO 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized cursive letters, positioned above a horizontal line.

**Saleumxay KOMMASITH**  
Chair of the 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR

Vientiane, Lao PDR  
July 2024

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Annual Security Outlook 2024 is a compilation of voluntary contributions from 22 out of 27 ARF participants. The contributions are the overview on current state of the regional and security environment as well as undertakings by ARF participants at national, regional and international levels contributing to the common efforts of the international community in maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and wider region.

Participants highlighted pressing challenges facing the region and beyond, which include natural disasters, pandemic, climate change, trafficking in person, terrorism, cyber security, space security, maritime security, disarmament and non-proliferation, and unresolved territorial disputes, among others. In this regard, they emphasized the importance of strengthened cooperation to respond to such challenges for the betterment of the livelihood of peoples.

In doing so, there is a need to maintain and strengthen the role as well as the relevance of the ARF and greater synergy among the ARF and other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

The contributions demonstrate the commitment of ARF participants to the ARF process as a leading regional security forum in the Asia-Pacific region for fostering constructive dialogue and cooperation among its participants on political and security issues of common interest and concern. In view of expanding activities and scope of the ARF, the contributions stressed the need for a comprehensive review of the ARF including assessing the roles, achievements and challenges of the ARF over the past 31 years. In addition, the low implementation rate of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II needs to be assessed with a view to strengthening the ARF to ensure that it continues to function effectively and efficiently to cope with existing pressing challenges and emerging issues, thereby contributing to regional and international peace, security, stability and prosperity.

## **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 a Comprehensive Strategic Partner, Australia supports ASEAN's valuable contribution to the peace, stability and prosperity of our region. We work closely with ASEAN to support ASEAN centrality and advance the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

In March 2024, Australia was honoured to welcome ASEAN leaders to Melbourne for the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations. The Summit reaffirmed the importance of Australia's partnership with ASEAN and set the future trajectory of the relationship. Leaders adopted a Vision Statement and the Melbourne Declaration outlining shared aspirations for the region's future and committing to continue working together to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability. Recognising the central importance of further expanding our economic relationship, Australia established a new AUD2 billion Investment Financing Facility to catalyse Australian private sector investment in Southeast Asia. Australia also announced over AUD500 million in additional funding for new and expanded initiatives to strengthen our political, economic and cultural ties with Southeast Asia.

#### **1. Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

Our region is being reshaped, through sharpening strategic competition and internationally-agreed rules and norms under increasing pressure. Compounding security and economic challenges have created a highly complex strategic environment.

Australia and ASEAN share a vision for a region that is peaceful, stable and prosperous. We want a region in which each country can make sovereign decisions, and in which no country dominates and no country is dominated. We want a region in which countries and peoples can cooperate, trade and thrive. We are committed to working together to build economic prosperity, security and resilience for all countries, underpinned by our commitment to open markets and an international rules-based trading system. We promote a region in which disputes are settled peacefully and in accordance with international law, not by power or size, and in which countries work together to shape the region they want.

Strategic competition in Southeast Asia is playing out in military and non-military ways, including through economic and diplomatic relations. It is accompanied by an unprecedented pace and scale of conventional and non-conventional military build-up in our region. This build-up is increasing the risk of military escalation through misunderstanding or miscalculation, which could lead to conflict in our region.

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.

Australia is committed to developing and sustaining an information environment that is trustworthy and resilient, and we oppose information manipulation that undermines the region's collective security, prosperity and sovereignty.

Australia is contributing to a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific that maintains peace and stability. We are working proactively to support the ability of all regional countries to exercise sovereignty, and to promote adherence to agreed rules and norms. Australia is deploying all tools of national power to build regional resilience, offer regional countries choices to promote their economic, development and security interests, and contributing to regional security.

It is the responsibility of all countries to ensure that strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific does not spill into conflict. Australia consistently calls on all countries to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability, to commit to strengthening the regional conflict prevention architecture to reduce the risk of crisis, conflict and war, and to support our neighbours' sovereignty. The ARF has a key role to play in this shared endeavour.

Our diplomatic partnership with India, Japan and the United States through the Quad reinforces and supports our respective visions for the region. All Quad partners are ASEAN Dialogue Partners and consistently reaffirm their support for ASEAN centrality. The Quad's positive and practical agenda responds to ASEAN priorities and supports the practical implementation of the AOIP. We are responding to the region's most pressing challenges including strengthening regional health security, supporting the clean energy transition, investing in climate resistant and telecommunications infrastructure and building undersea cable connectivity in the Indo-Pacific.

#### **i. Ukraine**

Australia condemns Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine, and is unwavering in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's invasion demonstrates what is at stake for us all. Russia's war undermines the ASEAN principles of non-interference and respect for sovereignty and international law, as set out in the AOIP and the UN Charter. It violates the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), to which Russia and Ukraine are parties.

We are proud to have contributed important defence, economic and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Our total assistance is over AUD 1 billion, including AUD 880 million in military assistance and AUD 85 million in humanitarian assistance. Australia has imposed a comprehensive suite of measures against Russia in response to its invasion,

including sanctions and trade measures. We continue to support international legal accountability mechanisms to hold Russia to account.

Australia continues to closely monitor the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. There are more than eight million Ukrainians seeking refuge across 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. Russia's war is exacerbating global food and energy insecurity, which is also having an impact in the Indo-Pacific region.

## **ii. Myanmar**

The 2021 military coup in Myanmar reversed years of democratic, economic and development gains. Australia remains deeply concerned about the worsening political security and humanitarian situation, ongoing violence and human rights violations, including airstrikes against civilians, arbitrary arrest and detentions, and allegations of torture and deaths in custody. We are also concerned by the regime's enforcement of military conscription, and the further suffering this is causing the people. Australia continues to urge the regime to end violence against civilians, release those unjustly detained, allow safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance, and engage in dialogue with key stakeholders.

We strongly support ASEAN's continued efforts to resolve the crisis, including those of the ASEAN Chairs and Special Envoys. We call on the regime to implement the Five-Point Consensus and engage meaningfully and positively with ASEAN representatives. Australia is dismayed at the regime's continued disregard of its commitments under the Five-Point Consensus.

After careful deliberation, on 1 February 2024 Australia imposed further targeted financial sanctions on five entities with direct links to the regime, designed to limit the regime's access to funds and military materiel. Australia continues 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 Rohingyas and other ethnic groups.

Australia will continue to support the people of Myanmar through the provision of sustained development and humanitarian assistance (AUD121.4 million in 2024-25). Our assistance is targeted toward meeting immediate needs and building community resilience to respond to future challenges, with a focus on the most vulnerable. We also 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 military regime, and we take proactive steps to ensure Australia's assistance does not provide legitimacy to the regime.

### **iii. Climate Change**

Climate change is a shared existential, systematic, long-term global challenge. The effects of climate change are growing and will amplify the security and strategic challenges in our region. It is a global crisis that is disrupting trade, causing food, water and energy shortages, increasing risks of pandemics, conflict and displacement, and reversing progress in the fight against poverty and gender equality. Australia is committed to demonstrating global leadership on climate change, leading in international climate negotiations and decarbonising our economy.

Australia recognises the national security implications of climate change and is taking steps to address the risks. The recently released 2024 National Defence Strategy, and preceding 2023 Defence Strategic Review, consider the role of climate change in the region and on defence capability. The Strategy and Review recommend the development of national resilience and response measures at local levels for adverse climate change, and to accelerate Australian Defence clean energy transition to increase national resilience. Further, the Australian Government's first National Climate Risk Assessment, released in March 2024, identified nationally significant climate risks to Australia, including defence and national security. Each of the assessments has identified the expected pressures of concurrent disasters likely to be experienced in Australia and the region, and the Government's capacity to effectively respond. These nationally comprehensive views of Australia's climate risks allow a better understanding of where we need to focus our efforts going forward.

Climate change is a threat multiplier to Indo-Pacific livelihoods, wellbeing and security. Australia is partnering with Indo-Pacific countries to adapt and mitigate climate impacts to ensure livelihood security. More work is necessary to protect what we most value, and Australia will seek further opportunities for climate security cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners. 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.

In 2023, Australia, Vietnam and Lao PDR co-chaired the inaugural ASEAN-Australia High-Level Dialogue and Climate Change and Energy Transition in Hanoi. The Dialogue identified opportunities for climate and energy cooperation under our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with ASEAN and strengthened Australia's credentials as a trusted partner on climate and energy transition. At the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in March 2024, the Climate and Clean Energy track brought together regional stakeholders to focus on practical cooperation for meeting the region's climate priorities, including in clean energy trade and investment. It built on the green transition priorities highlighted in



Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy and announced policy initiatives designed to advance regional energy transition. Australia's Prime Minister announced an Energy Cooperation Package under the Aus4ASEAN Futures Initiative to enhance ASEAN-led regional energy policy and planning, including implementation of the ASEAN Strategy for Carbon Neutrality. The package will support the ASEAN Centre for Energy and the establishment of an ASEAN Centre for Climate Change in Brunei Darussalam.

#### **iv. South China Sea**

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).

Australia recognises the value of ASEAN and the ASEAN-led architecture. Australia and the region listen when ASEAN speaks about matters of peace, security and stability. We will always pursue a world where differences are settled through dialogue and other peaceful means and in accordance with international law – not by force or coercion.

We remain gravely concerned about the risk of escalating tensions and the safety of life at sea in the South China Sea. We share the serious concerns of the Philippines Government about a pattern of dangerous actions conducted by Chinese vessels against Philippines vessels and crew in the South China Sea, including incidents near Scarborough Shoal and at Second Thomas Shoal. Actions by the Chinese Coast Guard and other Chinese vessels, such as water cannoning and ramming, endanger the peace and security of the region, threaten lives and livelihoods, and create risks of miscalculation. We will continue to express serious concern about unsafe and destabilising actions in the South China Sea, including the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia and interference with routine maritime operations, the ongoing militarisation of disputed features, and efforts to disrupt other countries' legitimate resource exploration and exploitation activities.

We are also concerned about efforts to undermine long-established rules and norms. 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 will continue to respect the right of others to do the same. All maritime claims and activities, including those in the South China Sea, must be consistent with international law, particularly UNCLOS. All disputes must be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law. The 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Award is final and binding on the parties.

The ARF is a central pillar of the evolving regional security architecture. All ARF members have a responsibility to promote dialogue and to support measures that reduce the risk

of conflict and miscalculation, including by reinforcing other ASEAN forums, setting expectations for regional stability and providing a forum for engagement and cooperation. Australia wants to continue working with ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners to promote peace and stability in the maritime sphere, particularly through promoting conflict prevention, confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy.

Australia is not a party to negotiations between ASEAN Members and 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. Australia 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.

#### **v. DPRK**

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) continues to present a grave threat to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and globally. Its wide range of provocative, escalatory and destabilising behaviour is contrary to Australia and the region's interest in a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific that operates according to international rules and norms.

The DPRK's apparent progress in its weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems program remain gravely concerning. Its maintenance of chemical and biological weapons programs and reports that it remains ready to conduct a seventh nuclear test are also deeply concerning for collective regional security. The DPRK's unlawful launches using ballistic missile technology continue to threaten the security of partners, including Japan and the Republic of Korea. The DPRK's malicious cyber activities, which fund its unlawful weapons programs, also remain of grave concern. The DPRK's export of arms and ballistic missiles to Russia is a further flagrant violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Australia urges the DPRK to prioritise the wellbeing of its people and make a sustained commitment to meaningful talks with the United States and the Republic of Korea. Australia continues to call upon the DPRK to comply fully with the UN Security Council resolutions which require the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear, other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. Australia remains committed to taking action against the DPRK until such time.

#### **vi. Health security**

Australia is partnering with countries in the region to build strong and resilient health systems. 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 proved a responsive and reliable partner for Southeast Asian countries throughout the pandemic, sharing almost 49 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines with Southeast Asia, including Timor-Leste. There is strong demand from ASEAN countries for health cooperation with Australia, including to reduce risks associated with emerging infectious diseases.

Australia is helping to improve health outcomes and promote regional prosperity and stability through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative, a five-year program being implemented from 2023 to 2027. This initiative is supporting technical expertise to build resilience in our region and providing funding for research and development of vaccines, drugs and diagnostics for diseases that affect Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Australia has provided AUD21 million to support the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, which will enhance regional capacity to prepare for, detect and respond to pandemics. Through the ASEAN-Australia Health Cooperation (AAHC) program, we are working in partnership to reduce the risk of pandemics from zoonotic diseases using One Health approaches. We are also promoting mental health awareness under the AAHC program.

As co-chair of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Group on Military Medicine for the 2021-2024 cycle, alongside Brunei Darussalam, Australia supported practical military medicine cooperation in military operations other than war, with a strong focus on pandemics and health security in the region. A Project-Based Community Medical Deployment/ Medical Aid Provision was conducted in General Tinio, the Philippines from 14-27 October 2023.

#### **vii. AUKUS**

In April 2024, AUKUS Defence Ministers reaffirmed that Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States seek to maximise the strategic benefits of the AUKUS partnership to support security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Australia's acquisition of a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability (under AUKUS Pillar I) and development of advanced military capabilities (under AUKUS Pillar II) is a necessary response to the rapidly evolving strategic environment in our region. Strengthening our trilateral defence capabilities and our industrial capacity will enable AUKUS partners to deter coercion or aggression in the region more effectively. No additional partners will be invited to cooperate on the AUKUS Pillar I initiative.

AUKUS partners remain committed to progressing Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines in a way that sets the highest non-proliferation standard. Australia does not have and will not seek to acquire nuclear weapons. Australia will continue to meet its non-proliferation obligations and commitments, including under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,

the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (Treaty of Rarotonga) and its safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). While Australia is not party to the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (the Bangkok Treaty), Australia will continue to work in a manner that is consistent with its basic principles.

#### **viii. Middle East**

Australia is deeply concerned by the crisis in Gaza. The widespread human suffering is unacceptable. The 7 October 2023 terrorist attacks by Hamas and ensuing Israeli military campaign in Gaza have created a humanitarian catastrophe and resulted in a shocking number of civilian deaths. We have consistently condemned Hamas's attacks, while demanding that Israel protect civilians and abide by international humanitarian law at all times during its operations in Gaza. We continue to call for a ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of hostages, and rapid, safe, and unimpeded humanitarian relief to civilians in Gaza. Australia strongly supports Palestinian aspirations for self-determination and a state of their own. We continue to support a just and enduring peace in the form of a two-state solution, where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace and security within internationally recognised borders, and call for a return to negotiations. Australia has committed AUD62.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the Middle East since 7 October 2023.

The conflict in Gaza continues to have ramifications beyond Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We were deeply concerned by Iran's unprecedented attack on Israel, which heightened the risk of a regional conflict. We remain concerned by the unacceptable ongoing attacks on US interests in Iraq and Syria by Iran-aligned groups.

Australia has called on all regional actors to refrain from provocations that risk further destabilising the region. Ongoing Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden constitute an unjustifiable threat to the safety and interests of all nations, navigational rights and freedoms, international trade and maritime security. Australia, alongside the Netherlands, Canada, Bahrain, and New Zealand, has provided support for the US and UK in defensive strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen since 12 January 2024. As the conflict in Syria enters its thirteenth year, the country remains afflicted by the ongoing impact of violence, a bleak humanitarian situation and the risk of economic collapse. We continue to call for all parties to engage genuinely with the political process established under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 to bring this conflict to an end.

## **2. National Security and Defence Policy**

### **i. Overview**

Australia's updated Defence policy, planning, capabilities and resourcing are outlined in the 2024 National Defence Strategy (NDS) and rebuilt Integrated Investment Program

(IIP). The NDS will be updated biennially and is a shift away from the development of periodic Defence white papers.

As set out in the NDS, Australia's security and prosperity is inextricably linked to developments in the Indo-Pacific, and its defence lies in the collective security of the region. Australia will continue to strengthen defence engagement with Indo-Pacific partners, embracing opportunities to support mutual interests, build trust, deepen cooperation and maintain peace, security and prosperity in the region. The NDS reaffirms that Australia sees a balanced regional order with ASEAN at its centre, providing an essential stabilising influence.

Australia seeks to: deter any conflict before it begins; prevent any potential adversary from succeeding in coercing Australia through force; support regional security and prosperity; and uphold a favourable regional strategic balance. The NDS reiterates that the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) key tasks are to defend Australia and our immediate region; deter through denial any potential adversary's attempt to project power against Australia through our northern approaches; protect Australia's economic connection to our region and the world; contribute with our partners to the collective security of the Indo-Pacific; and contribute with our partners to the maintenance of the global rules-based order.

The IIP outlines Australia's generational reinvestment in the ADF's posture, capability and structure and will transform the ADF into an integrated, focused force and give effect to the NDS. The IIP will ensure the ADF is equipped with critical capabilities required to defend Australia and our national interests, and underpin regional security, over the coming decades

## **ii. Data Contribution to ARF Arms Register**

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 \(un-arm.org\)](https://unarm.org). Detail on the total number of personnel in the Australian Defence Force is published in the Department of Defence Annual Reports, available at [www.defence.gov.au](http://www.defence.gov.au). 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. Australia further reports on its international transfers of conventional arms each year to meet its obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty ([thearmstradetreaty.org](https://thearmstradetreaty.org)).

## **3. National Contributions to Regional Security**

### **i. Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism**

The threat of terrorism and violent extremism continues to pose risks to Southeast Asia's security and prosperity. Regional cooperation, especially through ASEAN mechanisms,

is crucial to disrupt offshore terrorist and criminal activity before it reaches our respective borders and helps to protect Australians in the region. Australian counter-terrorism engagement with ASEAN responds to emergent, cross-cutting issues.

In May 2023, Australia co-chaired the 2nd ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Dialogue. Australia supports the implementation of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (Bali Work Plan) 2019-2025. Australia and Indonesia co-chaired two workshops to support identified priority areas: the ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Workshop on Good Practice Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism, Hate Speech and Disinformation Online (30-31 January 2024), and ASEAN-Australia Workshop to Exchange Practices on Community Resilience Programs to Counter Radicalisation and Violent Extremism Activities (16-17 May 2023). Activities delivered under the Bali Work Plan support the ASEAN Plus Australia Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC + Australia) and the SOMTC workplan. Australia and Indonesia will co-chair the 3rd ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Dialogue and seek to implement additional workshops, in support of priority areas.

Australia works closely with our ARF partners to counter terrorism and violent extremism including through the ARF Intersessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ARF ISM on CTTC). Post-pandemic, the recent ISM on CTTC reinvigorated the workstream. Discussions highlighted the nexus between terrorism and transnational crime and consideration of a new cross-cutting priority area on Border Security Management.

In November 2023, Australia was pleased to host the Senior Officials' Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum (SOCTPF) in Sydney under the auspices of supporting the Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Security. SOCTPF is attended by representatives from Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. This forum provides a valuable opportunity to enhance regional connectivity on counter-terrorism and national security issues.

Australia welcomes the opportunity to continue working with Indonesia as Co-Chairs of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum's (GCTF) Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Working Group, a role that was renewed for a third two-year term commencing in September 2024. This will enable Australia and Indonesia to deepen our relationship and build on the accomplishments of our previous terms in office, which saw the delivery of framework documents on national/local cooperation, mainstreaming gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and recommendations for funding and enabling community-level P/CVE.

Australia is currently funding counter-terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism programs in Southeast Asia with a combined total value of nearly AUD110 million. This includes (2014-2024, AUD92 million) Peacebuilding in Conflict-Affected

Mindanao, a program supporting the ongoing peace process between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. It also includes (2017-2024, AUD9 million) to P/CVE programs delivered under the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice Phase Two.

**ii. Non-Proliferation, Counter Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament**

Australia has an enduring commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. We continue to work with others to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Australia continues to support the entry into force and universalisation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and by urging progress on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) to address critical gaps in the global disarmament architecture. In our region, Australia welcomes the ratification of the CTBT by Papua New Guinea in March 2024. At the UN General Assembly in September 2023, Australia joined Japan and the Philippines in urging progress on a FMCT, and in March 2024, Australia joined the FMCT Friends group, an initiative led by Japan to build momentum towards the commencement of negotiations for a FMCT.

In keeping with Australia's commitment to mainstreaming gender equality in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, we are funding scholarships for women in our region in the nuclear field under the International Atomic Energy Agency's Marie Sklodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme. We also work with Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and others to build practical safeguard capabilities through the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network. In May 2024, we co-presided, with Kazakhstan, over the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS).

Australia plays a leading role in promoting safe and sustainable exports through our work as permanent Chair of the Australia Group (AG). The AG is vital to promoting legitimate trade in sensitive dual-use chemical and biological items, reducing the risk that these exports could contribute to chemical and biological weapons proliferation. Many countries in our region, including non-members, use the AG's Common Control Lists in their national export control frameworks.

In May 2023, Australia co-chaired with the Republic of Korea and the United States the five-yearly High-Level Political Meeting of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) on Jeju Island, Republic of Korea. Over 65 countries, including the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, reaffirmed their commitment via a joint statement to preventing the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), their delivery systems and related materials.

Australia was also pleased to contribute HMAS ANZAC and subject matter experts briefings to the Republic of Korea's Exercise Eastern Endeavor 2023 and PSI 20<sup>th</sup>

anniversary events. Australian experts appreciated engaging with regional partners and contributing to Thailand's PSI Southeast Asia Workshop in August 2023. Australia looks forward to hosting Exercise Pacific Protector, part of the PSI Asia-Pacific Exercise Rotation, in Sydney, September 2024.

Australia strongly supports the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) and looks forward to engaging constructively in the Fourth Review Conference of the PoA in June 2024. In January 2024, Australia was pleased to support regional delegates from Fiji and Samoa to attend a Review Conference preparatory meeting hosted by the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Kathmandu.

Australia remains committed to working to build common understandings of the opportunities and risks associated with Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS), in particular through constructive participation in the current Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. Australia supports practical and tangible outcomes in this forum and has co-sponsored a Principles and Best Practices paper on lethal AWS. Existing international law regulates the development, acquisition and deployment of new weapons and weapons systems, including emerging technologies such as AWS. Australia encourages countries to strengthen their compliance with existing international law, including international humanitarian law, by conducting legal reviews on any new weapons, means or methods of warfare. Initiatives such as the December 2023 Manila Meeting on Indo-Pacific Perspectives on AWS hosted by the Philippines can significantly enrich GGE deliberations.

Australia also participates in complementary international efforts that consider the breadth of applications of artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomy in the military domain. Australia has endorsed the Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy and the Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAIM) Summit's Call to Action. Australia attended the REAIM Regional Consultations in Singapore in February 2024, which provided an opportunity to better understand approaches and challenges relevant to our region. These consultations were useful in preparation for the REAIM Summit to be held in Seoul in September 2024.

### **iii. Transnational Crime**

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. The Bali Process continues work to implement the priorities in the 2023 Adelaide Strategy for Cooperation as agreed by members at the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Bali Process, and Third Government and Business Forum, held in February 2023. This 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 AUD80 million investment over 10 years from 2018-2028. 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 AUD24 million commitment until 2025 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 continues to present 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 who use the Southeast Asian region as a source and transit location. Australia is particularly concerned by the growth in synthetic drug manufacturing, particularly methylamphetamine and its precursors, although 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.

#### **iv. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

The Indo-Pacific region will continue to experience, with increasing frequency, disasters caused by hazards such as cyclones, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. These hazards are exacerbated by climate change, driving even higher levels of disaster risk. Reducing disaster risk, building resilience and enhancing capacity for disaster relief are therefore more important than ever.

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. Through the Australia Assists program, we provide humanitarian specialists to support ASEAN Member States, including in Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre).

Australia is committed to strengthening cooperation with the AHA Centre and sharing information with ASEAN partners to improve future humanitarian responses. In September 2023, Australia participated in the HADR Workshop on the Türkiye earthquake response Lessons Learned in Jakarta, and in December supported Vietnam's chairing of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management at a Knowledge Exchange Workshop.

#### **v. 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. At the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in March 2024, a dedicated Maritime Cooperation Forum brought together maritime security experts from across ASEAN for an academic conference and Track 1.5 dialogue. The academic conference discussed key challenges relating to the blue economy, maritime safety and security, the marine environment, and law of the sea and maritime governance. The Track 1.5 dialogue brought together 41 officials and 21 academics to discuss critical maritime issues, including the blue economy, and maritime cooperation and risk reduction. The Track 1.5 dialogue considered key areas for future ASEAN-Australia maritime cooperation, including fisheries, maritime law and governance, maritime domain awareness, the blue economy, marine protection and biodiversity, and submarine cables.

Australia is committed to supporting the implementation of the maritime pillar of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the ASEAN Maritime Outlook. The Melbourne Declaration agreed at the Summit by ASEAN Member States and Australia underscored our joint commitment to address maritime security challenges, and recognised that it is critical that we maintain peace, stability, and maritime security in our region through the consistent adherence to, and application of, international rules and norms. The Melbourne Declaration reaffirmed the importance of the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS. To support these efforts, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs announced during the Summit that Australia would invest AUD64 million over the next four years to enhance Australia's Southeast Asia Maritime Partnerships. This cooperation supports the ASEAN Maritime Outlook and the maritime pillar of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

Australia continues to be a strong supporter and contributor to ASEAN's maritime forums, including the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), ARF Intersessional Meeting on

Maritime Security (ARF ISM MS), and the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security (ADMM EWG MS). We provided support to Indonesia to host the EAMF in 2023. We are working with the Philippines as co-sponsor to implement two projects – that were adopted by ASEAN Member States in March 2023 – to strengthen the institutional capacity of the EAMF. We also continue to prioritise the implementation of items agreed under the ARF ISM MS Work Plan 2022 – 2026. In the 2022 – 23 ARF intersessional year, Australia co-hosted the '5th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues' alongside Vietnam, New Zealand, Canada and the European Union.

Australia continues to work with regional partners to enhance maritime domain awareness; combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; disrupt maritime transnational crime threats; uphold international law, particularly UNCLOS; improve maritime safety; sustainably manage marine resources and respond to marine environmental challenges. In November 2023, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Japan and Australia jointly delivered a regional workshop on maritime cooperation under the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Australia has worked closely with partners to support 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.

#### **vi. Cyber Security**

Australia released its 2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, together with its Cyber Security Action Plan on 22 November 2023. Priority areas for the new Strategy include Australia's ongoing international cyber engagement and capacity building efforts to enhance the collective cyber resilience of our region and work with global partners to meet the evolving challenges of cyberspace.

Australia recognises that cyberspace and critical technology play an important role in our vision for a peaceful, 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; best practice use of technology for economic, sustainable and inclusive development; protection of human rights online; and regional coordination on critical technology standards, telecommunications, and broader cyber and technology resilience. Under the 2023-2030 Cyber Security Strategy, the Program will be refocused to be more targeted, effective and sustainable and to enable our neighbours to better prevent cyber incidents and recover quickly when they occur.

Australia supports cooperation on advancing the agreed framework for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace including through 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 continues to co-sponsor and manage the ARF Points of Contact Directory on ICT Security (ARF Cyber POC Directory) with Malaysia. Australia looks forward to co-chairing the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security with Cambodia for the 2024-2027 cycle to support increased defence cooperation on regional cyber security challenges.

Australia is especially focused on efforts to enhance regional implementation of existing international law and the 11 agreed norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. Australia continues to support – 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 also demonstrates its commitment to advancing and 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 continues to look for opportunities to expand this work (including through capacity building) and promote elaboration of best-practice guidance and practical assistance to help states implement the framework of responsible state behaviour.

Australia is committed to continuing to work closely with our regional partners in the UN Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime, to finalise and adopt 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 combatting these crimes to better protect children worldwide. Under our SOMTC work plan, in March 2023 Australia co-chaired with Singapore an ASEAN-Australia cyber capacity building workshop, which considered these and other cyber issues exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.

## **vii. Space Security**

Australia recognises that outer space plays a vital role in our vision for a peaceful, stable and prosperous region. Australia is committed to multilateral efforts to build transparency, confidence and develop non-binding norms, rules, and principles of responsible behaviour safeguarding the peaceful uses of outer space.

The consensus outcome of the UN Disarmament Commission on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space was a notable achievement in 2023. Australia welcomed the inclusive discussions on responsible behaviours in space during the UN Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats Through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours and the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS). Australia particularly welcomed the cross-regional Joint Statements made at the OEWG illustrating the shared approach to responsible behaviours. The second OEWG on Reducing Space Threats in 2025 will be an important opportunity to advance discussions further.

Australia seeks to deepen its engagement in the region to advance space security, working collaboratively to support our shared interests in outer space.

### **viii. 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, as reaffirmed in the Melbourne Declaration (6 March 2024). Launched in 2022, the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women Peace and Security is a critical step in ASEAN Member States' progress towards meeting their commitments 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
- establish a Gender Justice Practitioner's Hub, which will adapt justice facilitation to the applied thematic topic of gender justice, strengthen efforts for accountability for all atrocity crimes-war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and aggression.

Australia also supports bilateral and regional programming on WPS, including on cyber security and countering violent extremism. This includes support to 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.

#### **4. Role of the ASEAN Regional Forum**

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.

## **BANGLADESH**

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

The world is presently in flux with evolving challenges, forcing nations to look for collective and pragmatic solutions to meet these 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 technologically advanced and sustainable "Smart Bangladesh" 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 Cyber Security Act in 2023 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 transformative 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 1.2 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 deeply ingrained 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 Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals 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 Defense 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. Defense 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 to 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 behavior 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 catalyze 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

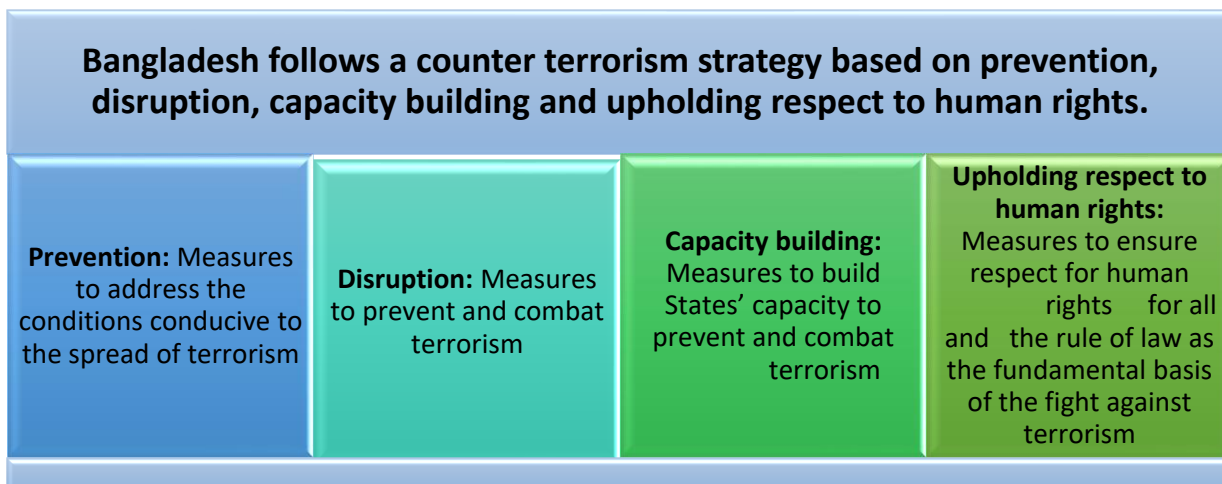
its forms and manifestations and fully supports the ARF in combating this menace. Additionally, as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, even during the COVID 19 pandemic, Bangladesh has the potential to be a strong economic and trading partner for the ASEAN region and the ARF countries.

#### **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:

- (1). Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.
- (2). Anti-Terrorism Rules, 2013.
- (3). Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.
- (4). Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, 2012.
- (5). Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Rule, 2013.
- (6). Extradition Act, 1974.
- (7). Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006.

- (8). Special Powers Act, 1974.
- (9). Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012.
- (10). Children Act, 2013.
- (11). National Counter Terrorism Strategy, 2011.
- (12). Accession to the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes.
- (13). Cyber Security Act in 2023

### **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, analyzing 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.

### **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.

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.

### **Banning of militant outfits**

The Government of Bangladesh has already banned several militant outfits.

## 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.

## 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



- a) 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 fulfill 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.
- b) 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 Center 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.

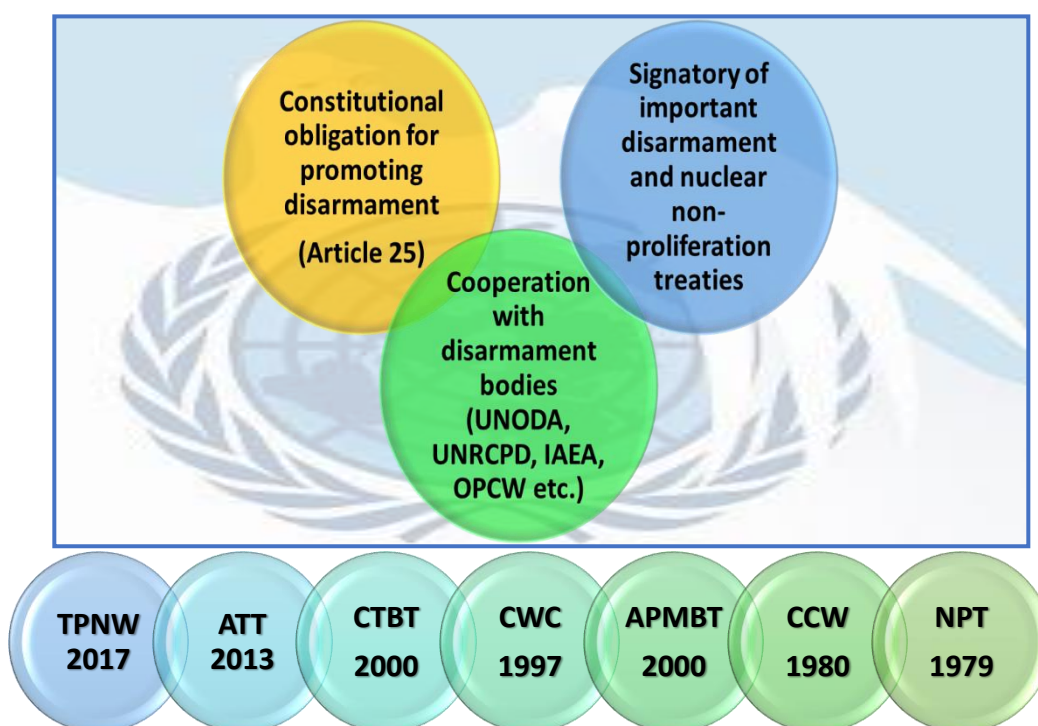
Bangladesh remains fully committed to the implementation of this concept through action-oriented policy interventions in eight programme areas of the 'Program of Action on Culture of Peace' – education, sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between men and women, 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 68<sup>th</sup> 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 German watch, 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 CO<sub>2</sub>-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 \$443 million (3752 crore BDT) to BCCTF since 2009. So far, the BCCTF has undertaken 800 projects with an investment of USD480 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 USD 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 (CO<sub>2</sub>emission) (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 9.2 million USD 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 5.7 million USD financial support and the other one entitled "Building Climate Resilient Livelihoods in vulnerable Landscapes in Bangladesh" with approximately 8.9 million USD 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 centered.

**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 behavior 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 fueling 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 behavior 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 labor. 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's 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 continues to face many interwoven security concerns, ranging from the complexities of major power rivalries to the looming specter of the global climate crisis amidst the backdrop of rapid technological advancements. These multifaceted challenges resonate across diverse fields, underscoring the intricate interplay of issues in shaping the landscape of the region's future.

As such, the fluidity of existing security issues reiterates the continued need for effective and viable approaches to address challenges affecting the region. With the current global order being widely perceived to have shifted towards multipolarity, such changes have presented significant challenges to the conventional models of multilateral cooperation. Efforts to enhance confidence-building measures, promote transparency, establish practical cooperation as well as mechanisms for crisis management continue to be important components of both bilateral and multilateral approaches towards reducing tensions and fostering trust among countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Further to this, the impacts of traditional and non-traditional security challenges alike also underscore the need for a holistic approach with wider involvement from all sectors and levels of society.

While the region has witnessed the proliferation of security cooperation, emerging challenges such as competition for political and economic influence has implicated the region's stability and security, as well as ASEAN itself. Over the years, ASEAN has faced increasing pressure, both internally and externally, to adapt and evolve towards better positioning itself to effectively manage and/or resolve problems within the region - intrastate crisis in member states, regional territorial disputes, post-pandemic inflation and standard of living crisis, as well as how it chooses to manage the current wave of major power competition.

Acknowledging ASEAN's growing importance in the geopolitical scene, there has been an increasingly intense competition among the major powers to gain (more) influence in the region. Henceforth, ASEAN needs to continue leveraging its convening power to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with not only major powers but also middle powers in the Asia-Pacific region, in efforts to uphold multilateralism on all fronts. Hence, as an active and committed member of ASEAN, Brunei Darussalam remains resolute in its efforts to ensure the continued relevance and credibility of the ASEAN-led regional architecture as an anchor of regional security, stability and prosperity.

#### **a. Traditional Security**

##### **i. Evolving Geopolitical Environment**

The ongoing variations in the geopolitical and geo-economic landscapes have brought about a wide range of security challenges. In ensuring international peace and stability;

managing tensions or conflicts diligently is required and remains vital to maintain balance against the backdrop of evolving regional architecture and power dynamics. Nonetheless, while the region has witnessed the proliferation of multilateral and regional security cooperation, emerging challenges such as competition for political and economic influence has implicated the region's stability and security.

## **ii. South China Sea**

One of the primary challenges facing ASEAN is the long-standing territorial claims in the South China Sea. ASEAN and China remain committed to continuing to promote maritime security and safety, enhance mutual trust and confidence, and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea. 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. Underscoring the heightening tensions in the South China Sea, it is more imperative than ever for all involved parties to reaffirm their commitment to fully implementing and concluding the negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), to mitigate further escalation of conflicts between warring parties.

Brunei Darussalam reaffirms the importance of upholding and adhering to international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), remains committed to the maintenance of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region, and maintains its two-step approach in addressing the South China Sea, as reflected in its Statement on the South China Sea dated 20 July 2020. Working in tandem with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, practical defence cooperation aims to increase mutual trust and confidence, as well as enable dialogue and engagement at the highest level among ASEAN defence officials. These actions contribute to providing a positive and conducive environment towards achieving peaceful resolutions of disputes, and at the same time, enable close cooperation to ensure the maintenance of peace, prosperity, and stability of the region.

## **iii. Korean Peninsula**

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) stepped up its development for more technologically- advanced weaponry. Early 2024 saw the successful testing of intermediate-range hypersonic missile involving a new solid-fuel engine and newly-equipped super-large multiple rocket launchers. In 2023, Pyongyang launched its first spy satellite into orbit and the first tactical nuclear attack submarine. In welcoming the New Year 2024, Kim Jong-Un, DPRK's Supreme Leader vowed to 'thoroughly annihilate' the US and South Korea if provoked, saying effort of reconciliation with South Korea as a mistake, diminishing any hope towards peaceful reunification. The increased rhetoric and provocation by the DPRK came amidst the growing cooperation between South Korea, the US and Japan. Last year, for the first time saw the leaders of the three countries held a trilateral summit at Camp David, US. Agreeing to the

'Camp David Principles', the three countries agreed to a new 'duty to consult' security pledge committing

them to speak with each other in the event of a security crisis or threat in the Indo-Pacific, in which any provocations or attacks against any one of the three countries will trigger a decision-making process within the framework. Concurrently, DPRK and Russia leaders also met, signalling an increased camaraderie between the two countries.

## **b. Non-Traditional Security**

While lingering traditional security issues remain, the region has also seen growing non-traditional security challenges that are increasingly complex, cutting across different sectors, in turn undermining prosperity, progress, as well as the well-being and livelihood of its people.

### **i. 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. Islamic State (IS) group attacked a concert at Crocus City Hall in the outskirts of Moscow in March 2024, proving that large-scale terrorist threats still occur, not just within its traditional domains (Middle East, South Asia, Sahel etc.), but also in developed and well-secured countries. The attack confirms that IS continues to fuel terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism, not excluding towards our region. Such threats can be compounded by weak governance, political dissatisfaction, local dynamics and geopolitics. Terrorism threats are far from static, particularly with the use of technological advancements; the use of cryptocurrency and Dark Web as finance and recruitment methods; misinformation for dissemination of their ideology and propaganda; and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and drones for surveillance, spying and attacks.

Years of counter-terrorism effort have also led to new modus operandi – the rise of terrorist groups' affiliates, such as those that are responsible for the Moscow's concert hall attack. Now, terrorist threats are most likely to come in the form of small cells or individuals inspired by larger terrorist organisations and violent extremist ideologies, including the Palestinian plights in Gaza, to conduct attacks.

### **ii. Climate Change**

The climate crisis is aggravating conflicts, destabilising societies and adversely affecting peace and stability around the globe. Extreme weather events and critical change to Earth systems are considered as the greatest concerns facing the world over the next decade. Worryingly, cooperation on these issues is still considered insufficient. From the security lens, recurrent climate extremes are threatening the health and well-being of humanity, and creating greater displacement, migratory movements, pandemics, social unrest, instability and even conflicts. Our armed forces are also confronted with the changing and

challenging operational conditions due to climate change. Climate change is a threat multiplier that could intensify resource scarcity and worsen existing social, economic and environmental factors. Dealing with the worsening consequences of climate change may swamp the capacity of governments to take the transformative action on the root cause of the crises itself, and many of the countries that are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change already are among the most politically and economically fragile.

### **iii. Emerging Technologies**

There is a general consensus that emerging military technology has the ability to reshape traditional ideas of security and military tactics, altering battlefield in terms of connectivity, lethality, autonomy, and sustainability. The year 2024 is foreseeing a substantial rise in the use of AI, robotics, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to optimise defence operations and enhance military efficiency. Conventional warfare is no longer the sole focus of military strategy, with hybrid approaches taking center stage. The integration of cyber warfare, information operations, and other unconventional tactics creates a complex and challenging battleground. Specifically on AI, its effective governance and regulation has been the centre stage of global discussion. Meanwhile, emerging technology is also in the forefront of geopolitics, particularly the US- China rivalry.

## **II. National Security and Defence Policy**

### **a. Overview of National Security and Defence Policy**

Brunei Darussalam's fourth Defence White Paper published in May 2021, continues to be a blueprint and guidance for its national security and defence policy. Brunei Darussalam's defence policy has consistently focused on comprehensive, robust, and integrated efforts to protect and promote the nation's peace and stability. The defence strategy aligns with the national development agenda in the National Vision 2035 and aims to uphold sovereignty and stability. This strategy emphasizes three core priorities: deterrence and response, defence diplomacy, and holistic defence.

Brunei Darussalam is dedicated to enhancing its armed forces to effectively address security challenges. The country is also focused on fostering strong relationships with defence establishments and armed forces globally. A comprehensive defence strategy involves local agencies working together to maintain peace and security, which in turn supports the nation's political and economic progress and development.

### **b. Defence Expenditure**

For the fiscal year 2024/2025, the Ministry of Defence of Brunei Darussalam's defence budget is BND796,304,785.00, marking an increase of about 28 percent from the previous financial year.

## **III. National Contributions to Promote Regional Peace and Security**



Brunei Darussalam is committed to cooperating and engaging with other countries in the region to protect its interests and fulfil its responsibilities as a member of the international community. By participating in multilateral regional platforms like the ARF, ADMM, and ADMM-Plus, Brunei Darussalam has the opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue and collaborate on addressing common security challenges.

**a. Defence and Security Achievements and Initiatives**

The ADMM and ADMM-Plus have added value by strengthening Brunei Darussalam's defence and military capacity and capability development. In its commitment to contribute to 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) aims to enhance logistics cooperation among military forces in the ASEAN region to tackle non-traditional security challenges, including Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Search and Rescue (SAR), Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), and anti-piracy in a coordinated and effective manner. Following 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). Looking ahead, Brunei Darussalam aims to further integrate with other ADMM initiatives such as the ASEAN Military Ready Group (AMRG) and potentially expand in the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWGs).

**ii. ASEAN Direct Communication Infrastructure**

Recognizing 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 aims to provide a permanent, rapid, reliable, and confidential means by which any two ASEAN Defence Ministers may communicate with each other to make mutual decisions in handling incidents or emergency situations. This communication platform aims to prevent or defuse misunderstandings and misinterpretations, thereby preventing escalation and promoting quick response cooperation in emergency situations.

The ASEAN Direct Communication Infrastructure (ADI) is being implemented in phases. The first phase, in the form of an IP-based mechanism, was launched on 24 October 2017, after the ADMM-Plus Meeting in Clark, Pampanga, Philippines. An ADI Exercise was conducted on 21 February 2019 to test the system's functionality and operationalize the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The second phase is currently under discussion among the AMS co-chaired by Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines. The

initiative to expand the ADI to Plus countries was adopted by the 13th ADMM in 2019, aiming to promote open communications among member states and enhance regional and wider confidence and security-building measures. During the 15th ADMM in June 2021, the ASEAN Defence Ministers agreed to adopt the Concept Paper on Enhancing the Usage of ADI as Defence Communications Architecture in the ADMM Process. This Concept Paper will provide the policy and technical parameters for Phase 2 of the ADI, including the expansion of user cases and routine exchange of information.

### **iii. ASEAN Defence Interaction Programme (ADIP)**

Brunei Darussalam considers interactions among its defence and military officials crucial for fostering enduring relations among future leaders of ASEAN. The ADIP also serves as a platform for knowledge sharing and fostering cooperation on emerging defence issues. The inaugural ADIP took place in Brunei Darussalam in 2014, with Malaysia hosting the second iteration in January 2018. To ensure continued engagement, the revised Concept Paper on the ADIP was approved in the 15th ADMM in June 2021. The paper aims to make the ADIP more sustainable while strengthening regional unity and identity among ASEAN defence establishments through respect for diversity, equality, and mutual understanding. Continuing the momentum, Brunei Darussalam hosted the third iteration of ADIP in November 2021, focusing on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Cambodia chaired the 4th ADIP in October 2022, focusing on the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, followed by Indonesia, who hosted the 5th ADIP in March 2023. Lao PDR is set to host the 6th ADIP in June 2024 by bringing to the fore, the militaries' roles in contributing to climate change response.

### **iv. ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups**

The progress of the seven ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWGs) in the areas of HADR, Military Medicine (MM), Maritime Security (MS), Counter-Terrorism (CT), Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) and Cyber Security (CS) manifests the maturity of practical cooperation under the ADMM-Plus. Brunei Darussalam remains 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 MS with New Zealand from 2014 to 2017, culminating in the ADMM-Plus MS and CT Exercise that took place in Brunei Darussalam and Singapore, and a MS Field Training Exercise in New Zealand. Brunei Darussalam, together with Australia, have recently concluded the co-chairmanship of the EWG in MM for the 2021-2024 cycle. Born during Brunei Darussalam's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2021 with the theme of "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper", the EWG on MM undertook a component of Project-based Community Medical Deployment (PCMD), Medical Aid Provision (MAP) which aims to address the concerns around the pandemic.

As for the new cycle of co-chairmanship of EWGs (2024-2027), Brunei Darussalam has been working closely with China as co-chair of the EWG on PKO to continue incorporating WPS Agenda as an effort to enhance the participation of women peacekeepers.

The EWGs' work has garnered understanding and promoted capacity building and interoperability in all member states. More importantly, these have contributed to deeper trust and fostering stronger military- to-military relations among the ADMM-Plus's armed forces. 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 has 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 Royal Brunei Armed Forces (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-nine (29) personnel in 2023. Throughout the fourteen years of RBAF's involvement in the UNIFIL, six female members of the RBAF served in the peacekeeping operations.

Brunei Darussalam has also deployed personnel for the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao, southern Philippines since 2004, and in the 2021-2022 peacekeeping mission, there are four (04) RBAF personnel and one (01) Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF). The deployment of IMT has been halted since 2022. 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 Headquarters, wherein three of them serve as Verification, Monitoring and Assistance Team (IDB VMAT) in Cotabato, Mindanao, Southern Philippines.

Initiatives at the operational theatre level offer exposure and insight into operating in conflict environments for the personnel involved. The engagements between RBAF and its foreign counterparts and organizations further enhance Brunei Darussalam's defence diplomacy. These initiatives also highlight RBAF's reputation as a professional force capable of making meaningful contributions. In the context of Brunei Darussalam, this also demonstrates substantial support for regional and global endeavours aimed at promoting peace and stability.

### **c. Countering Terrorism, Radicalisation and Violent Extremism**

The global reach of terrorism and the spread of violent and extremist influence has exacerbated and remains one of the top concerning issues for countries globally. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2024 report highlighted those deaths from terrorism increased by 22%, with 8,352 deaths, and are now at their highest level since 2017. Despite the increased number of deaths, incidents have fallen with total attacks dropping to 22% in 2023. The rise in deaths but fall in the number of incidents portrays how terrorism is becoming more concentrated and lethal. Recorded as the largest single terrorist attack in 2023 was the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas-led militants.

Significant improvements in terrorism are in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq was ranked outside of the worst ten countries in the index for the first time, with less than a hundred deaths from terrorism recorded in 2023. Daesh remained the deadliest terrorist group globally for the ninth consecutive year, recording both the highest number of attacks and deaths from terrorism. Although the group is still highly active, its impact has been falling over the nine years altogether. Violent conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism, with over 90% of terrorism deaths in 2023 taking place in countries in conflict. Moreover, countries that were most impacted by terrorism in 2022 were also involved in an armed conflict.

Although 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 preparators are utilising Brunei Darussalam as a transit point, financial hub and harbour greater support for their activities. This was apparent through arrests of four individuals linked to Daesh in 2017. In 2018, an arrest was made on an individual with possession of Daesh propaganda-related materials, deliberately construed to garner sympathy and radicalise. Such cases amplify the serious risks posed by social media and the cyber domain in the circulation of extremist ideologies and terrorist-related movements which has become one of the main mediums for terrorist activities.

### **d. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief [NDMC part]**

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.

#### **e. Non-Proliferation, Counter-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament**

Brunei Darussalam, as a small nation, recognizes the significance of upholding non-proliferation, counter- proliferation, arms control, and disarmament efforts. The country has signed various multilateral and global agreements related to non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament, particularly those pertaining to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Brunei Darussalam will uphold its commitment to non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament, as it believes that reaching a consensus and universalizing these agreements is crucial to ensuring peace and stability, not only within the nation but also globally.

Brunei Darussalam demonstrates its dedication by engaging in confidence-building measures and activities, expressing support as necessary, submitting reports to promote transparency, and enhancing its capabilities through technical assistance and training. In relation to United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1540, Brunei Darussalam endorsed the resolution and consistently updating the UNSCR 1540 matrix to ensure the resolution's implementation.

Brunei Darussalam is also extensively involved in regional initiatives for non-proliferation, counter- proliferation, arms control, and disarmament, including active participation in ASEAN and ARF, as well as in the international sphere within the United Nations and its affiliated organisations.

#### **f. Transnational Crime**

Brunei Darussalam faces various types of transnational crimes. It is a small country in terms of both size and population, which reduces some of the attractions for transnational criminal activities. Although data generally show minimal cases of transnational crimes, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities in controlling certain forms of transnational crime. Specifically, the country has witnessed an increase in drug and other related contraband trafficking and distribution.

Brunei Darussalam is committed to collaborating with regional partners bilaterally and multilaterally, particularly with other AMS to enhance international and regional cooperation in addressing transnational crimes, recognizing the cross-border nature of this challenge. This commitment includes utilizing the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) as the primary platform for strengthening cooperation with regional and international partners. The AMMTC is currently engaged in the implementation of the 'Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2019 – 2025)', which aims to establish a framework guiding ASEAN sectoral bodies in conducting necessary activities and effectively monitoring radicalization and violent extremism prevention. The ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime (2016 – 2025) is an ASEAN-led initiative aimed at fostering close cooperation among AMS to prevent and combat transnational crimes. It also seeks to enhance ASEAN's capacity to effectively and promptly address transnational crimes. Additionally, guiding documents such as the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025 are crucial in strengthening political and security cooperations. They also play a vital role in 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 is a small coastal state that lies on the island of Borneo which is situated in the middle of the South China Sea. Although small in size Brunei has gained its fortune by having a large resource in the form of natural oil and gas which a number of companies have been exploring and extracting within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). As oil and gas makes up a huge percentage of the country's economy, securing its maritime domain remains a top priority for Brunei Darussalam, and this task has been largely given to the RBAF and Ministry of Defence. There are a number of security concerns that relate to maritime security from the perspective of Brunei Darussalam but however, in recent years issues such as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU Fishing), Transnational Crime, Piracy and the presence of foreign vessels within its EEZ's vicinity are the top security concerns that has been envisaged by the country.

#### **IV. Role of the ARF**

The ARF, being the primary forum in the Asia-Pacific region for discussing peace and security matters, remains a crucial platform for security discussions in the area. Aligned with its objectives of building confidence, engaging in preventive diplomacy, and resolving conflicts, the ARF supplements the efforts of the East Asia Summit and the ADMM-Plus. In addition to its formal processes, the ARF has also acknowledged the importance of informal exchanges through the ARF-Experts Eminent Persons (ARF EEPs) system, which brings together recognised professionals and experts in specific areas. The EEPs are expected to offer new and practical ideas and suggestions related to the ARF's three stated goals.

The defence-related platforms within the ARF have contributed to a deeper understanding of the diverse perspectives on regional security concerns among its members. The ARF Defence Officials Dialogue (DOD) and ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) have been instrumental in providing a platform for defence and military officials to establish networks, foster confidence, and promote mutual trust. Moreover, the ARF Heads of Defence Universities, Colleges, and Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM) has played a significant role in promoting best practices in military education and facilitating exchanges of research on security issues.

#### **a. National Contributions to Enhancing the ARF and Regional Security**

During its co-chairmanship of the ARF DOD with Australia in May 2021, Brunei Darussalam suggested that the ARF DOD should have a regular agenda item focusing on the sharing of updates on other regional defence cooperation, such as the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, as well as any other relevant initiatives aimed at promoting confidence building and the exchange of best practices. The proposal, in accordance with the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practical and Protocol and the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II, aims to support the advancement of defence and security dialogue and practical cooperation to strengthen regional peace, security, and stability, including the enhancement of synergy between ARF and the ADMM- Plus.

The ARF's various levels of involvement highlight the commitment to fostering discussions and consultations. Brunei Darussalam is dedicated to the ARF processes, aiming to enhance mutual understanding and collaborate to tackle regional security challenges. Given the uncertain regional security landscape, engaging in dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration at both bilateral and multilateral levels is essential for effectively addressing future risks.

#### **b. Future of ARF**

The ARF plays a crucial role in promoting peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region by supporting various political, security, and economic processes for its member states and the broader security environment. In general, the ARF has been instrumental in promoting capacity building, fostering mutual trust through Confidence Building Measures

(CBM), and facilitating dialogue among the Foreign Ministers of its member states. It also ensures ongoing dialogue to maintain a secure regional security environment in the face of increasing external challenges. However, the ARF's expanding activities and scope may require a review of its initiatives to avoid redundancy and to streamline its significant thematic contributions.



## **CAMBODIA**

### **1. Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

The Asia-Pacific region is presently encountering a phase of increased uncertainty and evolving security challenges in international affairs. While the likelihood of direct military conflict in the region remains low, there is a growing concern regarding unintentional conflicts and escalation risks, particularly due to existing hotspot issues and potential miscalculations. It is crucial to acknowledge the increasingly interconnected and interdependent nature of the global and regional strategic environment. Conflicts occurring in one part of the world can have widespread effects on other regions. Evidently, the war in Ukraine and the Middle East also have direct and indirect impacts on many countries around the world, affecting areas such as energy prices, food security, and overall economic stability.

Moreover, the Asia-Pacific region grapples with a wide range of non-traditional and human security vulnerabilities, including those related to transnational issues such as climate change, water resources, energy, disease, terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and smuggling. Concurrently, this region is becoming more interconnected and reliant on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies. While these technologies, such as AI and cyberspace, offer great benefits, they also pose significant challenges. The impact of cybersecurity challenges is multifaceted and consequential, affecting various aspects of military operations, strategy, and national security. These challenges have substantial implications for regional stability and necessitate a comprehensive and coordinated approach.

Amid this complex and evolving geopolitical landscape, it is imperative to uphold the principles of sovereignty, independence, and cooperation for all states. Cambodia emphasizes the significance of multilateralism within the framework of international and ASEAN-led organizations to foster cooperative mechanisms that produce mutual benefits for all states, with the aim of reinforcing enduring peace, security, and prosperity.

### **2. National Security and Defense Policy**

Cambodia prioritizes border defence, addressing challenges from land demarcation, maritime concerns, and cross-border issues such as the pandemic. The focal points include enhancing political and security dialogue, conducting joint exercises, and developing infrastructure along border areas. The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) focuses on diplomacy and military preparedness, modernizing its forces and equipment.

Secondly, Cambodia emphasizes internal security, countering subversion and remaining vigilant against terrorism without becoming a target. As stipulated by the former Defence Minister Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh, he emphasizes adopting a preventative approach rather than combating terrorism head-on. Cambodia cooperates internationally,

sharing information to prevent extremism and address cybersecurity and emerging technological threats. The RCAF also aims to enhance preparedness in responding to natural disasters as well as pandemics.

Over the next decade, the RCAF will undergo military reforms to refine its structure, command and control systems, personnel management, budget, defence industries, and training.

Lastly, the RCAF is dedicated to enhancing defence cooperation and international security through partnerships based on independence, neutrality, and mutual respect. The RCAF intends to bolster bilateral and multilateral relations through defence diplomacy, supporting regional security frameworks like the ADMM, ADMM Plus, and ARF. Having transitioned from receiving to contributing peacekeeping forces globally, Cambodia emphasizes women's participation in peace operations and has contributed to de-mining and peacekeeping efforts, showcasing its commitment to humanitarian aid and global contributions.

The global geostrategic landscape is in a constant state of fluctuation and remains fragile, requiring vigilant monitoring, assessment, and recommendations due to rapid developments in both traditional and non-traditional security situations. Currently, the region and the world are facing significant challenges, with conflicts and tensions escalating in various areas such as Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia Pacific. This underscores the importance of a proactive and informed approach to understanding and navigating the complexities of the international security environment.

To ensure that Cambodia remains in step with these evolving dynamics and concurrently in sync with the 7th mandate of the Royal Cambodian Government's Pentagonal Strategy, the Ministry of National Defence of Cambodia is in the process of formulating the Defence Strategic Update 2025 to ensure that Cambodia's defence posture is adaptive to the changing environment.

### **3. Cambodia's Contributions to Regional Security**

#### **i. Counterterrorism**

Terrorism is a threat to both global social and security orders, an issue to the world leaderships 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 the international terrorism has again taken its shape in our government and the National Counter-Terrorism Special Forces is in ready posture, for both trainings and operations. We have planned for national and international exercises with our counterpart to strengthen our skills, our information sharing and fighting capabilities. To make sure of a peaceful region by preventing terrorist

activities; deterring and combatting terrorism to maintain peace, stability, security and promoting cooperation in the region and in the world.

In response to growing terrorism threats, the Royal Government of Cambodia has taken several important steps which include:

- Fighting for information and sharing them to our operational partners, both nationally and internationally.
- Support external partners in 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 colors by encouraging them to share, to talk and to understand each other as a measure of preventing them from being radicalized.
- Enhancing maritime security via the empowerment of National Committee for Maritime Security and its maritime CT components, by conducting joint trainings 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 cooperate 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 trainings and operations among her Special Operation Forces. We have increased our operational capabilities to respond simultaneously across the country, gaining control over any unforeseen and foreseen situations required quick released and respond forces.

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

## **ii. Non-Proliferation, Counter Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament**

### **Overview**

**Flowing the Article 54 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia “Production, use and stockpiling of nuclear, chemical or Vatrano (biological) weapons are absolutely prohibited”.**

To support the global movement on non-proliferation of WMD, the Kingdom of Cambodia has adopted various international conventions and treaties to combat against the use of WMD and become a party of several organizations and treaties. The Kingdom of Cambodia has committed to a range of capacity-building for non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in regard to national laws and legislations as well as regional and international legal instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

### **National Authority for the Prohibition of Chemical, Biological, Nuclear and Radiation Weapons (NACW)**

- Royal Kram No. សន/រកម/១២០៩/០២៣, 03 December 2009 on Law on the Prohibition of Chemical, Nuclear, Biological and Radiological Weapons
- Royal Decree No. សន/រកត/០៦០៦/២៧៥, 27 June 2006 on the establishment of the National Authority for the Prohibition of Chemical, Nuclear, Biological and Radiological Weapons

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 national ministries-agencies, international organizations and States Parties in disarming and in combating against the proliferation of CBRN weapons. The NACW is also missioned to disseminate, educate and raise public awareness of national and international laws. Kingdoms of Cambodia adopted National legal frameworks to combats against the WMD as below:

- The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993)
- Law On Customs (2007)
- Law on Counter Terrorism, 2007
- Law on the Prohibition of Chemical, Nuclear, Biological and Radiological Weapons, 2009
- Law on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (2020)
- Law on Combating the Financing of Proliferation of WMD (2020)

## **Related Conventions and Treaties**

The Kingdom of Cambodia Became various international conventions and treaties to combat against the use of WMD :

1. Chemical Weapons Convention – CWC
2. Biological Weapons Convention – BWC
3. Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone-SEANWFZ
4. Treaties and Convention related to Radiological and Nuclear Weapons
  - Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons-NPT)
  - Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty - CTBT)
  - Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons-TPNW)
  - International Convention for the Suppression of Act of Nuclear Terrorism ICSANT)
  - Convention on Nuclear Safety-CNS)
  - Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material-CPPNM)
  - Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident)
  - Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency)
5. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 – UNSCR 1540 (2004)

## **International Engagement**

1. The United Nation
  - The United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)
  - The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
  - The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

UNICRI

- 1540 Committee

2. Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
3. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization) CTBTO)
4. The International Atomic Energy Agency) IAEA)
5. ASEAN CBR Network of Defense Experts
6. ASEANTOM
7. EU CBRN Centres of Excellence (EU CBRN CoE)
8. International Security and Emergency Management Institute (ISEMI)
9. The Federal Office of Economics and Export Control (BAFA)
10. INTERPOL
11. The International Institute for Strategic Studies) IISS)
12. Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation )VCDNP(
13. Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation) HCoC(
14. United State Embassy in Cambodia on The Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance (EXBS)
15. Others relevant International-Agencies and the Regional States Parties.

#### **Achivments in 2023-2024**

- **2023:**

The Kingdom of Cambodia cooperated with international institutions to hosted 09 Programs that have 388 Participants from 22 national relevantes agencies and 33 regional states parties:

1. Workshop on Strengthening Capacities to Identify and Mitigate CBRN Proliferation Financing Risk in Southeast Asia, (UNICRI)
2. CBRN First Responder Training, (ISEMI)
3. Project 81 BIOSEC-Survey Mission, (EU CBRN CoE)

4. National Introductory Workshop on the Development of a Voluntary National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1540(2004), (UNODA)
5. The 21<sup>st</sup> Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties of OPCW in Asia, (OPCW)
6. EU CBRN CoE Project 81 BIOSEC: Training on Laboratory Handling and Management of High Consequence Pathogens, (EU CBRN CoE)
7. National Workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), (UNODA, BWC-ISU)
8. The 21<sup>st</sup> National Focal Points Round-Table Meeting for Southeast Asia (EU CBRN CoE)
9. CONTACT Southeast-Asia: Train The Trainer and National Training, (UNICRI)

- **2024:**

In the first semester of 2024, The Kingdom of Cambodia cooperated with international institutions to hosted 03 National Workshop and 01 billectural meeting that have 115 Participants from 15 national relevantes agencies :

1. National Workshop on the Implementation of the BWC Confidence Building Measures in Cambodia (UNODA)<sup>4</sup>
2. Project 81 BIOSEC-Survey Mission, (EU CBRN CoE)<sup>4</sup>
3. Project 81 - Workshop on National Inventories of High-Risk Pathogens  
(EU CBRN CoE)
4. Bilateral Meeting with the Regional Advisor in Cambodia and Philippines

of the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program and

## Conclusion

Cambodia continues to support and contribute to strengthen cooperation with international organizations, institutions and partners in implementing conventions, treaties and UNSCR 1540(2004), as well as advocate for peaceful, multilateral resolutions, while working to eliminate weapons that harm humanity.

### iii. 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 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 the national borders, the flow of people, finance and technology from one country to another become free and much easier. Moreover, the rapid development of the information technology is a factor that eases those criminals' communication and their activities.

**There are various types of transnational crimes, most notably:**

- 1. Cybercrime:** is a crime in information technology era which includes spreading fake news against legitimate government and hacking to steal important data from public institutions and private companies, including online scams which causes significant financial losses. This crime is now a contentious issue that also presents a serious challenge.
- 2. Illegal Arms Smuggling:** is also a concern that needs to be closely monitored amid rising threat of terrorism and separatism against the government. Terrorist groups could have used the weapons that they got from illegal trade to attack on government forces.
- 3. Drug Trafficking:** is still a challenge that needs to be carefully monitored, particularly in the regions along 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 seizure 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 continues to rise, especially the production of synthetic drugs (ATS), which a major threat in every region including Cambodia.

**4. Human Trafficking and Labor Exploitation:** is still a challenge in the region. Tens of thousands of victims have been trafficked along the borders and deceived by the middle persons to work without payment. Some women have been forced to work overtime or being sexually exploited. Cambodia remains concerned about cases of people being trafficked through illegal entry points along the borders.

**5. 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**

### **1. Cybercrime**

The Royal Government of Cambodia has both legal and institutional mechanism 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 (NIG) 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.

### **2. 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.

### **3. Drug Trafficking**

- Enforce the capability to check and find narcotic substance by providing modern equipment for law enforcement institutions.
- Raise awareness and educate the population, especially the youths, about the risk and harmful impact of consuming drugs.
- Impose control measure on dual-use chemicals (which can be used as precursors to produce illegal drugs) and plan to draft law to control chemicals 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 of 2022 after the sixth successful "one-year campaign strategy" to combat illegal drugs.
- International cooperation with bordering countries.
- All countries shall strictly enforce the law and punish the criminals.

### **4. Human Trafficking**

- Raise awareness and educate the population to understand the laws and regulation such as labor law, law on immigration, law on marriage with foreign national, and explain about 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.
- Strictly control of the borders as well as the corridors between the neighboring countries are needed, and monitors the illegal crossing activities.

### **5. Combating against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing**

To combat against 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 against illegal activities terrorist groups. On 18 January 2022 The Ministry of Justice has formed a task forces to fight money laundering and the financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, led by the minister of justice.

#### **iv. Humanitarian Assistant and Disaster Relief (HADR)**

Currently, the continuation of rivalries between powerful nation states for territorial integrity, geopolitical, economic, social, and religious influences, brought greater

challenges, and security instabilities to the global system which greatly effects the livelihood of people in the region and throughout the world. The effects from such challenges and security instabilities exert greater difficulties for many nation states in the region, and throughout the world to access resources such as water, food, medications, shelters, and energy for their daily survival. Compounded with Russia-Ukraine war, Israel-Hamas war, violent extremist movements, and other civil wars; the world have continually been exposed even more vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). Furthermore, traditional and non-traditional threats such as transnational crimes, cybercrimes, environmental degradation, illicit arms trade, human trafficking, drug trafficking, sea piracy, and natural disasters such as pandemic diseases, typhoons, hurricanes, tornadoes, landslides, volcanic eruption, earthquakes, building collapses, forest fires, flash floods, and traffic accidents have increased in frequency at an alarming rate possibly due to the impact of climate change as well as human carelessness activities. Compounded with all the above problems, it's catalytically significant have greatly affected economic prosperity, security stability, and the wellbeing of our daily lives. Therefore, both of these traditional and non-traditional threats are undoubtedly outweigh the capabilities of our respective governments, and individual nation states to deal quickly and in an orderly manner in providing humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief responses.

Even though, Coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) is no longer a major problem to the regions as well as the whole world, the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia has been continuing working endlessly with its ASEAN member states, partner nations, civil societies, national and international none-governmental organizations to establish and ratify new concepts, procedures, guidelines, regulations, and law on disaster management. In addition, the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) and the Royal Cambodian Gendarmerie (RCG) 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 mechanism; and is committed to support all defense cooperative activities conduct by the ASEAN militaries, regional militaries. To further contribute to national, regional, and the world security, the Royal Cambodian Government, the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, 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).

Endlessly by 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 Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and the Royal Cambodian Gendarmerie had participated in a bilateral Gold Dragon HA/DR table-top exercise and field training exercise with Chinese Liberation Army. Furthermore, continuing our effort

to strengthen relationship and foster closer cooperation while implementing more frequent pragmatic defense cooperative activities among the ASEAN militaries, and regional partners will, undoubtedly help 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. In order to succeed, we must harness and integrate all aspects of our capabilities, intellectual knowledge, and work closely with allies, friends, and partners. Therefore, 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 turning vision into reality. In conclusion, we strongly believe that by promoting closer defense cooperation and implementing more pragmatic defense 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 in which eventually helping to strengthen our nation's security, regional security, and the world security as a whole.

#### **v. Maritime Security**

The Royal Cambodian Navy (RCN) plays a pivotal role in defense 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, operation, logistics, exchange visits of high-ranking officials and organizing interaction platforms such as ASEAN Navy chiefs' Meeting (ANCM), ANCM-Staff Meeting, The 6th Japan-ASEAN and Timor-Leste Ship Rider cooperation Program 2024(SRCP2024) ASEAN Navy Young officers' Interaction Program (ANYOL), ASEAN Cadet Seminar and ASEAN Cadet Sail, and International Liaison Officer (ILO) to be stationed at the Information Fusion Centre (ILC) to promote mutual understanding, effective working in solidarity, enabling its navy to adapt and respond positively when dealing with unexpected circumstances.

Cambodia has developed 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.

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#### **4. Role of ASEAN Regional Forum**

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1994, stands as a fundamental platform for security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region. It provides a crucial setting for members to engage in constructive discussions on current security issues and collaborate on measures aimed at strengthening peace and security.

Over the span of three decades, the ARF has facilitated regular dialogue among members, playing a pivotal role in fostering trust, reducing potential misunderstandings, and alleviating tensions among ARF participants. In light of the ever-evolving global landscape, it is imperative for ARF members to carefully assess approaches to enhance the forum's effectiveness and relevance and adapt to the changing security dynamics. It is essential for the ARF to uphold its foundational values of openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and ASEAN Centrality as it engages with all partners.

Cambodia stands committed to the ARF and perceives it as a keystone in the multi-layered regional security architecture. Cambodia will continue to uphold the ASEAN Centrality and support ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the role of ARF in upholding peace, security, and stability in the region. Moreover, Cambodia is committed to making positive contributions to the ARF's objective of nurturing constructive dialogue and

consultation on political and security concerns of common interest in the region, while also contributing significantly to efforts focusing on confidence-building and preventive diplomacy.

## **5. Information and Communications Technology Security Ministry of Post and Telecommunications**

Cambodia recognizes the transformative potential of digital technology, but also understands that a digital economy and society also brings about certain risks, especially risks to cyberattacks. In order to leverage digital technology for safe, secured, and sustainable development, Cambodia has developed information and communications technology policies and legal frameworks, and actively participated in information and communications technology security mechanisms.

On 1 March 2024, the Royal Government of Cambodia issued the Sub-Decree on the Organization and Functioning of the Digital Security Committee establishing the Digital Security Committee, which leads, facilitates, and promotes the management of digital security to protect the interests of all social actors against all forms of attacks. This Committee is chaired by the Prime Minister with a general secretariat managed by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and four units: the Cambodia Cybersecurity Unit, the Anti-Cybercrime Unit, the National Cyber Defense Unit, and the Cyber Diplomacy Unit. The Digital Security Committee is the central command in charge of security management in the digital space, and coordinates the four units to direct, prepare, implement, monitor, and evaluate policies, strategies, measures, technical standards, and action plans related to security in the digital space.

The Royal Government is drafting a Law on Cybersecurity that shall serve as the legal framework for the protection of Cambodia's cyberspace. A robust cybersecurity regime will build confidence and trust in digital technology systems supporting the development of Cambodia's digital economy and society. The law will allow for the Royal Government to determine critical infrastructures and raise their cybersecurity standards ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of their systems. The Royal Government is also drafting a Law on Cybercrime that will enhance the capabilities of competent authorities to combat cybercrimes.

Safe, secured, and sustainable development is not possible without collaboration, especially in this connected world considering the cross-border nature of digital technology. Cambodia is committed to multilateral cooperation and is an active member of various international mechanisms including ASEAN. For instance, Cambodia proactively engages with the ASEAN Cybersecurity Coordinating Committee to tackle coordination challenges, promote cross sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation, and strengthen cybersecurity in the region.

On 19-21 March 2024, Cambodia hosted the 1st ASEAN Working Group on Anti-Online Scam meeting during the first ASEAN Digital Senior Officials' Meeting and ASEAN Telecommunications Regulators' Council Leaders' Retreat of 2024. ASEAN Member States discussed collective measures and collaborative efforts in tackling online scams in the region. The ASEAN Working Group on Anti-Online Scam was established as a platform for ASEAN Member States to cooperate and collaborate on capacity building, training and sharing of information related to combating online scams, and scams across digital and telecommunication channels.

Over the past fifteen years, Cambodia has consistently made significant contribution to successful collaborative and cooperative efforts of ASEAN-Japan in the realm of cybersecurity.

This cooperation encompasses a variety of collaborative actions, such as joint awareness initiatives, remote cyber exercises, tabletop exercises (TTX), critical information infrastructure protection (CIIP), voluntary mutual notification, capacity building, and ASEAN-Japan online communities. This year, Cambodia is scheduled to co-host with Japan the "2024 2nd ASEAN Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting" in Siem Reap, Cambodia from 21-22 May.

In September 2023, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications of Cambodia joined in a collaborative effort with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre (GCSCC) from the University of Oxford in hosting a consultation workshop in Cambodia. Rooted in the Cybersecurity Capacity Maturity Model (CMM), this consultation endeavored to benchmark the current maturity of Cambodia's cybersecurity capacity, pinpoint potential areas of capacity deficiencies, and identify pertinent areas for future investment and capacity-building initiatives, under the technical cooperation project called "the project for improvement of cyber resilience", supported by JICA.

## **CANADA**

In 2023, Canada was pleased to strengthen our longstanding ties to ASEAN through the elevation of the relationship to the level of Strategic Partnership. Our partnership is built on close to five decades of mutually beneficial collaboration. We reaffirm our strong support for ASEAN centrality and shared commitment to advancing cooperation in line with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Working with partners in the region, Canada will continue to take an active part in, and help strengthen, ASEAN-led mechanisms.

Canada firmly believes that when ASEAN is stronger and more effective, 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 in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 Canada's relationships with its Indo-Pacific allies and partners. 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 that 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 (IPS). ASEAN is central to Canada's IPS, which sets out an ambitious plan for Canada's increased engagement in the region over the next decade. The Strategy outlines five interconnected strategic objectives:

1. to promote peace, resilience and security;
2. to expand trade, investment and supply chain resilience;
3. to invest in and connect people;
4. to build a sustainable and green future; and



5. to position Canada as an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific.

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy is supported by dedicated new investments totaling nearly CA\$2.3 billion to enable unprecedented engagement in the region. For more information about Canada's IPS, please visit: <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique/>

Stability in this region directly impacts the safety, prosperity and security for all 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 since 2022, including launches of inter-continental ballistic missiles and military satellites. We are also concerned by indications that North Korea may be preparing to resume nuclear testing. Canada deeply regrets that stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the broader region has been further undermined by North Korea's military cooperation with Russia. Russia's procurement of North Korean ballistic missiles and other weapons fuels its war against Ukraine and contravenes UN Security Council resolutions. We call on the DPRK and Russia to cease unlawful arms transfers and urge the DPRK to respond to the numerous and genuine offers to return to diplomacy.

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.

Canada calls on North Korea to cease all malicious cyber activities and to abide by the norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. Canada has committed CA\$2.6 million in 2023 and 2024 for projects to build capacity to counter North Korea's cybersecurity threats, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

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 preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) efforts require a global approach that combine both domestic and international efforts. These efforts must be guided by the principles of respect for human rights, the rule of law, and must be partnership-driven. 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, and the international rules-based order, as well as integrating gender considerations and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into CT and P/CVE initiatives.

Canada's CT efforts link domestic and international efforts, including intelligence, policing, criminal justice, diplomacy, military assistance, as well as development and capacity-building. Canada supports international CT efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, encompassing not only security-based CT but also preventive measures 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 international fora that addressing issues related to CT and P/CVE, including: the UN, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), 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 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 internet, 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, radicalization and violent extremism through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. Addressing the underlying conditions conducive to such threats is essential.

Since 2022, there has been a significant increase in Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content (TVEC) online. This was mainly caused by layoffs in the tech industry which impacted trust and safety teams. Canada's primary engagement with industry about TVEC is through the government-led Christchurch Call to Action (Christchurch Call), and through the industry-led Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT). In 2022 Canada announced CA\$1.9 million in funding over three years for 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 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 (COC) 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 contribute to initiatives that help to build confidence, restore trust in the region and advance a comprehensive COC.

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.

## **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. Under our Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada is committed to seeking membership in the ADMM-Plus, strengthening our diplomatic presence in the region and increasing security cooperation with ASEAN and its members. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Canadian Department of National Defence (DND) will continue to implement the Strategy under Operation HORIZON, with a focus on increasing engagement through persistent deployment of Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) ships, increased and diversified CAF participation in regional and multinational exercises and activities, tailored defence training to strengthen resilience and interoperability, advancing Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) initiatives, as well as cyber defence cooperation.

Canada recently updated its defence policy in April 2024, titled *Our North, Strong and Free* (ONSAF). ONSAF builds on commitments made through Canada's previous 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE), which outlined our intentions to deepen relations in the Indo-Pacific, and continues to bolster our commitments as made in the Indo-Pacific Strategy. ONSAF outlines how we will increase our defence spending to ensure our military has the tools, equipment, and training needed to keep Canada strong and resilient in an increasingly unstable global environment. It is focused on restoring credible deterrence at home in Canada and in North America and makes clear that our priorities for international engagement are Europe, as a strong NATO Ally, and the Indo-Pacific, as an engaged and reliable partner. ONSAF commits to increasing engagement on WPS agenda in the Indo-Pacific region as one of the key objectives we share with many of our Indo-Pacific partners.

Through the implementation of the IPS, Canada has increased contributions to the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula. Ongoing personnel contributions to United Nations Command and consistent participation in regional humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief efforts are two tangible examples. Canada is actively strengthening defence relations and cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific, including through the expansion of its network of defence attaché offices, establishment of new defence policy advisors, maintenance of an enduring naval presence, and increase in its regional military contributions.

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, and in

2023 as observers to the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Maritime Security. Canada has also taken key steps to support the deepening of cooperation with ASEAN Member States' defence institutions by moving to establish new Memoranda of Understanding, Terms of Reference, and defence policy and military staff talks with them.

Canada's defence policy also reaffirms our commitment to capacity building projects and mutual education, training, and assistance through the Military Training and Cooperation Program (MTCP). The 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 training, staff officer training, multinational operational cooperation and professional development training as well as defence institution-building in select cases. There are 12 MTCP members within the Indo-Pacific, with over 4,000 candidates in this region having received sponsored training to-date. In 2023-2024, DND trained 395 personnel from the Indo-Pacific.

Through the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the MTCP is dedicating 15.92M towards defence capacity building programming in the region, with 6.6M earmarked for promoting Women, Peace and Security (WPS) between 2023 and 2028. This expanded programming will focus on advancing joint priorities and increasing defence cooperation through the provision of specialized training, which may include the provision of equipment, and generating platforms and opportunities to share knowledge, expertise and best practices.

Activities to date include an Integration of Women and Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces workshop with high-level panel discussion conducted in the Philippines in 2023-24, and another to be conducted in Indonesia in 2024-25, as well as sponsorship of subject matter expert visits. The MTCP also launched two multi-year projects, one dedicated to supporting the Philippines in maritime domain awareness, and the second providing tailored WPS training courses, Gender Advisors roundtables and senior leadership workshops, and a WPS train-the-trainer course.

In Canada's 2021-2022 fiscal year, Canadian federal government departments, including DND, 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 2022-2023 military expenditure in millions of Canadian dollars (CA\$)*

Resource Costs	Strategic Forces	Land	Navy	Air Force	Other military forces	Central support administration and command	UN Peacekeeping	Military Assistance and Cooperation	Emergency Aid to Civilians	Undistributed	Total
<b>1. Personnel</b>	-	4,618.4	2,048.3	2,622.9	836.9	5,815.1	1.4	1.5	-	-	15,944.5
1.1 Conscripts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.2 Active Military Personnel	-	2,663.2	1,063.3	1,613.4	509.1	2,180.8	1.1	-	-	-	8,030.9
1.3 Reserves	-	420.8	116.7	120.3	27.1	330.0	0.3	-	-	-	1,015.3
1.4 Civilian Personnel	-	283.2	380.3	132.3	74.5	2,258.7	-	1.5	-	-	3,130.5
1.5 Military Pensions	-	1,251.1	488.1	756.9	226.2	1,045.6	-	-	-	-	3,767.9
<b>2. Operations And Maintenance</b>	-	1,527.2	1,551.5	2,381.7	485.7	6,273.3	6.3	7.6	-	-	12,233.4
2.1 Materials For Current Use	-	446.8	426.8	506.4	131.7	270.2	1.5	0.1	-	-	1,783.5
2.2 Maintenance And Repair	-	151.0	303.9	1,100.4	9.1	254.4	0.0	-	-	-	1,818.8
2.3 Purchased Services	-	786.7	691.5	691.3	254.4	1,715.3	2.6	0.1	-	-	4,142.0
2.4 Other	-	142.7	129.3	83.7	90.5	4,033.4	2.1	7.3	-	-	4,489.1
<b>3. Procurement And Construction (Investments)</b>	-	892.6	2,085.2	1,077.4	63.2	1,201.5	-	-	-	-	5,319.8
3.1 Procurement	-	676.6	1,948.7	942.9	58.3	984.8	-	-	-	-	4,611.4
3.1.1 Aircraft And Engines	-	-	-	663.2	-	7.2	-	-	-	-	670.4
3.1.2 Missiles, Including Conventional Warheads	-	-	0.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5
3.1.3 Nuclear Warheads And Bombs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.1.4 Ships And Boats	-	-	1,797.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,797.0
3.1.5 Armoured Vehicles	-	218.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	218.5
3.1.6 Artillery	-	2.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0
3.1.7 Other Ordnance And	-	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.7

Ground Force Weapons												
3.1.8 Ammunition	-	265.6	11.6	99.9	9.4	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	386.5
3.1.9 Electronics And Communications	-	31.9	22.8	57.5	13.6	78.8	-	-	-	-	-	204.7
3.1.10 Non-Armoured Vehicles	-	28.0	0.1	1.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29.8
3.1.11 Other	-	128.9	116.7	120.7	35.2	898.8	-	-	-	-	-	1,300.3
<b>3.2 Construction</b>	-	<b>216.0</b>	<b>136.5</b>	<b>134.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>216.7</b>	-	-	-	-	-	<b>708.4</b>
3.2.1 Air Bases, Airfields	-	-	-	100.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.5
3.2.2 Naval Bases And Facilities	-	-	132.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	132.2
3.2.3 Electronics Facilities	-	2.8	-	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.8
3.2.4 Personnel Facilities	-	-	-	-	-	66.2	-	-	-	-	-	66.2
3.2.5 Training Facilities	-	6.7	-	-	-	3.7	-	-	-	-	-	10.4
3.2.6 Other	-	206.5	4.3	33.0	4.9	146.8	-	-	-	-	-	395.4
<b>4. Research And Development</b>	-	<b>2.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>192.1</b>	-	-	-	-	-	<b>209.5</b>
4.1 Basic And Applied Research	-	0.1	0.4	0.1	1.0	2.4	-	-	-	-	-	4.0
4.2 Development, Testing And Evaluation	-	2.6	0.4	0.6	12.2	189.7	-	-	-	-	-	205.5
<b>5. Total (1+2+3+4)</b>	-	<b>7,040.8</b>	<b>5,685.8</b>	<b>6,082.7</b>	<b>1,399.0</b>	<b>13,482.1</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>9.1</b>	-	-	-	<b>33,707.2</b>

*Note: Total 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.

#### **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 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 CA\$76 million in weapons 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 (MBT), 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\$36 million since 2013). Phase III of the MBT Programme was announced by Prime Minister Trudeau at the ASEAN Summit in September 2023 as a key deliverable under the "Security Partnerships" pillar of the IPS and was officially launched in March 2024. The WTRP has supported Lao PDR during its 2024 ASEAN Chairmanship is developing an ASEAN Leaders Declaration on Biosafety and Biosecurity (to be adopted at the ASEAN Summit in October 2024).

The WTRP has also committed over CA\$32 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 being implemented by the IAEA will build regulatory infrastructure for

nuclear security and radiation safety in 28 countries in the Indo-Pacific region over five years.

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 believes that the ARF can help promote the universal implementation of the AP in the Indo-Pacific region.

On efforts toward the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, Canada is providing \$360k to support Cambodia in its role as president of the Ottawa Treaty's 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference, which will host the *Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World*, to be held in Siem Reap from November 25-29, 2024. As well, Canadian funding is supporting a multi-year initiative to advance universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty in the 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 (SOMTC), 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 to support Indo-Pacific countries, including ASEAN Member States, in their efforts to reduce threats from transnational organized crime and international terrorism.

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 Organized 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 – Canada's interest in securing full membership was announced by Foreign Minister Joly in 2019 and is part of commitments under Canada's 2019-2024 *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking*. 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.

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.

As part of the *Strategic Objective to Enhance Peace, Security and Resilience* under the Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada will invest \$47M in capacity building assistance to

Indo-Pacific countries, including ASEAN Member States, from 2023-24 to 2027-28. These efforts will target five (5) thematic priorities:

- Maritime, Land and Air Border Security,
- Illicit Financial Flows,
- Cybercrime and Cybersecurity,
- Legislative and Judicial Assistance, and
- Community Based Preventative Efforts.

Programming will aim to address security issues that impact both the ASEAN region and Canadian security, including money laundering, terrorist financing, drug trafficking, crimes that affect the environment, violent extremism, smuggling of migrants, and child sexual exploitation and abuse online. Specific programming initiatives will be announced later in 2024.

In addition to the Indo-Pacific programming envelope, through Global Affairs Canada's Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program (ACCBP), Canada also works with regional partners to address transnational organized crime issues in the region, often in coordination with international organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and INTERPOL. ACCBP programming has historically focused on 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.

For example, Canada is 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 International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)'s 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. The ACCBP in its contribution to the GRIDS Program, has been focusing on encouraging Private and Public sector partnerships, continuing its support to the INCB and its policy initiatives.

Finally, Canada is a strong proponent of the international anti-corruption architecture and is a member of the APEC Anti-Corruption and Transparency Experts Working Group (ACTWG). Canada also supports regional efforts to advance anti-corruption

commitments under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC): the most comprehensive and universal multilateral framework (at 190 States Parties), with five pillars of prevention, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange.

#### **d. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

The increasing intensity and frequency of natural disasters underscore 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 was pleased to co-chair the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ARF ISM-DR), together with Lao PDR and China from 2019 to 2023. During this time, Canada reiterated the importance of finding synergies between the numerous disaster relief initiatives in the region and underlined the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive approach in all aspects of disaster management, from preparedness through responses and recovery.

Since then, Canada continues to encourage 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**

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 promoting the efficient and secure movement of goods and people.

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 with 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.

#### **f. Cyber (ICT)**

The ARF region is susceptible to cyber threats emanating from both state and nonstate 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. In recent years, cyber security has become a growing concern. Critical infrastructure is a prime target for both cybercriminals and state-sponsored actors. Ransomware incidents are publicized on an almost daily basis both in Canada and around the world. Essential services are being disrupted, from hospitals and schools to municipalities and utility providers. Personal and financial data are being stolen, traded, or leaked online, and online spaces are being flooded with false information and divisive rhetoric.

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) on ICTs in 2016 was undertaken to support the process specifically on ICT (cyber) issues. To this end, Canada seeks to Co-Chair the ISM on ICTs, along with the Philippines, beginning in August 2024.

The ARF has also put in place an Open-Ended Study Group (OESG) on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of

ICTs. The ARF's work on cyber CBMs, including the establishment of an ARF Points of Contact Directory for Security of and in the Use of ICTs, and information exchanges on the protection of critical infrastructures have 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 the UN norms for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, and the implementation of CBMs. Canada welcomes the efforts undertaken by the ARF to support the implementation of the UN norms, and 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 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 cyber development programs specifically tailored for ASEAN countries. The project will 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 against a large-scale cyber incident. 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 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.

#### **g. Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and Peace and Stabilization Operations Program in Asia**

Canada recognizes that everyone, women and men, girls and boys, (including gender non-conforming and intersex persons in all their diversity) experience conflict differently. They also bring different perspectives to conflict resolution and

peacebuilding. Women broaden the WPS agenda beyond that of the warring parties, and the link between their meaningful participation and sustainable peace agreements has been established. Yet, women are often excluded from formal peace processes. As a result, Canada has been a staunch supporter of the WPS agenda from its inception and co-sponsored the 31 October 2000 landmark resolution on Women Peace and Security: UNSCR 1325. Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (CNAP) guides the efforts of over nine federal departments and agencies to implement the agenda both at home and internationally. Its third iteration (CNAP3) was launched on 28 March 2024.

Internationally, Canada continues its efforts under the WPS umbrella, for instance through the time-bound, multi-stakeholder, Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations (Elsie Initiative). Today, more than 70,000 military and police peacekeepers serve in UN peacekeeping missions, however women account for less than 8% of uniformed personnel. This is why Canada launched the Elsie Initiative in 2017: to increase uniformed women's meaningful participation in peace operations. Now a global initiative, Canada and its allies continue efforts to advance the Elsie Initiative, both because it is the right thing to do from a gender equality perspective, and because diversifying talent and perspectives can produce more effective outcomes in peacekeeping missions.

The Initiative will seek to expand its engagement in the ASEAN region going forward, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to grow the pool of champions for women in peacekeeping in the region. Engagement under the umbrella of the broader Initiative has thus far been largely via the UN-hosted Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations. The UN-hosted Elsie Initiative Fund is an innovative and multilateral fund that aims to use collective resources to support and incentivize efforts by Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) and the UN to accelerate the pace of change in advancing the meaningful participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations. In the ASEAN region, Cambodia is receiving funding from the UN-hosted Elsie Initiative Fund to undertake a gender assessment to identify specific barriers to and opportunities for the meaningful participation of women in the Cambodian Armed Forces and their deployment to UN peace operations. Additionally, the Third Programming Round of the Fund, which closed on September 8, 2023, demonstrated a continued demand for the Fund, with applications received from institutions in 22 T/PCCs (including Indo-Pacific countries) and two UN missions.

To date, the UN-hosted Elsie Initiative Fund has received contributions and pledges of US\$35.7M 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 rotating seats on the Steering Committee occupied by Member States currently include Rwanda, the UK and Senegal. Canada encourages all T/PCCs in the ASEAN region to consider contributing to the Fund or to submit a letter of interest in future programming cycles. More information is available at [www.elsiefund.org](http://www.elsiefund.org).

Canada is further 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, as well as 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 recent years there has been a strong momentum to advance the WPS agenda within ASEAN to ensure that women participate and lead efforts in peace processes. ASEAN member states have taken more significant strides in implementing the WPS agenda and Canada has been pleased to support these efforts. With a contribution of CAD \$8.5 million, Canada supports the 'Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion' project (2021-2026), implemented by UN Women.

Canada contributed to the development of the first-ever ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS – which was launched in December 2022 under Cambodia's leadership as ASEAN Chair. The project aims to advance and strengthen the WPS agenda in the ASEAN region, including by building regional-level expertise and accountability across ASEAN creating a shift whereby WPS is systematically integrated into ASEAN policies and frameworks; and supporting the localization of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS. The project intends to build regional level capacity, and includes country-level components in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Canada was pleased to join the first ASEAN WPS Summit: High-Level Dialogue to Advance the Implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on WPS, hosted by Indonesia (as ASEAN Chair) in July 2023.

Canada leveraged the 5-year program to engage other stakeholders and ensure a sustainable progress and outcomes for WPS. As a result, we are supporting several complementary initiatives. As announced by Prime Minister Trudeau at the ASEAN-Canada Summit in 2022, Canada's Mission to ASEAN hosted a series of WPS Dialogues in 2023 to help advance the WPS agenda and generate discussion amongst ASEAN stakeholders. In addition, through Canada's Fund for Local Initiatives Canada invested directly in ASEAN institutions: (1) Canada supported the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) and the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR) so ASEAN-IPR could develop trainings to enrich the expertise of ASEAN policy makers on WPS; (2) Canada supported the Women Parliamentarians of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (WAIPA) to promote Women's Political Participation; and, (3) Canada supported the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center in promoting gender equality and inclusion in mine action.



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 (GNWP), 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 from 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.

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.

#### **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.

In the 2023-2024 inter-sessional year, Canada continued its active support to the ARF agenda across all lines of effort. In November 2023, Canada was proud to serve as co-chair of the 5<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues alongside Vietnam, Australia, the European Union and New Zealand. For the 2024-2025 Inter-sessional year, Canada is proposing an ambitious list of initiatives. Canada is seeking consensus in co-chairing the Inter-sessional Meeting on Security of and in the use of Information and Communications

Technology (ISM on ICTs Security) with the Philippines, and Canada is co-chairing the 6<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS with Vietnam, Australia, the EU and New Zealand. Finally, Canada also proposes a second ARF Workshop on Women, Peace and Security to mark 25 years of the WPS Agenda to be co-chaired by Vietnam.

#### **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 activities and exchanges between members. The ARF had the most success through bringing together policy practitioners and experts to address and share knowledge on specialized security issues that require interagency cooperation across borders.

The ARF's inclusive membership highlights the importance of the ASEAN and broader 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 on 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.

Canada would like to conclude our contribution to the 2024 Annual Security Outlook by thanking the ARF and ASEAN for its tireless work on all the important issues discussed above, and for contributing to a positive, inclusive and harmonious ASEAN and Indo-Pacific region. Canada is pleased to have contributed to the development of the ARF community that works together to protect the region's vitality and continued economic growth.

## **CHINA**

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

In 2023, Asia maintained overall peace and stability. The regional economy generally stepped onto the track of recovery and regional cooperation steadily moved forward, making our region the most dynamic and promising in the world. Countries in the region showed an even stronger desire for stability, cooperation and development. In the meantime, the resurgence of the Cold War mentality, escalating geopolitical tensions, complex hotspot issues and the persistence of non-traditional security threats such as terrorism and natural disasters had increasingly prominent impacts on Asia. In particular, a certain country intensified efforts to build a network of military alliances and a variety of exclusive circles, and increased military and security deployment, introducing nuclear proliferation risks into the region, and provoking confrontation and conflict, which has seriously undermined regional peace and stability.

The reality in today's world is that all countries rise and fall together, and the only way to address challenges is through mutual assistance and win-win cooperation. Safeguarding peace and stability and promoting development and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific remains an arduous task that requires greater collective efforts from all parties. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. All parties should jointly uphold these principles, safeguard the hard-won peace and stability in Asia, promote regional prosperity, and continue to make Asia's contribution to peace, security, prosperity and progress of the world.

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

China firmly pursues a national defense policy that is defensive in nature. 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 defense policy. Commitment to never seeking hegemony, territorial expansion or spheres of influence is a salient feature of China's defense in the new era. China has the best record on peace and security 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, COVID-19 response, and so on. History has proven and will continue to prove that the Chinese military is always a staunch force for world peace.

China conducts active defense. It adheres to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-strike response. China pursues coordinated progress of national defense and economic development, and decides on an appropriate scale of defense expenditure. In recent years, in a bid to safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests and to better fulfill China's international responsibilities and obligations as a major country, the Chinese government has in general kept a reasonable and steady growth of defense expenditure on the basis of sustained and sound economic and social development, so that its national defense capabilities and economic strength

grow in sync. In 2024, RMB 1.69 trillion yuan is earmarked as defense expenditure in China's general public budget.

By engaging in international military cooperation, the Chinese military contributes to defending China's sovereignty, security, and development interests, and to safeguarding world peace and stability and building a community with a shared future for mankind. China faithfully acts on the Global Security Initiative (GSI). It strengthens military exchanges and cooperation with Russia, including those under existing bilateral mechanisms, and deepens mutual trust between the two militaries; it maintains overall stability in the military-to-military relations with the United States, and urges the US side to work in the same direction with China in implementing the common understandings reached by the two presidents, keeping lines of communication open, addressing disputes and differences properly, and strengthening crisis management; it actively conducts international cooperation on the implementation of arms control treaties, resolutely safeguards national strategic interests, and upholds global strategic stability. China sent high-level military delegations to the Shangri-La Dialogue, and hosted the 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum.

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

#### **1. Relations with Major Regional Countries and Cooperation Mechanisms**

##### **(1) China-ASEAN Cooperation**

China always takes ASEAN as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy. It firmly supports ASEAN's community building, supports ASEAN centrality in East Asian cooperation, and supports ASEAN in playing an even greater role in regional and international affairs. China has organized friendly exchanges between middle-aged and young military officers from China and ASEAN, actively participated in the exercises, training activities and assistance projects of various expert groups of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), and helped ASEAN strengthen its capacity building in such fields as counter-terrorism, demining, disaster relief, and military medical science.

##### **(2) China-Russia Relations**

China and Russia are each other's biggest neighbor and comprehensive strategic partner of coordination for the new era. As the world's two key major countries and permanent members of the UN Security Council, China and Russia enjoy a relationship grounded in a clear historical logic, driven by strong internal dynamics, and based on non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not targeting any third party. It has become a fine example for a new type of major-country relations.

Since the beginning of 2023, President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin have maintained close contact through in-person talks, phone calls, correspondence, and other communication channels. The two presidents have outlined top-level plans and made strategic arrangements for the bilateral relations, bringing stability and positive energy into a turbulent and changing world. President Xi and President Putin jointly

signed the Joint Statement on Deepening the China-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era. The two countries have kept close coordination on the global stage, firmly upheld the UN-centered international system and the international order underpinned by international law, actively safeguarded security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, promoted multipolarity and democracy in international relations, and worked for a more just and equitable global governance system.

### **(3) China-US Relations**

In November 2023, President Xi Jinping met with President Joe Biden in San Francisco at the invitation of the US side. The two presidents had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on strategic and overarching issues critical to the direction of China-US relations, drew up a future-oriented “San Francisco Vision” for the relationship, and reached important consensus and fruitful results, bringing stability and certainty to the world. Since the meeting, the two sides have actively promoted exchanges at all levels and dialogue and cooperation in various fields, and made some positive progress in such areas as diplomacy, military-to-military, economy and trade, finance, drug control, law enforcement, technology, climate change, health, and people-to-people exchanges. This is welcomed by the two peoples and all countries. It proves once again that stabilizing and improving China-US relations serves the shared interests of both countries and meets the common expectations of the international community.

At the same time, however, the United States is still treating China as its primary strategic competitor and the most consequential geopolitical challenge, and is still containing and suppressing China under the guise of competition. On issues concerning China’s core interests, including on Taiwan, economy and trade, technology, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea, it has continuously made erroneous statements and actions that interfere in China’s internal affairs and undermine China’s interests.

In April 2024, President Xi Jinping spoke with President Joe Biden on the phone at the request of the latter. President Xi stressed again that two big countries like China and the United States should not cut off their ties or turn their back on each other, still less slide into conflict or confrontation. The two countries should respect each other, coexist in peace, and pursue win-win cooperation. The relationship should continue moving forward in a stable, sound and sustainable way, rather than going backward. President Biden reiterated the five-no commitments, i.e. the United States does not seek a new Cold War with China; its objective is not to change China’s system; the revitalization of its alliances is not against China; the US does not support “Taiwan independence”; and the US does not seek conflict with China. On a positive note, he also stated that the US does not want to curtail China’s development and does not seek “decoupling” from China. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated these statements multiple times in their visits to China that followed, expressing the US desire to continue implementing the San Francisco understandings, maintain dialogue and communication, manage differences, promote cooperation, and keep US-China relations stable in the US election year.

#### **(4) China-Japan Relations**

The year 2023 marked the 45th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between China and Japan. On October 23, Premier Li Qiang and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida exchanged congratulatory messages. Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, attended and addressed the reception marking the occasion in Beijing. On November 16, President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco. The leaders of the two countries reiterated their commitment to the principles and consensus stipulated in the four political documents between the two countries, reaffirmed their commitment to comprehensively promoting a strategic relationship of mutual benefit, and agreed to build a constructive and stable China-Japan relationship fit for the new era, providing crucial political guidance for the development of bilateral relations in the next step.

#### **(5) China-India Relations**

In 2023, the relationship between China and India remained stable overall. High-level interactions guided the development of bilateral ties, and coordination and cooperation were carried out on bilateral and multilateral fronts. In June 2023, following a train derailment and collision accident in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, President Xi Jinping sent messages of condolences to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi respectively. In August, President Xi talked with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg at the latter's request. President Xi stressed that improving and growing China-India relations serves the common interests of the two countries and peoples, and is also conducive to peace, stability and development of the region and the world. The two sides should bear in mind the overall interests of this relationship, properly handle the boundary question and jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in border areas. In July, Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, met with External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in Jakarta on the sidelines of the foreign ministers' meetings on East Asian cooperation. Wang Yi noted that both sides should keep to the right direction of bilateral relations, keep pace with the trend of the world, and work to stabilize and improve China-India relations. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said that getting India-China relations back to normal serves the common interests of both sides. In July, Wang Yi met with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on the sidelines of the Meeting of BRICS National Security Advisers and High Representatives on National Security in Johannesburg. Wang Yi put forward suggestions including turning the important consensus of stabilizing China-India relationship reached by the two leaders into concrete policies. Ajit Doval noted that the future of China and India are closely intertwined, and both sides should work to reestablish strategic mutual trust and pursue shared development.

In 2023, China and India held three meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs and three 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 tensions in border areas. 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.

## **(6) Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

Since its establishment more than two decades ago, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been committed to upholding regional security and stability, and advancing the common development of all nations. It has sustained a sound and stable growth momentum. Guided by the Shanghai Spirit, SCO member states have continued to expand cooperation in the political, security, pragmatic, people-to-people and cultural fields, and actively engaged in exchanges. The big SCO family continues to expand and grow and the organization's global influence has risen significantly.

In July 2023, President Xi Jinping attended the 23rd meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State via video link. Leaders of SCO member states signed and issued the New Delhi Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. They also issued the statement on countering radicalization and the statement on digital transformation. In October, Premier Li Qiang attended the 22nd Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government in Bishkek. A joint communiqué was signed and issued, which approved multiple SCO cooperation documents and resolutions in the economic, trade and other fields.

## **2. Cooperation on Non-Traditional Security**

### **(1) Cooperation on Disaster Relief**

In 2023, China actively engaged in multilateral and bilateral cooperation on disaster relief in the Asia-Pacific region and officially established the Belt and Road International Cooperation Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management (BRIDRREM). China held the third China-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management and ASEAN-China Forum on Work Safety Cooperation, and provided disaster management capacity building programs. Under the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), China held the 21st Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief. It also conducted bilateral exchanges and cooperation on disaster relief with countries including Russia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar. The South China Sea Tsunami Advisory Center (SCSTAC) operated by China continued to offer public services to the region, and the Southeast Asian High-Resolution Marine Environmental Forecasting and Disaster Warning System helped ASEAN countries enhance their preparedness and response capacity.

The Asia-Pacific is a key region for the Belt and Road Initiative. China welcomes other Asia-Pacific countries to join the BRIDRREM. China is ready to strengthen communication and coordination with all parties to promote the development of

disaster management cooperation under the framework of ARF and other mechanisms. China 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.

## **(2) Cooperation on Maritime Security**

Peace and tranquility at sea bears on the security and development of all countries. The maritime policy stance of the Chinese government is highly consistent and stable. China is firm in safeguarding its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests. It is committed to properly resolving differences through dialogue and consultation, to upholding the international rule of law of the sea, and to promoting the building of a maritime community with a shared future. China stands ready to continue to work with other countries in the region to deepen dialogue, exchanges and practical cooperation, make concerted efforts to address traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges, and make oceans peaceful, tranquil, prosperous and sustainable.

In 2023, China actively participated in maritime security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and made active contributions to the maintenance of maritime security in the Asia-Pacific. China and ASEAN countries continued to fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), actively advanced consultations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), and carried out practical maritime cooperation. China actively participated in meetings and activities within ASEAN-led mechanisms and co-hosted the 14th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security with Cambodia.

China strengthened dialogue and communication with the US on maritime affairs. In November 2023, China and the US held the first round of consultations on maritime affairs and had an in-depth exchange of views on issues including maritime policies of the two countries, maritime situations, maritime security, maritime economy and maritime environment. China and Japan held the 15th and 16th rounds of high-level consultation on maritime affairs. China and the ROK held consultations on maritime-related issues and the 11th round of talks of the China-ROK Working Group on Maritime Boundary Delimitation Negotiations.

China attaches great importance to keeping sea lanes safe. It has continued to take an active part in regional cooperation mechanisms including the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). In 2023, a delegation of the Chinese government attended the 18th Annual Meeting of the Governing Council of the ReCAAP Information Sharing Center (ISC), and discussed with ReCAAP member states ways of combating piracy and armed robbery against ships and keeping sea lanes safe.

The South China Sea is a bridge of communication and a bond of peace, friendship, cooperation and development between China and its neighbors. Peace and stability in the South China Sea are vital to the security, development and prosperity of the countries and the well-being of the people in the region. To realize peace, stability,



prosperity and development in the South China Sea is the shared aspiration and responsibility of China and ASEAN countries, and serves the common interests of all countries.

In 2023, China and the countries directly concerned in the South China Sea actively engaged in dialogue and communication, properly resolved maritime differences and promoted maritime cooperation through bilateral maritime-related mechanisms, and worked together to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea. In March 2023, China and the Philippines held the 7th Meeting of the China-Philippines Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea. In July 2023, China and Viet Nam held the 16th round of consultations of the China-Viet Nam Working Group on Sea Area Outside the Mouth of the Beibu Bay and the 13th round of consultations of the Working Group for Consultation on Joint Maritime Development, to advance in parallel joint development and boundary delimitation work. In August 2023, China and Viet Nam held the 16th round of consultations of the Expert Working Group on Cooperation in Maritime Low Sensitive Areas, to actively carry out cooperation in low sensitive areas. In November 2023, China and Viet Nam held the meeting between heads of government-level negotiation delegations on border issues, and agreed to negotiate and sign a new maritime-related cooperation agreement as early as possible. In December 2023, China and Viet Nam held the 7th High-Level Working Meeting between the coast guards of the two countries and agreed to expand coast guard cooperation.

In the same year, China and ASEAN countries held two rounds of senior officials' meetings and four rounds of joint working group meetings on the implementation of the DOC, and achieved a series of important results. At the China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in July 2023, the parties announced that they had successfully completed the second reading of the COC and adopted the Guidelines for Accelerating the Early Conclusion of the COC. At the 21st Senior Officials' Meeting on the implementation of the DOC held in Beijing in October 2023, relevant parties announced the official launch of the third reading of the text of the COC and agreed to accelerate consultations with a view to reaching at an early date an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law.

### **(3) Counterterrorism Cooperation**

China is resolute in combating all forms of terrorism. The international community should foster a sense of a community with a shared future for mankind, support the UN in playing a central and coordinating role, take a holistic approach and address both the symptoms and root causes of terrorism, and oppose "double standards" in counterterrorism and politicization and instrumentalization of the issue of counterterrorism. Since 2023, in combating the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and other East Turkistan terrorist forces, China has continued to deepen and expand practical cooperation with neighboring countries, and constructively participated in multilateral cooperation mechanisms such as the UN, the SCO, BRICS, and the Global Counterterrorism Forum. China has participated in the 19th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime, and the ARF Seminar on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism.

#### **(4) 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 cooperation with other countries to prevent and combat transnational crime. Since 2023, countries in the Asia-Pacific region have assisted China in apprehending more than 800 fugitives from justice for economic crimes. China has continued to deepen cooperation in combating and managing cross-border gambling crimes, and has carried out several rounds of law enforcement cooperation with the Lancang-Mekong countries, Indonesia and the Philippines, achieving good results. China hosted the 14th Ministerial Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on Anti-Drug Cooperation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and attended the 45th Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies for Asia and the Pacific Region. China participated in the 8th ASEAN Plus China coordination meeting on drug control cooperation and the 16<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Plus China, Japan and the ROK working group meeting on drug control.

#### **(5) Cooperation on Cybersecurity**

China has always been a builder of, defender of and contributor to 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 has put forward the Global Initiative on Data Security, issued a China-League of Arab States Cooperation Initiative on Data Security, and reached the Data Security Cooperation Initiative of China+Central Asia (C+C5) 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 and international rule-making of cyberspace. China advocates formulating international rules governing cyberspace that are widely acceptable to all countries under the UN framework, and discussing the formulation of legally binding international instruments. China supports the UN in playing a leading role in global digital governance and rule-making, and actively participates in the process of formulating the Global Digital Compact and discussing the formulation of globally interoperable common rules.

China actively engages in dialogue and cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries on cyberspace, with a view to jointly maintaining peace and security in cyberspace. China has actively promoted the cybersecurity processes of BRICS, the ARF and the SCO, deepened bilateral cooperation in this field with such countries as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, and expanded practical cooperation with the rest of the world in such areas as digital technology and cyber infrastructure.

## **(6) Cooperation on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**

China is committed to the path of peaceful development and a nuclear strategy of self-defense, and keeps its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security. China firmly upholds the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime underpinned by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). China stands for and advocates the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, and undertakes not to use nuclear weapons first at any time or under any circumstances, and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-weapon-free zones unconditionally.

China has always believed 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 fulfill 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 conditions for attaining the ultimate goal of complete and thorough nuclear disarmament. China worked actively for the issuance by the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states of a joint statement on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races in January 2022. The joint statement emphasized that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and reaffirmed the commitment not to target nuclear weapons at each other or at any other country.

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

The Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone is of great significance to strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and promoting regional peace and stability, and is in line with the fundamental security interests of ASEAN countries. As a comprehensive strategic partner and amicable and close neighbor of ASEAN, China has always firmly supported the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone. China attaches great importance to the signing of the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, and is willing to take the lead in signing the Protocol. China appreciates the great deal of work that Indonesia did, as the rotating chair of ASEAN, in 2023 within ASEAN on the signing of the Protocol. China is willing to maintain close communication with ASEAN on this matter.

China has stood 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 fulfills 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 and comprehensive review process 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.

China actively advances regional cooperation on 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. In May 2023, China participated in the 14th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, and expounded on its policy and propositions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Japan's disposal of nuclear contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant bears on the global marine environment and public health. There is no precedent for discharging nuclear accident-contaminated water into the ocean, and there are no recognized standards for disposal. On August 24, 2023, the Japanese government, in disregard of international doubts and opposition, initiated the discharge of contaminated water of the Fukushima nuclear accident into the ocean. The Chinese side firmly opposes this. The ocean is the common heritage of all mankind. The Japanese government should fully respond to the concerns of the international community, engage in full consultations with neighboring countries in a sincere manner, and cooperate in establishing an independent, effective and long-term international monitoring arrangement with substantive participation of stakeholders.

The US, the UK and Australia have announced the establishment of AUKUS and advanced cooperation in nuclear submarines and other cutting-edge military technologies. This is typical Cold War mentality and will only stoke arms races, undermine the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and pose serious nuclear proliferation risks. It goes against the efforts to build a Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, and undermines regional peace and stability.

### **(7) Assistance and Cooperation on 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 donations, 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 200 million yuan worth of assistance, and trained over 1,000 mine clearance professionals. As a good neighbor, good brother and good friend of China's, ASEAN countries have been key recipients and partners of China's mine clearance assistance, and demining cooperation 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 2023, China continued to provide Cambodia and Laos with approximately RMB 30 million yuan in funding, mine detection equipment, and humanitarian supplies. In strict accordance with international mine-related policies, regulations, and standards, China provided a three-month systematic training program for a total of 40 mine clearance personnel from both countries. China continued to support ASEAN in strengthening regional cooperation in mine clearance, and in 2023, it dispatched two technical experts to the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center for the first time. With the support of the Chinese side, the second ASEAN High-Level Regional Meeting on "Enhancing Regional Cooperation and Resource Mobilization in ASEAN in Mine/ERW Action" was successfully held in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province from September 7 to 9, 2023. As co-chairs of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus Expert's Working Group on Humanitarian Mine Action, China and Cambodia jointly hosted the "Pure Homeland-2023" multinational joint demining operation from September 1 to 23. More than 300 people from 14 countries cleared over 3000 pieces of various types of ammunition debris, and discussed and revised standards such as the ASEAN Mine Clearance Standard Operation Procedures during the operation.

### **(8) Global AI Governance**

China has always attached great importance to the development and governance of artificial intelligence (AI). In 2021, China released the Ethical Norms for the New Generation Artificial Intelligence. In 2022, China submitted to the UN the Position Paper on Strengthening Ethical Governance of Artificial Intelligence. In July 2023, China promulgated the world's first piece of domestic legislation on generative AI, the Interim Administrative Measures for Generative Artificial Intelligence Services. In October 2023, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the Global

AI Governance Initiative at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

The Initiative systematically outlines China's approach to AI governance, focusing on the development, security, and governance of AI. The core content includes: adhering to a people-centered approach and the principle of developing AI for good, guiding AI in developing in a way that is beneficial to human civilization; upholding the principles of mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefit, opposing drawing ideological lines or forming exclusive groups to obstruct other countries from developing AI; advocating for the establishment of a testing and assessment system based on AI risk levels, and continuous efforts to make AI technologies more secure, reliable, controllable, and equitable; supporting developing global AI governance frameworks, norms and standards based on extensive consensus with full respect for policies and practices of countries, and supporting discussions within the United Nations framework to establish an international institution to govern AI; strengthening international cooperation with and providing assistance to developing countries to bridge the gap in AI and its governance.

The Initiative puts forward constructive approaches to issues regarding AI development and governance that are of interest to all, providing a basis for relevant international discussions and rule-making. China is ready to work with ASEAN and other parties for communication, exchange, and practical cooperation on global AI governance, in a bid to make AI technologies benefit humanity.

In 2023, China actively participated in global AI governance, advocating for respect for sovereignty and collaborative governance. China strongly supported UN Secretary-General António Guterres' proposal to establish an international institution for AI governance and recommended two Chinese experts to participate in the UN's High-Level Advisory Body on AI. With an open attitude, China engaged in policy communication and experience exchange on AI governance with the US, Russia, Europe, and developing countries. China participated in relevant summits held by the UK, the Netherlands, and the Republic of Korea. The Chinese side actively took part in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS GGE) meetings under the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and worked constructively for reaching a new mandate and adopting a brief substantive report by the expert group.

#### **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 interest, and take concrete steps to inject more vitality and impetus into confidence-building measures and activities and preventive diplomacy in various fields.

## **1. Uphold Multilateralism and Maintain an Open and Inclusive Regional Architecture**

China calls on ARF Participants to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and practice true multilateralism. ARF Participants 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.

## **2. Deepen Practical Cooperation and Tackle Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats in a Coordinated Way**

China encourages ARF Participants 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 Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) and the understandings reached at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, ARF Participants need to actively put forward practical cooperation projects, jointly ensure secure and smooth implementation of relevant 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.

## **3. 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 Participants 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**

### **1. Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

1. Over the past year, significant and concerning changes have unfolded in the security landscape of both Europe and Asia. The resurgence of conflict in Europe, exemplified by Russia's illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, has intensified tensions. Furthermore, the security situation in Myanmar has deteriorated following the military coup in February 2021. Additionally, the conflict in the Middle East and heightened tensions in critical maritime areas, such as the Red Sea, further exacerbate challenges to regional and global peace and security.
2. Military aggression, conflicts, weaponisation 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, drug trafficking), piracy, as well as supply chain disruption 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 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 elevated our relations to the level of a Strategic Partnership. In 2022, the EU and ASEAN celebrated 45 years of dialogue partnership. Following the EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit held in Brussels in December 2022, the EU hosted the 24th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in February 2024, alongside the EU Indo-Pacific Forum. In addition to ASEAN, the EU maintains close engagement with other Asian partners and aims to strengthen existing and future partnerships by offering tailored security cooperation.
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 stability and peace in the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait that are key for regional and global security and the economy. The display of force and increasing tensions in such regional hotspots



would 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 is concerned by incidents which have occurred in the South China Sea and 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 our citizens, invest more and better in capabilities and innovative technologies, fill strategic gaps and reduce technological and industrial dependencies, and 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 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.

## **2. National Security and Defence Policy**

### **a. Overview of National Security and Defence Policy**

10. Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine has brought war back to Europe and has given renewed impetus to progress on the EU's security and defence. As a manifest violation of international law and of the key principles of the UN Charter, including sovereignty and territorial integrity, Russia's war is a serious threat to all countries and the rules-based international order, not just to Europe. It 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 have witnessed that high levels of interdependence may be manipulated by terrorism, organised crime and 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 and 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.

11. 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 better able to 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. It makes concrete and actionable proposals, with a 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 aspects of security and defence policy and is structured around four pillars: act, invest, partner and secure.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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 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 to critical energy infrastructure as a key requirement to the accelerated digitalisation of the energy system.

16. 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.
17. Under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the EU takes a leading role in crisis management, conflict prevention and the strengthening of international security. It is an integral part of the EU's integrated approach towards crisis management, drawing on EU Member States and partners' civilian and military assets. Currently, some 3,500 military personnel and 1,300 civilian personnel are deployed around the world. Since the first CSDP missions and operations were launched in 2003, the EU has undertaken over 40 overseas operations, using civilian and military missions and operations in several countries in Europe, Africa and Asia. As of today, there are 23 ongoing EU CSDP missions and operations, including 13 civilian, 9 military and 1 CSDP civilian and military initiative. The two CSDP missions in Niger (EUMPM and EUCAP Sahel Niger) are in the process of closure. The most recent operation is Operation Aspides, launched to protect the freedom of navigation and safeguard maritime security, particularly for merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.
18. In addition, the EU devised the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) concept to boost its collective engagement by enhancing coordination of the Member States' existing 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.
19. The EU currently supports 66 projects under the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) on capability development and interoperability of forces, focusing on operational domains, such as cyber, land, maritime, air, space and training. Permanent Structured Cooperation remains a crucial framework for the 26 participating Member States to deepen their defence cooperation and increase the EU's ability to act and invest together. In November 2023, the Council launched the ongoing PESCO Strategic Review which should result in a stronger, more strategic and effective PESCO beyond 2025, adapting it further to the changing security environment.
20. 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.
21. 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.

22. As part of the implementation of the tailored-partnerships approach outlined in the Strategic Compass, the EU is striving to further develop and strengthen mutually beneficial security and defence partnerships with its Indo-Pacific counterparts. Operational cooperation, including expanded naval exercises between EUNAVFOR Atalanta and key partners in the region and the extension of Coordinated Maritime Presences, facilitates joint activities and enhances regional security.
23. Beyond these visible efforts, the EU strives to be a "smart enabler" for security and defence: a non-traditional security actor committed to enhancing its partners' capabilities through a tailored approach. We believe that our focus on non-traditional security domains, such as cyber, maritime security, counterterrorism, FIMI/transnational crime, humanitarian and disaster relief, and crisis management, brings tangible added value to our relationships with regional partners. Through initiatives like the ESIWA project, the EU contributes to the development of international expert networks and the enhancement of partner capabilities in non-traditional security domains. Projects like CRIMARIO (Critical Maritime Routes Indo-Pacific) are instrumental in developing a maritime transparency initiative that boosts maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean and enhances the capabilities of regional states. Our emphasis on non-traditional security domains significantly enriches our relations with regional partners

### **3. National Contributions to Regional Security**

24. 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.

#### **i. Counter-Terrorism**

25. The EU manages a network of Counter-Terrorism/Security Experts in 18 EU Delegations across the globe. In 2023, the EU co-chaired the Global Counter Terrorism Forum together with Egypt.
26. With ASEAN, the EU continues to actively engage on Counter-Terrorism through capacity building efforts and political dialogues. It holds regular bilateral security dialogues and consultations with ASEAN and its Member States on these issues. The 11th ASEAN plus EU Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime, held in Indonesia in June 2023, provided a good opportunity to engage at the regional level on CT and transnational crime issues, at a time when the EU is increasingly seen in the region as a longstanding and reliable partner.

27. An ASEAN-EU Regional Workshop was held in Indonesia in March 2023 on the Development of Promising Practices Related to Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration Programmes.
28. In the context of the ARF, the EU continued 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. This included co-chairing the 19th ARF ISM on CTTC in May 2023, which was the last edition of the ARF ISM on CTTC under the EU co-chairmanship.
29. Furthermore, following a 2021 regional workshop on Non-Profit Organisations and the risk that they can be abused for the financing of terrorism (Recommendation 8 FATF), future activities in South-East Asia are being discussed within the framework of the EU Global anti-money laundering (AML)/ combatting the financing of terrorism (CFT) facilities.
30. The EU will continue its efforts to support the criminal justice sector of South East Asian countries against terrorism, radicalisation, and the financing of terrorism from drug trafficking.
  - ii. Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament
31. 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.
32. 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 Weapons 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.
33. The EU promotes consistently the benefits and the contribution of the CTBT Treaty and its International Monitoring System (IMS) to peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as its civil applications (tsunami warning, nuclear emergency response, atmospheric research both in the context of aviation safety and climate change, etc.).
34. The EU deeply deplored the decision by Russia to revoke its ratification of the CTBT as well as its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric in 2023. The EU intends to keep on working with all States Party of the NPT genuinely committed to its purpose. As we were very encouraged by the constructive engagement of an overwhelming majority of States Party in the Working Group on further strengthening the NPT

review process at the Preparatory Committee of 2023, we fully support the continuation of this dialogue at the upcoming meetings, with appropriate time and space.

35. 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 highest safeguards standard including the conclusion of both the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) and its Additional Protocol (AP), as well as adherence to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) and 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.
36. 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 (the US, Canada, Australia, Japan) is essential.
37. In the context of the ARF, the EU co-chaired with Singapore the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Workshop on "Detection, Response and Deterrence of Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) Incidents" in Singapore from 26-27 June 2024. The workshop brought ARF members, as well as regional and international partners, together to enhance our collective understanding of CBR threats and emerging risks, take stock of relevant international legal instruments and conventions; share information on regional and international cooperation programmes and exchange
38. 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.
39. 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 preeminent global

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.

### **iii. Transnational Crime**

40. 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, drug trafficking and organised crime originating from Afghanistan will be a major priority in the coming years.
41. 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 human rights-oriented drug policy through cooperation with third countries, regions and international and regional organisations, while strengthening the commitment to development-oriented drug policies and alternative development measures.
42. Building on the EU Drugs Strategy, in October 2023 the EU presented the Roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime in order to more effectively respond to the unprecedented increase of illicit drugs available in Europe, in particular cocaine from South America. The document sets out 17 concrete actions in four priority areas: i) the European Ports Alliance to increase the resilience of ports against criminal infiltration; ii) dismantling high-risk criminal networks through facilitating financial and digital investigations, mapping the biggest criminal networks, reinforcing cooperation between specialised prosecutors and judges; iii) measures to prevent organised crime; and iv) working with international partners to confront the global threat, including through enhancing information exchange, joint operations on the main drug trafficking routes, and strengthening law enforcement and judicial cooperation with non-EU countries. These actions are to be implemented in 2024 and 2025.
43. 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 a programme through its Internal Security Fund with multi-disciplinary international cooperation to identify and tackle Vietnamese trafficked persons 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).

44. 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 the judiciary; and strengthening the relevant knowledge base. So far, the EU launched Anti-Smuggling Operational Partnerships with Niger (July 2022) Morocco (July 2022), Western Balkans (November 2022) and Tunisia (April 2023) to support partners in building law enforcement and judicial capacities to more effectively respond to irregular migration and smuggling.
45. In order to provide a new impetus to effectively and comprehensively counter migrant smuggling, as announced by the President of the European Commission in her 2023 State of the Union Speech, on 28 November 2023 the EU launched a Call to Action for a Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling. The Alliance, together with an anti-smuggling legislative package, published by the European Commission on the same day, is to step up the EU's fight against migrant smuggling within and outside the EU, in line with the EU Action Plan Against Migrant Smuggling 2021-25. The Alliance will facilitate (international/regional) cooperation to more effectively address smuggling along three strands: i) prevention of migrant smuggling; ii) response to migrant smuggling; and iii) alternatives to irregular migration as a key deterrent for smuggling.

#### **iv. Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Relief and Preparedness**

46. The EU stands ready to provide humanitarian assistance to populations affected by humanitarian crises in ASEAN Member States when disasters strike and additional assistance is required to support national and regional capacities. To strengthen regional capacities, the EU also supports the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) through the EU-SAHA<sup>1</sup> Programme from 2019 to 2025. The EU is working closely with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management to reinforce EU-ASEAN cooperation in the field of disaster management and emergency response.
47. In 2024, the European Commission has allocated EUR 48 million in humanitarian assistance to address the most urgent 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 address 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 almost EUR 400 million in humanitarian and development funding to respond to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Southeast Asia.
48. Additional specific support has been provided to address the frequent natural disasters in the Philippines and, in particular, in Mindanao. Overall, the EU has

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<sup>1</sup> Integrated Programmes in Enhancing the Capacity of the AHA Centre and ASEAN Emergency Response Mechanisms.



been a staunch partner to the Philippines and has provided over EUR 160 million since 1996. 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.

49. The EU systematically mainstreams Disaster Preparedness (DP) 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.
50. 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 DP in ASEAN countries since 1995 and is 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.

#### **v. Maritime Security**

51. The EU is strongly committed to the 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.
52. The EU remains active in the context of the ARF. For instance, on 9 November 2023 it co-chaired with Vietnam, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand the 5<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to address Emerging Maritime Issues.
53. In the context of its Indo-Pacific Strategy, the EU seeks to ensure enhanced naval deployments by its Member States in the region. It aims to fight piracy, deter illicit activities and contribute to the protection of freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with UNCLOS. The EU also wishes to conduct more joint exercises, including multilateral ones, and joint port calls with partners.
54. The EU will continue to contribute to regional maritime security through capacity building as well, in particular through the Critical Maritime Routes in the Indo-Pacific (CRIMARIO) project. 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 lines of communication in the region and with the EU, via increased information sharing through the IORIS platform, while also improving inter-agency cooperation at national and regional level. In addition, CRIMARIO supports partners by enabling exercises at sea and tabletop exercises to test procedures and improve operational effectiveness.

55. Robberies and theft remain the most common threat to shipping in South-East Asia and the Pacific. While piracy is largely suppressed, it has not disappeared, nor have its underlying factors. This shows the need for continued joint efforts and vigilance at sea and in ports. At the same time, maritime security in the region is at increasing risk due to repeated clashes over competing claims; their intensity causes increased concerns for the region and the broader international community. Disputes between countries in the South China Sea must be resolved through peaceful means in accordance with and on the basis of the UN Charter and the UNCLOS, including the Arbitration Award of 2016.
56. The EU has continued to contribute to maritime security and safety through its Operation ATALANTA. This operation – in combination with the wider international response and implementation of best practices, including private armed guards on-board ships – reduced for most of 2023 the number of attacks at sea in the Western Indian Ocean region. Against the backdrop of Houthi illegal attacks on shipping and seafarers in the Red Sea, pirates sought to exploit the crisis, increasing attacks against shipping. Operation Atalanta has actively employed its assets to provide security at sea. The EU extended Operation Atalanta by two years until the end of 2024, with an expanded area of operations and a broader mandate against illegal activities at sea. Operation ATALANTA has stepped up its naval cooperation including through exercises with, Japan, US, India and others.
57. On 19 February, the EU launched Operation ASPIDES to protect freedom of navigation and to safeguard maritime security, especially for merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and in the Indian Ocean. Within its defensive mandate, ASPIDES is to provide maritime situational awareness, accompany vessels, and protect them against possible multi-domain attacks at sea.
58. In addition, the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) concept and its implementation in the North Western Indian Ocean as a Maritime Area of Interest (CMP NWIO) 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 partners.

## **Role of ARF**

59. 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.
60. 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.

61. 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 the ARF and other regional fora, such as the ADMM+ and the East Asia Summit.

## INDIA

### 1) Overview of the Regional Security Environment

- India's security is linked to the wider Indo-Pacific region, which is a seamless space from the western coast of North America to the eastern shores of Africa. The Indo-Pacific Ocean system carries an estimated 65 percent of world trade, 90 percent of world's energy and contributes 60 percent 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 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 India's 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 recognition of the convergence between IPOI and ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), and for its implementation, ASEAN and India adopted the 'Joint Statement on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific for Peace, Stability, and Prosperity 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. At the 20th ASEAN India Summit in 2023, ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Maritime Cooperation as a means to explore and promote maritime cooperation between ASEAN and India was adopted.
- India is actively engaged with various Indo-Pacific frameworks including, 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 became an Observer at Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) in March 2020. India is also a part of various other multilateral constructs. Through participation in such fora, India contributes effectively to holistic maritime security of the Indo-Pacific Region.
- 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 and that the negotiations are not prejudicial to the legitimate rights and interest of the nations that are not party to these discussions.

### **3) National Contributions to Regional Security**

#### **i) 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 20th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ARF ISM on CTTC), in May 2024.
  - India and ASEAN have endorsed a Work Plan on Cooperation to Combat Transnational Crime (2023-2027) and are in the process of its implementation.
  - 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 terrorism, 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 endeavor.
  - 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 participated 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 in 2023.
- ii) **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 organizing 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 was the Plenary Chair of WA for a period of one year from 1 January 2023 further establishing 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 put forth a futuristic vision for regional co-operation in the recent



UNRCPD regional consultations on United Nations Programme of Action on SALW at Kathmandu, 23-25 January 2024 and also attended the preparatory Committee meeting for the 4th Review Conference on SALW from 12-16 February 2024. Indian women Army officers participated in “Fostering Gender-Responsive Small Arms Control: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific Region on the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and the ATT”, held on 15 February 2024.

- Under the India-ASEAN framework, India organized Training Programme for Women Peacekeeping Officers in New Delhi in December 2023.
- India is committed to refine the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), wherein India has been recently added as the 11<sup>th</sup> member of the TRB (Technical Review Board) of IATG. Towards safer and secure ammunition management, India is/was an active participant in the OEWG on Conventional Ammunition (under the UN auspices) and was instrumental in the drafting of a Global framework on Ammunition Management to prevent diversion to unauthorized recipients, including criminals and terrorists. The global framework has been adopted by UNGA in the 78th session on November 2023. In line with the commitment towards women-led development, increasing number of women officers from India have contributed effectively in the field of global ammunition management

### **iii) 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. Rapid emergence of crypto-financing, access to Dark Web and other newer technologies will continue to have significant implications for counter terrorism efforts. 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.

- 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 and ASEAN have undertaken collaborative efforts in countering threats in the cyber space, including the ASEAN-India Webinar on Cyber Threat hunting conducted by CERT-In with ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre for Excellence (ASCCE) in November 2022 and ASEAN-India Virtual training course on Cyber Forensics was conducted in February 2024
- India 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 organizations including some ARF members participated.
- 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.

**(iv) Humanitarian Assistance 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. India has also been a credible regional partner with demonstrated capabilities to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) materials for affected people. Indian Naval ships and aircraft are regularly deployed to facilitate security to Indian and international maritime community, provide HADR assistance and respond to any maritime incident in the region.
- India continues to provide HADR to countries across the globe including Nepal in the aftermath of the earthquake of November 2023; Myanmar post cyclone Mocha through Operation Karuna; setting up of a hospital at Iskenderun, Hatay Province following the earthquakes in Turkiye and Syria in February 2023; Papua New Guinea in the aftermath of volcanic eruptions of December 2023; medical assistance to Zambia and Fiji; and general and emergency medical aid to Malawi, Palau, Peru, Sao Tome & Principe, Suriname, Ukraine, Guatemala and relief materials to Afghanistan. India also sent humanitarian aid and disaster relief material to the Palestinian people in two tranches, comprising of medical aid and disaster relief material
- India and Indonesia were the co-chairs of the 4th Cycle of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus Experts Working Group (ADMM-Plus EWG) from 2021-2023.

- Annual Joint Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief Exercise (AJHE) – Chakravat 2023 was hosted by Indian Navy in Goa (Oct 2023). Representatives from 08 neighbouring countries were also present.

**v) 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.
- 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'. The 2022, 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 last edition of the exercise, with participation of all members of IONS, was conducted in November 2023.
- 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 Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), 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, 2023-24 India along with the USA, Philippines and Papua New Guinea (Host) co-chaired the third part of "ASEAN Regional Forum Training Series and Best Practice Manual on International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS)Code in Port Moresby, PapuaNew Guinea from 23-24 April 2024. The second edition of this training was held in Mumbai in April 2023. Effective ISPS Code implementation remains a crucial component of protecting maritime infrastructure from malicious behavior such as piracy, armed robbery at sea, smuggling, trafficking in persons, and acts of terrorism. This three-part

training series has helped identify capacity gaps, provide technical assistance, and facilitate exchanges on regional best practices to help foster a secure, resilient, and prosperous maritime domain. As a culmination of this line of effort, countries worked together to develop a digital regional Best Practices Manual that will gather exemplary models and practices from ports within the ARF, including practical drills and exercises, and will identify key resources for effective port management and security.

- India along with Indonesia and the United States of America co-chaired the “15th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) on Maritime Security (MS), at Jakarta on 06 May 2024. The meeting focused on addressing issues under the three main guiding topics of the ARF Workplan for Maritime Security 2022 – 2026, namely: (1) Maritime Security and Cooperation; (2) Environmental Management and Conservation; (3) Protecting Critical Maritime Infrastructure.
- India participated in the 11th EAMF on 02 August 2023 in Bali, Indonesia and discussed Blue Economy Cooperation and Maritime Stability and Cooperation.
- 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 numerous white shipping information exchange agreements and partnerships with regional organizations, as well as international liaison officers from various countries; IFC-IOR has emerged as the nodal IFC in the region. The IFC-IOR in addition to alerting all the partners on maritime incidents also publishes monthly, half yearly and yearly reports on its website. In the recent past, IFC-IOR and Indian Navy, were at the forefront of operations to monitor, share information and counter piracy incidents.
- 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. In 2023, India sent a ship into Gulf of Guinea (GoG) for preventing Illicit Maritime Activity (IMA) in the region. India also conceptualized and participated in the inaugural India-EU Maritime collaboration in the GoG which included exercises in the maritime domain and jointly held training for regional partners. India participated in the Plenary meeting of the Friends of Gulf of Guinea (G7++ FoGG) from 05-07 December 2023 at Dakar, Senegal where India’s role in enhancing the maritime security in the region was appreciated.
- Anti-Piracy Patrol in Gulf of Aden/Red Sea & Indian Ocean and India’s Response: More than hundred Indian Naval ships have been deployed in the Gulf of Aden since commencement of anti-piracy patrols in 2008. 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 current situation,

with unprecedented cases of piracy and armed attacks in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean Region, is a cause for grave concern. India has had successful interventions in the cases of MV Ruen, MV Lila Norfolk, MV Abdullah and rescue from Somalian Pirates of fishing vessels AL Naeemi, Iman and Omari and Al-Kambar 786 as well as fishing trawler Lorenzo Putha 04 (in connection with Seychelles and Sri Lanka) and many others. In addition, Indian Navy executed, and continues to carry out, numerous boarding operations against suspicious vessels in the area to thwart piracy attempts.

- The maiden ASEAN- India Maritime Exercise (AIME) was conducted from 02-08 May 2023. The exercise was co-hosted by the Indian Navy and Singapore Navy and witnessed participation from ASEAN Navies.
- MILAN is one of the largest multilateral exercises in the IOR, hosted by Indian Navy biennially. MILAN 24 was conducted from 19-27 Feb 2024 at Visakhapatnam with participation of more than 50 countries.
- 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. Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh led India's participation at the 10th ADMM Plus meeting in Indonesia from 16-17 November 2023. India also participated in the 20th ADMM-Plus EWG on Maritime Security.

#### **4) 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 centrality 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**

### **1. OVERVIEW OF THE REGIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

Indonesia underscores the significance of ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), in maintaining relevance amidst the uncertainties and increasingly complex dynamics of global geopolitics. This emphasis is embodied in the theme of Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship for 2023, "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth." This theme reflects two key aspects: first, the necessity for ASEAN to prepare for future regional and global challenges, and second, the importance of sustaining regional strength as a global driver of economic growth.

The theme also highlights ASEAN's commitment to addressing the urgent needs of its people by focusing on critical issues that span not only the political-security pillar but also the economic and socio-cultural pillars. These issues include food and energy security, health and financial stability, as well as enhancing the effectiveness and capacities of ASEAN's institutions.

Given its prioritization of maritime security in the region, Indonesia's perspective on the regional security outlook is shaped by its identity as an archipelagic nation, its strategic geographical location, and its vision to be the Global Maritime Fulcrum. Southeast Asian waters and the surrounding areas are crucial to the region's economy, trade, transportation, and communication.

In this context, Indonesia continues to emphasize the concrete implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), complementing the focus of its 2023 Chairmanship theme. The AOIP's strategic objective of building trust and fostering a paradigm of inclusive collaboration will be actively pursued across all pillars of the ASEAN Community to ensure peace and stability.

Potential conflicts, such as disputes arising from overlapping claims in the region, must be addressed in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Indonesia places great importance on peace and stability in the South China Sea, despite not being a claimant state in the territorial disputes in the area. It is crucial that all parties refrain from activities that may escalate tensions and fully and effectively implement the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC).

Indonesia is committed to actively promoting the completion of the Code of Conduct (COC) through practical, effective, and actionable means as swiftly as possible. This will serve as a governance framework for the behavior of ASEAN Member States and China in the South China Sea. Indonesia will continue to provide leadership to advance substantive progress and facilitate discussions on various contentious issues in the negotiations.

Indonesia reaffirms that the freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, along with other lawful uses of the seas, is a fundamental right of all States protected by international law, particularly UNCLOS 1982. It is paramount for

Indonesia to uphold UNCLOS 1982 as the legal basis for determining sovereign rights and legitimate interests over maritime areas.

Indonesia stresses the importance of constructive dialogue as a core component of the peace process, which is essential for achieving regional and international peace and security. Security issues both within and outside the region, including the dire situation in the occupied land of Palestine and the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, impact our region and should be addressed as international concerns through inclusive and constructive engagement between the parties, in accordance with international law.

Regarding nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, Indonesia believes that the involvement of an independent and competent body, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in the verification process is crucial for achieving the permanent denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Indonesia's participation in multilateral treaties, such as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), underscores its commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament.

Indonesia reiterates that United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions are means rather than ends and must be well-targeted and reviewed periodically to be effective. Indonesia is committed to implementing multilateral sanctions in accordance with its national laws and regulations, while not recognizing unilateral sanctions. Indonesia asserts that Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), as defined by UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/3284-B, pose a threat to the existence of all nations, humanity, and global peace, security, and stability.

## **2. NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

### **A. Overview of National Security and Defence Policy**

The relationship between global security and national defense is often reciprocal, though it can sometimes be symmetrical or asymmetrical. National policies must be adaptive and relevant to the current global context, especially to address the increasingly complex and multidimensional challenges that present both traditional and non-traditional security threats. These threats encompass terrorism, radicalism, separatism, armed rebellions, natural disasters, border violations, sea piracy, resource theft, epidemics, cyber attacks, espionage, trafficking, drug abuse, as well as conventional warfare and armed conflicts. Domestic conditions are intricately linked with the strategic environment, influenced by ideological, political, economic, socio-cultural, and security factors. These developments pose significant challenges in managing national defense.

Indonesia adheres to an independent and active foreign policy, believing that neighboring countries, as friends, share a commitment to promoting regional security and stability. Establishing a common perspective is essential to minimize potential issues in international relations, including in both bilateral and multilateral forums.

To achieve national goals, Indonesia relies on a total defense system involving all citizens and national resources, each playing a specific role. This involvement is driven by a shared love for the homeland and a collective commitment to serving national interests. Maritime defense is guided by the concept of Indonesia as the Global Maritime Fulcrum, which directs citizens in understanding national goals, interests, defense nature, defense systems, functions, and fundamental principles.

Indonesia actively promotes peace and enhanced cooperation in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions through the ADMM and ADMM-Plus frameworks. As the Chair of ASEAN in 2023, Indonesia's chairmanship theme for ADMM and ADMM-Plus is "Peace, Prosperity, and Security." Priorities for this chairmanship include maintaining ASEAN unity and centrality, ensuring ASEAN remains united and dignified, driving regional interests, and keeping ASEAN an open and inclusive region. This involves cooperation not only with partner countries but also with nations beyond the region, aiming to make ASEAN a pillar of regional and global peace and prosperity. Additionally, Indonesia emphasizes upholding international law and prioritizing dialogue to resolve internal and external issues with a spirit of brotherhood to secure the ASEAN community.

Indonesia has been committed to promoting broader cooperation and Indonesia's efforts to implement such commitment is reflected in the deliverables of its chairmanship such as the Concept Paper on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific from a Defense Perspective, the Jakarta Joint Declaration of the ADMM for Peace, Prosperity, and Security, and the Joint Statement by the ADMM-Plus on Women, Peace, and Prosperity.

Indonesia continues to contribute to regional counter-terrorism efforts through the ASEAN Our Eyes (AOE) framework. Recently, Indonesia chaired the 8th Meeting of the Working Group of the AOE, on 13 March 2024, hosted by Singapore.

As the co-chair of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group (EWG) on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) with India for the 2021-2024 cycle, Indonesia and India successfully conducted a Table-Top Exercise and Field Training Exercise on HADR from October 15-20, 2023, in Yogyakarta. This exercise focused on enhancing the capacity of ADMM-Plus countries to provide humanitarian assistance during a pandemic. For the 2024-2027 cycle, Indonesia and the United States are committed to co-chairing the ADMM-Plus EWG on Military Medicine.

In the maritime sector, Indonesia recognizes the importance of safeguarding its maritime zone and the need for skilled investigators to enforce the law effectively. Through Government Regulation Number 13 of 2022 on the Implementation of Security, Safety, and Law Enforcement in Indonesian Waters and Jurisdictional Areas, Indonesia has established a framework for collaboration among various institutions, including the Sea and Coast Guard (KPLP), the National Police (Polair), the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL), and the Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA). The synergy among these institutions is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of preventive and law enforcement measures.



Indonesia values multilateralism, as evidenced by its active participation in international organizations such as the United Nations. Indonesia served as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from January 2019 to December 2020 and has been involved in UN Peacekeeping Operations since 1957, when it first deployed military personnel to the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) in Egypt. Indonesia continues to contribute proudly, deploying both military and police personnel as peacekeepers.

Indonesia's involvement in UN Peacekeeping Operations reflects the mandate of the 1945 Constitution's Preamble, which emphasizes active participation in maintaining world order based on freedom, lasting peace, and social justice. This commitment has become a cornerstone of Indonesia's diplomacy, particularly during its Security Council membership. As of June 2024, Indonesia has contributed 2,717 personnel to eight out of 23 UN missions, including UNIFIL (Lebanon), UNSOM (Somalia), UNFICYP (Cyprus), MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo), MINUSCA (Central African Republic), UNMISS (South Sudan), MINURSO (Western Sahara), and UNISFA (Abyei-Sudan).

Indonesia's peacekeeping contingents include a notable number of female personnel, currently 193, who serve in various roles including troops, military staff, Formed Police Units, individual police officers, and medical professionals. Their presence is crucial for effective community engagement and the protection of civilians, especially women, girls, and children.

Indonesia's peacekeeping contributions underscore its role as a major enabler of UN peace operations. Looking ahead, Indonesia is committed to strengthening its support for UN Peacekeeping initiatives, aiming to assist host countries in building lasting peace and development. Indonesia has also focused on enhancing its Peacekeeping Center in Sentul as an international hub for regional training and leveraging civilian capacities, including women's participation, in peacekeeping missions. Recent efforts include hosting the 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting from June 24-26, 2024, in Jakarta and Bogor, Indonesia. This meeting aimed to improve the performance, safety, and security of UN peacekeeping operations through better training and capacity building.

Indonesia encourages the inclusion of civilian experts in peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding missions to address the increasingly multidimensional nature of conflict situations. In this regard, Indonesia actively supports the development of civilian capacities (CivCap) at multilateral, regional, and national levels.

Indonesia has given 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.
- Proposed 9 Issue Papers in the COE Manual Working Group 2023 which focused on the topic of reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment.
- 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) in 2023.
- 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 and on 2023 with Rwanda, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom on Protection of Civilians and Strategic Communication.
- Together with Japan and Ethiopia, Indonesia has successfully co-hosted the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial 2021 that raised the issue on partnership and capacity building.
- One of the co-sponsors of UN Security Council Resolution 2518 (2020) and 2589 (2021) on Safety and Security of Peacekeepers.
- Hosted various international trainings, which among others include UN Triangular Partnership Phase II (5 June 2023 – 14 July 2023), UN Logistic Officers Course (12 – 23 June 2023), Regional Pre-Assessment Mission Training for Mission Services (AMS) (22 May 2023), and Formed Police Unit (FPU) workshop.
- The chair of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network (APCN) after the chairmanship was transferred from Vietnam in the APCN Workshop, held on the 12 – 16 June 2023.
- The co-chair of 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting with Japan (24th – 26th June 2024), in Jakarta and Bogor, Indonesia. The meeting raised the importance of training and capacity building of peacekeepers to enhance their performance, safety and security.

## **B. Data contribution to ARF Arms Register**

- i. Total number of active personnel in national armed forces, as of 2023

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.

ii. Total number of reserve personnel in national armed forces, as of 2023

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 (Pusdikowad) hosts 50 personnel.

### **3. NATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL SECURITY**

#### **I. NATIONAL LEVEL**

##### **A. Counter-Terrorism**

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

On January 6, 2021, Indonesia adopted Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2021, establishing the National Action Plan (NAP) to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism for the period 2020–2024. The primary goal of the NAP is to protect citizens from violent extremism leading to terrorism by addressing its underlying drivers, specifically: (1) conducive conditions and structural contexts, and (2) the radicalization process, including "push and pull factors." The NAP is structured around three key pillars: (1) prevention, which encompasses national preparedness, counter-radicalization, and deradicalization; (2) law enforcement, which includes the protection of witnesses and victims, and strengthening the national legislative framework; and (3) international partnership and cooperation.

The NAP comprises 130 action lines, predominantly focused on prevention efforts. This action plan is a systematic and coordinated program implemented by various ministries and agencies at the national level, as well as regional and local governments at the subnational level, in accordance with their respective responsibilities. Civil society organizations (CSOs) also participate to ensure a comprehensive, whole-of-government, and whole-of-society approach.

To monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Action Plan, a Joint Secretariat was established, consisting of representatives from six ministries and agencies tasked with coordinating among relevant bodies as outlined in the Presidential Regulation. The Joint Secretariat conducts biannual meetings to assess progress and prepares reports for the President on the outcomes of NAP implementation at the end of each year. These reports are also made available to the public to ensure transparency and accountability.

To support effective reporting on the National Action Plan, the Joint Secretariat utilizes I-K hub on CT/VE (Indonesian Knowledge Hub), a digital platform providing data and information on NAP implementation progress.

Over the first four years of NAP implementation (2021–2023), 122 out of 135 actions (90.4%) have been successfully completed, with ongoing efforts to address remaining actions :

**First Pillar (Prevention Efforts):** 91.8% of actions related to national preparedness, counter-radicalization, and deradicalization have been implemented.

**Second Pillar (Law Enforcement, Protection of Witnesses and Victims, and Strengthening the National Legislative Framework):** 84.8% of actions have been completed.

**Third Pillar (Partnership and International Cooperation):** 93.7% of actions have been successfully implemented.

Additionally, to enhance local-level implementation of the NAP, nine provinces and eight cities/regencies have adopted Local Action Plans, known as RAD PE.

With regards to strengthening the NAP implementation in 2024, several follow-up actions will be pursued :

- 1) **Enhancing Local Implementation:** Strengthen local-level NAP implementation through the development of Local Action Plans.
- 2) **Coordination with Key Agencies:** Coordinate with Bappenas (National Development Planning Agency) to include violent extremism in the RPJMN (National Medium-Term Development Plan) 2025-2029 and work with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights to ensure continuity of the NAP.
- 3) **National Resilience Programs:** Enhance the National Resilience Program through the seven Priority Programs of the National Counter-Terrorism Agency.
- 4) **Comprehensive Evaluation:** Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of NAP implementation from 2020-2024 and formulate the next phase of the NAP for the period 2025-2029.
- 5) **Engaging Private Sector and Media:** Involve the private sector and media in preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) efforts to strengthen the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, particularly in addressing increasingly complex challenges.

- 6) **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Continue collaborating with all stakeholders to advance various NAP actions that remain to be implemented.

## **B. Maritime Security**

Indonesia prioritizes maritime issues due to its imperative to protect its extensive ocean and sea territories. The threats posed by illegal exploitation of marine resources, such as through illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and environmental degradation, present significant challenges to maritime security that Indonesia must continually address due to their evolving nature.

At the national level, Indonesia has undertaken efforts to progressively adapt its laws to combat IUU fishing. For instance, the Law on Corruption Eradication is utilized to address the economic losses associated with illegal fishing activities. Additionally, Indonesia is committed to closing gaps in its national legislation to mitigate potential threats to maritime security and to enhance investment in the fisheries sector, particularly in the processing industry.

In the past two years, Indonesia has worked closely with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to tackle the rising number of criminal cases. The National Police have identified a growing incidence of petty theft and have implemented a strategy that includes intensifying patrols and promoting patrol hotlines in ten areas particularly prone to such thefts. This effort, supported by the IMO, has led to a significant reduction in criminal cases and a decrease in petty theft incidents in the identified hotspots.

## **II. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

### **A. The Role of Indonesia in AMMTC and SOMTC**

As the voluntary lead shepherd on counter-terrorism issues within ASEAN, Indonesia remains steadfast in 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. This plan underscores ASEAN's dedication to fostering cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration in combating terrorism and violent extremism, demonstrating the highest level of engagement from various sectoral bodies to date.

During Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2023, five additional documents were produced:

1. Labuan Bajo Declaration on Advancing Law Enforcement Cooperation in Combating Transnational Crime.
2. ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation in Protecting and Assisting Witnesses and Victims of Transnational Crime.

3. ASEAN Declaration on Developing Regional Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) Capability to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (PCRVE).
4. ASEAN Declaration on Combating Arms Smuggling.
5. ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against Trafficking in Persons 2023-2028.

Additionally, Indonesia has successfully executed several projects in 2023 and the first quarter of 2024 with external parties and dialogue partners, aligning with various indicative activities in the Bali Work Plan 2019-2025.

In the first quarter of 2024, SOMTC Indonesia, in collaboration with ASEAN Dialogue Partners, initiated two Concept Notes for ASEAN projects under the SOMTC mechanism to support the Bali Work Plan's implementation:

1. The ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Workshop on Good Practice Approaches for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and Their Families.
2. The ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Workshop on Good Practice Approaches to Empower Youth and Enhance Their Capacity to Prevent the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism.

Following the international travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic, Indonesia successfully hosted the 3rd Bali Work Plan Multi-Sectoral Task Force (MTF) Meeting and the 3rd ASEAN Partners Meeting in Bali on June 8, 2023, to further support and advance the Bali Work Plan's implementation.

The 3rd Bali Work Plan MTF Meeting highlighted several key milestones, including an increase in the number of indicative activities from 113 recorded at the 2nd MTF Meeting to 117. The meeting also noted that a total of 46 indicative activities (39.32%) had been addressed by relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies, organs, and entities.

Breakdown of progress by pillar:

**First Pillar** (Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism): 25 activities out of 70 planned (35.71%) have been implemented.

**Second Pillar** (Counter Radicalisation and Promote Deradicalization): 6 activities out of 15 planned (40%) have been completed.

**Third Pillar** (Law Enforcement and Strengthening National Legislation Related to Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism): 8 activities out of 22 planned (36.36%) have been executed.

**Fourth Pillar** (Partnership and Regional Cooperation): 7 activities out of 10 planned (70%) have been carried out.

This progress is expected to increase as Indonesia anticipates further updates from several ASEAN sectoral bodies, organs, and entities that have expressed interest in reporting on their Bali Work Plan implementation.

To continue monitoring and supporting the Bali Work Plan's execution, Indonesia, with the support of ASEAN Dialogue Partners, will conduct the 4th Bali Work Plan Multi-Sectoral Task Force (MTF) Meeting and the 4th ASEAN Partners Meeting tentatively in the third quarter of 2024.

## **B. The Role of Indonesia in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)**

In a broader regional context, Indonesia has played a pivotal role within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). In 2019, Indonesia advocated for the adoption of the ARF Statement on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism. Additionally, in 2020, Indonesia supported the ARF Statement on the Treatment of Children Recruited by or Associated with Terrorist Groups. These documents have advanced efforts across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond to address violent extremism conducive to terrorism and to improve the treatment of children associated with or recruited by terrorist groups.

Furthermore, in the realm of countering terrorism financing, Indonesia, in collaboration with the European Union and Laos, successfully co-chaired the ARF Workshop on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism. Held in Bali from March 8-10, 2023, this workshop aimed to enhance knowledge and capacity to tackle the security risks associated with money laundering and terrorist financing. The focus was on preventing the financing of terrorism through non-profit organizations, in line with the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) Recommendation 8.

## **C. International Context**

Following the adoption of the ARF Statement on the Treatment of Children Recruited by or Associated with Terrorist Groups, Indonesia believes that additional efforts are needed to address violence against children effectively. It is crucial to strike a balance between public security and the rights of children.

Additionally, Indonesia's resolution on the "Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist Groups, Including Those Who Are Recruited and Exploited by These Groups," was adopted by consensus at the 33rd Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) Meeting, held in Vienna from May 13-17, 2024. The resolution, supported by 36 co-sponsoring countries including Australia, the United States, Brazil, Dominica, the Philippines, Italy, Japan, Canada, Morocco, and 27 European Union member states, underscores the global commitment to addressing the plight of children associated with terrorist groups, who are primarily considered victims.

The adoption of this resolution reflects the world's recognition of the need for serious attention to this issue. Indonesia views the treatment of children associated with terrorist groups as a significant contribution to counter-terrorism efforts. As stipulated by the resolution, intergovernmental expert groups are to convene to develop principles and guidelines for the treatment of children associated with terrorism. These

guidelines will serve as a reference for countries worldwide. The first meeting is scheduled to take place in Indonesia in February 2025. The participation of ARF member countries in this process is highly encouraged.

#### **D. Measures against Terrorist Financing**

Indonesia remains committed to continually strengthening its Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terrorism financing (CTF) regime. This commitment is underscored by Indonesia's recent achievement of becoming a full member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing. This milestone was attained during the FATF Plenary Meeting held in Paris, France, on Wednesday, October 25, 2023, chaired by FATF President Mr. T. Raja Kumar. This recognition reflects international acknowledgment of the effectiveness of Indonesia's regulations, coordination, and implementation of its AML-CTF regime, as well as its efforts in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The FATF is an international forum dedicated to establishing global standards for AML and CTF, addressing other issues that threaten the integrity and stability of the international financial system. As a full member, Indonesia's status is elevated to be on par with other G20 member countries, reinforcing its position within the global financial system. This membership is anticipated to enable Indonesia to make significant contributions to the FATF's objectives.

From a law enforcement perspective, Indonesia's FATF membership enhances international cooperation by leveraging the strong support of the FATF member network to combat cross-border money laundering and terrorism financing effectively. Consequently, the Indonesian National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) remains deeply committed to synergizing efforts to prevent and eradicate money laundering, terrorism financing, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Indonesia.

In reference to the ARF Annual Security Outlook 2023, Indonesia has provided data on its methods for preventing terrorist financing in the administrative sector from 2017 to 2023. During this period, asset freezing measures raised approximately Rp. 790 million, while the total amount raised through insurance policies was Rp. 98 million.

#### **E. Non-proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament**

##### **National Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540**

Indonesia remains committed to the total and complete prohibition of transferring all equipment, information, materials, facilities, and resources related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as well as to the provision of assistance in nuclear, biological, and chemical scientific and technological fields to non-State actors. This commitment is evident through Indonesia's active participation in multilateral negotiations aimed at strengthening non-proliferation efforts and advancing disarmament.

Indonesia's dedication to these goals is reflected in various initiatives. In 1971, Indonesia, along with the founding members of ASEAN, declared Southeast Asia a



Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality. This commitment has been further reinforced through Indonesia's ratification of key international treaties, including the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons, the 1998 Chemical Weapons Convention, the 1997 Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, the Codes of Conduct and Additional Protocol to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the 2014 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Indonesia is currently finalizing the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and has expressed political commitment to the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, including its Supplementary Guidance. This commitment highlights Indonesia's shared interest in managing the risks associated with high-activity radioactive sources, given their widespread use throughout the country. The strategic geographical location of Indonesia poses challenges, as the trade of radioactive materials could threaten national, regional, and global security. Therefore, effective cooperation at national, regional, and international levels is essential to mitigate the risks of radioactive material smuggling and illicit trafficking.

Recognizing the serious threat posed by illicit trafficking in radioactive materials, the President of Indonesia has initiated the installation of radiation portal monitors (RPM) at international ports, airports, and cross-border posts. As of now, RPM equipment has been installed at five key locations: Tanjung Priok (Jakarta), Tanjung Emas (Semarang), Tanjung Perak (Surabaya), Bitung (Manado), and Soekarno-Hatta (Makassar).

Indonesia continues to advocate for the non-proliferation of export controls, a commitment reflected in national laws such as Law No. 10/1995 on Export Control, Law No. 15/2003 (amended by Law No. 5/2018) on the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism, and Law No. 9/2008 on Chemical Substances for Chemical Weapons. This national implementation is supported 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 also amending Law No. 10 of 1997 on Nuclear Energy to enhance coordination on nuclear security by streamlining the duties and functions of relevant authorities.

Enforcement actions in Indonesia include monitoring and controlling regulations and permits, conducting inspections, and implementing the nuclear material inventory accounting system managed by the Indonesian Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency and other relevant agencies. Routine inspections ensure the verification of inventory, including monitoring quantity, location, ownership, and the movement of materials. These inspections also cover waste management.

As an archipelagic country, Indonesia faces unique challenges in nuclear security. To address this, Indonesia continues to strengthen its coordination efforts through the I-CoNSEP (Indonesia Center of Excellence on Nuclear Security and Emergency

Preparedness), established in 2014. This initiative aims to enhance national capabilities in nuclear security and emergency preparedness through improved stakeholder coordination, training, technical support, and infrastructure development.

I-CoNSEP aligns with the concept of Nuclear Security Support Centres (NSSC) promoted by the IAEA and similar initiatives by the European Union through the Instrument for Stability (IfS), which supports the establishment of Chemical-Biological-Radiological-Nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence.

In terms of addressing financing activities related to Resolution 1540, Indonesia became a full member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on October 27, 2023. This membership signifies international recognition of Indonesia's effective regulation, coordination, and implementation of anti-money laundering measures, as well as efforts to prevent the financing of terrorism and the proliferation of WMD.

Within ASEAN, Indonesia actively participates in ASEANTOM, which is focused on implementing action plans across its technical working groups, including those on Radiological and Nuclear Security. Indonesia has also initiated the draft for a Model Legislation for Nuclear Security and Safeguards within ASEANTOM to assist ASEAN member states in developing their legislative frameworks for nuclear security and safeguards.

### **Non-proliferation/NPT Regime**

Indonesia reaffirms its commitment to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. The country believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and essential for strengthening international peace and security. Non-proliferation derives its legitimacy from the broader goal of nuclear disarmament. Pursuing non-proliferation while neglecting nuclear disarmament obligations is both counterproductive and unsustainable. Indonesia emphasizes that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilateral, universally negotiated, comprehensive, and non-discriminatory agreements.

Indonesia continues to advocate for the universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and urges states that are not yet parties to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear states. Consistent with the ASEAN Political-Security Blueprint 2025, Indonesia envisions Southeast Asia not only as a nuclear weapons-free zone but also as a region free from all other weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, Indonesia is committed to intensifying efforts with ASEAN and nuclear-weapon states (NWSs) to address all outstanding issues concerning the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty, with the aim of achieving the signing and ratification of the SEANWFZ Protocol by the NWSs as soon as possible.

### **Disarmament**

Through the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), Indonesia advocates for nuclear disarmament. The country believes that nuclear deterrence doctrines must be reconsidered, as nuclear disarmament's objective cannot be achieved while major nuclear-armed states continue to enhance their arsenals as a

deterrence factor. Indonesia also underscores the obligation under Article VI of the NPT to pursue negotiations in good faith toward nuclear disarmament under transparent, strict, and effective international control.

Indonesia is concerned about the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, including upgrading, refurbishing, or extending the service life of nuclear weapons and related facilities. Such modernization measures could trigger a new arms race and undermine the value of previous reductions in nuclear arsenals.

Indonesia was among the first countries to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on September 24, 1996, the day it was opened for signature. The CTBT is viewed as a key element in the international regime for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As an Annex II country, Indonesia ratified the CTBT through Law No. 1 of 2012, a timely action following ASEAN Member States' negotiations with NWSs on their accession to the SEANWFZ Protocol at the 19th ASEAN Summit in Bali in November 2011.

To support the implementation of the CTBT, Indonesia's Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency, in cooperation with the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency, has installed radiological monitoring stations at several locations:

1. Lembang, Bandung, West Java (AS040)
2. Jayapura, Papua (AS041)
3. Sorong, Papua (AS042)
4. Kappang, South Sulawesi (AS044)
5. Baumata, East Nusa Tenggara (AS045)

These stations provide radiological data to complement the seismic data from CTBT stations in the aforementioned areas, enhancing monitoring capabilities for nuclear weapon testing.

As the ASEAN Chair 2023, Indonesia gave special attention to two issues related to disarmament within the ambit of ASEAN:

1. First, reviving the discussion toward the signing of the Nuclear Weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). To this end, Indonesia convened four meetings of the Working Group of the Executive Committee of the SEANWFZ Commission.
2. Second, Indonesia reinvigorated ASEAN's efforts in tabling the Biennial UN General Assembly Resolution on the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty) after being absent in the last three cycles (2017, 2019, 2021). The UNGA Resolution 78/39, adopted on 4 December 2024, reiterates the commitment of ASEAN to progress towards general and complete disarmament of nuclear weapons.

## **Non-Proliferation**

Indonesia holds that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and essential for international peace and security. The legitimacy of non-proliferation derives from the overarching goal of nuclear disarmament. Efforts to address non-proliferation while disregarding disarmament obligations are counterproductive and unsustainable. Indonesia stresses that proliferation issues are best addressed through multilateral, universal, comprehensive, and non-discriminatory agreements.

The country continues to advocate for the universality of the NPT and urges non-signatory states to accede to the treaty. Consistent with the ASEAN Political-Security Blueprint 2025, Indonesia envisions a Southeast Asia that is not only a nuclear weapons-free zone but also free from all other weapons of mass destruction. Indonesia is committed to advancing efforts to resolve all outstanding issues related to the SEANWFZ Treaty and to ensure the signing and ratification of its Protocol by NWSs, as outlined in ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together.

## **Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy – Civil Nuclear Safety and Security and Regional Partnership**

Indonesia believes that non-proliferation policies should not undermine the inalienable rights of states to acquire, access, import, or export nuclear materials, equipment, and technology for peaceful purposes. Each state has the sovereign right to develop, research, and use nuclear energy, including the full national nuclear fuel cycle, for peaceful purposes without discrimination, and to engage in the exchange of equipment, material, and scientific and technological information for peaceful nuclear uses.

Indonesia is dedicated to ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear energy while maintaining high standards of safety, security, and safeguards. The country follows additional protocols and accountability practices in compliance with IAEA guidelines.

A regional concern remains the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which poses a threat to global security, stability, and peace. Indonesia believes that WMDs endanger every nation and humanity as a whole.

## **F. Transnational Crimes**

### **Illicit Drug Trafficking**

Indonesia confronts the complex challenges of drug abuse and illicit trafficking with a multifaceted approach. The country recognizes that addressing these issues requires not only comprehensive strategies but also stringent and effective law enforcement measures against drug traffickers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the link between drug trafficking and other organized crimes, including human trafficking, corruption, and arms smuggling. Indonesia remains committed to fulfilling its obligations under relevant conventions and

the 2009 Plan of Action, employing robust law enforcement tactics to address these interconnected issues.

From 2019 to 2021, drug abuse rates in Indonesia increased. National prevalence data for 2021 shows a rise of approximately 0.15%, from 3.41 million people (1.80%) to 3.66 million people (1.95%). Additionally, Indonesia has become a major target for international narcotics distribution networks. These trends highlight the urgent need for comprehensive efforts, including stringent law enforcement against drug traffickers.

As of June 2023, there are 1,212 types of new psychoactive substances (NPS) reported globally (according to EWA UNODC), with 91 identified in Indonesia. Of these, 85 NPS are listed in the Ministry of Health Appendix Number 36 of 2022, while six others remain unregulated.

Indonesia actively participates in international and regional efforts to combat drug trafficking. This includes involvement in the 66th Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna (March 13-17, 2023) and hosting the Extraordinary Session of the Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) Asia and the Pacific in Bali, October 2023.

In the fight against drugs, the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) employs a multifaceted approach:

1. Soft Power: Prevention, community empowerment, and rehabilitation.
2. Hard Power: Eradication efforts.
3. Smart Power: Development and analysis through information technology.
4. Cooperation: National, regional, and bilateral collaborations.

These approaches are integrated into the national action plan for the Prevention and Eradication of the Abuse and Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics and Their Precursors (P4GN), aiming for a drug-free Indonesia (BERSINAR).

In terms of rehabilitation, BNN focuses on improving accessibility and capabilities of rehabilitation institutions, enhancing the capacity of the rehabilitation workforce, and elevating the quality of services. These strategies aim to improve the quality of life for individuals with substance use disorders, thereby fostering their productivity and economic growth.

BNN employs the Community-Based Intervention (CBI) method, providing accessible rehabilitation services within communities. The CBI approach addresses the treatment gap in areas lacking formal rehabilitation facilities. In 2022, BNN recorded 9,783 outpatients, 1,570 inpatients, and a total of 2,357 patients treated using the CBI method.

To address drug trafficking, Indonesia has established a national interdiction task force comprising relevant national agencies. Regionally, Indonesia initiated the ASEAN Seaport Interdiction Task Force in 2016 to combat transnational drug trafficking via sea routes and prevent drug syndicates from utilizing ASEAN seaports.

Indonesia believes that addressing the global drug problem requires a zero-tolerance stance, a comprehensive and balanced approach, and respect for each country's sovereign rights. In this regard, Indonesia adopted the ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016–2025 to guide efforts in combating drug activities and mitigating their societal impact. The country completed the Mid-term Review of this Work Plan in 2021 to assess and analyze the implementation of strategies from 2016 to 2020.

International cooperation remains crucial in deterring criminal syndicates and drug traffickers. With a spirit of shared responsibility, Indonesia has established agreements and collaborations with other countries, including judicial cooperation for arresting perpetrators of organized narcotics crime through extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA).

### **Trafficking in Persons and People Smuggling**

Combating trafficking in persons is a high priority for Indonesia due to the significant number of recorded victims, predominantly Indonesian migrant workers sent abroad through illegal channels, particularly in domestic work and the fisheries sector.

In response, the Indonesian government has undertaken reforms to strengthen efforts against trafficking. Indonesia is a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, since 2009.

Regionally, Indonesia, in collaboration with Australia, has established and co-chairs the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime. This initiative strengthens cooperation in preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking. The Bali Process, attended by 49 participants including 43 countries, 2 jurisdictions, and 4 international organizations, is the only Regional Consultative Process (RCP) involving countries of origin, transit, and destination. It provides a platform for dialogue and information-sharing on irregular migration issues. The Bali Process will celebrate its 20th Anniversary in 2022 and host the 8th Ministerial Conference.

Along with other ASEAN countries, Indonesia has ratified the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which entered into force on March 8, 2017.

Nationally, Indonesia has enacted anti-trafficking legislation focusing on prevention, prosecution, victim protection, and international cooperation. The Task Force for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons, comprised of relevant government agencies, employs approaches such as advocacy, public awareness, protection, and joint training.

Indonesia believes that effectively combating trafficking in persons requires a global and collective response, coupled with a deeper understanding of its root causes. The country remains committed to collaborating with other nations within the ARF framework and beyond to address this pressing issue.

### **G. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

Indonesia remains steadfast in its commitment to disaster risk reduction (DRR), as evidenced by the establishment of its 2020-2044 Master Plan for Disaster Management (RIPB) and the 2020-2024 Mid-Term National Development Plan. These strategic frameworks prioritize disaster management and risk reduction as key development programs, reflecting Indonesia's dedication to safeguarding economic growth and human development.

On the global stage, Indonesia is resolute in strengthening the implementation of international DRR frameworks. This commitment includes support for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015–2030, which emerged from the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. Indonesia underscores the importance of international cooperation to ensure the effective implementation of the SFDRR. This involves enhancing the capacity of developing countries, promoting best practices, facilitating knowledge sharing, and transferring technology.

Furthermore, Indonesia highlights the strategic importance of monitoring frameworks at both global and regional levels, such as the Global Partnership for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) and the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR). These frameworks are crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of the SFDRR and advancing global DRR efforts.

### **H. Maritime Security**

Indonesia remains deeply committed to advancing its maritime sector through bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation. The primary reference for Indonesia's maritime priorities is outlined in the White Book of Indonesian Maritime Ocean Policy, which includes:

1. Management of Marine Resources and Human Resource Development;
2. Defense, Security, Law Enforcement, and Safety at Sea;
3. Ocean Governance and Institutions;
4. Economic Development and Infrastructure of the Marine Sector;
5. Management of Ocean Space and Marine Environmental Protection;

6. Maritime Culture; and

7. Maritime Diplomacy.

The Asia-Pacific region continues to face significant challenges to maritime security. Indonesia views regional and international cooperation as crucial in addressing these challenges. For example, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing is a prevalent transnational crime in the region. Consequently, Indonesia has undertaken various regional and multilateral initiatives to combat this issue.

In the Southeast Asian region, the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), established in 2010, has been playing a key role in addressing maritime issues through the three pillars of ASEAN—Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural. In order to broaden the existing AMF, the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) was first held in 2012 by including ASEAN Dialogue Partners, allowing for wider discussions on maritime cooperation and security issues in the region.

Indonesia saw the importance of regularisation of the AMF and EAMF to intensify dialogue and cooperation on maritime issues pertinent to the three Community pillars. The strengthening and annualisation of the AMF/EAMF was then agreed and acknowledged by the ASEAN Leaders during the 43rd ASEAN Summit in September 2023.

Indonesia actively engages in norm-setting efforts through other regional forums, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, Indian Ocean Rim Association, and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and Related Transnational Crime.

Indonesia acknowledges that the Declaration on ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II) 2003 underscores ASEAN's commitment to addressing transboundary maritime issues in a holistic, integrated, and comprehensive manner. ASEAN has made significant progress in addressing multidimensional maritime issues through its 14 maritime-related sectoral bodies.

However, Indonesia recognizes that maritime issues are increasingly multidimensional and interconnected. Blue economy, maritime safety, maritime security, and marine environmental protection are interrelated challenges. Therefore, Indonesia prioritizes shaping an ASEAN that is forward-looking with an integrated approach to the maritime domain in the region.

In 2021, Indonesia proposed to the 11th ASEAN Maritime Forum the development of a strategic and integrated ASEAN Maritime Outlook (AMO). Key objectives of the AMO include:

1. Serving as a practical tool that captures the breadth, depth, and dynamics of maritime issues across all relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, helping ASEAN Leaders, Ministers, and Partners understand the direction of maritime cooperation, engage in focused discussions, and identify new areas for cooperation.



2. Exploring opportunities for technical and financial assistance to enhance ASEAN Member States' maritime capacities.
3. Providing a reference for maritime trends and challenges in the region to avoid duplication of efforts among relevant mechanisms.
4. Synergizing existing programs and work plans across all ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.

Ultimately, the first edition of AMO was launched during the 13th ASEAN Maritime Forum in Bali, Indonesia. Indonesia initiated the establishment of AMO as a strategic document in strengthening the synergy of maritime cooperation under ASEAN's three pillars.

The potential for maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is enormous and multidimensional, strategically, politically, economically and socially for its people. It is also increasingly open along with the development of new maritime issues, such as cyber attacks on ships and port facilities, blue economy and renewable energy.

The first edition of the AMO comprehensively summarizes the progress of maritime cooperation in ASEAN. Going forward, the AMO, which will be issued every three years, is expected to make a meaningful contribution to efforts to build a secure, stable and prosperous ASEAN Community, as well as further strengthen ASEAN's relations with external partners.

At the multilateral level, Indonesia actively participates in norm-setting and addressing transnational crime issues at sea through various forums, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), and the Crime Congress.

As an archipelagic nation with extensive maritime territory, Indonesia is particularly focused on safeguarding its sovereignty and addressing IUU Fishing. Indonesia views IUU Fishing as a significant issue related to the management and conservation of fisheries resources, which remains inadequately regulated under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs). Efforts are underway to address IUU Fishing as a transnational organized crime in multilateral forums.

Indonesia is also developing a security policy paper on port and terrorism threats in cooperation with UNODC, which will contribute to the Maritime Security module of the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) and the development of port facility security plans.

Indonesia continues to demonstrate leadership in regional cooperation against IUU Fishing and its classification as a transnational organized crime. The country maintains active participation in various international forums, including:

1. The ARF Workshop on Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation
2. The Global Maritime Crime Programme of UNODC
3. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), which convened from May 8–12, 2023

### **I. Information Communication Technology Security**

The ongoing development of cyberspace presents both opportunities and challenges for Indonesia, the Asia-Pacific region, and the global community. This dynamic environment introduces significant challenges, including serious cyber threats and attacks that can undermine regional security.

Indonesia acknowledges the necessity of enforcing international law in cyberspace and advocates for international cooperation to address the multifaceted challenges and threats in this domain. This cooperation involves dialogue, capacity building, and confidence-building measures (CBMs). Efforts such as sharing information and best practices through webinars, seminars, and workshops are essential steps toward fostering a safe, peaceful, and open cyberspace for all stakeholders.

To enhance national cybersecurity, Indonesia has strengthened its legislative framework by adopting two key regulations: Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection and Presidential Regulation No. 82 on the Protection of Vital Infrastructure Information. In 2023, Indonesia introduced Presidential Regulation No. 47 of 2023 on the National Cyber Security Strategy and Cyber Crisis Management. This strategy establishes a foundational direction for national policy and provides a unified guideline for stakeholders to develop cybersecurity policies within their respective institutions.

The National Cyber and Crypto Agency (BSSN) plays a crucial role in fortifying Indonesia's cybersecurity from 2022 to 2023, focusing on policy, operations, and capacity building. BSSN has implemented several initiatives, including security testing of electronic systems, installation of detection and monitoring devices on network infrastructure at Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and event sites, early detection of cyber threats, and incident response efforts. These measures aim to identify cyber threats, mitigate their probability and impact, and enhance protection against cyberattacks.

As part of its cybersecurity strategy, Indonesia, through BSSN, is developing the Computer Emergency Incident Response Team (CSIRT) as outlined in the National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020–2024, as stipulated in Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020. In addressing cyber threats and attacks in the ASEAN region, Indonesia supports the establishment of the ASEAN Computer Emergency Response Team (ASEAN-CERT). This initiative aims to facilitate cooperation with

national CERTs or CSIRTs in ASEAN dialogue partner countries, thereby enhancing regional cybersecurity and positively impacting national security.

Additionally, Indonesia actively engages in collaboration with various stakeholders from both the public and private sectors to strengthen the role of cybersecurity and share information, contributing to a conducive national cybersecurity environment. The National Cyber and Crypto Agency (BSSN) has been proactively involved in ASEAN forums on cybersecurity, underscoring its commitment to regional and international cooperation. These forums and activities include:

### **ASEAN Regional Forum**

- a) 12<sup>th</sup> ARF Open Ended Study Group (OESG), 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024, via video conference.
- b) 13<sup>th</sup> ARF OESG on ICTs Security, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 in Moscow, Russia.
- c) 6<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on ICTs, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023, hybrid, in Moscow, Russia.
- d) ARF Series of Workshops on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> 2024, hybrid, in Moscow, Russia.
- e) ARF Workshop on the Protection of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructure, 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024, in Singapore, Singapore.

### **ASEAN-US Cyber Policy Dialogue**

- a) Indonesia co-chaired the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-US Cyber Policy Dialogue on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2023 via video conference.
- b) Indonesia co-chaired the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-US Cyber Policy Dialogue on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 in-person sidelines with Singapore International Cyber Week 2023 in Singapore.

### **ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group**

- a) 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting, 14 – 15 February in Tagaytay, the Philippines.
- b) 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting, 23 – 24 May in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei.
- c) Critical Infrastructure Information Protection Workshop, 1st August 2023, in Hanoi, Vietnam;
- d) 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting, 1 – 4 August 2023, in Hanoi, Vietnam;

- e) 16th ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Policy Meeting, 3 – 4 October 2023, in Tokyo, Japan.

### **Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime**

a) Senior Officials Meeting Transnational Crime on Working Group on Cybercrime via Video Conference, 26th May 2023;

b) 23rd ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime, 19 – 23 June 2023 in Yogyakarta.

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).
- d) ASEAN Working Group on Anti-Online Scam (WG-AS).

Proposal to develop ASEAN Cyber Security Assessment Model (ACAM) that was delivered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

## **4. The Role of ARF**

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) remains a crucial platform for fostering constructive dialogue and cooperation among participants on political and security issues of mutual interest and concern in the Asia-Pacific region.

As the regional architecture evolves, it is imperative that the ARF maintains its relevance by fully leveraging its potential and showcasing its unique attributes. One of the ARF's strengths is its establishment of a foundation for political and security dialogues that integrate both civil and military elements.

It is important to recognize that the ARF is not merely an institution but a dynamic process through which countries in the Asia-Pacific region engage in dialogue and undertake activities to promote confidence-building measures (CBMs), preventive diplomacy, and conflict resolution mechanisms. To enhance its effectiveness, the ARF must be more robust, substantive, proactive, and action-oriented. Indonesia is firmly committed to advancing this goal by continuously initiating and actively participating in ARF activities.

A key strategy for optimizing the confidence-building process within the ARF is to utilize the ARF Annual Security Outlook as a primary reference for dialogue and activities conducted under the ARF framework. Moving forward, ARF cooperation efforts should align with the evolving geopolitical dynamics. As outlined in the ASEAN Regional Forum Statement commemorating 30 years of the ARF, it is crucial to strengthen the ARF as a key platform for dialogue and consultation on regional political and security issues. This should complement the work of other ASEAN-led mechanisms without duplication, thus shaping the future direction of the ARF.

Indonesia envisions a more effective, substantive, and action-oriented ARF capable of remaining relevant amidst the shifting global geopolitical landscape. Therefore, Indonesia remains committed to contributing to the ARF's potential through active participation, innovative initiatives, and the development of new ideas. In shaping the future direction of the ARF, Indonesia believes that revitalizing the forum is a timely and necessary action to enhance its institutional capacity for transitioning to preventive diplomacy.

## **JAPAN**

The region has developed a multilayered framework of cooperation centered on ASEAN, including the ASEAN+3, East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defense 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 attaches high importance to ASEAN-led frameworks while consistently supporting ASEAN centrality and unity. Particularly on the ARF, Japan recognizes its unique role in improving the regional security environment by promoting mutual confidence building through dialogue and practical cooperation. As the trusted partner of ASEAN, Japan will proactively engage in the discussions and activities in the forum to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

### **1. Japan's Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

The global security environment is most severe and complex since the end of WWII. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has shaken the very foundation of the international order that the international community has nurtured. Japan strongly urges Russia to cease its aggression and withdraw its forces from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine immediately and unconditionally. Japan also emphasizes the importance of achieving a just and lasting peace, in accordance with the UN Charter. The possibility cannot be precluded that a similar serious situation may arise in the future in the Indo-Pacific region. The world is now at a turning point in history and power balances, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, have been changing. Turning the eyes to the vicinity of Japan, military buildups, including those of nuclear weapons and missiles, are rapidly advancing. 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. The scope of national security has expanded to include the fields previously considered non-military such as economic, technological and others, and thus the boundary between military and nonmilitary fields is no longer clear-cut either.

Maritime issues including those surrounding the East and South China Seas are linked to peace and stability of the region and are legitimate concerns of the international community. Unilateral attempts to 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. Japan reiterates its strong opposition against such attempts and express its unchanged position to respond to them calmly and resolutely while enhancing coordination with the relevant countries, along with strengthening communication in order to make the East China Sea a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship."

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. 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. In March 2023, 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)”. The three principles gained support 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). The 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 the COC should lead to demilitarization and a free and open South China Sea.

Japan, together with the international community, has expressed serious concern about the situation in the South China Sea as well as actions increasing regional tensions including militarization of disputed features, dangerous and coercive use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels. 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 all parties concerned 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 UNSCRs. In 2023, North Korea continued its provocations and launched a new type solid-fuel ICBM-class ballistic missiles three times. This year, North Korea announced that it would launch three satellites, and conducted satellite launch using ballistic missile technology. As these launches 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.

In view of above, 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-Defense 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 prohibited 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. Although Russia vetoed an UNSCR to renew the mandate of the Panel of Expert of the UNSC 1718 Committee in March, forcing the panel to cease its activities at the end of April, the relevant UNSCRs remain in force. Therefore thus Japan is determined to cooperate with the US, and trilaterally with the US and the ROK, and coordinate closely with the international community, to achieve their full implementation and the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in accordance with the relevant UNSCRs.

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

Japan expresses serious concern about the deteriorating situation in Myanmar and condemns the repeated extension of the state of emergency by the Myanmar military without working towards a peaceful resolution while many innocent civilians are killed and wounded daily by air strikes and other acts of violence. In addition, Japan also expresses grave concern about the potential impact of conscription through the enforcement of the People's Military Service Law. 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 calls upon the Myanmar military to resolve the crisis through constructive dialogue among all stakeholders. 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 150 million US dollars 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, In 2023, the situation in Gaza has worsened since the terrorist attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups against Israel in October, and the conflict structure in the international community has become more complex. Furthermore, the use of the Internet and social networking services to spread extremist ideology and recruit, and the use of cryptographic assets to acquire funds for terrorist activities have become prominent trends.



## **2. National Security and Defense Policy**

### **a. Japan's Security Policy**

As multilateralism centered on the United Nations faces further difficulties, there is a mountain of issues to be addressed that transcend national borders and values, and the international community is called upon to cooperate as never before. Japan's security environment is the most severe and complex it has been since the end of WWII. In response to this situation, Japan will steadily implement 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.

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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.
- (3) As a peace-loving nation, Japan will adhere to the basic policy of maintaining an exclusively national defense-oriented policy, not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries, and observing the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.
- (4) The Japan-U.S. Alliance, including the provision of extended deterrence, will remain the cornerstone of Japan's national security policy.
- (5) Japan will attach importance to coexistence and coprosperity alongside other countries, cooperation with like-minded countries, and multilateral cooperation.

The National Security Strategy first identifies diplomatic power as an element of Japan's overall national strength for security. While linking diplomacy and defense, Japan will organically and effectively link its various soft powers, such as its strong economy, advanced technological capabilities, and rich culture, to pursue a comprehensive foreign and security policy. In addition, Japan will steadily implement the newly established Official Security Assistance (OSA) and actively work on the promotion of cyber security and economic security.

Against international information warfare in the cognitive domain through manipulation of information including proliferation of disinformation, etc., we will collect and analyze information from various angles and strategically disseminate it, as well as build and strengthen information security infrastructures.

**b. Japan's Defense Policy**

**(1) The National Defense Strategy**

On December 16, 2022, the Government of Japan approved the National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program as replacements to the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), and the Medium Term Defense Program (MTDP).

The Strategy states Japan's three defense objectives and three approaches to achieve those objectives. Japan's defense objectives are as follows.

- 1) Shape a security environment that does not tolerate unilateral changes to the status quo by force.
- 2) Deter through cooperation with our ally, like-minded countries and others, unilateral changes to the status quo by force and such attempts that concern Japan's peace and security. Should such an eventuality occur, our objective is to swiftly respond in whatever ways and bring the situation under control at an early stage so that the situation would not lead to invasion of Japan.
- 3) Should deterrence fail and invasion of Japan occur, to rapidly respond to the invasion in a tailored and seamless manner; to take primary responsibility to deal with the aggression; and, while receiving support from the ally and others, to disrupt and defeat the invasion.

The three approaches to realize Japan's defense objectives are stated as follows:

- 1) In an effort of strengthening of Japan's own architecture for national defense, to fundamentally reinforce Japan's defense capabilities, which constitute the core of national defense, and to reinforce the defense architecture of the whole country.
- 2) Further reinforce joint deterrence and response capability of the Japan-U.S. 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.

Amid the most severe and complex security environment since the end of WWII, Japan needs to squarely face the grim reality and fundamentally reinforce Japan's defense capabilities, with a focus on opponent capabilities and new ways of warfare, to protect the lives and peaceful livelihood of Japanese nationals. Japan also needs to strengthen Japan's architecture for national defense that integrates various elements

of national power. Thinking strategically, Japan should promote these two lines of effort as a coherent whole. It is this undertaking that provides the way forward to bolster Japan's deterrence capabilities and further strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and which forms the foundation of security cooperation with like-minded countries and others.

## **(2) The Defense Buildup Program and Defense-Related Expenditures**

The Defense Buildup Program is the first five-year defense buildup plan developed to achieve the targeted levels of defense capabilities as set forth in the National Defense Strategy. The expenditure earmarked from FY2023 to FY2027 amount to approximately ¥43 trillion. In addition to the cost of maintaining and operating the JSDF, defense-related expenditures in Japan also include the cost of improving the living environment in the vicinity of defense facilities and support for US forces stationed in Japan. As the FY2024 defense-related expenditures budget is based on the National Defense Strategy and the Defense Buildup Program, it includes an array of projects aimed at the establishment of a Multi-Domain Defense 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), and the US forces realignment-related expenses (the portion allocated for mitigating the impact on local communities), the expenditure budget for FY2024 has been increased by 1,124.8 billion yen (or 17 % growth) from the previous fiscal year to 7,724.9 billion yen, marking the twelfth consecutive year of growth.

Including these expenses, the total expenditure budget for FY2024 amounts to 7,949.6 billion yen, an increase of 1,127.7 billion yen, or growth rate of 16.5% from the preceding fiscal year. The FY2024 defense-related expenditure is 1.26% of gross domestic product increasing to 1.29% with the inclusion of SACO related expenses, and US forces realignment related expense. The FY2024 defense-related expenditure includes expenditure which will be transferred to and Digital Agency (32.4 billion yen).

### **c. Japan-US Security Arrangements**

Given an increasingly severe security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, securing the forward deployment of U.S. forces based on the Japan-U.S. 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. Japan's decision to fundamentally reinforce its defense capabilities under the strategic documents formulated in December 2022 will lead to more effective employment of U.S. 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 defense, cyberspace, outer space, and information security.

In light of the recent security environment, the U.S. will strengthen its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, and Japan will assume larger roles and responsibilities in the Alliance with its fundamentally reinforced defense capabilities. Japan and the U.S. will further enhance cooperation with allies and partners in the region.

### **3. 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 “a Free and Open Ocean”. For Japan, maritime rights and interests, which are the basis for economic survival, including the freedom of navigation and overflight, and use 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 and Open 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 a “Free and Open Ocean,” 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 realized the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), a Track 1.5 forum. At the 11th EAMF, which was chaired by Indonesia in August 2023, 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). Since its inception, 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) 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 sixth Capacity Building Executive Programme (CBEP), held on September 2023, Japan Coast Guard explained its efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery against ships 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 served 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 2018-2020. 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-Defense 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. During FY 2023, Japan provided emergency relief goods to Mongolia to support those affected by the dzud. 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 Center 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 Program) 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.

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. In 2023, Japan held the bilateral consultations with Indonesia, Algeria and Tunisia, also the dialogue between Japan-US -Australia, as well as the dialogue between Japan-US-Australia-India. 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 the dialogue with relevant international organizations or partner countries, including the frameworks such as, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime plus Japan (AMMTC+Japan), and the Senior Official Meeting on Transnational Crime plus Japan (SOMTC+Japan).

In the Indo-Pacific region, Japan has also been stepping up its efforts to support for capacity building to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism, as well as to combat transnational crimes such as illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and cybercrime, through financial contributions to the projects of the UNODC, the GCERF and the INTERPOL. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has conducted a “Project for Strengthening Regional Network for Combating Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Mekong Region” including support for the Mekong Region Workshop, since January 2022. Japan has also actively participated in multilateral dialogues at the frameworks such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), etc. In addition, Japan organized the South and Southeast Asian workshop on February 2024 in Tokyo, with collaboration with the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offender (UNAFEI) and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJJ) to ensure due process of law throughout investigation, prosecution, and treatment of offenders, as well as to promote the rule of law for effective counter-terrorism measures.

#### **d. Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**

As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan has the responsibility to lead international efforts to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. Last year, Japan hosted the G7 summit in Hiroshima, where the G7 leaders issued the “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament” the first stand-alone G7 leaders’ document focusing on nuclear disarmament. Foreign Minister Kamikawa chaired the Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation” in March, originated from the Prime Minister Kishida’s speech at the General Debate of the 78<sup>th</sup> Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly last year, in which he stated that it is key to have nuclear-weapon States engage in concrete nuclear disarmament measures, and Japan, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, would work to promote dialogue between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. Japan will continue to advance realistic and practical efforts including the "Hiroshima Action Plan", announced by Prime Minister Kishida at the 10<sup>th</sup> NPT Review Conference in 2022.

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. For this purpose, Japan announced in the Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in March, the establishment of the “FMCT Friends,” a cross-regional group with the participation of both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States which aims to maintain and enhance political attention on an FMCT and to contribute to expand the support for the negotiation of an FMCT.

Furthermore, the emergence of new technologies is spurring a growing potential for private sector technologies to be diverted to uses for military purposes, and increasing the proliferation risk of weapons that could pose a threat and of related materials and technologies. Under these circumstances, Japan has been implementing its non-proliferation policies through international non-proliferation regimes and rules, domestic non-proliferation measures and close coordination with and capacity building support for other countries.

To this end, Japan supported regional workshops for the implementation of UNSCR 1540, hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. 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 in order to promote a better understanding of the non-proliferation regimes and strengthen regional efforts, mainly in Asian countries.. Japan has also actively participated in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercises and related conferences including PSI rotation exercise in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, Japan has actively contributed to the enhancement of the understanding on safeguards system, such as the universalization of the Additional Protocol (AP), and 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 this regard, Japan has held the “ASEAN-Japan Cyber Security Policy Meeting” every year since 2007 to strengthen international cooperation and efforts between Japan and ASEAN countries in the field of cyber security. In the last Policy Meeting, ASEAN member states and Japan exchanged views regarding the cybersecurity policies of each country over the past year and also confirmed the status of collaborative activities such as information sharing of the good practice of critical information infrastructure protection, the topic of joint awareness raising, capacity building, joint government-industry-academia partnership and cyber exercises. Furthermore, they discussed how the collaborative activities should be for the future.

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. In recognition of the 50th year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, in 2023, Japan conducted a capacity building program on cybersecurity to ASEAN defense authorities. 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 and enhance 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 Behaviors. In this regard, Japan highly



valued the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviors, which has contributed to deepening understanding among stakeholders on space security issues and to identifying issues for further consideration, and strongly supports the continued work of this OEWG. Japan also committed not to conduct destructive, direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) missile testing in September 2022. With regard to the commitment, like-minded countries, including the U.S. and Japan, jointly submitted a resolution promoting this matter to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. The resolution was adopted at the Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly in 2022. As one of the leading space-faring nations, Japan has promoted bilateral dialogues on space with such ARF members as the 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;

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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 Center (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 Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) since then.

3) In the third cycle, from 2017 to 2020, Japan actively participated in and contributed to each EWG.

4) 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, and since then, the Co-Chairs convened WPS seminars by inviting eminent experts from the UN. In September 2023, the Competency Evaluation Program for Prospective UN Peacekeepers (CEPPP) was held in Vietnam under EWG on PKO. The program consisted of classroom lectures and scenario-based exercise to validate coordination procedures such as how UN Military Observers should coordinate with engineers and medical personnel. Throughout the cycle, Co-Chairs contributed to enhancing partnerships as well as the knowledge and skills participants require to undertake UN PKO mission tasks, including WPS.

5) In the fifth cycle, from 2024 to 2027, Japan is set to co-chair EWG on maritime Security with the Philippines. Japan will work towards maintaining maritime order governed by the rule of law, not force or coercion through practical cooperation.

6) 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.

#### **4. 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 favorable 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 improves the regional security environment.

## LAO PDR

### I. Overview of the Regional Security Environment

Regional and international environment continues to undergo complex changes with uncertainties due to a myriad of challenges posed by rapidly changing geo-political and geo-economic landscapes.

The traditional and non-traditional security issues, including, among others, territorial disputes, armed conflict, trafficking in persons, people smuggling, illegal migration, trafficking of illicit drug, pandemic, natural disasters, climate change, and exacerbation of poverty continue to be pressing challenges to various regions and the world at large.

Nowadays, information and communication technology (ICT) has played a major role in shaping society, including in the economy digitalization. People are increasingly dependent on the internet for communication, commerce and other aspects of lives. Thus, cybersecurity is an important aspect of modern society.

Against this backdrop, the Lao PDR is of the view that enhancing connectivity and resilience is of utmost importance to ensure ASEAN collective efforts in the strengthening of the ASEAN Community. The principles of unity and centrality of ASEAN in all ASEAN-led mechanisms should be enhanced so as to promote the relevance and resilience of ASEAN.

It is, thus, imperative for ASEAN to enhance its cooperation on ASEAN connectivity and resilience through intensifying ASEAN cooperation under the three community pillars.

To this end, the Lao PDR, as the Chair of ASEAN 2024, has determined nine priority areas to implement the theme of its ASEAN Chairmanship 2024 “**ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience**” with a view to building a more connected and resilient ASEAN Community and enable ASEAN to navigate through emerging challenges and seize opportunities.

With regard to the regional and international issues, the situation in the Korean Peninsula remains complex and unpredictable. The Lao PDR reiterates its wishes to see lasting peace, stability and development in the Korean Peninsula, thus encourages parties concerned to pursue engagement through dialogue and diplomacy with a view to addressing differences in a peaceful manner and moving towards a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

The current violence and escalation of conflicts in the Middle East have resulted in the loss of many lives and properties. In this regard, all parties concerned should exercise utmost restraint, cease all acts of violence and jointly resolve the conflict by a peaceful means through negotiation process, and restore mutual trust for solving the long-overdue Palestinian issue through the establishment of two sovereign states coexisting peacefully in line with relevant UN resolutions and international law.

As an immediate neighbor of Myanmar as well as an ASEAN Member State and the ASEAN Chair 2024, the Lao PDR has followed closely the situation in Myanmar.

The Lao PDR, through the Special Envoy on Myanmar, has played a facilitative and constructive role to help Myanmar through the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) by engaging with various stakeholders in Myanmar and representatives of relevant partners, countries and organizations, including appointed Special Envoy of the UNSG with a view to promoting national dialogue; and facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance through AHA Centre to all the affected populations in need without discrimination based on the recommendations of the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) Report.

We also welcome and support every constructive effort that aim at helping the ASEAN Chair in implementing the 5 PC to ensure consistent and continuous effort of ASEAN to help Myanmar to solve its complex problem.

The Review and Decision on the Implementation of the 5 PC adopted at the 45<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summits together with the 5 PC and Review and Decision on the Implementation of the 5 PC adopted in 2022 and 2023 shall be the main references on the situation in Myanmar.

Moving ahead for the remaining time of the Lao ASEAN Chairmanship, the Lao PDR will continue to uphold ASEAN's commitment to facilitate and assist Myanmar to find a peaceful and durable solution based on the Myanmar-Owned, Myanmar-led process, through the implementation of the 5PC of ASEAN Leaders and the Leaders' Review and Decision on the implementation of the 5PC.

## **II. National Security and Defence Policy**

Since the proclamation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) in 1975, the Lao government has consistently pursued two strategic tasks of national defence and development with the participation of entire Lao multi-ethnic people in conjunction with socio-economic development and international cooperation in accordance with its foreign policy of peace, independence, friendship and cooperation.

To achieve the tasks, the Lao PDR firmly adheres to the policy of the People's Comprehensive National Defence and Security so as to safeguard the national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, to protect national interests and the entire Lao multi-ethnic people, and to ensure national security and social order with a view to creating a favourable environment for socio-economic development of the Nation. Importantly, the Lao PDR's consistent policy is to neither participate in any military bloc or alliance, nor allow foreign military bases in the territory of the Lao PDR since its armed forces are for self-defence only.

The national defence and security are the task and duty of entire Lao multi-ethnic people where everyone has a role to play as stipulated in the Constitution of the Lao PDR.

### **III. National Contributions to Regional Security**

The Lao PDR is fully committed to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, ASEAN Charter and the International Law, and pursuant to its foreign policy of peace, independence, friendship and cooperation and the People's Comprehensive National Defence and Security Policy of self-defence, the Lao PDR has intensified its relations with friendly countries and regional and international organisations around the world through deepening and widening existing cooperation as well as exploring new possible areas of cooperation based on the principles of mutually beneficial cooperation and mutual understanding, trust and confidence, and the Lao PDR is open for establishment relations and cooperation with other friendly countries in accordance with its foreign policy.

To date, the Lao PDR has established diplomatic relations with 149 countries and actively participates in sub-regional, regional and international frameworks such as ASEAN, ASEAN-initiated frameworks (ASEANPlus One, APT, ARF, ADMM Plus, EAS AMMTC, ASEANTOM and ASEAN CBN, United Nations, Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), ASEANAPOL, INTERPOL, Moscow Conference on International Security, Xiangshan Forum, and Shangri-La Dialogue, among others.

Over the years, the Lao PDR has been entrusted and given the honour to chair many sub-regional, regional and international meetings. In 2024, the Lao PDR is honoured to chair ASEAN for the third time as well as chair of ASEAN Regional Forum. In this connection, the Lao PDR is pleased to co-chair with New Zealand for the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ARF ISG on CBMs and PD) and the ASEAN Regional Forum Defence Official's Dialogue (ARF DOD).

The Lao PDR has been working with regional and international communities to address a myriad of current challenges of common concerns and interests based on its ability and in accordance with universally recognized principles and norms.

#### **a. Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime**

Terrorism and Transnational crime remain a pressing threat to national, regional and global security. For its part, the Government of the Lao PDR always attaches great importance to the attempt and multilateral cooperation in the fight against terrorism and transnational crimes. To date, the Law on Extradition (2012), the Law on National Public Security (2014) and Law on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism (2014) which is in processing of amendment, Law on Anti-Trafficking in Person, Law on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (2020) and other legislations have been in place. More importantly, the Penal Code replaces the Penal Code (2005) and the provisions contained within other laws determining criminal offences and penalties and Criminal Procedure Law has been amended to criminalize all act of terrorism and transnational organised crime which cause the loss of live and property, and undermine public security and order, and national integrity.

In this connection, the National Counter-Terrorism Ad-Hoc Committee, National Steering Committee Against Human Trafficking, National Committee for Drug Control and Inspection has been established and led by the Ministry of Public Security with mandates, inter alia, to act as an advisory body to the Government on counter-terrorism and transnational organized crime related issues. Whereas the National Ad-Hoc Committee on Implementing and Reporting United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1737 is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Committee oversees the implementation of all UNSC terrorism-related resolutions and regularly submits the National Report to the 1737 Committee.

The Lao PDR reaffirms its commitment to the anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism. In this regard, the National Coordination Committee for Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism has been established and the Law on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism has been enacted thus far. This provided a firm foundation and legal framework for the Lao PDR, especially the concerned law enforcement sectors to undertake the work of the AML/CFT rigorously. In addition, sub-legislation under the Law AML/CFT “Order on withholding, Freezing or Seizure of Funds Relating to Financing of Terrorism (revised); Directive on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prosecution; and Directive of the Head of the General Police Department of the Ministry of Public Security have been issued to address money laundering and financing of terrorism related issues.

Given the global and transboundary nature of these issues, the Lao PDR has pursued cooperation with countries, regional and international organisations. At the bilateral front, the Lao PDR has worked closely with immediate neighbouring countries, including through bilateral cooperative mechanisms, namely Lao-Cambodia General Border Committee, Lao-China Joint Border Inspection Committee, Lao-Myanmar Provincial/Regional Border Committee, Lao-Thai General Border Committee, and Lao-Viet Nam Border Committee to ensure safety and security at the border areas as well as to jointly address border-related issues.

At the regional level, the Lao PDR actively participated in the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, which is a sub-regional body of the Financial Action Task Force in order to further enhance and promote the work on anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism in the country as well as to enhance cooperation with other countries in the region. For the ASEAN framework, the Lao PDR is a party to the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism.

For the United Nations framework, the Lao PDR is fully committed to all UNSC terrorism-related resolutions and closely worked with international community to prevent and combat terrorism. This included information sharing, regularly participation in international trainings and seminars on the margin of INTERPOL and other related transnational organised crime meetings. The Lao PDR is a state party to the following 13 UN conventions on counter-terrorism:

- Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft (1963);
- Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (1970);

- Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation (1971);
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, Including Diplomatic Agents (1973);
- Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (2005).
- Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (1980);
- International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages (1979);
- Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation (1988);
- Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (1988);
- Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf (1988);
- Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection (1991);
- International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997);
- International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999); and

Recently, the Lao PDR is one of those countries facing with the emerging ICT/Cybercrime, including online scam. In the digital era, digital technology plays a crucial role in shaping society and people rely on Information Communication and Technology. But in other side, it is more likely that they are vulnerable to cyber-threats and cyber-attacks such as information and data theft, online scam, phishing and spear phishing attack. These cyber-attacks have caused social-economic insecurity as well as a threat to national security. Therefore, the Government of Lao PDR has been working closely with neighboring countries, sub-regional, regional and international levels as well as regional and international organizations to prevent and combat cybercrimes. In doing so, a number of legal frameworks have been issued and amended, namely Law on Data Protection (2017), Law on Prevention and Combating cybercrime (2015), Law on National Public Security (2014), Law on E-Transaction (2012), and Law on Telecommunication (2011) and in the process of drafting the Cybersecurity Law and National Cybersecurity Strategy (ກົດໝາຍ). Moreover, the Criminal Law was replaced by the Penal Code, and the Criminal Procedure Law has been amended to criminalize an act of conducting cybercrimes. Ministry of Public Security, led by General Department of Police and Ministry of Technology and Communications (Department of Cyber Security, Lao Computer Emergency Response Team-Lao CERT) are the main operational government agencies addressing this issue. To ensure the prevention and response to such transnational crime, the Lao PDR is a part of INTERPOL24/7 and will continue to work closely with the international community to tackle ICT threats effectively and in a timely manner. In this connection, the Lao PDR together with Indonesia and the EU successfully co-chaired the ARF Workshop on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism held on 8-10 March 2023 in Bali, Indonesia.



## **b. Non-Proliferation, Counter-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament**

Underscoring the great importance of disarmament and non-proliferation in ensuring durable international peace and security, the Lao PDR is supportive of multilateral disarmament efforts under United Nations frameworks reflecting from being a party to a number of international conventions including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Treaty on the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Amended Small Quantities Protocol-ASQP, and the Amendment Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in 2023.

The Lao PDR has neither the capacity nor the intention to produce, use or possess, transport, transfer or deliver nuclear, chemical or biological weapons to any states or non-state actors. The Lao Government fully supports the effort of the international community on disarmament and non-proliferation in the world and this should be carried out under the principle of multilateral diplomacy and international law. Today, nuclear proliferation continues to be a major threat to global peace and security. Amid regional and international conflicts and disputes as well as civil unrests occurring across various regions, the international community should redouble its efforts to advance disarmament work. In this context, the Lao PDR will continue to work closely with regional and international communities to address those issues.

In addition, the Lao PDR is a state party to a number of regional and international instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation such as the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty, Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological Weapons Convention, Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and Convention on Cluster Munitions, and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, or Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty, among others.

The Lao PDR believes that the creation of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, including in the Southeast Asia has significantly contributed to strengthening the global regime of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and the enhancement of regional and global peace and security, and consolidated international efforts towards peace and security. The Lao PDR further reiterates that the recognizance of these zones by the Nuclear Weapons States is of great importance.

The Lao PDR recognizes the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in nuclear non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Lao PDR became a member of the IAEA in 2011 and signed the IAEA Additional Protocol in November 2014. In 2019, the Lao PDR adopted Law on Radioactive Protection and Nuclear Safety, which laid down the standard for radiation protection and safety including measures to prevent and mitigate risk and danger to lives and environments. To ensure the effective implementation of Proliferation Financing, the Order of Prime Minister was issued on the Withholding, Freezing or Seizure of Funds Relating to Financing of Proliferation in 2020.

To address the serious impact arising from the unexploded ordnances (UXOs) in various provinces, the Lao PDR, as a state party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions or OSLO Convention, has been actively promoting this universal Convention in order to prevent further victimization of humankind. In addition, the Lao PDR has acceded to the CCW and is a party to the Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War. The Lao PDR was the first among a few countries in the world to adopt its own national Millennium Development Goal called MDG9 in early 2000 and recently launched its own national SDG entitled “SDG18: Lives Safe from UXO”. Addressing the UXO impact remains a top priority for the Lao Government. However, UXO clearance, victim assistance and mine-risk education remain challenges for the Lao PDR to fully operate due to the fact that the operation is a very complex process which requires sufficient resources, human and technical capacities, Therefore, that is very important that all countries, International Organisations and INGOs continue to support and assist UXO/Mine Action Sector in the Lao PDR.

The Lao PDR encourages the role of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre as the center of excellence in increasing efforts to address explosive remnants of war (ERW) and facilitate cooperation between interested ASEAN Member States and relevant institutions, including the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Further, the Lao PDR has been contributing the fund to the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre.

### **c. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

Humanitarian assistance is very essential considering frequent occurrence of natural disasters now. The Lao PDR is one of those frequently hit by natural disasters. As such, in order to address and mitigate the impact of the natural disasters, the Lao PDR places importance to and contributes to regional and international cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) based on its limited resources and in accordance with the principle of request or consent of the affected countries.

The Lao PDR is a party to four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and two additional Protocols as follows: Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, 12 August 1949; Convention (II) for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, 12 August 1949; Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 12 August 1949; Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 12 August 1949; Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977; and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), 8 June 1977.

Within the ARF framework, the Lao PDR successfully co-chaired with China the 5<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Urban Search and Rescue on 21-25 November 2022 via videoconference, and the Lao PDR has successfully completed its co-chairmanship with Canada and China of the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief *for cycle 2018-2023 with one additional intersessional year extended*.

The Lao People's Army has actively contributed to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). To name a few, the Lao People's Army co-chaired the ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR with Japan from 2014 to 2016. In this co-chairmanship, Lao PDR and Japan drafted Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Multinational Coordination Centre (MNCC) which was subsequently annexed to Chapter VI of Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP) in 2021. The Co-Chairs also successfully carried out the following activities:

- 5<sup>th</sup> ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR on 10-12 December 2014, Vientiane, Lao PDR;
- 6<sup>th</sup> ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR (TTX) on 5-7 August 2015, Vientiane, Lao PDR;
- 7<sup>th</sup> ADMM-Plus EWG on 9-10 December 2015, Tokyo, Japan;
- 8<sup>th</sup> ADMM-Plus EWG on 10 May 2016, Tokyo, Japan;
- ADMM-Plus Military Medicine Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Joint Exercise 2016 (AM-HEX 2016), 1-11 September 2016, Chonburi, Thailand; and
- 9<sup>th</sup> ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR, 14-16 December 2016, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

In addition, the Lao People's Army hosted and chaired the 7<sup>th</sup> ACMMC under the theme: "Strengthening ASEAN Military Medical Cooperation in HADR" on 11-15 July 2017 in Vientiane, Lao PDR."

#### **d. ICTs Security**

The Lao government has established the Department of Internet Security under the Ministry of Technology and Communication. This department is tasked with creating and implementing policies and initiatives aimed at protecting critical information infrastructure, reducing cyber threats, and enhancing cyber security awareness. Cooperation with international partners, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and ASEAN member countries, has been an important point in upgrading Lao PDR's cyber security capabilities.

Lao PDR continues to face challenges in ensuring strong ICT security. The rapid digital transformation and growth of the Internet has led to an increase in Internet threats such as malware, phishing, and data breaches. Limited resources and expertise in cybersecurity compound these challenges, emphasizing the need for continued capacity building and investment in advanced technologies. To solve these problems, the government has prioritized partnership between the Public-private, regional cooperation, and use of international support to create an ecosystem Resilient cyber. Through active participation in ASEAN initiatives and discussions, Lao PDR is committed to sharing best practices and cooperation in joint efforts to combat cybercrime, contributing to a safe digital environment in the region.

#### **IV. Role of the ARF**

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as a multilateral forum with ASEAN as the primary driving force, has played an important role in promoting mutual understanding, confidence and trust among diverse participants through dialogue and practical cooperation, thereby contributing positively to the maintenance and promotion of peace, stability and development cooperation in the region and the world.

Over the past 30 years, the ARF has achieved progress in its three-stage process towards the ultimate stage of conflict resolution. In light of growing traditional and non-traditional security challenges and in moving forward, all participants should build upon the achievements made thus far including through joint initiatives, and move the ARF process forward at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants, taking into account the diversity of this Asia-Pacific region with a view to further enhancing mutual understanding, trust and confidence, and maintaining and promoting peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world at large. In this connection, the Lao PDR supports ASEAN's collective efforts in deliberating the ARF's roles, achievements and challenges over the past 30 years.

The Lao PDR as the Chair of ASEAN and ARF in 2024, stands ready to work closely with ARF participants to build upon the ARF achievements and further strengthen and move the ARF process forward at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants with a view to further enhancing mutual understanding, trust and confidence, thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world at large.

## **MALAYSIA**

### **A. OVERVIEW OF THE REGIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

As a result of the uncertainties at the regional and global levels, the regional security environment is becoming more complex and unpredictable. Although Malaysia is not beset by military threats or conflicts at the present moment, the nation faces the need to manage the growing nexus and fluidity of non-traditional security threats as well as the intensity of major powers rivalry. Within this sphere, Malaysia continues to observe maritime security, terrorism and cyber security, among the primary issues which require paramount attention within the defence realm, whilst acknowledging the growing need to enhance responses towards the rising of natural and man-made disasters due to climate change.

#### **Maritime Security**

One of the key aspects of Malaysia's regional security environment is its geographical location. Situated in the heart of Southeast Asia, Malaysia serves as a strategic maritime gateway between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. This location has made Malaysia a significant player in regional trade and a vital transit point for international shipping. However, it also exposes the country to various maritime security challenges, including piracy, smuggling, and illegal fishing activities.

Malaysia has taken measures to enhance its maritime security capabilities, including the modernisation of its naval and coast guard forces, strengthening maritime surveillance and patrols, and participating in regional initiatives to promote maritime cooperation and security, such as the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) and the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangements (TCA). Malaysia also advocates for a rules-based approach and peaceful resolution of maritime disputes, emphasising the importance of upholding international laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

#### **Terrorism**

It is also undeniable that conflicts within the region and outside the region such as the situation in Myanmar, the Russia–Ukraine conflict and the inhumane attacks by Israel on Palestine have direct and indirect impacts on Malaysia and the region. These developments have the potential to reignite terrorism activities that work through its network of sympathisers and followers around the world. Such conflicts have resulted in regional destabilisation that has caused supply chain as well as economic disruption.

Terrorism and extremism are therefore significant security concerns in Malaysia's regional environment. The country has faced threats from extremist groups, including the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in recent years. Malaysia has taken measures to counter terrorism, including strengthening its intelligence capabilities, enhancing border security, and cooperating with regional and international partners to combat the spread of extremist ideologies.

As per the 2024 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), a comprehensive report compiled by the Institute of Economics and Peace, Malaysia has notably advanced, securing the 81<sup>st</sup> position among 163 countries assessed. This improvement signals a positive trend, indicating reduced susceptibility to terrorism and violent extremism in recent years. While factors like global and local movement restrictions may have contributed to limiting the activities of violent extremists and terrorists, it would be premature to conclude that the threat of terrorism has entirely dissipated within Malaysia.

Recognising terrorism as a persistent non-traditional security challenge, Malaysia remains vigilant, acknowledging the importance of cooperation among nations in the region. Sharing intelligence and information remains paramount in addressing various facets of terrorism, including cross-border movement criminal activities, piracy and maritime robbery.

### **Cyber Security**

The advancement of technology has created a new threat to the region. The expanding utilisation of the internet, coupled with its borderless nature, presents new opportunities for threat actors, including terrorists and cybercriminals, to exploit cyberspace for malicious activities. These actors can conduct global and simultaneous cyberattacks while effectively concealing their identities. Moreover, the frequency of cyberattacks is on the rise, posing heightened risks to national defence, security, critical infrastructure and the financial sector.

Malaysia recognises the importance of cybersecurity and the protection of critical information infrastructure to safeguard national security, economic stability, and public trust. Malaysia has implemented various initiatives to enhance cyber resilience, including the establishment of cybersecurity institutions, the development of national cybersecurity strategies and the promotion of public-private partnerships. The country also emphasises the need for international cooperation and information sharing to combat cyber threats.

In terms of artificial intelligence (AI) security, Malaysia acknowledges the potential benefits and risks associated with AI technologies. The country is working towards developing robust governance frameworks and ethical guidelines to ensure the responsible and secure use of AI. Malaysia also actively participates in regional and international discussions on AI security to stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices.

### **Climate Change**

The intersection of climate change and security is indeed a pressing issue, particularly in regions like Southeast Asia where natural disasters and environmental challenges are increasingly common. The vulnerability of coastal populations to rising sea levels underscores the urgency of addressing climate change from a security standpoint.

Through the years, numerous natural and man-made disaster has hit Malaysia. Some notable incidents include the monsoon flood in 2014 and the 5.9 magnitude earthquake in Sabah. Following all the major disaster that had affected the country, on 26 August 2015 the Malaysian Cabinet agreed to establish the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA) under the Prime Minister Department. NADMA is the national focal point for disaster management at the national, regional and international level.

To effectively address the security implications of climate change, collaboration between civilian disaster management organisations and the military is essential. This includes not only coordination during response efforts but also undertaking proactive measures such as disaster preparedness training, infrastructure resilience building, and early warning systems development.

Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the need for international cooperation on climate security issues. Given that climate change knows no borders, collective action is necessary to mitigate its impacts and ensure the security and well-being of populations worldwide. This may involve sharing resources, expertise, and best practices among nations, as well as addressing root causes such as greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation.

## **B. NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

### **Overview of National Security and Defence Policy**

The National Security Policy (NSP) was introduced as the overarching principal policy in managing various security threats which have become increasingly dynamic and complex. The Principal Strategies Statement spelled out in the NSP must be implemented to maintain and safeguard the National Security Core Values thereby keeping Malaysia from all forms of threats, not only physical but non-physical threats to ensure the survival of Malaysia as a sovereign, peaceful and harmonious nation.

The Statement of Policy in the NSP mentions nine core values of national security that are highly inter-connected and inter-related spanning across various sectors in society and the country's administrative structure, as follows:

- i) Territorial Sovereignty and Integrity
- ii) Socio-Political Stability
- iii) National Integration
- iv) Good Governance
- v) Economic Integrity
- vi) Social Justice
- vii) Sustainable Development
- viii) People's Security

## ix) International Recognition

The NSP has become the principal guide and reference for Ministries and Agencies at every administrative level of the Federal, State and District government in the comprehensive governance of national security comprehensively. The policy demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensure that the country's security remains secured and preserved. It cultivates and promotes the whole of government and the whole of society approach in dealing with and confronting national security challenges.

The NSP will reinforce the implementation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan. It will also be the overarching policy which outlines specific policies related to security across various government Ministries and Agencies at the administrative level of Federal Government and State Governments. This includes among others, the Defence White Paper, and the Security and Public Order Policy

The current and future security environment is extremely complex and highly dynamic. The NSP serves as a guideline followed for effective coordination to ensure that every ministry and agency is well-equipped to address issues, challenges, and threats.

On the defence front, Malaysia published the Defence White Paper (DWP) in 2019 which outlines Malaysia's perspectives on national, regional, and global strategic trends, its National Defence Framework. The DWP also serves as a long-term blueprint for defence planning to pursue Malaysia's aspiration as a secure, sovereign, and prosperous nation.

The DWP acknowledges Malaysia's geostrategic importance, being a maritime country with continental roots, flanked by the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean on one side and the Straits of Malacca and Indian Ocean on the other. It also emphasises the importance of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach towards defence.

The DWP defines Malaysia's defence strategy as centred on three pillars, namely:

(i) Concentric Deterrence: Malaysia's national defence is pursued along the concentric areas that cover land, maritime, air and cyber electromagnetic domains. These are categorised into three geographic areas:

- a) Core Area:** The land masses of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak; the territorial waters; as well as the air space above them.
- b) Extended Area:** The Malaysian Maritime Zone (MMZ), strategic waterways, airspace and critical lines of communications.
- c) Forward Area:** Covers locations beyond the extended area, where Malaysia's national interests are involved.



(ii) Comprehensive Defence: Adopting the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to defend the country, in line with the spirit of Total Defence.

(iii) Credible Partnerships: To build Malaysia’s credibility as a dependable partner through bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation with external partners, as well as to contribute to defence readiness, security needs and regional stability of Malaysia and its partners.

### Data Contribution to Arms Register

The breakdown for Malaysia’s defence expenditure in 2024 is as follows:

Expenditure	Value
Operating Expenditure	RM12,700,000,000 (USD2,650,000,000) *
Development Expenditure	RM7,050,000,000 (USD1,470,000,000) *
Total	RM19,700,000,000 (USD4,120,000,000) *
Defence Expenditure as a percentage GDP	1.07%
Defence Expenditure per capita	RM483.92 (USD101.50) *

\*Exchange rate as per April 2024 (USD1 = MYR4.77)

## C. NATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL SECURITY

### Counter-terrorism

The Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) continues its efforts in combatting terrorism and violent extremism through soft approaches which include activities such as conducting capacity-building, research and public awareness programmes, as well as digital counter-messaging activities. SEARCCT’s programmes are specifically designed to enhance the knowledge and capacity of the nation’s law enforcement, government and security officials, as well as the larger civil society and international community through collaboration with local agencies, foreign governments, established think-tanks, international organisations, and civil society organisations.

### Promoting a People-Centred Approach to Counter-Terrorism

In 2022, the “MyStanFor” social media campaign was launched with the aim to provide a safe space for youth to share their opinions, grievances, or support to their peers in matters that they may find difficult to share with adults. This campaign targeted topics such as hate speech, identity, the importance of unity, individuality, and other relatable topics among the youth. The MyStanFor ended in 2023, succeeded by a new campaign - “#ApeTu?” The new awareness campaign is meant to educate and promote two-way communication with our youth as well as peer-to-peer learning, providing them a space

to share their views and be heard. Themes such as Mental Health and Digital Resilience are being explored via the campaign.

The Sports in Enhancing and Promoting Authentic Diversity for Unity (SEPADU) was a collaborative effort between SEARCCT, the United States Embassy in KL and the United States Sports Diplomacy Department. The 5-day programme featured a former Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) player and two Harlem Globetrotters players in a series of activities such as basketball clinics, dialogue with youth, community engagement, media interaction and more, promoting both sports as a unity tool and women's involvement in sports. Through the program, the role of sports to prevent and counter violent extremism (PCVE) and in cultivating unity was shared with a total of more than 350 participants from around Klang Valley and Kota Kinabalu.

As part of the effort to establish the Southeast Asia Network of Preventing Violent Extremism (SEAN-PVE), two regional meetings were co-organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and SEARCCT in March of 2023 to address the themes of two of the Thematic Working Groups (TWG), TWG 3: Empowering Youth and TWG 6: Strategic Communications, the Internet, and social media.

To commemorate its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, SEARCCT has elevated its regional/international programme through the organisation of its first ever SEARCCT International Conference (SIC 2023) last year, with the theme "Building Digital Resilience in PCVE". One of the emerging issues highlighted during the conference was the nexus between gaming and gaming-adjacent platforms and generative AI being used as a tool to spread violent extremism propaganda and radicalisation.

SIC was preceded by the Regional Youth Workshop - "Sharing Together for Online Resilience among Youth (STORY)", which featured a total of 28 youth participants from Malaysia and Southeast Asian countries, ranging from 18 to 25 years old. 12 of the participants were from ASEAN countries except Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Singapore. The workshop's focus was to promote awareness of potential risks inherent when it comes to online activities as well as enhancing digital resilience and preventing violent extremism (PVE). Participants were also given exposure to Generative AI and the usage of AI tools such as ChatGPT and Image Creator, to spark discussion of potential risks accompanying this development as well as opportunities to leverage them in content creation. Participants took part in a hackathon to develop digital resilience-themed content and social media campaigns.

A collaborative project titled "Perspectives in Understanding Radicalisation as the Pursuit of Significance leading to Extremism (PURPOSE)" was embarked upon involving SEARCCT, the Royal Malaysian Police - Special Branch's Counter-Terrorism Division (E8), the Prisons Department of Malaysia and UNDP. This project primarily conducted preliminary research on the role of 'pursuit of significance' (PoS) as a driver of radicalisation for both former and current Malaysian detainees.

In response to the dynamic internet gaming landscape and the potential for extremist influences, SEARCCT organised a strategic project - Partnering with Online Gaming Groups to Enhance Resilience (POGGER) - to support its growing community of game makers and players. The initial phase involved a roundtable discussion among key gaming industry experts, cybersecurity specialists, and regulatory officials. Following this, a 3-day youth gamer workshop was conducted in Johor in collaboration with Johor e-Sports Association. The workshop aimed to empower and raise awareness among participants through interactive sessions where attendees will learn about subtle extremist indicators, effective countermeasures, and promotion of inclusive gaming environments by harnessing enthusiasm of these young gamers to encourage actionable commitments to safeguard their gaming spaces and fortify Malaysia's gaming platforms against extremism.

Similarly, to inoculate the Malaysian youth from violent extremist elements particularly on social media platforms, SEARCCT organised the second edition of the workshop on "Technology & Innovation in Building & Enhancing Resilience (TIBER) 2.0" which skilfully amalgamated effective elements from previously successful youth workshops such as "Common Identity: Values for an Inclusive and Cohesive Society (CIVICS) 2022", TIBER pilot, STORY and BESTNYER. The workshop was held in Perak in collaboration with the Perak Youth Assembly (Majlis Belia Perak), bringing together 40 young people from local tertiary education institutions and youth organisations. The workshop aimed to engage youth in harnessing the power of generative AI to craft compelling counter narratives.

SEARCCT jointly organised the University Lecture Series with the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The lecture series is part of SEARCCT's public engagement programme with the objective to increase awareness on threats of terrorism and violent extremism particularly on preventing terrorist use of internet. The lecture was delivered by one of SEARCCT's Research Officer on the title 'Exploitation of Gaming Spaces by Extremists' which was attended by undergraduate students of the faculty. The session offered a comprehensive outline of the extent and characteristics of violent extremists' exploitation of gaming environments, encompassing both the games and gaming-adjacent platforms. The session also lays out some of the on-going efforts to mitigate these potential harms, including working together with the online gaming communities to prevent and counter violent extremism. The University Lecture Series started in 2011, with almost 10,000 participants from students of the higher education institutions.

Together with the ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat (AMNS), SEARCCT organised the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Seminar on 'The Role of Youth in Building Digital Resilience to Prevent and Counter Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism (VECT)' in Kuala Lumpur. The ARF seminar which Malaysia co-chaired alongside Australia and New Zealand, was participated by 112 participants from ARF Participating Countries. The seminar emphasised on collaboration between government and technology companies, as well as civil society organisations such as youth in moderating terrorist and VECT content online.

The RESIST 2 – Strategic Communication Workshop was a collaborative effort involving the Government Communications Service International (GCSI), a division of the UK Cabinet Office. The workshop received support from the British High Commission in Malaysia and the Planning and Training Division of SEARCCT. This initiative aims to enhance government confidence in countering misinformation and disinformation among Malaysian civil servants through the RESIST 2.0 toolkit. The UK's GCSI emphasised how the RESIST 2.0 toolkit advocates a six-pillar approach: Recognition, Early Warning, Situation Insight, Impact Assessment, Strategic Communication, and Tracking Effectiveness. The workshop also included practical application learning from RESIST case studies, addressing the scenarios of misinformation and disinformation in the context of both countries.

### Promotion of Inter-Civilisation Dialogue

As part of the SERASI youth workshop, an interfaith forum was held, moderated by a local youth representative. The session involved speakers from Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia (Ikram Muda), Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia (BMSM), Malaysia Hindu Sangam, Federation of Taoist Associations Malaysia (FTAM) and Fellowship of Christian Athletes Community Church (FCA) Kuala Lumpur. Through the session, participants gained insight into how various religions are unique from one another in their beliefs, values, and practices as well as the common positive values that are shared by all the religions. It encouraged open and respectful communication to promote a sense of solidarity among participants, whereby they demonstrated solidarity and interfaith harmony during group activities and discussions throughout the programme.

Several initiatives have also been developed by the Ministry of National Unity through the National Unity and Integration Department (JPNIN) for 2024, including integrating elements of terrorism and extremism prevention into ongoing programmes that address the needs of all target groups, including women, communities, and youth, while taking into consideration the diversity of ethnic and religious backgrounds. These communication and awareness programmes will be carried out through cross-agency collaboration with approaches like discourses, debates, exhibitions, podcast broadcasts, and lectures. The following are some suggested communication and awareness programmes: Harmony Dialogue, National Security and Harmony Sustainability Discourse, Celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week, Youth Chit Chat Forum, and Podcast Harmony Chit-Chat. These programmes will apply elements and narrative exposure associated with the prevention of terrorism.

### Measures Against Terrorist Financing

As the competent authority, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) or the Central Bank of Malaysia, administers the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001 (AMLA 2001). This includes BNM's role as the country's financial intelligence unit (FIU) and the anti-money laundering, and countering financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) supervisory authority for reporting

institutions<sup>2</sup>. In ensuring a holistic and robust AML/CFT framework, BNM collaborates with various domestic and regional stakeholders to better prevent, detect, disrupt and dismantle financial crimes, including terrorism financing.

On the domestic front, BNM is a key member of the National Coordination Committee to Combat Money Laundering (NCC), a national inter-agency platform that is responsible for the coordination, implementation and monitoring of Malaysia's AML/CFT initiatives across relevant government agencies. This includes the regulatory authority for offshore reporting institutions, the Labuan Financial Services Authority, as well as the special branches investigating terrorism and terrorism financing (T/TF) within the Royal Malaysia Police. The NCC's primary objectives are to tackle key ML/TF risks identified under the National Risk Assessment 2020 (NRA 2020)<sup>3</sup>, implement a national AML/CFT strategy, as well as to ensure compliance with international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The NCC's strategic priorities are encapsulated in 67 action plans under the NCC Roadmap 2021-2023. As most of these action plans are nearing completion, the NCC is developing a new set of strategic plans that will ensure the sustainability of the Malaysia AML/CFT regime. The new Roadmap is expected to be implemented in the second half of 2024 and will be in effect from 2024 – 2026.

Bilaterally, BNM works closely with domestic law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to support financial investigations on ML/TF activities. Approximately 15-25% of the disclosures on financial intelligence made to domestic LEAs and foreign FIUs between 2021-2023 relate to national security (i.e. terrorism/TF and proliferation financing).

BNM adopts a risk-based approach in supervising AML/CFT compliance for approximately 30,000 reporting institutions across various sectors. BNM ensures the effectiveness of the AML/CFT framework by applying sufficient supervisory focus, dedicating clear resources, and setting clear expectations on the reporting institutions, that are aligned to the international standards set by the FATF. This includes:

- i) Revising the AML/CFT and Targeted Financial Sanctions (TFS) for Financial Institutions (FIs), as well as the Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBPs) and Non-Bank Financial Institutions (NBFIs) policy documents in line with the revised FATF Standards. The policy documents were reissued in February 2024 and were accompanied by several industry engagements with FIs and DNFBPs to socialise the key amendments in the revised policy documents.
- ii) Increasing awareness across the private and public sectors to uphold a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability. The International Conference on Financial Crime and Terrorism Financing (IFCTF),

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<sup>2</sup> Reporting institutions are defined in the First Schedule of AMLA 2001. It includes financial institutions, non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs), and designated non-financial businesses and professions (DNFBPs)

<sup>3</sup> The NRA 2020 assesses several areas which include, serious crimes that pose ML threats, terrorism and TF risks and vulnerabilities of financial and non-financial sectors to ML/TF risks.

organised jointly with the Asian Institute of Chartered Bankers and regular engagements with the Compliance Officers' Networking Group (CONG) are among one of the means for BNM to advance this agenda. BNM also continues to collaborate closely with LEAs and financial institutions by sharing relevant information on criminal modus operandi, and threats via Malaysia's publicprivate partnership (PPP), known as MyFINet or Malaysia Financial Intelligence Network.

- iii) Adopting a multi-channel strategy to strengthen the awareness of the DNFBP sectors on the latest AML/CFT initiatives such as by issuing periodic newsletters, which are accessible by DNFBP reporting institutions through the designated 'E-Platform channel'. The E-Platform, which was launched in 2022, now has been fully subscribed by a majority of the DNFBP sectors (approximately 28,000 registered users). This is also complemented with industry-led initiatives, such as the sharing of best practices to support the industry's compliance with supervisory and regulatory expectations.
- iv) Utilising various supervisory tools to effectively carry out risk-based supervision of DNFBPs and NBFIs. We focused our onsite and off-site supervisory reviews on reporting institutions in higher-risk sectors, resulting in 161 supervisory engagements conducted in 2023, which evaluated the effectiveness of board and senior management to implement sound and robust internal risk and compliance measures to address AML/CFT risks.
- v) Advancing the deployment of supervisory technology (Suptech) solutions in supporting supervisory activities. In 2023, automated assessments on the implementation of TFS by reporting institutions were successfully operationalised. Suptech solutions also enabled supervisors to maintain an updated profile of reporting.
- vi) In enhancing oversight over the institutions in the DNFBP sector, BNM collaborates with other regulatory and supervisory authorities of DNFBPs to promote better alignment and coordination on initiatives.

BNM continues to contribute to the global fight against TF through our participation with regional and global platforms, as well as bilateral engagements with our counterparts.

Notably, BNM remains an active participant and contributor to discussions and projects in regional and global platforms/forums such as the FATF, Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), Egmont Group of FIUs, and Financial Intelligence Consultative Group (FICG). Under the FICG, Malaysia co-led the development of an Information-Sharing Platform (ISP) with Australia and Philippines - a secure platform to enable the sharing of intelligence and financial information between FICG countries. Malaysia also led the Asia-Pacific Virtual Codeathon in June 2023 which aimed to trigger greater application of data analytics in antimoney laundering, countering

financing of terrorism and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and its financing (AML/CFT/CPF).

With respect to Malaysia's collaboration with ASEAN on TF matters, Malaysia is also involved in the ASEAN Senior Officers Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), a platform for regional collaboration in combating cross-border criminal activities. Within the SOMTC, Malaysia contributes as a Voluntary Lead Shepherd for ML, Sea Piracy and People Smuggling priority areas.

BNM has also established multiple Memorandum of Understandings with a majority of ASEAN members on the sharing of financial intelligence related to money laundering, related predicate offences and financing of terrorism.

#### Non-Proliferation, Counter-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

Malaysia firmly advocates for the prioritisation of the total elimination of all forms of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) on the international agenda. It is Malaysia's steadfast belief that the comprehensive eradication of such armaments would greatly enhance global peace and security.

Malaysia underscores the continued importance of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty as a pivotal instrument for disarmament and non-proliferation within ASEAN. Malaysia encourages all States Parties to the SEANWFZ Treaty, as well as Nuclear Weapon States, to redouble their efforts to address outstanding matters related to the signing and ratification of the Protocol. This should be pursued in accordance with the Treaty's objectives and principles, with the aim of expediting the process at the earliest opportunity.

Malaysia remains steadfast in its commitment to preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and their associated technologies and delivery systems. In pursuit of this objective, Malaysia actively participates in various international agreements and frameworks aimed at disarmament and non-proliferation, including but not limited to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Additionally, Malaysia is a Signatory State to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

Malaysia has established an Act on Chemical Weapons and BioToxic Weapons in order to control the usage and production of those agents. The enforcement agency has been trained to conduct a joint investigation to mitigate the issues of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) in Malaysia.

The Malaysian Armed Forces has also developed an Ammunition and Explosive Regulation in line with the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) by the United Nations to regulate the storage, usage and disposal of ammunition and explosives in the military inventory. This regulation has successfully prevented any misuse involving ammunition and explosives in the Malaysian Armed Forces.

## Supporting National Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540

### Amendments to the Atomic Energy Licensing Act 1984 (Act 304)

Atomic Energy Licensing Act 1984 is an Act to provide for the regulation and control of atomic energy, for the establishment of standards on liability for nuclear damage, and for matters connected therewith or related thereto. Act 304 contains ten (10) parts and seventy-one (71) sections. Under section 3 of Act 304, The Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB) was established on 1 February 1985. Department of Atomic Energy Malaysia (Atom Malaysia) acts as an enforcement body for Act 304 includes regulations and other subsidiary legislation made under this Act.

Atom Malaysia is in the midst of enacting an Atomic Energy Bill, by amending existing Act 304 to strengthen the legal and regulatory provision of safety, security, and safeguards in supervising the usage of atomic energy implicitly and comprehensively, in line with the dynamic changes of internationally accepted and recognised practices. The enactment of this Bill will ensure adequate protection for workers, the public, and the environment from the harmful effects of ionising radiation, emphasising controls on nuclear security and safeguarding nuclear material and related technologies, demonstrating the Government's commitment and transparency in ensuring implementation of relevant international obligations within the country. Efforts are taken to include the relevant international instruments to national law through the amendment of Act 304. The Bill is currently under review of the Attorney General's Department.

### **Export Control**

In fulfilling the obligations stipulated under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 (2004), Malaysia enacted the Strategic Trade Act 2010 (STA 2010) on 5 April 2010, which came into force on 1 January 2011. STA 2010 provides for control over the export, trans-shipment, transit, and brokering of strategic items, including arms, technologies, and related material, and other activities that will or may facilitate the design, development, and production of weapon of mass destruction (WMDs) and their delivery systems. After seven (7) years of implementation, STA 2010 underwent its first amendment, known as the STA (Amendment) 2017. The purpose of the amendment was to adapt the STA to the changing dynamics of proliferation scenarios while ensuring its compliance with the relevant UNSCR without discouraging trade activities. The STA (Amendment) 2017 came into force on 8 September 2017. This Act is consistent with Malaysia's international obligations on national security.

In order to fulfil the State's Obligation under the UNSCR 1540 through Malaysia national instrument STA 2010, a Strategic Controller in The Strategic Trade Secretariat is appointed to serve as the focal point for the administration of STA 2010. Apart from the Controller, relevant agencies are appointed as an "appropriate authority", inter alia the Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), Department of Atomic Energy (Atom Malaysia), and Pharmaceutical Services Division, Ministry of Health, who are responsible to issue permits for specific activities mandated by STA 2010. Under this Act, Atom Malaysia is the responsible authority of Category 0 Nuclear



Materials, Facilities, and Equipment for Dual-Use Item. The regulatory control measures are applied to the monitoring of manufacturing, supply, receipt, possession, storage, use, transfer, import, export, transport, maintenance, recycling, and disposal of nuclear material and strategic goods that can be used for weapon development. By implementing this Act, Malaysia fully adheres to its obligation under Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 of the United Nations (UN).

### **Non-Proliferation**

Malaysia recognises the role of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Malaysia holds the view that nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology must be addressed comprehensively in all aspects in a balanced manner, in line with the three pillars of the NPT. Malaysia is Party to a number of international treaties on disarmament and non-proliferation of WMDs, including the:

- i. Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water (1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty - PTBT) on 21 August 1963 and ratified on 15 July 1964.
- ii. Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968 NPT) on 1 July 1968 and ratified on 5 March 1970.
- iii. Agreement between the Government of Malaysia and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non- Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1972 IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement) on 29 February 1972.
- iv. Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof (1971 Seabed Treaty) on 20 May 1970 and ratified on 21 June 1972.
- v. Agreement between the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Governments of Malaysia and the United States of America Concerning the Transfer of a Research Reactor and Enriched Uranium (Supply and Project Agreement) on 22 September 1980.
- vi. Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident on 1 September 1987.
- vii. Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency on 1 September 1987.
- viii. Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) on 15 December 1995 and ratified on 11 October 1996.
- ix. Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (1998 CTBT) on 23 July 1998 and ratified on 17 January 2008.

- x. Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (2017 RCA) on 19 June 2017.

Malaysia signed the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (INFCIRC/140) on 1 July 1968 and came into force on 5 March 1970. Under Article III (INFCIRC/140), Malaysia has concluded a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (INFCIRC/182) with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and came into force on 29 February 1972. Comprehensive safeguards agreements implemented in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty were designed to confirm that declared nuclear materials remained in peaceful activities and to prevent diversion towards non-peaceful uses. This is in line with Malaysia's stance and unwavering commitment to realising the long-overdue goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Malaysia reaffirms the centrality of the IAEA in this regard and recognises the Agency's invaluable contribution in establishing and promulgating effective safeguards and verification mechanisms for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Under the Safeguards Agreement, Malaysia has accepted IAEA Safeguards Inspectors for the annual Physical Inventory Verification (PIV). Atom Malaysia, as a State Regulatory Authority, is responsible for national safeguards implementation and maintaining the State System of Accounting for and Control (SSAC) by ensuring the correctness and completeness of the declared nuclear materials.

Malaysia signed the Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreement (AP) on 22 November 2005; which outlines the responsibility to control and report any activities related to nuclear items and technology to the IAEA. By finalising the amendment of Act 304, this comprehensive national nuclear law would facilitate Malaysia becoming a party to the various conventions, agreements, and protocols governing the issue of nuclear terrorism and nuclear security, including ratification of the IAEA Additional Protocol. Hence, Malaysia continues to undertake serious efforts concerning nuclear safeguards as part of its confidence-building measures in the non-proliferation regime.

Malaysia is participating in the pilot phase of the new initiative launched by the IAEA, namely the Comprehensive Capacity-Building Initiative for State Systems of Accounting for and Control (SSACs) and State Authority Responsible for Safeguards Implementation (SRAs) (COMPASS), which was implemented beginning June 2021 until March 2023. Six (6) types of assistance have been agreed upon, namely on outreach; training; equipment; legal and regulatory assistance; expert support; and technology information support. With the implementation of the COMPASS initiative, Malaysia gained a positive impact in improving the effectiveness of Malaysia's SSAC infrastructure and enhancing the regulatory body's capability for the implementation of nuclear safeguards.

### **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**

As a State Party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) since 30 September 2020, ratifying the TPNW is Malaysia's tangible effort to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament on the international stage. The entry into force of the TPNW complements international law regarding nuclear disarmament, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Malaysia views that

ratifying the TPNW will change the nuclear disarmament discourse from one dominated by nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed States to a more democratic, equitable, where all States have an equal voice. Malaysia strongly reaffirms the paramount importance of the Treaty as the disarmament and non-proliferation instrument in the region. Malaysia believes that the TPNW strengthens the global norms against nuclear weapons, and more importantly, for a safer and secure world.

### **Supporting Nuclear Security-related International Initiatives**

Malaysia recognises nuclear security as one of the fundamental national security issues, in line with other conventional threats to Malaysia. In this regard, the nuclear security infrastructure program is being deployed under the chairmanship of the National Security Council (NSC) in setting up policy and strategy in a multi-agencies environment. Nuclear security is planned and implemented through an established framework of the IAEA Integrated Nuclear Security Sustainability Plan (INSSP) to ensure a comprehensive approach in line with IAEA international good practices. Malaysia's INSSP was jointly developed and approved in 2009 based on findings and recommendations of the IAEA International Nuclear Security Advisory Service (INSServ) mission implemented in 2005 and 2022.

Malaysia has been recognised as the Nuclear Security Support Centre (NSSC) with regional roles by the IAEA since December 2012. Malaysia is utilising the NSSC to retain knowledge and expertise gained from various international cooperation and assistance in nuclear security. A strong collaboration between national and international agencies is being conducted to ensure the availability of national resources for nuclear security in Malaysia.

Malaysia has been extending the NSSC's capability based on experiences and best practices sharing-session with countries such as Sudan, Nigeria, Cambodia, Indonesia, Brunei, Djibouti, and Zimbabwe, through cooperation with the IAEA. Malaysia through Atom Malaysia actively contributes expertise to the international community on the development of nuclear security detection architecture, and deployment and maintenance of radiation detection equipment at the Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre (NSTDC), Siebersdorf, Austria, and other IAEA Member States such as Indonesia, Morocco, Uganda, and Viet Nam.

On 25 September 2020, on behalf of the Government of Malaysia, Atom Malaysia signed a Practical Agreement with the IAEA on the Loaner Pool of Radiation Detection Equipment that will be supporting regional countries for equipment loans and training on behalf of the IAEA for nuclear security purposes. Malaysia contributed to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 by deploying radiation detection equipment under the pool for security screening purposes. Malaysia welcomes the Asia Pacific Members to utilise this facility especially the Member States that will organise Major Public Events (MPE) in the near future.

## **Cooperation with the United States National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) on Cooperation in Peaceful Nuclear Energy Infrastructure**

Malaysia, through Atom Malaysia, had commenced its' bilateral cooperation with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) through the exchange of a Letter of Intention (LOI). The areas for cooperation include but are not limited to (i) Development of nuclear legislation and regulations; (ii) Energy planning and modelling; (iii) Nuclear safeguards and security; (iv) Radiation protection; Environment, safety and health; (v) Low-and intermediate-level radioactive waste management; and (vi) Reactor Operations, safety and best practices.

### **(i) Nuclear Smuggling Detection and Deterrence (NSDD)**

Nuclear Smuggling Detection and Deterrence (NSDD)/NNSA under the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has established a cooperation with the Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMC) in radiation detection via the Agreement between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of the United States of America concerning cooperation to prevent the Illicit Trafficking in Nuclear and other Radioactive Material signed in 2008. Under the cooperation, Atom Malaysia was appointed as the technical agency to advise the RMCD regarding Malaysia's nuclear security and radioactive sources. Through the Agreement, 60 Radiation Portal Monitors (RPM) have been installed at main seaports in Malaysia, specifically at Port Klang (Selangor State), Tanjung Pelepas, Johore (Southern Port of Peninsular Malaysia), and Penang Port (Northern Port of Peninsular Malaysia). Other than that, continuous national and international training have been successfully conducted. Since 2016, NSSC Malaysia, USDOE/NSDD, and the IAEA have successfully established a module and syllabus for the Instructor Training Course on Nuclear Security Detection for Frontline Officers, which 172 IAEA Members have used.

The U.S. DOE/NNSA successfully organised a Workshop on Safeguards Implementation for Malaysian Decision-Makers and Outreach of the IAEA Additional Protocol on 14 - 15 July 2021. The workshop aimed to raise awareness among policymakers and senior officers on ratifying the Supplementary Protocol to the Comprehensive Control Agreement. The workshop was attended by representatives from various ministries and agencies such as the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH), Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), National Security Council (MKN), RMC, the Malaysian Nuclear Agency (Nuclear Malaysia) and Atom Malaysia.

In 2022, Malaysia and U.S. NSDD discussed the development of the Life Cycle Management (LCM) for the radiation detection system. The national regulatory body, Atom Malaysia, is committed to establishing LCM with support and training provided by the U.S. NSDD. This is a continuous commitment by Atom Malaysia as a regulatory body towards developing systematic and comprehensive management of detection equipment in the future.

Malaysia has also been involved as part of the Illicit Trafficking Database in Nuclear Material and Other Radioactive Sources since March 2001, which is implemented by

the IAEA in cooperation with the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the International Police Organisation (INTERPOL). Malaysia is committed to exchanging information with the IAEA Incident and Trafficking Database (ITDB) as part of national commitments to support global nuclear security objectives. The Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) and the U.S DOE/NNSA/NSDD working together to detect and prevent illicit trafficking in special nuclear material and other radioactive material through Counter Nuclear Smuggling (CNS) cooperation. This cooperation will assist the RMP in enhancing its nuclear security detection architecture. Malaysia's Ministry of Home Affairs and the U.S. are in the process of establishing the collaboration through the provision of six (6) units of Mobile Detection Systems (MDS) to the RMP.

## **(ii) Office of Radiological Security**

Malaysia also has benefitted from continuous support and collaboration with the Office of Radiological Security (ORS)/NNSA. ORS and Atom Malaysia successfully organised a Nuclear Security Table Top Exercise with observers from ASEANTOM countries as good practice and experience sharing on response measures during nuclear security events that was held in Malacca from 15 to 17 February 2020. This program was also a part of the collaboration between ASEANTOM and ORS in the South East Asia (SEA) region. Moving forward, coordination meeting between Atom Malaysia and ORS have been held regularly to discuss ongoing collaboration as well as potential future activities. The meeting also identified the potential expert assistance and advisory services needed on the security system in radiation facilities.

## **Transnational Crime**

Information sharing and intelligence exchange to combat terrorism occurs regularly, based on mutual trust and understanding.

The Wildlife Crime Bureau, part of the Internal Security and Public Order Department within the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP), is keen to strengthen cooperation and collaboration with ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) participating countries in the fight against transnational organised crime. Attending courses offers an opportunity to engage with ARF participating countries. As part of efforts to enhance Information Sharing and Intelligence Exchange, in addition to strengthening relationships between ARF participating countries and Malaysia.

The Marine Police Force has a platform for strategic cooperation with relevant agencies of the neighbouring countries that share maritime borders with Malaysia such as Korpolaairud, Polri, Indonesia, Royal Thai Navy (RTN) and Royal Thai Marine Police (RTMP) Thailand, Singapore Police Coast Guard (SPCG), Singapore Police Force (SPF), Singapore and Philippines National Police - Maritime Group (PNP-MG) Philippines. These platforms warrant strategic cooperation with the said country's maritime police for a monthly patrol asset rendezvous meeting at sea (RV) and coordinated patrol along shared maritime borders to enhance maritime security and law enforcement, occasional ship visit and port visit, occasional courtesy visit, annual bilateral meeting, occasional joint training at sea and occasional video conferencing (VC).

Transportation security measures against international terrorism are being implemented in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) standards, involving both local and foreign stakeholders, and based on international conventions and protocols.

### **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

ASEAN has achieved notable progress in disaster management and risk reduction ever since the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004. ASEAN Member States adopted the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in 2005, which serves as the legal framework to define roles and responsibilities of Member States in regional disaster management and cooperation.

Subsequently in 2015, ASEAN endorsed the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management, which set the strategic pathway to strengthen regional disaster resilience. In 2016, the declaration on “One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disaster as One in the Region and Outside the Region” was adopted in order to achieve faster response, mobilise greater resources and establish stronger coordination in ASEAN’s collective response to disasters.

To harness the momentum achieved by ASEAN over a decade through the AADMER Work Programmes to guide regional disaster management collaborations, the latest AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025 was developed based on the foundation laid out by the previous AADMER Work Programmes. It is guided by the vision set out by the AADMER to “build a region of disaster-resilient nations, mutually assisting and complementing one another, sharing a common bond in minimising adverse effects of disasters in pursuit of safer communities and sustainable development”.

The AADMER Work Programmes have galvanised ASEAN to take concrete action towards building a safe and united ASEAN Community together with National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs), relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and mechanisms, ASEAN Centres as well as external partners.

Ever since the ratification of the AADMER, Malaysia has been actively engaged and committed towards the realisation of the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management, as well as the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response. Malaysia will also continue to support AADMER’s operational engine namely the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) as the nerve for disaster monitoring, preparedness and response, and capacity building.

At the national level, the management of disasters is guided by the National Security Council Directive No. 20, an executive order that prescribes the mechanisms as well as responsibilities and functions of related agencies under an integrated emergency management system that is in line with the country’s commitments both at the international and regional level.

In addition, the Central Disaster Management Committee on 3 February 2022, agreed to 8 Strategic Steps to improve disaster management and risk reduction at all levels

which, among others include; a shift towards emphasising on disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives; allocation of specific budget for disaster management and risk reduction; as well as upgrading of system and delivery of information.

Under Malaysia's latest 5-year development plan, green growth will be bolstered to ensure sustainability and resilience. Building upon initiatives from the previous Malaysia Plans, the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan addresses climate change, reducing risks and strengthening the enabling environment for effective governance through:

- a. Increasing resilience against climate change and disasters;
- b. Implementing evidence-based and risk informed actions;
- c. Adapting integrated approaches for climate adaptation and DRR;
- d. Enhancing early warning systems and disaster response; and
- e. Enhancing disaster preparedness and recovery.

Some examples of anticipatory action measures that have been taken is the National Flood Forecasting and Warning Programme (PRAB) for 41 major river basins in Malaysia. Through the flood prediction model, early warning is able to be issued as early as 48 hours ahead of the predicted flooding. In terms of dissemination of information to the public, NADMA Malaysia has established cooperation with major telecommunication companies on a CSR basis to issue warning SMS to communities in the areas that are predicted to be flooded.

Aside from this, the Government also proactively encourages the participation of communities in disaster prone areas. The Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) is designed to encourage participation from the community including vulnerable groups to identify, analyse, treat, monitor, and evaluate potential risks within their locality, thereby empowering them into implementation of solutions that they themselves develop.

NADMA has also established the National Risk Register (NRR) aimed to support decision making processes and allocation of resources for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The NRR will ultimately promote a culture of safety and strengthening disaster resilience.

In addition, NADMA is in the midst of finalising the National DRR Policy which will be the main reference and guidance in disaster risk management at all levels, and across sectors. The National DRR Policy will be the main document that plans the country's strategic direction in reducing disaster risks, towards creating a safe and disaster resilient nation.

At the regional level, Malaysia has committed itself towards the realisation of the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management, as well as the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response since the ratification of the AADMER. Malaysia will continue to support AADMER's operational engine namely the ASEAN Coordinating

Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) as the nerve for disaster monitoring, preparedness and response, and capacity building. Among others, we are committed to update the list of modules under the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP) that has been developed to identify available assets and capabilities to increase the speed and scale of ASEAN support to disaster affected member states.

Apart from this, the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART) stands ready to be deployed for international HADR Missions. Established on 1 August 1995, the team consists of members from the Malaysian Armed Forces, Royal Malaysia Police and the Fire and Rescue Department who are recruited via a rigorous selection process. Being an elite search and rescue team, SMART has enhanced the image of Malaysia through its various deployments abroad to assist in major disasters. SMART has gained the INSARAG External Classification (IEC) in 2016, being the second team to be accredited under the Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) category in ASEAN.

For regional preparedness, Malaysia is home to the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) as well as the ASEAN Disaster Emergency Logistics System (DELSA). Following a number of natural disaster occurrences in Southeast Asia, the World Food Programme (WFP) was looking at strengthening its facility by establishing the UNHRD in this region. During the Indian Ocean Tsunami in December 2004, the humanitarian community utilised Subang Airbase in Malaysia as a temporary logistics hub, further highlighting the need for a regional logistics facility.

On 25 February 2010, the Government of Malaysia and the WFP signed a Basic Agreement to host the UNHRD in Subang Airbase. The Government of Malaysia has committed to financially support the UNHRD network with \$1 million USD per annum starting from the year 2010. The Government also committed to provide a total of at least 12,000 square metres of total surface area for the premises which include a covered storage, space of a minimum 5,000 square metres and another 500 square metres for office and training facilities based in Subang Airbase. The construction of the warehouse with the cost of RM17 million was borne by the Malaysian Government. While regionally focused, the UNHRD facility in Malaysia has a global scope and augments the international humanitarian community's ability to respond to emergencies worldwide quickly and effectively.

In order to enhance capacities and capabilities of Member States in joint disaster management operations ASEAN under the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) conducts on an annual basis the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX). Malaysia was the first Member State to host the ARDEX which was conducted in Selangor in September 2005.

Under the ARF, Malaysia co-organised with China on the ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx) in 2015, which is a biennial event to test civil-military effectiveness and efficiency in its response to large-scale disasters. It also allows testing of existing mechanisms in ASEAN and identifies issues related to civil-military coordination in the delivery of humanitarian aid at the strategic and operational



level through Table Top Exercises (TTX), and tactical level through Field Training Exercises (FTX).

The ARF DiREx 2015 was participated by more than 25 ARF Member States in addition to international humanitarian organisations such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC) as well as representatives from the NGO sector.

Aside from its commitments at the regional level, Malaysia also actively engages in bilateral cooperation through the establishment of MoUs with neighbouring countries in disaster management and emergency response, particularly those that share land borders with Malaysia. Among the activities conducted are cross-border training exercises, exchange of information, and capacity building.

Moving forward, Malaysia will continue to commit to collaborate with ASEAN Member States towards the implementation of the AADMER Work Programme in order to strengthen disaster management and emergency response, enhance resilience and mitigate the impacts of disasters in the region. This includes ongoing efforts in the implementation of the Work Programme whilst exploring opportunities for further cooperation and innovation in disaster management and risk reduction.

## **Maritime Security**

Malaysia is geographically located at one of the most strategic and very important international shipping routes, namely the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. The country's maritime boundaries encompass a significant portion of the sea, making it a crucial player in regional and global maritime affairs. Hence maritime security in Malaysia is a crucial aspect of the country's overall security framework due to its extensive coastline and strategic location.

Malaysia is deeply committed to working closely with neighbouring nations and participating in international discussions to improve maritime security in the region. At its core, Malaysia is deeply committed to making its seas safer, not just for itself but also for all maritime communities from various nations in the region and the world. This is mainly achieved through active participation and international forums and also undertaking numerous unilateral, bilateral and multilateral operations in exercising effective enforcement and maritime presence within and beyond the Malaysian Maritime Zone (MMZ).

In adherence to the ARF Statement on Cooperation Against Piracy and Other Threats to Maritime Security, Malaysia, through the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN), has undertaken a multifaceted approach to combat maritime threats effectively. In principle, Malaysia recognises the importance of regional and international cooperation in ensuring maritime security and upholding the principles of international law, particularly within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In alignment with its commitment to combating piracy and other maritime threats, Malaysia has undertaken and will continue to implement various measures and actions in collaboration with regional and international partners.

Malaysia has bolstered its maritime security infrastructure by enhancing surveillance capabilities, investing in advanced technology and conducting regular patrols in its territorial waters and MMZ. Malaysia has intensified joint operations between the Malaysian Armed Forces and other maritime enforcement agencies to ensure a coordinated and seamless response to maritime threats.

Malaysia also seeks to intensify its commitment to regional and global efforts against piracy and other maritime security threats within the region. Malaysia has enhanced maritime patrolling within the important Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) through bilateral and multilateral initiatives such as the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) and the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangements (TCA).

The Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA) between Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines is a collaborative effort signed in 2016 aimed at enhancing maritime security and addressing transnational crimes, particularly in the maritime areas bordering these countries. The TCA primarily focuses on the Sulu and Celebes Seas region, which has been known for piracy, armed robbery against ships, maritime terrorism, and other illicit activities. The TCA provides a framework for regular dialogue, cooperation, and coordination among the participating countries to address common maritime security concerns as well as promote regional stability and safety. Participating countries share maritime information and intelligence to improve situational awareness and facilitate more effective responses to security incidents. This includes sharing data on vessel movements, suspicious activities, and exchange intelligence on criminal networks operating in the region. The TCA involves sea and air coordinated patrols conducted by naval and coast guard vessels from Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. These joint patrols aim to enhance surveillance, deterrence, and response capabilities against security threats in the designated maritime areas.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Malaysia dan Republic of Indonesia signed in 2012 in Respect of the Common Treatment of Fisherman by Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies of Malaysia dan Republic of Indonesia (MoU Common Guidelines). The objective of the MoU Common Guidelines is to establish guidance for agreed activities in dealing with fisheries issues between Indonesia and Malaysia with particular emphasis on ensuring the wellbeing of fishermen from both countries. In line with the MoU Common Guidelines, Indonesia and Malaysia, inter alia, have agreed that upon encroachment cases by fishermen in unresolved maritime boundary area, the authorities of the two countries would inspect and request the fishermen to leave the area, except for those using illegal fishing gears such as explosives. Indonesia and Malaysia have established the Review Meeting on the Implementation of the MoU Common Guidelines (Review Meeting) to monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the MoU Common Guidelines. The Review Meeting is to ensure that the MoU Common Guidelines is honoured and respected by all maritime law enforcement agencies of Malaysia and Indonesia. To date, Malaysia and Indonesia and the Philippines had convened 9 series of Review Meetings.

Malaysia and Indonesia have signed numerous bilateral agreements covering a wide range of areas, including trade and investment, defence and security, education,

tourism, and agriculture. These agreements provide frameworks for cooperation and establish guidelines for collaboration in specific sectors. Both countries engage in security and defence cooperation to address common challenges such as terrorism, piracy, and transnational crime. Guidelines for such cooperation include joint patrols, intelligence sharing, and joint exercises aimed at enhancing maritime security and combating cross-border threats. Guidelines for resolving disputes or managing disagreements between Malaysia and Indonesia may include diplomatic channels, bilateral consultations, and adherence to international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Hence bilateral meeting between Malaysia and Republic of Indonesia have been held annually to view, report and share finding between two countries to ensure fishermen of both countries are treated as stipulated in the common guidelines.

#### **D. ROLE OF THE ARF**

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) stands as a cornerstone of political and security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF continues to provide a unique platform for fostering constructive dialogue and consultation among its participating countries. As we approach the conclusion of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action in 2025, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the ARF's past achievements and consider the future trajectory of this vital platform.

Since its establishment in 1994, the ARF has played a crucial role in addressing political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific region through constructive dialogue and consultation. However, the evolving security landscape presents new challenges and necessitates a strategic shift from confidence-building measures (CBMs) to preventive diplomacy. Additionally, the ARF must adapt to increasingly complex security threats while upholding ASEAN unity and centrality.

Initially, the ARF concentrated on CBMs to foster trust and mutual understanding through activities such as joint military exercises, information sharing, and regular meetings. These efforts reduced uncertainties and promoted transparency, creating a stable environment for an open engagement. However, there is a growing recognition of the need to transition from CBMs to preventive diplomacy. The region now requires a more proactive approach to security. Transitioning to preventive diplomacy is essential to anticipate and address potential conflicts before they escalate. This shift requires new mechanisms and a change in mindset among participating countries, prioritising proactive approaches to maintain long-term regional stability.

The Asia-Pacific region faces a multitude of evolving and increasingly complex security challenges that are both traditional and non-traditional in nature. These include among others, maritime security, enhancement of military capabilities, cybersecurity and climate change. To effectively address these multifaceted threats, the ARF must be agile and adaptive, complementing traditional security measures with innovative approaches.

Given these evolving threats, a new, updated and more relevant plan of action is essential. With the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action set to expire in 2025, it is imperative to

update or develop a new, comprehensive Plan of Action (POA) that reflects the current security landscape. This new POA should be formulated through extensive consultations with member states and stakeholders, ensuring that it addresses contemporary security challenges and sets clear, actionable goals.

ASEAN unity and Centrality are paramount to the ARF's success. As a platform rooted in ASEAN principles, the ARF must ensure its initiatives reflect the collective interests and values of its member states. The ARF's success hinges on its ability to present a cohesive and united front in regional and global arenas. This unity is vital for effective diplomacy and for projecting ASEAN's values and interests on the international stage.

The ARF should continue to promote inclusivity by engaging non-state actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, and the private sector to provide diverse perspectives and innovative solutions to security challenges. Such engagement enhances the legitimacy and credibility of the ARF's initiatives. Additionally, the ARF should also foster closer collaboration with other ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). This cooperation can provide complementary expertise, resources, and frameworks for addressing security issues comprehensively. Joint initiatives and shared resources will enhance the ARF's capacity to manage regional security effectively.

The ARF remains a vital platform for promoting political and security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. Malaysia firmly believes in the forum's potential to navigate the complex security landscape and serve as a beacon of dialogue and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. However, the ARF stands at a critical juncture, facing an increasingly complex security environment. The ARF must embrace the challenges ahead, continuously evolve, and reaffirm its dedication to fostering a secure and prosperous region.

The future of the ARF hinges on its ability to innovate and respond to contemporary security challenges. The ARF's continued evolution and adaptation to current realities will ensure its relevance and effectiveness in promoting regional security and cooperation. By addressing its challenges and enhancing its mechanisms, the ARF can continue to foster an environment of peace, stability, and prosperity. Through proactive measures, the ARF can uphold its commitment to peace and security, benefiting not only its member states but the entire Asia-Pacific region.

## **MYANMAR**

### **Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

1. The Asia-Pacific region, housing over half of the world's population, holds strategic significance globally. It serves as a hub for international trade and boasts a large populace, influencing various sectors, notably security. Additionally, it's witnessing a surge in global interest and trends. Challenges to stability and security on a global scale significantly impact the Asia-Pacific's economic and security domains. Amidst such circumstances, ASEAN member nations, situated in this region, assume a pivotal role in ensuring stability and security.

2. 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 endeavoring 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 brings the different responds and disagreements among ASEAN members. Similarly, some external countries could initiate issues that can deviate from ASEAN consensus, provisions and or lead to the disunity among member countries.

3. In the ASEAN region, efforts must be made to rid the dominance of some powerful countries and gradually to eliminate one-sided influence which may impact on the regional stability and peace. When the regional countries expand their relations with these powerful countries, it's crucial to remain unbounded and not to impinge the amity of the ASEAN community. Similarly, when the unilateral activities of some powerful countries in the region might effect the safety and interests of the region, all ASEAN countries need to oppose unanimously. By doing so, the impacts on ASEAN centrality and ASEAN's decision could be mitigated and the essence of the ASEAN's own stance would be highlighted.

4. When the ASEAN community faces unforeseen conflicts in the region, it is necessarily important to prioritize peaceful solutions over military ones. In other words, all ASEAN countries must focus on preventing the occurrence of wars and conflicts in the region, which cause serious damage to the socio-economic development of the people. Only then the people of the ASEAN region will be able to fully enjoy amity, prosperity, and cultural exchange between countries. Therefore, any crisis or conflict that may arise in the ASEAN community must be resolved peacefully through amity.

5. The superpowers later sought to gain political and military influence through the increasing competition for economic projects in the Indo-Pacific region. It is essential to aware the potential for influencing in the region and intervention in the internal affairs of regional countries, under the pretext of human rights, democracy, and humanitarianism.

6. 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 of 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 accord with ASEAN CHARTER, ASEAN VISION, 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.

7. There is a gradual increase in arms race in the East Asian region, particularly evident in the arm-race, installation, and deployment of the state of the art weapon systems. Similarly, within the ASEAN region, the procurement of modern weapons systems and technologies for national security and sovereignty is steadily rising, contributing to the overall increase in arms races in the region. Additionally, some countries in the region are prioritizing military means through cooperation with powerful countries. Consequently, countries focusing on weapon installation and military buildup must consider about the potential consequences of military solutions.

8. As an ASEAN community, it is necessary for all ASEAN countries to make concerted efforts to reduce the influence of some powerful countries in the region as much as possible, prioritize peaceful solutions to any conflicts that may arise, maintain focus on ASEAN-centered decisions and agreements, and monitor and address the rise of regional arm races. Only then the ASEAN will be able to preserve and protect the prosperity, unity, and development of the people in the region. Myanmar will also make all efforts to strengthen the ASEAN community and enhance the safety and socio-economic of the people in the ASEAN Community.

#### National Security and Defence Policy

9. 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 Union of Myanmar, the article 42 of State Constitution (2008) has clearly promulgated that:

- (a) The Union of Myanmar shall not commence aggression against any nation.
- (b) No foreign troops shall be permitted to be deployed in the territory of Myanmar.

10. 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:

- (a) 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.
- (b) To formulate the National Defence with the People's War Strategy centered at Tatmadaw as pillar depending on the synergy of entire people.
- (c) 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.

(d) To employ a defence system that has oriented towards friendly relations with other nations in accord with the five principles of peaceful co-existence.(e) Not to permit forming military alliance with other nations and the deployment of any foreign troops in the territory of the Union. (f) To cooperate with international community in non-traditional security issues and anti-terrorist affairs and to render assistance when calamities occur in the Union.

#### Defence Budget (Military Expenditure)

11. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar allocated Defence Budget about MMK 5635.1 billion for 2023-2024 fiscal year.

#### National Contributions to Regional Security

12. For the security of the region in multiple aspects, Myanmar is actively participating and contributing her efforts to the inter-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 chairmanship of the ASEAN for the first time since her membership. As a member of the ASEAN, Myanmar has been participating the dialogues and workshops organized by the ASEAN Regional Forum – ARF since the establishment of the institution in 1994 which host the countries inside and outside of the region.

13. Myanmar perceived that any act of terror is still remaining a big challenge for the security in the region especially within the ASEAN. Myanmar had decisively opposed the terrorist groups designated by some of ASEAN countries and will be continue to oppose. 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. Myanmar co-chaired 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.

14. 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.

15. Additionally, there are joint endeavors with Yangon based US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) Thailand, and with

National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC) of China and we have set up Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) along Myanmar-China, Laos and Thailand borders. These serve as main centers 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 with 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.

16. Myanmar and Thai Air Force held 8th MAF-RTAF Air Working Group Meeting on 12 to 16 June 2023 at Naypyitaw. Besides, Myanmar hosted ADMM-Plus Counter Terrorism Table Top Exercise on 1 to 3 August 2023, 10th ASEAN Air Forces Education and Training - Working Group (10th AAFET- WG) on 7 to 9 August 2023 through Video Tele-Conferencing, Seminar of Drugs Prevention and Suppression on 16 to 18 August 2023, 20th ASEAN Air Chiefs Conference (20th AACC) on 12 to 15 September 2023, and 10th Myanmar-Thailand Senior Staff Talks (10th SST) on 25 to 27 December 2023, at Naypyitaw. Myanmar hosted 4th Myanmar-Laos Joint Border Security Committee Meeting on 27 to 29 November 2023 at Kengtung.

17. Regarding non-proliferation of nuclear weapon, Myanmar has signed the additional protocol of the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty – SEANWFZ, and actively following the Action Plan to strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the SEANWFZ (2018-2022).

18. There were no ASEAN militaries' meetings and exchanges hosted by Myanmar from June 2020 to April 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic. As for Myanmar, the Union is actively participating in matters relating to counter terrorism as in 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 cooperation to respond to the challenges relating to acts of terror which we are now confronting. 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.

### **Role of ARF**

19. 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.

20. 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. 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.

21. ASEAN member states should continue enhancing peace and stability of the region in cooperative manner, encourage the states to sign the additional protocol of the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ), cooperate more in the 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.

22. The ASEAN Regional Forum with three-stage process of security cooperation, namely, confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, and conflict resolution was established for the purpose of consultation between countries. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) faces a dynamic set of challenges and prospects as it navigates the evolving geopolitical landscape of the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF has traditionally focused on confidence building and conflict resolution, but to remain relevant, it must expand its scope to tackle contemporary security concerns effectively.

23. Looking ahead, the ARF has significant prospects for fostering regional stability and security. By promoting a three-stage process of security cooperation, the forum can develop a more predictable and constructive pattern of relationships within the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, the ARF's unique position, with its broad membership encompassing major powers, provides a platform for dialogue and consultation that can help mitigate tensions and build trust among nations.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

### **I. Overview of the regional security environment**

a. The Indo-Pacific region is central to 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 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 the immediate cessation of violence and a return to civilian rule. New Zealand supports ASEAN's efforts 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 the 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, without threat or use of force or coercion.

j. The Korean Peninsula remains one of the greatest long-term threats to regional security. We are concerned at the 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 further 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 cybersecurity 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. 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 concluded in 2023 and were signed in August 2023. The Upgrade modernises the agreement to reflect trade policy and practice. 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 (by geographical coverage). RCEP entered into force in January 2022 and the rules and norms set by RCEP 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. The New Zealand Government is working to maintain a secure and resilient New Zealand that is protected as a free, open, and democratic society for future generations. 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:

- Re-engaging and reinvigorating our relationships with traditional and like-minded partners;
- Sustaining our deep focus on the close bilateral ties with Pacific Island neighbours, including those for which New Zealand has constitutional responsibilities;
- Significantly increasing focus on, and resources applied to, South East Asia and India; and
- Supporting 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's defence policy settings conclude that the two principal challenges to New Zealand's security interests are strategic competition and the impacts of climate change. In response, the Defence Policy and Strategy Statement emphasises a more deliberate, proactive and strategy-led approach with three objectives: promoting and protecting New Zealand's defence interests in the region, particularly in the Pacific; contributing globally to collective security efforts that protect New Zealand's interests and values, particularly in the Indo-Pacific; and responding to events in New Zealand, the region, and globally where required. These objectives are underpinned by a strategy with three mutually reinforcing themes: understand, partner, and act.

### **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 New Zealand Transnational Organised Crime Strategy 2020-2025, New Zealand aims to unify through a system-wide governance model to prevent, detect, and dismantle TNOOC threats. A strong focus of the Strategy is partnerships and New Zealand engages to prevent, detect, and respond to these threats. New Zealand works 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 help New Zealand complete 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 continue to strengthen efforts to support partners to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks. This includes activities to counter the root causes of violent

extremism by building resilient communities, and invigorating mechanisms that promote coherence and coordination of counterterrorism 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 Intersessional Group Meeting with Lao PDR 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 Engagement Course – delivered in person in April-May 2024 with a focus on cooperation between Counter Terrorism (CT) units and Police, and Government / Non-Government Organisation (NGO) stakeholders to develop a multi-agency approach to CVE. New Zealand Police (NZ Police) provided two trainers to support development and delivery of training content through the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC).
- International Cybercrime Investigations Workshop (ICIW) – jointly delivered by the New Zealand Police, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) at JCLEC in person in January 2024. ICIW seeks to address knowledge and skills gaps in Cyber and Technology Enabled Crime (TEC) Investigations, with a focus on three thematic areas – cybercrime, child exploitation / online engagement and digital forensics.
- Victoria University of Wellington STIK (Indonesian National Police Higher Education) Masters Course – a collaborative initiative between Victoria University of Wellington and NZ Police, held annually with Indonesia National Police (INP) to build collaborative educational relationships. The most recent course took place in December 2023 with INP students travelling to New Zealand to attend.

- PEACE Interviewing – New Zealand Police provided two trainers to deliver a “Train the Trainer” course in PEACE Interviewing in March 2024 at the Royal Thai Police (RTP) ACcademy. The course seeks to build RTP interviewing best practice and prevent instances of human rights abuses in Police custody.
- Transnational Organised Crime (TNOc) Skills Course – New Zealand Police, New Zealand Customs (NZ Customs) and Immigration New Zealand (INZ) have provided trainers to jointly deliver the TNOc Skills Course once in Malaysia, seeking to build local capability in TNOc investigative skills. A second TNOc Skills Course is planned for delivery in Malaysia in June 2024, however there is desire to expand delivery to other ASEAN countries in the near future.
- Transnational Organised Crime (TNOc) International Cooperation Course – delivered in February-March 2024 at JCLEC by the New Zealand Police, the New Zealand Customs and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). The course aims to facilitate regional and strategic cooperation across ASEAN in combating TNOc, with 24 participants attending this course from a range of ASEAN Countries.
- Building Police Leadership Capacity – Women In Leadership – in June 2022 New Zealand Police, along with RCMP and the UK Government, delivered the Building Police Leadership Capacity – Women In Leadership Course to female leaders from across Asia in person through JCLEC facilities.
- People Smuggling Course – delivered at JCLEC three times per year by trainers from New Zealand Police / INZ, AFP and RCMP, with delivery scheduled for July and November 2024. There is increasing interest in expanding delivery of the course, with one previously facilitated in Sri Lanka and another scheduled for delivery in Malaysia in August 2024.
- Additionally, the New Zealand Police Senior Liaison Officer (SLO) based in Bangkok, the two New Zealand Police Liaison Officers (PLOs) based in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, and the four Irregular Migration Liaison Officers (IMLOs) based in the South East Asia region have continued to participate in localised training and presentations, maintain and strengthen partnerships, and facilitate cooperation on criminal matters.

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), through 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 Islands Forum member countries to strengthen resilience and build capacity to respond to a range of shared security challenges. New Zealand is a Pacific country, and as such, has a strong commitment to our region's security as set out in the Biketawa and Boe Declarations and more recently through the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. As a region, we strive to work together to preserve our security and our sovereignty. The Boe Declaration on Regional Security affirms an expanded concept of security encompassing traditional and non-traditional challenges encountered by the region, with climate change recognised as the preeminent security threat to the region. Other priorities include human security, environmental security, transnational crime, and cyber security.

13. New Zealand strongly supports the implementation of the Boe Declaration, and channels this through 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.

14. New Zealand supports 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 of, and responses to, regional security issues. New Zealand also provides technical assistance, capacity building, and mentoring for law enforcement and border agencies in the region.

15. In 2023, Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders adopted the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent implementation plan. The plan includes over 100 specific high-



level actions designed to help Forum Members and Forum Dialogue Partners deliver against the region's aspirations, priorities, and values for the next 30 years. This is a critical document for any partner undertaking, or considering, cooperation with Pacific countries.

16. 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. On 14 May 2024, New Zealand and France jointly announced a new non-governmental organisation, the Christchurch Call Foundation, to continue coordinating the Christchurch Call's work to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

17. The New Zealand Disarmament and Arms Control Strategy 2024-2026 identifies our priority objectives, the context in which we are pursuing them, and the means through which we aim to achieve them. The three broad priorities outlined in the Strategy are (1) promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; (2) defending international humanitarian law and promoting the protection of civilians, and (3) helping to shape norms and rules on outer space and autonomous weapon systems respectively.

18. New Zealand is a strong supporter of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). New Zealand ratified the TPNW in 2018 and continues to encourage non-signatory states to sign, and signatories to ratify the Treaty. Along with Malaysia, New Zealand co-chairs implementation work under the TPNW on nuclear disarmament verification (Article 4). New Zealand has also continued its active promotion of nuclear disarmament more generally, including through its membership of the New Agenda Coalition and work in the NPT context to improve transparency and reporting under the review cycle's disarmament review pillar.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. 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 safeguard 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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. In March 2024 we also sponsored a capacity-building workshop for Pacific Island countries, focused on Chemical Weapons Convention implementing legislation, and in 2024 participated in Biological Weapons Convention universalisation and implementation workshops in South East Asia and in the Pacific.

25. 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 chaired the Missile Technology Control Regime 2019-2020.

26. 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 2026. 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.

27. 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 universalisation and greater implementation, of the Treaty, including recently as 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 looks forward to continuing to work closely with its ARF partners on reinforcing the ATT.

28. New Zealand strongly supports the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC). New Zealand's position stems from concern about the humanitarian effects of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, and our support for international humanitarian law. As such, New Zealand is pleased to have worked with many ARF States on explosive remnants of war clearance operations, including in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Until 2023, New Zealand was 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.

29. New Zealand has a strong legacy of supporting unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance, risk education and victim assistance in the Indo-Pacific region. New Zealand also provides funding to the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, and has funded mine action work in Myanmar.

#### Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

30. The Indo-Pacific region continues to be afflicted by disasters that underline the need to continue deepening practical and effective cooperation in relation to disaster reduction, readiness, 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 disasters in the South East Asia region, including Timor-Leste floods in 2021 and Typhoon Rai in the Philippines in 2022.

31. New Zealand is continuing to play its part in deepening regional capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters, including drawing on lessons learned from the Christchurch earthquakes (2011) 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.

32. 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**

33. 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.

34. 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**

35. 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.

36. 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 2024, and the associated Study Group on Confidence-Building Measures, and we look forward to further cooperation in this area. We welcome constructive proposals made in this work stream, including Malaysia and Australia's ongoing work to maintain a point of contact directory, and the recent Singapore-EU initiative to hold a workshop on the Protection of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructure.

37. 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.

#### **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 co-chaired 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. 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**

### **Overview of Regional Security Environment**

The world has entered a new phase of transformation due to enormous shifts in the worldwide security landscape, regional realignments, and the rise of new challenges such as climate change, pandemics, poverty, starvation, xenophobia, terrorism, Islamophobia, natural disasters, insurgencies, WMD proliferation, disruptive technologies, migration from conflict and natural disastrous zones, civil strife, transnational organized crimes, security of trade routes, cybercrimes and abuse of social media.

Pakistan believes that regional and international peace, security and long-term prosperity depend on international conduct consistent with UN Charter as well as principles of peaceful coexistence with neighbors. Strategic stability at the global and regional levels including in south Asia, is under threat due to unresolved disputes, new forms of arms racing and quest for regional/global dominance.

#### **Situation in South Asia**

Peace and security in South Asia face serious challenges due to tensions in Pakistan-India relations, growing arms imbalance in South Asia, and military and strategic alliances involving major powers in the Asia-Pacific region.

Durable peace and stability in South Asia is contingent upon resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Longstanding disputes coupled with growing military imbalances and aggressive posturing poses serious challenges to strategic stability. Furthermore, the tendency of reckless and unlawful behavior, manifested in the form of extra-territorial and extra-judicial assassinations, not only in Pakistan but also other countries, constitutes yet another factor for instability.

Pakistan views with concern the emergence of new alliances and closed bloc structures in Asia-Pacific. It supports building of an equitable, open and inclusive security system in the Asia-Pacific region which promotes peace, stability and prosperity.

Pakistan rejects arbitrarily designations such as 'net security provider' for any country in the Indian Ocean Region. New geopolitical constructs in the Asia Pacific region may only incite divisions and confrontations, exacerbate arms race and lead to instability in the region and beyond.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan is extremely important for the countries of the region. It is vital for the realization of the vision of broader regional connectivity and prosperity.

Towards this end, Pakistan has remained actively engaged with the regional countries as well as the wider international community to find pathways for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, exacerbated by decades of conflict, remains an abiding concern for the international community. As part of its commitment to support the Afghan people, Pakistan has regularly contributed to the development and humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. Pakistan's assistance is geared towards investment in healthcare, infrastructure, education, agriculture and human resource development. In order to address the medical needs of the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan has set up hospitals and healthcare centers in Kabul, Jalalabad, and Logar. Pakistan is also offering fully-funded scholarships for higher studies to 4,500 Afghan students, including girls.

Building an inclusive and broad-based governance system in Afghanistan that reflects the interests of all segments of the Afghan society, and ensuring the rights of girls and women to achieve their full participation in public life, are essential prerequisites for socio-economic development in Afghanistan. Pakistan supports inclusive governance in Afghanistan, representing all segments of society, and continues to impress upon the Interim Afghan Government, the importance of ensuring the fundamental human rights of all Afghans, including ethnic groups, women and children. However, for the realization of these objectives, there is a need for humanitarian assistance and economic assistance for the Afghan people.

Pakistan has consistently pursued a comprehensive and holistic policy in its engagement with the Interim Afghan Government (IAG). Pakistan also remains actively engaged in all major regional and multilateral forums to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and has endeavored to forge broad convergences within the region and beyond, and to seek collective solutions to the challenges confronting Afghanistan. Pakistan will continue to work closely with the international community to promote lasting peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

#### The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Pakistan's policy on the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been principled, consistent and non-partisan. It stands for the universal and consistent application of fundamental principles of the UN Charter: self-determination of peoples, non-use or threat of use of force, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, pacific settlement of disputes and equal security for all in order to ensure durable peace, security and stability.

Pakistan believes that the conflict in Ukraine has brought misery and pain indirectly to developing countries. The effects have manifested in the rising oil and food prices in international market.



Pakistan believes that a diplomatic solution in accordance with relevant multilateral agreements, international law, and the provision of the UN Charter is indispensable.

## Counterterrorism

Pakistan has made tremendous contributions to the global fight against terrorism. Our efforts are driven by a resolve to ensure the safety and security of our citizens and to contribute positively to global peace and security.

Pakistan has been on the frontline in the fight against terrorism for decades. Our geographical location and historical geopolitical challenges have made us both a victim and a key player in regional counterterrorism efforts. No other country, outside active conflict zones, has sacrificed as much as Pakistan has done due to terrorism.

Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism that is planned, orchestrated, and sponsored by those detractors who are operating outside our borders. We have managed to turn the situation around with unwavering national resolve, concerted efforts, and unparalleled sacrifices of the people of Pakistan especially our law enforcement and security forces.

In our region, we have many detractors of peace who do not want to see Pakistan reap the dividends of its unprecedented and sincere efforts. We have faced significant internal security challenges from various terrorist groups, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISKP operating from its bases in Afghanistan, which have targeted civilians, security forces, and national infrastructure. For Pakistan, terrorism emanating from Afghanistan remains the foremost security concern.

We have implemented comprehensive counterterrorism policies that include military operations, intelligence-based operations, and legal frameworks such as the National Action Plan (NAP) including its revised version, to dismantle and disrupt terrorist networks. Military operations in tribal areas and across the country have been successful in significantly reducing the capability and presence of terrorist groups. Operations like Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad have been pivotal in this regard. On the legislative front, Pakistan has enacted several laws to strengthen our counterterrorism framework, including amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act. We have also established the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), which plays a crucial role in streamlining information sharing and coordinating actions between various federal and provincial agencies.

Pakistan actively participates in international counterterrorism forums and has collaborated with various countries and international agencies to enhance our capabilities and share information. Our cooperation extends to the United Nations, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and bilateral engagements with our partners.

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. The international fight against terrorism should not be allowed to be held hostage to vested interests of any country.

We also 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.

While the path has been challenging, Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to eradicate terrorism. We are dedicated to fostering a safe environment for our people and to working collaboratively with the international community to enhance regional and international security.

#### Non-Proliferation, Counter-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 the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Pakistan has put into place robust legislative, regulatory administrative and enforcement mechanisms to regulate the transfer of sensitive goods and technologies.

The following measures have been undertaken by Pakistan in this context:

- In pursuance of its commitment to non-proliferation and to regulate the export of sensitive and dual-use goods, items, and technologies, Pakistan enacted the Export Control Act on Goods, Technologies, Materials, and Equipment related to Nuclear and Biological Weapons and their Delivery Systems, also known as the Strategic Export Control Act (SECA), in September 2004. This legislation underscores Pakistan's dedication to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ensuring stringent controls over the export of critical materials and technologies.
- Pursuant to SECA-2004, Strategic Export Control Division (SECDIV) was set up in 2007 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SEDIV is responsible to regulate and administer the exports of strategic goods and technologies. SECDIV also leads inter-agency consultation to take immediate effect to the decisions taken by the UN Security Council (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 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) and National Institute of Safety and Security (NISAS) have been established for human resource development and technical support for effective in the area of nuclear safety and security. These institutions collaborate with the IAEA to impart trainings at the regional and global levels.
  - 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 has been submitting its reports on the implementation of the UNSC 1540 Resolution to the 1540 Committee. So far, Pakistan has submitted 6 reports to the Committee. 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.
- i. New and Emerging Technologies
- Pakistan recognizes the indispensable importance of new and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Cyber for socio-economic progress of states and calls for fair, equitable and non-discriminatory access to new and emerging technologies for the developing countries.

- However, being fully aware of the risks associated with the unregulated military applications of new and emerging technologies, and their impact on global peace and security, Pakistan calls for a legally-binding instrument to ensure the responsible uses of new and emerging technologies in military domain.
- Pakistan has been playing an active role in the multilateral discourse on Military Applications of AI and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). Pakistan believes that AI enabled military capabilities, in the absence of human control, increase the likelihood of miscalculations, accidents and evoke asymmetric responses, and can heighten nuclear risks, thereby lowering the threshold for use of force and armed conflict.
- In this regard, Pakistan has submitted a concrete proposal in Group on Governmental Experts (GGE) established under Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) on a legally binding instrument or a new Protocol under the CCW proposing prohibitions and regulations relating to LAWS. Similarly, in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), Pakistan submitted a working paper in July 2023 proposing the CD to examine and address the security and stability impacts of military uses of AI.

## **ii. Outer Space**

- Being concerned about the risks to safety and sustainability of Outer Space for the peaceful uses and the growing nature and extent of threats owing to the employment of space based objects and resources for military purposes, such as the development and deployment of Anti-Ballistic Missile systems and their integration into space assets as well as the testing of Anti-Satellite weapons, Pakistan calls for the formulation of a comprehensive treaty on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS).
- Pakistan regularly co-sponsors the resolution on PAROS under UN General Assembly each year, calling on the CD to establish a working group on PAROS as early as possible. Pakistan has also been co-sponsoring every year since 2013 the resolution titled “No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space”.

## **iii. Chemical Weapon Convention**

- Pakistan established the National Authority on Chemical Weapons Convention (NA CWC), under CWC Implementation Ordinance-2000. 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 scheduled chemicals.

#### **iv. Biological Weapon 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. The scope of the controls is consistent with those followed by the Australian Group.
- Pakistan has been submitting Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) under BWC as a useful tool for increasing transparency and building trust among State Parties in implementation of the convention.

### **TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME**

The international community faces a significant threat from transnational organized crimes, which have far-reaching consequences. Pakistan is steadfast in its commitment to combating these crimes in all their forms and manifestations. We are actively engaged in global efforts and policy discussions at the United Nations and other multilateral forums, working collaboratively to address this pressing issue and ensure a safer world for all.

Pakistan is set to join the prestigious ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Organized Crime (SOMTC), further strengthening its collaboration with ASEAN member states in combating transnational organized crime.

#### **i. Drug Trafficking**

Pakistan has a strong political resolve and policy of zero tolerance against any manifestation of drug trafficking. Pakistan has ratified all the three conventions related to the control of drug trafficking and narcotics abuse. These conventions lay down an elaborate mechanism to foster international co-operation on drug related matters. Pakistan actively takes part in UNGA debates and Ministerial Declarations on the drug use. Pakistan remained a member of member of Commission on Narcotics and Drugs (CND) till December, 2023. Pakistan regularly submits reports to International Narcotics Control Board. Pakistan has also pioneered a resolution in CND concerning alarming situation of drug use in educational settings.

During the last two decades, Pakistan has followed a zero-tolerance policy toward poppy and other illicit narcotic plants cultivation. Resultantly, on more than one occasion since 2001, Pakistan has been declared a poppy free country by UNODC.

Pakistan maintains 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. The overarching goal should be to promote “a society free of drug abuse” based on the principle of ‘common and shared responsibility’. Pakistan is playing its constructive role towards achieving this goal.

## **ii. Smuggling of migrants (SOM) and Trafficking in Persons (TIP)**

Being a country of origin, transit and destination for smuggled migrants and trafficked persons, migration and TIP related issues hold special importance for Pakistan. The Greek shipwreck tragedy in June 2023, which claimed the lives of more than 700 people, including 200 Pakistanis, highlighted that the migrant smuggling is a scourge that transcends borders and affects countless lives.

At the UN and other multilateral forums, Pakistan has actively engaged on these issues while underlining the need to enhance international cooperation in order to effectively tackle these transnational crimes and address their root causes. 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 conducted two workshops in April 2024, in collaboration with UNODC, focusing on smuggling of migrants and sharing best practices.

Pakistan maintains that migration is a positive development related phenomenon. Instead of unduly focusing on its security dimensions, the international community should work closely together to channelize its potential and role in achievement of SDGs. Pakistan has consistently emphasized at the UN and other pertinent forums that the international community must focus on addressing social, economic and political root causes of irregular migration, in particular through bridging the economic disparities among developing and developed countries and through enhancing legal pathways for migration. Moreover, Pakistan advocates staunchly for a firm stance against xenophobia, racial profiling, and Islamophobia directed at migrants.

## **iii. Cyber Crime**

The trend of growing use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for malicious purposes/cyber crime undermines international security and stability, places strains on economic growth and sustainable development, and hinders the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The discussion on cyber crime at the United Nations is relatively recent. Pakistan stands in favor of crafting a convention specifically addressing cybercrime. Pakistan welcomed the formulation of the United Nations Ad-hoc Committee to formulate a comprehensive International Convention on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for criminal purposes established in 2020, and is positively contributing towards the formulation of an international convention.

Pakistan maintains that the new convention shall be comprehensive, encompassing the new and emerging technologies and crimes. Pakistan has also consistently highlighted the need to have a particular focus on the needs of developing countries in capacity building and transfer of technology while formulating the convention. Pakistan supports a comprehensive, consensus-based convention on cyber crime/ICTs.

Pakistan has taken a number of steps at the national level to counter cybercrime. Prominent ones include the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) (2016) which deals with unauthorized data access (hacking), Denial of Service assault (DOS Attack), electronic forgery, electronic fraud, and cyber terrorism; and formulation of 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.

### **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

In the field of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, below are our major recent (2023-24) contributions:

i. Relief Activities in the Wake of Earthquake in Turkey and Syria in 2023

Following 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Turkiye and Syria in February 2023, Government of Pakistan decided to provide immediate relief assistance for the affected Pakistanis in both countries. Crisis Management Unit (CMU), Ministry of Foreign Affairs in coordination with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) sent 33 cargo flights carrying relief items. Also, several trucks were dispatched to Turkiye containing food items, tents and blankets. Three flights were also sent to Syria containing relief goods for the earthquake affectees.

ii. Humanitarian/Medical Assistance for People of Palestine

In the background of ongoing crisis in Gaza Strip, Government of Pakistan has provided humanitarian assistance including blankets, medicines, food packs, gift bags for children, hygiene kits, tents etc. for the people of Gaza. This is an ongoing process that started on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2023 when Pakistan dispatched first tranche of humanitarian relief items to Palestine through Al-Arish, Egypt. The operation is being managed by relevant national stakeholders mainly Ministry of Foreign Affairs (CMU) and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). So far, we have managed to operate six special air crafts and two cargo ships of humanitarian assistance for the people of Palestine. In this regard, the latest humanitarian consignment/shipment containing more than 350 tons of relief items has been dispatched via cargo ship from Karachi Port on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

iii. Evacuation of Afghan Nationals under Pakistan's Humanitarian Safe Passage Program

In August 2021, after the U.S. troops withdrawal from Afghanistan, Taliban led government took control of the country. At that time, one of the main objectives of the NATO and its allied countries was to evacuate at-risk Afghans from Afghanistan. In this regard, Pakistan in coordination with the concerned countries developed a humanitarian evacuation plan namely Pakistan's Humanitarian Safe Passage Program.

Under this plan, CMU, Ministry of Foreign Affairs was designated as focal point to coordinate evacuation related matters. Under the Program, so far more than 75000 Afghan nationals have been evacuated through Pakistan to 25 different countries. Evacuation of Afghan nationals by 3rd countries is ongoing process through CMU, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- iv. Evacuation Mission to Bring Back Stranded Pakistanis after Civil War Broke out in Sudan

In wake of current Sudanese civil war started in April 2023, Government of Pakistan decided to repatriate Pakistani diaspora living in Sudan. CMU was focal desk, which coordinated with all important stakeholders for smooth repatriation of Pakistan Embassy officials as well as Pakistani community members. The humanitarian evacuation made during the most difficult time of the conflict, we managed evacuate around 1,100 Pakistanis from Sudan and brought them to Pakistan.

### **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.



## **PHILIPPINES**

### **1. Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

The Indo-Pacific has become an increasingly dynamic region and the center of economic growth in the recent decade, paving the way for intensified geopolitical competition between and among major powers. The great power rivalry between major powers poses a challenge to ASEAN member states as they pursue their respective economic and security interests in the region. 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 pragmatically and take an active role in shaping the vision for cooperation rather than competition in the Indo-Pacific.

Attached to this rapidly changing geopolitical landscape are other issues that aggravate the security uncertainties in the region, compounding the need for stronger collaboration and solidarity among states. These include long standing interstate territorial and maritime disputes, global economic vulnerabilities, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, 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. Concerns of recent escalation of conflict in Myanmar continues to cause displacement of civilians. The lack of concrete positive developments, such as the cessation of violence and completely implementing the Five-Point Consensus, continues to be an obstacle for ASEAN in resolving the conflict.

Moreover, the rapid escalation of hostilities in the disputed South China Sea continues to challenge regional peace and stability. The increasingly provocative and dangerous behavior of the Chinese Coast Guard and Maritime Militia and the militarization of the area, as well as the elusive finalization of the Code of Conduct continues to cause tensions and deepen distrust between nations in the region. The pattern of unjustified, illegal and threatening actions in the recent months is a direct violation of the 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).

The brewing tension in the cross-strait relations, if left unresolved, will embroil the region into full-blown armed conflict. The Indo-Pacific region continues to be confronted by non-traditional security concerns such as natural disasters, terrorism, cybercrimes, humanitarian crises and transnational crimes, posing a challenge to regional security and stability. These post-Cold war threats call for tangible cooperation and implementation of prompt, effective, rules-based, people-centered and sustainable solutions.

Given that global challenges are becoming more frequent, interconnected, and multidimensional, it is more crucial than ever to uphold ASEAN's shared values and norms. International law, mutual trust and confidence, inclusive dialogue, and cooperation among stakeholders are necessary to address these concerns. It is imperative for member states and external partners in the region to maintain the culture of dialogue and cooperation to address both traditional and non-traditional security issues effectively. Upholding principles for friendly and mutually beneficial relations, as enshrined in various ASEAN documents, and maintaining a peaceful environment conducive for cooperation and friendship must be consistent with engagements and operations on the ground. Indeed, ASEAN is faced with an inevitable need to come up with new forms of confidence-building mechanisms; however, it must aim to supplement and enhance already existing ones in tackling pressing issues of the world today.

### **Regional Power Dynamics**

The competition among major powers to expand their spheres of influence is evident in their attempt to expand their relations with other states through economic agreements, development assistance, and health initiatives. Major powers are carrying out distinct strategies in their efforts to carve out their particular spheres of influence and vision for the international order. Initiatives, such as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific espoused mainly by Japan, India and the US, and China's Global Security Initiative (GSI), underscore how the region is now a significant geopolitical strategic focal point. Also notable is the emergence of alternative minilateral frameworks challenging multilateralism. It is imperative that these new concepts for cooperation must be harmonized to support existing mechanisms and ascertain mutually beneficial cooperation.

Against this backdrop, upholding ASEAN Centrality is essential in managing engagements with major powers and accommodating their initiatives in the region. Should major powers desire to play a more active role in shaping the regional dynamics, they must adhere to ASEAN's common vision of a rules-based, cohesive, and stable region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world. The ASEAN Outlook in the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) is a testament to ASEAN's commitment for cooperation and ensuring the resilience and effectiveness of ASEAN-led mechanisms while accommodating innovation amid geostrategic shifts. It is a guide for external partners as they work with ASEAN to undertake practical cooperation in four priority areas: maritime cooperation, connectivity, Sustainable Development Goals, as well as economic and other possible areas of cooperation.

### **Situation in the Korean Peninsula**

Significant foreign policy changes happened for the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Korean Peninsula at the start of the Yoon Suk-yeol administration. In this administration, ROK was able to deepen its military and economic cooperation with Japan and the United States (US), among others. This was demonstrated when the three countries convened at Camp David in Maryland, USA to inaugurate a new era of

trilateral partnership last 18 August 2023—one which aims to coordinate their responses to regional challenges, provocations, and threats that affect their collective interests and security.<sup>12</sup> The trilateral partnership also reaffirms the countries' commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and ultimately urge the DPRK to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.<sup>3</sup>

During his speech at a key meeting of DPRK's ruling party, Kim Jong Un verbalized his plans to boost DPRK's nuclear arsenal, launch 3 new spy satellites, and build more military drones in 2024.<sup>4</sup> These actions, along with changing the language of its relationship with ROK as those "between two belligerent states" show hostility and it closes any possibility for reconciliation.<sup>5</sup> Before this declaration, John Kirby, National Security Council coordinator for strategic communications of the White House, disclosed that DPRK allegedly delivered more than 1000 containers of military equipment and munitions to Russia for use in Ukraine between 7 September to 1

October 2023.<sup>6</sup> This relationship between DPRK and Russia could indicate a stronger cooperation, including in more "sensitive" areas, that could be perceived as a threat to regional stability.<sup>7</sup>

Given the extent of the heightening strategic competition among greater powers like the US and Russia, with the Korean Peninsula at the center, President Yoon continuously emphasizes that ROK, a key democracy in Northeast Asia, is moving towards becoming a 'global pivotal state' for peace and prosperity. During Yoon's annual New Year Address to the Nation last 1 January 2024, he highlighted the country's role as a global pivotal state in the Korean Peninsula through their efforts for deterrence: building a stronger ROK 3K Defense System to defend against the DPRK nuclear and missile threats; completing the enhanced ROK-United States extended deterrence system to fundamentally dissuade any DPRK nuclear and missile threat; and transforming the ROK military into a powerful force based on cutting-edge science and technology, including AI and the Manned-Unmanned Teaming System.<sup>8</sup>

Aside from these domestic and trilateral efforts to successfully deter or regulate DPRK's activities relating to their weapons of mass destruction (WMD) development, the UNSC also has resolutions (UN Resolutions 1718, 1874, 2087, 2094, 2270, 2321,

2356, 2371, 2375, 2397) that have been adopted. These are economic sanctions that urge the DPRK for a complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization (CVID) but

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1 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/U.S.-Japan-South-Korea-agree-to-hold-annual-talks-after-Camp-David-summit>

2 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/commitment-to->



The national security agenda on public safety, peace, and justice under the NSP provides that, “The campaign against illegal drugs shall be sustained and pursued through vigorous law enforcement operations. Equal importance shall be given to the promotion and respect for human rights, the prevention of the use of banned substances, and the rehabilitation of drug-dependent individuals. Crime prevention and law enforcement, as well as other pillars of the criminal justice system, shall be strengthened and complemented by just, humane, and speedy adjudication of cases. The Government shall also strengthen the capabilities of law enforcers and enhance intelligence sharing and cooperation, both domestic and with other countries in the region.”

In addition, the Government shall develop a comprehensive strategy in addressing terrorism, insurgency, and criminality involving trans-regional boundaries. The national security agenda on border security under the NSP provides that, “Protecting the borders from unlawful trade and travel and entry of illegal small arms and light weapons, illegal migrants, illegal aliens, illegal drugs, and contraband is essential not only in promoting national security and economic prosperity but also for regional peace and stability. The Government shall implement effective security procedures and control measures to protect the country’s borders.”

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9 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/slow-boil-what-expect-dprk-2024>

For its part, the Philippines’ Department of National Defense is working on the following priority programs:

- Develop an agile and future-ready defense organization by re-visioning its defense strategic outlook to conform to the current trends and situations in national security.
- Re-educate and re-skill its personnel putting premium on the enhancement of their core competencies in program management, procurement, analytics, and international relations, among others.
- Re-horizon its modernization for optimal deterrence, interoperability, and sustainability. It shall achieve a modern, self-reliant, and combat-ready defense force that is capable to detect, deter, and deny actions by state and non-state actors inimical to national interests.
- Sustain engagement with state allies and partners, focusing on people-to-people exchanges, joint development of technology and industries, interoperability, and capacity building through military training and dialogue are some of the key efforts foreseen to enhance the country’s security and contribute to global stability.

- Institutionalize and improve coordinating mechanisms to enhance cooperation with national and local government units (LGUs) concerning disaster risk reduction management (DRRM).
- Engage with the private sector to facilitate investor confidence by securing sensitive site and communities.
- Execute the full implementation of the Comprehensive Archipelagic Defense

Concept (CADC) to protect and secure the entire Philippine territory.

- Build up cyber infrastructure and processes to improve the defense security posture and cyber security paradigm

In terms of defense expenditures, the following table summarizes the data from FY 2021-2023:

YEAR	PHP to USD	Defense Expenditure	Defense Expenditure (% share of GDP)	Defense Expenditure per Capita (USD)
2021	₱ 49.25	₱		\$ 37.47
2022	₱ 54.48	₱	0.98%	\$ 36.35
2023	₱ 55.63	₱	0.93%	\$ 37.48

### 3. National Contributions to Regional Security i. Counter-Terrorism

The Government of the Philippines recognizes the threat terrorism poses to human rights and the ability of States to achieve their development goals. Republic Act (RA) 11479 or the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) was signed into law on 3 July 2020. The Philippines maintains that the ATA is one of the most important pieces of legislation that addresses security and protection of its citizens from potential terrorist acts.

The integration of military and non-military approaches for a more coherent counter-terrorism effort is the government’s holistic strategy to address multiple dimensions of terrorism enablers and root causes. At present, the government adopts a whole-of-nation approach against terrorism under the ambit of the National Action Plan on

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP-PCVE), which entails the collaboration among government agencies and other stakeholders, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), people's organizations (POs), the academe, and the religious sector, among others.

The Philippines believes that national efforts to defeat terrorism must be complemented by regional and international cooperation as the issue of terrorism is one that cuts across borders, from the supply of weapons, financing, training, and other activities aimed at promoting extremism. As such, the Philippines continues to support counter-terrorism efforts in several regional and multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting, and APEC.

#### Promoting a People-Centred Approach to Counter-Terrorism

The Philippines has recently collaborated with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in launching of the "Technical support on the rights and needs of victims of terrorism through the Model Legislative Provisions and the development of National Comprehensive Assistance Plans" project in Manila.

The project will support the Philippines in enhancing and harmonizing its national legislative frameworks and developing national assistance plans for victims of terrorism. This project is a milestone for the Philippines in the international victims of terrorism agenda, as it marks the first time that a Member State takes action to implement the Model Legislative Provisions to Support the Rights and Needs of Victims of Terrorism, while also responding to General Assembly resolution 35/705, which calls on member states to develop national comprehensive assistance plans. It also highlights the country's determination to forge a strong engagement in the pursuit of justice for victims of terrorism.

In addition to numerous police, justice, aviation security, and border programs, a corrections pilot program was resumed by Philippine authorities post-COVID in a Manila jail that holds the most terrorist detainees. The goal is better management of high-profile detainees while maintaining human rights and best practices.

#### **Information-Sharing and Intelligence Exchange to Combat Terrorism**

The Department of National Defense (DND) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have been collaborating with partners for mutual development of critical counter-terrorism capabilities through joint trainings and exercises, as well as subject matter expert (SME) and intelligence exchanges (INTELEX). Among these initiatives include the following:

- Kapit Bisig Framework between the AFP and the United States Indo-Pacific Command (US INDOPACOM) – A comprehensive and coherent framework for cooperation in the campaign against terrorism. Specifically, the Special Operations Task Force 511.2 partners with the AFP Western Mindanao Command

(AFPWESMINCOM) to advise and assist in CT, and maintains subordinate teams which partners with AFPWESMINCOM Joint Task Forces (JTF) to provide direct CT intelligence and operations support.

- Bilateral Counter-Terrorism Consultations (BCTC) with Australia – A platform for enhancing bilateral cooperation with Australia on key areas in preventing violent extremism, CT, and addressing emerging security threats in the region.
- Counter-Terrorism Information Facility (CTIF) in Singapore – This provides the AFP with reports pertaining to the cyberspace activities and propaganda materials of both local and international terrorist groups. In 2024, the AFP deployed three (3) military officers and one (1) research analyst to the CTIF. COL JOEL F CASTRO PA from the AFP assumed as the Head of the CTIF on January 31, 2024.
- ASEAN Our Eyes Initiative (OEI) – The AFP has been actively participating in engagements about this initiative by maintaining thorough and seamless coordination through the Our Eyes Command Center (OECC) in the Philippines.

- ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Experts' Working (EWG) on CT –

The AFP is an active participant in the various activities under this platform. In

2023, it has attended four (4) activities of the ADMM EWG on CT.

#### Cooperative Counter-Terror Action on Border Security

The Philippines is a recipient to the UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, a flagship global initiative of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) which follows an "All-of-UN" approach to provide comprehensive, yet tailored assistance to beneficiary Member States, in enhancing their national capacity to detect and intercept terrorists and serious criminals by using passenger travel information and cross-checking against national and other various international databases of known and suspected terrorists and criminals, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017), and 2482 (2019), including ICAO standards and recommended practices, other international law obligations, relevant privacy laws, and human rights principles. The Programme also promotes regional cooperation through enhanced information exchange and sharing of lessons learned and good practices.

The Philippines is likewise collaborating with other partner countries to boost and improve its national databases as well as its watchlist systems to further help enhance and strengthen its cross-border security management and security.

In response to the growing terrorism and transnational crime challenges in the tri-border area encompassing the Sulu and Celebes (Sulawesi) Seas, the Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines (INDOMALPHI) Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA) was launched in 2016. The TCA has contributed to the decline in the arrival and movements of foreign terrorism fighters (FTFs) between the three (3) countries. There have been no monitored cross-border transit and arrival of FTFs in the Southern Philippines since



April 2020. There are also no monitored Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)- initiated kidnapping incidents in the country since 2020.

### **At the sidelines of INTERPOL's 24th Asian Regional Conference in February**

2023 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Indonesian National Police (INP) reaffirmed their partnership in combating transnational crime and terrorism in the region, forged via a memorandum of understanding signed on 12 December 2022. Both police forces have formulated standard procedures for joint police operations, joint training on cooperation, a procedure for conducting hot pursuit operations along territorial waters, and guidelines for the handover of criminal suspects.

### **Measures Against Terrorist Financing**

In 2022, FATF reported the Philippines had taken steps toward improving its Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism regime, including by increasing the resources of its FIU, using its targeted financial sanctions (TFS) framework for terrorist financing (TF), implementing registration requirements and applying proportionate and dissuasive sanctions to unregistered and illegal remittance operators, increasing TF investigation and prosecution capacity, demonstrating that appropriate measures are being taken with respect to the non-profit sector, and implementing supervision for TFS. The Philippines has until the end of 2023 to resolve all strategic deficiencies. Philippine units working on TF have also increased their capabilities in proportion to the number of cases.

In anticipation of the Philippines' next round of Mutual Evaluation in 2026, the AMLC on 5 April 2024, led the formal launching of the third comprehensive NRA on Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing. This assessment will be pivotal in identifying areas of risk, strengthening the Philippines' defense against proceeds- generating crimes, and aligning our strategies with international standards.

### **ii. Non- proliferation, Counter- proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament**

The Philippines continue to actively participate in international disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation mechanisms. Such active participation is evident in the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference. The Philippines exhibited leadership in the NPT Working Group on Strengthening the Review Process where it championed transparency and accountability measures especially for Nuclear Weapons States.

The Philippines continues to support the universalisation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) towards its full and effective implementation. The Philippines hosts three monitoring stations for the CTBTO International Monitoring System (IMS).

The Philippines is also actively cooperating with Japan, and other partners, in calling for the continuation of negotiations towards the adoption of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) at the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

The Philippines and Australia co-organized an ARF Workshop on Nuclear Risk Reduction on 22-23 March 2023 in Brisbane, Australia, producing a draft ARF Guidance Document on Nuclear Risk Reduction (NRR). During discussions, the Philippines highlighted that NRR is never a substitute for general and complete nuclear disarmament, and that nuclear-armed states bear the primary responsibility of preventing nuclear war.

The Philippines was also active in discussions on international cooperation mechanisms to implement Article X of the Biological Weapons Convention stressing that international assistance should be driven by the capacity and capability needs of developing countries.

On Emerging Technologies, the Philippines continue to actively participate and positively contribute to the outcomes of the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (OEWG on Cybersecurity).

At the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons (GGE-LAWS), the Philippines together with a Group of 15 other countries, submitted a draft Protocol VI containing a set of prohibitions and regulations to address autonomous Weapons Systems.

The Philippines also organized the Manila Meeting on Indo-Pacific Perspectives on Autonomous Weapon Systems on 13-14 December 2023 to consider the implications of the use of autonomy in weapons systems from ethical, moral, economic, and social and humanitarian dimensions from the point of view of the Indo-Pacific region. The threats posed by LAWS on the marine environment and on maritime security was highlighted during the meeting. Representatives from 24 Indo Pacific States, including nine ASEAN Member States, and five Observer States participated in the Meeting.

Furthermore, the Philippines promoted the elaboration and operationalization of the duty of “due regard” under Article 9 of the Outer Space Treaty at the Open-ended working group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats.

On Conventional Weapons, the Philippines actively participated in international discussions on the effective implementation of the Anti-Personnel Landmine Treaty, the Convention on Conventional Weapons, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the Arms Trade Treaty. The Philippines also subscribed to the Political Declaration on

### **Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA)**

On Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the Philippines initiated the adoption of a Regional Roadmap on Weapons Regulation in Asia-Pacific. The Roadmap outlines milestones, challenges, inputs/resources, and possibilities towards a regional

mechanism on weapons regulation. It draws from national experiences to establish effective common practices. Launched in Manila on 13 December 2023, it builds on a complementary regional process in the ASEAN, the ASEAN Declaration on Combating Arms Smuggling, and other efforts of various formal regional and sub-regional mechanisms that cover conventional and emerging weapons. Said Roadmap also highlights the interoperability with other instruments and mechanisms already present in Asia Pacific and ongoing efforts in the region, including the role of civil society. The Regional Roadmap is part of a shared noble aspiration for regional peace and stability and was initiated to establish a comprehensive framework for weapons regulation.

Finally, as it continues to strengthen its Strategic Trade Management System to prevent proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the Philippines together with Singapore, and with support from Japan, as well as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), commenced the first Peer Review Exercise in Southeast Asia to assess the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.

### **iii. Transnational Crime**

In this era of rapid technological advancement, transnational crime is now primarily technology driven. Information and communications technology is now central to the commission of transnational crimes. It enables criminals to function more efficiently and effectively while evading law enforcement. For instance, online anonymity and the use of dark webs benefit criminals and hampers the ability of law enforcement to intercept communications and track down suspects.

The more alarming trend is that criminal networks are adapting technology faster than law enforcement authorities. This also holds true as indicated in the prevalence of the cybercrime-as-a-service business model wherein advanced and sophisticated cybercrime tools and services are sold to organized crime groups.

As transnational crimes require rigorous national and local cooperation, close partnerships with neighboring states are being sustained particularly on matters involving sea patrol, intelligence gathering, information exchange, rapid bilateral investigations, and apprehension of criminal elements in the porous borders of Southern Philippines and other critical areas.

### **Trafficking in Persons**

The trans-border nature of trafficking in persons (TIP) remains a challenge to law enforcement as victims and perpetrators are typically from different legal jurisdictions (i.e. source, transit, and destination of TIP victims; and location of perpetrators). Moreover, the reluctance of victims to come forward and assist with investigations is also a serious concern. All these contribute to the delay in the disposition of cases.

The Philippine government continues to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts on its anti-trafficking initiatives. These efforts include investigating more trafficking crimes, convicting more traffickers, amending its anti-trafficking law, increasing funding to the

Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), and sentencing nearly all traffickers to significant prison terms.

The Philippines' 4th National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2023-2027) addresses key areas of: 1) Prevention and Advocacy, 2) Protection and Reintegration, 3) Prosecution and Law Enforcement, and 4) Partnership and Networking. The Action Plan is a result of the IACAT's consultation with Philippine government agencies, local-government units, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and victim-survivors. These and other efforts have contributed to the Philippines' retention of its Tier 1 status in the

2023 U.S. State Department Report on Trafficking in Persons for fully complying with the standards for elimination of human trafficking.

During the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), the Philippines discussed its four strategies to end trafficking on women namely: 1) adopting a "holistic approach" in establishing a better access in specifying the barrier of women or girls with regard to their various identities and distinct contexts; 2) having a proper coordination platform with multiple women organizations and adopting a "community-based" scheme to expedite the response in women trafficking cases; 3) acquiring a "survivor-centered approaches" to raise and highlight the survivor's voice and experiences for an appropriate action and mechanism; and 4) the domestic and regional collaborations in supporting the survivors of trafficking, such as inter-agency cooperation in addressing the trafficking and violence against women.<sup>10</sup>

To address the uptrend in trafficking facilitated through online platforms, the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022, or Republic Act No. 11862, provides for accountability of the internet intermediaries such as Internet Service Providers (ISPs), social media platforms, and internet search engines, if proven negligent by allowing their infrastructure to be used for human trafficking. Republic Act No. 11930, or the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse of Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act, came into effect in July 2022 to address online sexual exploitation, mandating the IACAT to monitor promotion of advertisement of trafficking online.

On other forms of trafficking, IACAT member-agencies and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime or UNODC conducted roundtable discussions on organ trafficking and anti-corruption on May 29-30, 2023. During the event, UNODC expressed its willingness to provide training to law enforcement agencies and prosecutors in relation to organ trafficking and removal.

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<sup>10</sup> "Speech of Commission on Human Rights Commissioner Faydah M. Dumarpa on the CSW 68th Side Event: Innovative Partnerships to End Trafficking in Women and Girls." Presidential Communications Office. March 16, 2024. <https://pco.gov.ph/presidential-speech/speech-of-commission-on-human-rights->

commissioner-faydah-m-dumarpa-on-the-csw-68th-side-event-innovative-partnerships-to-end-trafficking-in-women-and-girls/

With illegal recruitment as a predominant form of trafficking in persons, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) carries out various initiatives and programs to educate prospective OFWs and partners with local government units and NGOs. There are various bilateral and multilateral cooperation in combating trafficking, such as the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates on Cooperation in Combating Human Trafficking, among others. The Philippines also extends assistance to trafficking victims, their families, and communities with comprehensive and holistic psychosocial services for victim-survivors, through the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons.

In ASEAN, under the), the Philippines serves as the Lead Shepherd and Chair of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC). In this capacity, the Philippines spearheaded the development and approval of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Currently, the Philippines has 14 extradition treaties and nine (9) bilateral treaties on mutual legal assistance. Notably, the DOJ is the Central Authority or point of contact for such international legal cooperation.

Recognizing the magnitude and dynamics of TIP, the Philippines led the development of a Multi-Sectoral Work Plan also known as the Bohol TIP Work Plan 2017-2020, which aims to implement the Convention and its ASEAN Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons (APA).

The Bohol TIP Work Plan 2017-2020 provided a platform for all concerned sectoral bodies to collaborate in combating trafficking in persons. It harmonized regional activities into four thematic areas:

- Prevention of Trafficking in Persons;
- Protection of Victims;
- Law Enforcement and Prosecution; and
- Regional and International Legal Cooperation

It has since been succeeded by the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Work Plan Against TIP 2023-2028 (Bohol TIP Work Plan 2.0) to continue ASEAN's work in combating TIP.

On 6 June 2023, the Philippines designated its National ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) Representative (National ACTIP Representative) with the acceptance of the DOJ- IACAT's nomination.

The Philippines also continues to partner with ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking (ASEAN-ACT) in multiple regional anti-TIP endeavors. The ASEAN-ACT contributed

to the development of the BWP 2.0 and other related projects and initiatives, such as the ongoing work to develop a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Learning (MERL) Framework for the BWP 2.0.

## **Illicit Drugs**

With the directive of the new administration, the country's anti-illegal drugs strategy has taken a different approach, regarding human rights and dignity as non-negotiable principles. Government priorities programs are geared towards the demand reduction, with more emphasis on the needs to help victims of illegal drugs such as on treatment, rehabilitation, education, and reintegration.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) conducted 24,530 counternarcotics operations during the first eight months of 2022, resulting in the arrest of 35,024 individuals. PDEA made a significant increase in seizures compared to the same period in 2021 – three metric tons (MT) of shabu and eight kilograms (kg) of cocaine from January to August 2022 (1.7 MT of shabu and .17 kg of cocaine from January to August 2021). PDEA attributes the increase in interdictions to more operations due to relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions; an increased number of international cargo flights with illicit goods; and the receipt of more actionable intelligence from inter-agency partners. PDEA is increasing information exchanges and cross-border law enforcement operations with international partners, as well as e-commerce and courier services, to ensure packages containing illegal drugs are intercepted before delivery.

PDEA reported that as of August 2022, authorities filed 33,398 cases for drug-related crimes with the courts, and 25,917 barangays (communities) or 61.6% of barangays nationwide are drug-cleared (In August 2021, 22,858 or 54.37% of the barangays were drug-cleared).

The archipelagic set-up of the Philippines is also being exploited by drug syndicates to transport illegal drugs and controlled precursors and essential chemicals into the country through seaports, as well as the vast expanse of the Philippine coastlines.

In order to address the maritime concerns related to drug smuggling, the National Maritime Center coordinates closely with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in monitoring vessels of interest alleged to be involved in maritime drug smuggling.

The Dangerous Drug Board (DDB), responsible for the formulation of Philippine drug policies, continued its prevention campaign with the training of at-risk populations, including youth and indigenous people. DDB offered seminars on drug-free workplaces to government offices and private companies. DDB also assisted the Department of Health (DOH) with training of provincial health office physicians on best practices for the assessment and management of persons with substance use disorders. In partnership with international donors, PDEA facilitated staff training on anti-drug advocacy, focusing on drug preventive education in schools, workplaces, and communities. PDEA continued its development of informational materials, such as

flyers and infomercials, which the agency shares in community settings to raise awareness. PDEA also launched a monthly online show to promote demand reduction.

The DOH developed Administrative Orders to enhance services provided by the 22 residential drug treatment and rehabilitation centers in the country including: Guidelines on the Integration of Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation within the Health Care Provider Network and the Resource Stratified Framework for Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Facilities. Community treatment centers supported by the United States, Japan, and local and international NGOs are an increasingly popular model due to accessibility of services and low operational costs. However, additional funding is needed to ensure sustainability of these facilities.

Crucial to addressing drug trafficking is close cooperation between and among countries who are victims of transnational drug trafficking networks. In this regard, it is imperative for countries to further enhance intelligence-sharing and joint law enforcement operations.

### **Money Laundering**

The Philippines is a member of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering and its FIU, the Anti-Money Laundering Council, is a member of the Egmont Group. The Philippines remained on the FATF grey list in 2023.

The Philippines is stepping up efforts to combat the financing of terrorist organizations in the country and tackle money laundering, particularly when used to finance illicit weapons proliferation. Manila is working with international organizations and partners such as Australia and the United States (US) to strengthen domestic agencies, and enhance training and collaboration.

The Philippine government is seeking to mitigate threats posed by terrorist organizations such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the New People's Army, and the Islamic State group. Although terrorist attacks have declined in recent years, the groups continue to clash with government forces. In early December 2023, for example, Philippine troops battled with the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Islamic State group in Maguindanao del Sur, leaving 11 suspected militants dead.

In July 2023, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. ordered the adoption of a national strategy to counter money laundering, and terrorism and proliferation financing through 2027. The national strategy outlines the objectives and priorities for government and other stakeholders to enhance such initiatives and address challenges identified by international assessments.

In October 2023, Marcos, Jr. issued a memorandum directing government agencies to formulate plans and programs to implement the national strategy. Among the priorities is removing the Philippines from the gray list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). It tasked the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) with leading a national working group to assess risks and develop prevention and mitigation measures.

In late November, the AMLC hosted the 2023 Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Summit. The online event, which was held in conjunction with Australian and US partner agencies, sought to bolster collaboration and strengthen compliance.

#### **iv. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

The Philippines' Office of Civil Defense is committed to regional cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR) through the following initiatives and contributions:

1. ACDM Working Group on Preparedness, Response, and Recovery: The Philippines demonstrates its commitment to the ARF by actively participating in various forums and working groups, including the ACDM Working Group on Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

2. ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP): The Philippines contributes to the crafting and updating of the AJDRP, which outlines responses to multiple large-scale disaster scenarios. This includes the plan for responding to the following disaster scenarios were updated, the 7.2M earthquake in the Philippines, Mentawi Megathrust tsunami in Indonesia, and Cyclone Ayeyarwardy Delta flooding in Myanmar.

3. ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT): The Philippines has trained personnel as part of the ASEAN-ERAT, with 49 officers trained from different agencies and partner organizations. These individuals are prepared to respond to disaster situations within the ASEAN region. The Philippines through NDRRMC-OCD provided humanitarian aid to disaster-affected communities within the ASEAN Region with the deployment of ERAT members during the following disasters:

- ASEAN-ERAT Humanitarian Needs Assessment in connection to the repatriation of displaced persons in Rakhine, Myanmar - January 2018
- ASEAN-ERAT deployment and Deployment of NDRRMC relief items during the 7.5M Sulawesi Earthquake response operations
- ASEAN Joint Needs Assessment in connection to the civil unrest in Myanmar - June 2022
- ASEAN-ERAT Deployment to Tropical Cyclone MOCHA in Myanmar, 19-29 May 2023

4. Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA): The Philippines hosts one of the DELSA warehouses in the ASEAN Region, with a satellite warehouse in Quezon City. DELSA serves as a regional stockpile for emergency relief items, facilitating swift responses to disaster-affected member states.

5. ASEAN Standards and Certification for Experts in Disaster Management (ASCEND): The Philippines actively participates in the ASCEND project, aiming to establish a certification system for disaster management professionals. This initiative promotes



regional recognition of individual competencies and enhances mobility within the ASEAN region. Currently, there are three (3) officers from the Philippines certified as assessors. The Philippines will participate in the first assessment in July 2024.

6. AHA Centre Information Management Network (AIM-NET): The Philippines collaborates with other National Disaster Management Organizations (NDMOs) and AHA Centre through AIM-NET to strengthen capacities in Disaster Information Management and Information Systems Interoperability within the ASEAN region.

7. INSARAG Asia Pacific Regional Earthquake Exercise and Meetings: The Philippines engages in regional exercises and meetings focused on urban search and rescue operations in earthquake scenarios.

8. ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR and Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination: The Philippines actively participates in these groups, contributing to regional efforts in enhancing disaster response coordination and cooperation.

Through these engagements and contributions, the Philippines reinforces its commitment to promoting regional cooperation and resilience in addressing humanitarian crises and disaster situations within the ASEAN region.

## **v. Maritime Security**

The Philippines is a maritime and archipelagic state that highly ranks maritime security in its priorities. The country remains fully committed to the peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes, management of crimes at sea, safety of navigation, and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The country also stresses the importance of engaging with regional partners and the international community towards addressing maritime security 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 maneuvers that increase the risk of collisions at sea.

### **The South China Sea**

The Philippines continues to aspire for a peaceful, stable, secure, and prosperous South China Sea. The country underscores the value of the peaceful settlement of disputes through non-coercive means, friendly and cordial consultations, negotiations in good faith, and a healthy environment conducive for dispute settlement. The country also emphasizes that these aspirations are upheld under international law and the rules-based international order.

Actions by any party in the South China Sea that employs the use of force and threat of use of force, or acts of intimidation, subvert the regime of collaboration and shared stewardship in ensuring that the South China Sea becomes a sea of peace, stability,

and prosperity.<sup>11</sup> Peace is within the Philippine approach, thus, it ensures that 11 Department of Foreign Affairs, “Keynote Speech of Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo on Dialogue on Maritime Governance,” 16 August 2023, <https://dfa.gov.ph/statement-remarks-apc/33151-keynote-speech-of-secretary-for-foreign-affairs-enrique-a-manalo-on-dialogue-on-maritime-governance> its actions align with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the 1982 UNCLOS, and the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes.

Promoting and upholding the rule of law is paramount to the Philippines. Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo stressed that the 1982 UNCLOS “is the arbiter of good governance and order” in the South China Sea. The 1982 UNCLOS and the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award form the twin anchors of the Philippines’ positions and actions concerning the South China Sea. These legal instruments are vital to the peaceful resolution of disputes and provide a clear framework for facilitating a regime in the South China Sea that fosters peace and prosperity within and beyond the region in a fair, just, and equitable manner.

During the 7th anniversary of the Award, Secretary Manalo reaffirmed the Philippines’ commitment to translating the positive outcomes of the Award in securing its legitimate interests and promoting peace, security, and prosperity within the region. The Philippines welcomes the growing number of partners supporting the Award,<sup>13</sup> including states that have cited the Award during the Request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in September 2023.

On functional cooperation, the Philippines aspires for substantive regional cooperation in upholding the 2017 Declaration for a Decade of Coastal and Marine Environment Protection in the South China Sea (2017-2027). This declaration enshrines the commitment of ASEAN Member States and China in sustainably managing, preserving, and protecting the South China Sea’s marine environment.

The Philippines and China held their 8th Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM) on the South China Sea on 17 January 2024. The parties agreed to handle incidents in the South China Sea through diplomacy and continuous dialogue and assured mutual commitment in avoiding escalation of tensions. The Philippines and China also agreed to enhance communication mechanisms between their respective foreign ministries and coast guards and explore prospects of academic exchanges on marine scientific research between their scientists.

The BCM is a confidence-building mechanism that facilitates regular exchange of views on current and contentious issues of concern in the South China Sea in a frank, in-depth, and friendly manner. The initiative resulted from the Philippines-China Joint Statement following former President Rodrigo R. Duterte’s state visit to China in

2016.

12 Department of Foreign Affairs, "Dialogue on Maritime Governance."

13 Department of Foreign Affairs, "Statement of Hon. Enrique A. Manalo Secretary for Foreign Affairs on the 7th Anniversary of the Award on the South China Sea Arbitration," 12 July 2023,

<https://dfa.gov.ph/speeches-and-statements/32928-statement-of-secretary-for-foreign-affairs-enrique-a-manalo-on-the-7th-anniversary-of-the-award-on-the-south-china-sea-arbitration>

14 Department of Foreign Affairs, "Press Statement on the 8th PH-China Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea," 18 January 2024, <https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/statements-and-advisoriesupdate/33994-press-statement-on-the-8th-ph-china-bilateral-consultation-mechanism-on-the-south-china-sea>

The Philippines is actively conserving and monitoring its maritime domain to protect the marine environment from deliberate damage caused by illegal and destructive fishing activities of the Chinese Maritime Militia in Rozul (Iroquois) Reef and Escoda (Sabina) Shoal. The Philippine Coast Guard, from 9 August to 11 September 2023, conducted extensive underwater surveys in Rozul (Iroquois) Reef and Escoda (Sabina) Shoal, revealing significant coral reef and seabed damage.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources denounced and strongly deplored such action.

The National Maritime Center (formerly known as the National Coast Watch Center) regularly monitors and detects the presence of foreign-flagged vessels in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) such as the military, coast guard, maritime militia, fishing, and marine scientific/hydrographic survey vessels without clearance or permission from the Philippine Government. Further, these foreign-flagged vessels also traverse and loiter in other critical maritime routes and areas in the Philippines.

To provide enhanced monitoring of the Philippine maritime jurisdiction, the NM Center continuously develops its capabilities with the assistance of its support agencies and foreign partners. In recent years, the NM Center has added important Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) tools that enable it to submit relevant information and reports about the presence of these vessels to various Philippine government agencies in a timely manner.

In July 2023, to commemorate the 7th anniversary of the South China Sea Arbitration Award, the Philippines launched two microsites related to the South China Sea disputes: The Department of Foreign Affairs' "Not Once Inch" is the central resource for official information and positions on the Award, including the Philippines' contribution to the peaceful settlement of disputes through UNCLOS' dispute settlement mechanism; while the Foreign Service Institute's "West Philippine Sea

Online Resource Microsite” complements the former and is designed to promote public understanding of the South China Sea disputes, UNCLOS, and the 2016 Award.

On 16 to 17 August 2023, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Philippines co-hosted the Dialogue on Maritime Governance in the South China Sea. This dialogue convened legal scholars, security experts, and practitioners from across the Indo-Pacific region to explore potential areas for collaboration and stewardship, without prejudice to each state’s sovereignty and national interests. The maritime dialogue emphasized the importance of upholding a rules-based international order, exploring mini-lateral and regional maritime governance arrangements, and maintaining open channels of communication among South China Sea claimant and non-claimant states to reduce tensions.

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15 Philippine Coast Guard, “PCG Confirms Extensive Damage in Areas Frequented by Chinese Militia,” 18 September 2023, <https://coastguard.gov.ph/index.php/11-news/5332-pcg-confirms-extensive-damage-in-areas-frequented-by-chinese-militia>

16 Department of Environment and Natural Resources, “Statement of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources,” 20 September 2023,

<https://twitter.com/DENROfficial/status/1705106646366892043>

The Department of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with the United Kingdom's Government Communications Services International (GCSI), held a Strategic Communications Workshop from 13 to 15 December 2023. This workshop was designed to enhance the capacity of Philippine government officials to craft a more cohesive communication plan to refute disinformation surrounding the disputes.

### **Other National Initiatives**

Both Houses of the Philippine Congress passed the Maritime Zones Act on 19

March 2024. This Maritime Zones Act seeks to eliminate legal ambiguities surrounding the Philippines’ maritime zones and enforce the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award. The legislation is waiting for President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s signature. Once enacted, the law will allow the Philippines to forge more alliances with other states under a rules-based international order that is compliant with UNCLOS.

The Foreign Service Institute, as the institutional consultant of the Department of Foreign Affairs, held its inaugural Law of the Sea Academy (LSA) from 23 to 27

April 2024 to further capacitate Filipino public servants in understanding critical issues concerning maritime security, ocean governance, and the blue economy.<sup>18</sup> The FSI is also slated to conduct another iteration of the LSA in the 3rd quarter of 2024 that will involve ASEAN Member States.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is a significant maritime security challenge in the Philippines, affecting its rich marine biodiversity and the livelihoods of coastal communities. The NM Center plays a pivotal role in combating IUU fishing through effective coordination and collaboration with its support agencies in conducting maritime security operations.

The NM Center facilitates information sharing and operational coordination among various agencies to combat other maritime threats such: Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing (with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Philippine National Police-Maritime Group (PNP-MG), and other law enforcement agencies); and smuggling of goods (with the Bureau of Customs and Department of Agriculture).

### **Regional and International Cooperation**

Bilaterally, the Philippines has convened a number of maritime-oriented bilateral mechanisms with Australia, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, United Kingdom, and the United States. These mechanisms serve as a platform to discuss various maritime-related issues and explore and expand the scope of maritime cooperation.

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17 Senate of the Philippines, “Senate Approves Landmark Tolentino-Sponsored Maritime Zones Law,” 26 February 2024, [https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/press\\_release/2024/0226\\_tolentino1.asp](https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2024/0226_tolentino1.asp)

18 Foreign Service Institute, “FSI Director-General Outlines Institute’s Role in Maritime Diplomacy at

ADRi Event,” 01 December 2023, <https://fsi.gov.ph/2023/12/01/fsi-director-general-outlines-institutes-role-in-maritime-diplomacy-at-adri-event/>; Foreign Service Institute, “FSI Executive Director Highlights Importance of Blue Economy,” 27 March 2024, <https://fsi.gov.ph/2024/03/27/fsi-executive-director-highlights-importance-of-blue-economy/>

In ASEAN, the Philippines supports and actively participates in 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).

The Philippines strongly advocates for greater cooperation among regional coast guards and maritime law enforcement agencies through the institutionalization of an ASEAN Coast Guard Forum (ACF). On 02 to 03 May 2023, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-Global Maritime Crime Programme (UNODC-GMCP) co-hosted the ASEAN Coast Guard Forum Technical Expert Group Meeting in Cebu City. The meeting finalized the Draft Concept Paper

and Terms of Reference agreed upon during the ASEAN Coast Guard Commanders Meeting in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2022. The PCG hosted the 3rd ACF Commander's Meeting, on 4-7 June 2024 in Davao del Norte, Philippines.

Under the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the Philippines continues to co-shepherd with Australia two projects aimed at the strengthening and institutionalization of the EAMF: (1) the development of an EAMF website for the retention and access of resources and materials of the EAMF; and (2) the establishment of a pool of independent maritime experts from whom the EAMF Chair could commission substantive policy briefs. The Project Proposals for these initiatives were adopted by the ASEAN SOM ad-referendum in April 2023.

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 through initiatives such as the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme, ASEAN Green Initiative, ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook, and ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard, among others. Through the triumvirate efforts of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), the ACB, and the ASEAN Secretariat, the Philippines hosted and chaired the 33rd Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Nature and Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB) from 20 to 21 June 2023 in Pasay City. The two-day meeting mapped out ASEAN's actions for nature in line with the new set of global biodiversity targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

In the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Philippines, together with India, Papua New Guinea, and the United States, co-chaired a three-part ARF Training Series on the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS). The training series aims to increase understanding and implementation of the ISPS Code among ARF members to develop a regional manual highlighting best practices, identifying compliance drills and exercises, and providing resources for technical assistance. The first part of the training series was held at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London,

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United Kingdom in September 2022, while the second part was held 19 Department of Environment and Natural Resources Biodiversity Management Bureau, "PH Hosts ASEAN Meet to Plan Regional Actions to Hit New Global Biodiversity Targets," n.d., <https://bmb.gov.ph/ph-hosts-asean-meet-to-plan-regional-actions-to-hit-new-global-biodiversity-targets/> in Mumbai, India in April 2023. The third and last part of the training was conducted in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on 23 to 25 April 2024.

Beyond ASEAN, the Philippines recognizes the importance of multilateral cooperation and actively advocates for international frameworks and dialogues with its international partners to address maritime challenges.

The Philippines plays an integral role in the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia in Information Sharing Centre (RECAAP ISC) as the PCG Commandant, CG Admiral Ronnie Gil L Gavan was unanimously re-elected as Chairperson of the Governing Council 01 April 2024 to 30 May 2027, during the ReCAAP ISC Governing Council Meeting in Singapore on 14 March 2024. During the meeting, the contracting parties also tackled shaping the strategic direction and operational framework of the ReCAAP ISC, specifically on enhancing regional cooperation, addressing maritime security challenges, and promoting information sharing among member states toward safeguarding maritime interests and ensuring the safety and security of sea lanes in the Asia-Pacific region.

In the Sulu Sea, piracy and armed robbery has dropped down significantly in recent years, thanks to the increasing maritime patrols conducted by the Philippines together with relevant partners in the region. The Philippines has been an active partner together with its neighboring countries Indonesia and Malaysia in maintaining peace and order in the Sulu and Celebes Seas as strengthened by the existing Trilateral Cooperative Agreement among the three countries. The Philippines has actively engaged and participated in the Contact Group on the Sulu and Celebes Sea (CGSCS) initiated by the Global Maritime Crime Programme of the UNODC, a platform for comprehensive and shared understanding of maritime crime trends in the Sulu and Celebes Seas and development of possible cooperative responses.

With the information and intelligence gathered from all available sources, the National Maritime Center uses a holistic view for an effective understanding of the maritime domain. It overlays all maritime-related information and intelligence, which are then shared through Threat Assessment Reports sent to all government agencies concerned. In particular, the NM Center receives information and updates from the Singapore Information Fusion Center (IFC) on maritime incidents involving illegal fishing, transnational crimes, smuggling, and trafficking, and participates in the South East Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) Exercise sponsored by the United States and held every year in Singapore.

The first Sub-Committee on Maritime Cooperation under the Philippines- European Union Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was held in Brussels on 27 September 2023. The parties reaffirmed their commitment to enhance bilateral maritime cooperation, underscored the significance of the 1982 UNCLOS and acknowledged the validity and finality of the South China Sea Arbitration Award, and discussed various aspects of sectoral cooperation in the maritime domain, including sustainable development, ocean governance, and connectivity, among others.

Department of Foreign Affairs, "Philippines: First subcommittee on maritime cooperation with the European Union takes place in Brussels," 27 September 2023, <https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/dfa-releasesupdate/33396-philippines-first-subcommittee-on-maritime-cooperation-with-the-european->

On 7 April 2024, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the United States conducted a Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone,

underscoring their collective commitment to enhancing regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. In his statement, National Defense Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro Jr. emphasized that these series of bilateral and multilateral MCAs are designed to bolster the Philippines' capacity for both individual and collective self-defense.

The Philippines looks forward to conducting a trilateral at-sea exercise and other maritime activities, such as maritime law enforcement training and the promotion of maritime domain awareness, with the United States and Japan in the Indo-Pacific in 2025. Additionally, the establishment of a trilateral maritime dialogue with these countries is anticipated to enhance coordination and further promote maritime cooperation.

Following its signing of the Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement on 20 September 2023, the Philippines hosted the Southeast Asian Regional Workshop on the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) on 15 to 17 November 2023 in Manila.<sup>23</sup> The Department of Foreign Affairs hosted the workshop in collaboration with the Australian Embassy, the British Embassy, the High Seas Alliance, the Natural Resources Defence Council, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS). The regional workshop elucidated the significance of the BBNJ Agreement for the marine environment and the advantages of marine biodiversity conservation.

## **vi. Security of Information and Communications Technology**

On 4 April 2024, President Marcos issued Executive Order No. 58, s. 2024, mandating all government agencies to adopt the National Cybersecurity Plan 2023-

2028 (NCSP). The plan aims to strengthen the country's cybersecurity posture through a comprehensive framework, as promoting a secure and resilient cyberspace is one of the key strategies under the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. The NCSP supplements the country's Cybercrime Prevention Act, providing legal mechanisms to combat cybercrime, and the Data Privacy Act, ensuring the protection of personal information in information and communication systems.

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<sup>21</sup> "Joint Statement Australia-Japan-Philippines-United States Maritime Cooperative Activity," Department of National Defense, 06 April 2024, <https://www.dnd.gov.ph/Release/2024-04-06/2121/JOINT-STATEMENT-Australia-Japan-Philippines-United-States-Maritime-Cooperative-Activity/>

<sup>22</sup> "Joint Vision Statement from the Leaders of Japan, the Philippines, and the United States,"



Presidential Communication Office, 11 April 2024, <https://pco.gov.ph/presidential-speech/joint-vision-statement-from-the-leaders-of-japan-the-philippines-and-the-united-states/>

23 Department of Foreign Affairs, “Philippines Hosts Regional Workshop on the BBNJ Agreement,” 20

November 2023, <https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/dfa-releasesupdate/33695-philippines-hosts-regional-workshop-on-the-bbnj-agreement#:~:text=The%20workshop%20was%20initiated%20by,Manalo%2C%20signed%20for%20the%20Philippines.>

The NCSP, designed to achieve its vision, features an extensive Results

Framework with three (3) outcomes:

1. The State and its People in cyberspace is proactively protected and secured
2. Increased Cybersecurity workforce capabilities.
3. Strengthened Cybersecurity policy framework.

Under Outcome 1, the NSCP calls specifically for the expansion of bilateral and multilateral international cooperation in cybersecurity. The Philippines continuously seeks to expand agreements with its international partners such as ASEAN to enhance regional cybersecurity posture through information sharing and actively supports the creation of various mechanisms by ASEAN member countries. To date, the Philippines has participated in various ASEAN forums, demonstrating commitment to international cooperation:

- ARF Series of Workshops on Terminology in the Field of Security of and in the Use of ICTs in Confidence Building, April 2023, online (Co-chairs: Cambodia, Russia)

- ARF Series of Workshops on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal

Purposes, online (Co-chairs: Thailand, China, Russia)

- ARF Workshop on Fostering Professionals in the Field of Security of and in the Use of ICTs, 13 June 2023, Hanoi, Vietnam (Co-chairs: Vietnam, Republic of Korea)

- ARF Points of Contact Directory on ICTs Security (Co-chairs: Malaysia, Australia)

- ARF Workshop on the Protection of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructure, 6-7

June 2024, Singapore (Co-chairs: Singapore, European Union)

There are continuous efforts to enhance cybersecurity capabilities through training programs and partnerships with international organizations. Active participation in

regional and international cybersecurity fora and initiatives, including the ASEAN CERT Incident Drill and the APEC Cybersecurity Strategy, is also important.

Inadequate preventive capacity of cybersecurity infrastructures among the Philippine government institutions continues to be one of the paramount concerns in pursuing an advanced research and development sector in the country. The recent ransomware attacks against the Department of Science and Technology that breached 2 terabytes of the Department's data on invention proposals indicate that the Philippine government should immediately prioritize cybersecurity through resource allotment, talent cultivation, and establishment of impenetrable infrastructures.<sup>24</sup> High attrition in the government cybersecurity workforce due to low salary, lack of training, and lack of plantilla positions is also a major challenge. There is a need for greater public-private collaboration to strengthen cyber resilience, especially with emerging technologies such as IoT and AI presenting new

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<sup>24</sup> Dempsey Reyes and Tyrone Jasper Piad, "Hackers gain access to sensitive DOST data," *Inquirer.Net*, April 4, 2024, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1925924/hackers-gain-access-to-sensitive-dost-data> cybersecurity challenges. Collaboration with ASEAN member states and international partners to promote regional cybersecurity cooperation is also crucial.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

The Philippines commits to contribute to growing AI regulation and innovation efforts for regional security, noting the expansion of diplomacy in cyberspace. The attempt to foster an internationally compliant AI niche sensitive to the country's cultural values and security demands latches on the establishment of national frameworks covering the ethical and responsible use of AI. Apart from international compliance, considerations for national AI regulation spring from satisfying alignment and interoperability within ASEAN in pursuit of security efforts in the Indo-Pacific.

In 2021, the Department of Trade and Industry released the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy to steer the country's positioning as a key hub for AI in the region. The Strategy is aligned with the Philippine Digital Workforce Competitiveness Act (Republic Act No. 11927), which recognizes "[...] the rapid acceleration of digitalization and advances in technologies such as artificial intelligence and automation across a range of industries and sectors." Republic Act No. 10173, the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and Republic Act No. 11293, the Philippine Innovation Act, lay the foundation for a regulatory framework for AI in the Philippines.

The Philippine National Police's (PNP) ICT Master Plan in 2018 aimed to utilize technology for Secured, Mobile, AI-driven, Real-time Technology-driven (SMART) policing in crime prevention and resolution.<sup>25</sup> The PNP is gearing up to develop a five-year "smart policing" development plan.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas released a Digital Payments Transformation Roadmap to help navigate e-commerce. The Department of Tourism has also identified digital infrastructure development to promote the digital tourism industry.

Meanwhile, the Department of Science and Technology launched an Artificial Intelligence and Information and Communications Technology Report and unveiled AI research projects that cut across various sectors, including agriculture, marine, health, transportation, and education.

The University of the Philippines released guidelines on the responsible and ethical use of AI in the academe. Among others, it aims “to create an empowering environment [...] to openly discuss [...] AI and [...] come up with better policies and guidelines.” It is also the first in the country to develop AI and a Data Science Program.

Echoing President Marcos’ call before the UN General Assembly in 2022 to prevent the weaponization of emerging technologies through the development of governance structures, the Department of Foreign Affairs organized the Manila Meeting on the Indo-Pacific Perspective on Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS).<sup>26</sup>

The Philippines also actively pushes for laying down normative frameworks for lethal autonomous weapon systems in multilateral platforms like the UN.

<sup>25</sup> Philippine National Police, “Annual Accomplishment Report 2018,” accessed April 08, 2024, <https://pnp.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AR2018.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs, “2023 DFA Accomplishment Report,” accessed April 15, 2024,

AI can be applied not only in traditional security but also in the creation of climate-resilient and intelligent energy infrastructures, as well as the production of renewable energy to address nontraditional security threats.<sup>27</sup>

Approaching security holistically, the integration of AI into some industries leading to the automation of tasks should not trigger economic insecurity, considering that human capital is the country’s largest resource and the service sector accounts for almost 60 percent of the Philippines’ gross domestic product.<sup>28</sup>

The impact of AI on the work of Filipino diplomats and international relations practitioners has put new issues on the diplomatic table, which are tied with other agenda including governance, security, ethics, among others. As such, the Foreign Service Institute, the research and training arm of the Department of Foreign Affairs, has included AI among its latest research thrusts.<sup>29</sup> It recently conducted a dialogue

to harness the transformative potential of AI by equipping its policymakers and practitioners with the necessary knowledge and tools to navigate the opportunities and challenges presented by AI.

#### **4. Role of the ARF**

Thirty years since its inception in 1994, the ARF remains a one-of-a-kind platform for political-security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines remains fully committed to supporting the ARF as among the key ASEAN-led mechanisms

comprising the regional security architecture. The practical cooperation under the ARF's various work streams has contributed significantly to confidence building in the region.

However, the tense geopolitical landscape invites an opportunity for rethinking and re-evaluation of the role and relevance of the ARF in the region. Discussions on the revitalization of the ARF are therefore timely, if the ARF is to fulfill its promise to effectively progress its work from confidence building to preventive diplomacy. To this end, the ARF must aspire for candid and dynamic discussions among its members on core political-security issues of common concern. While endeavoring to be open and inclusive, ASEAN must be able to ensure its Centrality in the ARF, in order to drive the Forum's agenda in the years to come.

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28 Krista Danielle Yu et al., "Artificial Intelligence and its Potential Adverse Impacts on the Philippine

Economy," De La Salle University - Angelo King Institute Policy Brief 12, no. 2 (2017): 1, [https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=res\\_aki](https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=res_aki).

29 Lloyd Alexander M. Adducul, "Artificial Intelligence in Diplomacy: Whereto, Philippine Foreign

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## **REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

### **1. Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

The world is at an inflection point in history. Strategic competition and geopolitical tensions are buffeting the rules-based order that has underpinned global peace and prosperity since the Second World War. North Korea, which is further advancing its nuclear and missile capabilities and taking an adversarial approach to inter-Korean relations, has become a far greater threat to security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. The war in Ukraine and the armed conflict in the Middle East are shaking the rules-based international order to its core, seriously jeopardizing world peace and security. At the same time, security, economy, and technology are increasingly intertwined, making it all but impossible to compartmentalize diplomacy into either security or economic spheres.

In the face of this global poly-crisis, it is imperative to strengthen regional order that enables countries in the region to cooperate and prosper together. Hence the collective commitment of ARF participants to peace and stability for the region's continued growth and development is more important than ever. As a founding member, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has been a dedicated participant in the ARF and remains committed to strengthening the ARF as a central pillar in the evolving regional security architecture. The ROK will continue to champion the ARF's relevance and significance as an action-oriented Forum and contribute to enhancing the ARF's role in facilitating peace and stability in the region.

#### **a. Korean Peninsula**

Despite its economic hardship and dire human rights situation, North Korea continues to escalate tension on the Korean Peninsula with a series of missile provocations. Since 2022, North Korea has launched over 100 ballistic missiles, including more than a dozen intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). These missile launches are not only clear violations of and a flagrant disregard for United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs) but also a serious threat to the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula, the Indo-Pacific region, and beyond. North Korea's ICBM launch on 12 July 2023 during the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings and the so-called "military reconnaissance satellite" launch on 22 November 2023 in the direction of the Philippine Sea clearly showed Pyongyang's total disregard for international law and the ARF's efforts to secure peace and stability in the region.

Since the beginning of 2024, the North Korean regime has been ramping up its bellicose rhetoric against the ROK. At the Supreme People's Assembly meeting, the North Korean leader publicly abrogated the regime's long-held policy of reunification, declaring the ROK as its "number one adversary." He went even further to issue an order to codify in the constitution that North Korea will "completely occupy and subjugate the ROK and annex its territory in case of a war [...] by mobilizing all physical means including nuclear forces." Moreover, North Korea is attempting to change the status quo in the West Sea by denying the Northern Limit Line (NLL), which has separated military forces between the ROK and North Korea for more than 70 years,

and threatening to use force if the so-called “maritime border” is “violated.” Following up on such hostile remarks, the North Korean military has been increasing provocations, including launching over 10 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), hundreds of artillery fires, and multiple cruise missile launches.

On the other hand, North Korea is directly threatening peace and stability in other regions, including Europe and the Middle East, by smuggling weapons against UNSCRs. As of April 2024, it was reported that North Korea has transported over 10,000 containers to the Russian Federation, which could be filled with more than 3 million rounds of 152 mm shells. The Ukrainian government has confirmed that over 50 North Korea-made SRBMs were used against Ukraine, and members of the UN Panel of Experts concluded that the debris derived from North Korean “Hwasong 11-series missiles.”

In the face of persistent destabilizing activities and threats from Pyongyang, the international community must unite and send a clear message that it will never accept North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons. Together with the international community, the ROK will relentlessly continue efforts to create a strategic environment that leaves North Korea with no option but to return to the path of denuclearization by continuing a holistic “3D approach” of deterrence, dissuasion, and diplomacy.

The ROK, together with its ally and partners, will continue to secure peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula by deterring North Korea’s nuclear threats. Pursuant to the Washington Declaration announced during President Yoon Suk Yeol's state visit to the U.S. in April 2023, the ROK-U.S. alliance is significantly enhancing extended deterrence against North Korea’s nuclear threats, including by establishing the Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG). The ROK is also working closely with the U.S. and Japan to further enhance trilateral security cooperation as agreed at the trilateral summit at Camp David in August 2023.

To dissuade the North Korean regime’s obsession with nuclear weapons, the international community must cut off the regime’s revenue generation. As last year’s ARF Chairman’s Statement points out, the international community must adhere to its commitment to implement UNSCRs fully. The UN Panel of Experts, in its recent report in March 2024, accused North Korea of evading sanctions and creating loopholes in the sanctions regime. The report suggested that through malicious cyber activities, North Korea has generated approximately 40% of its funds (3 billion USD, from 2017 to 2023) to develop its WMD programs. Furthermore, it was reported that more than 100,000 North Korean workers remain in approximately 40 countries, and North Korea is continuing to smuggle refined oil and other goods through illicit ship-to-ship transfers. As the UN Panel of Experts was disbanded due to Russia’s veto, it is now up to the UN member states to safeguard and uphold relevant UNSCRs and monitor faithful implementation.

At the same time, the ROK will keep the door to dialogue open. President Yoon proposed the Audacious Initiative in August 2022, which encompasses economic, political, and military corresponding measures in return for North Korea's denuclearization. The initiative earned a wide range of support from the international

community, including ASEAN, the U.S., Japan, Canada, the UAE, NATO, and the EU. The ROK's commitment to diplomacy is well represented in the Camp David Leaders' Joint Statement with the U.S. and Japan. Through the statement, the leaders of the three countries reiterated that they "remain committed to re-establishing dialogue with North Korea with no preconditions."

Meanwhile, North Korea's human rights and humanitarian situation remains deeply concerning. A decade has passed since a UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) report highlighted the dire human rights situation, but no discernible change has occurred. To improve the human rights situation in North Korea, the ROK is strengthening cooperation with the international community and raising the issue in international fora. For instance, the ROK will organize an open briefing on North Korean human rights at the UNSC in June 2024. To better inform the international community about the grave human rights situation in North Korea, the ROK has appointed an Ambassador for International Cooperation on North Korean Human Rights in 2022. It has also strengthened collaboration with global civil society and academia while expanding outreach efforts to like-minded countries and the Global South. The ROK has recently published the 2024 North Korean Human Rights Report.

At the same time, despite North Korea's abrogation of the reunification policy, the ROK will continue its efforts to realize the vision of a free and unified Korean Peninsula. As President Yoon addressed on the 2024 March First Independence Movement Day, "Unification is precisely what is needed to expand the universal values of freedom and human rights [...] and a free, unified Korea will contribute to peace and prosperity in the world." The ROK will continue to develop its vision for a unified Korean Peninsula that is free and at peace. Based on solid support from the U.S. and Japan, as shown in the Camp David Leaders' Joint Statement, the ROK will continue to secure support from the international community.

#### **b. ROK's Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific**

In November 2022, at the 23rd ASEAN-ROK Summit in Phnom Penh, the ROK announced the Strategy for a Free, Peaceful and Prosperous Indo-Pacific for the first time. As a nation with a vital interest in the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, the ROK has formulated a comprehensive regional strategy that extends beyond the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. The Indo-Pacific Strategy presents a roadmap for an integrated regional diplomacy that would enable the ROK to contribute more to regional and global peace and stability. To achieve this goal, the ROK is strategically prioritizing the reinforcement of rules-based order and enhancing cooperation and solidarity with partners who share the vision of ensuring freedom, peace, and prosperity in the region.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy provides a set of guiding principles for achieving comprehensive regional engagement both in terms of geographical scope and in the range of cooperation areas. This integrated approach is notably evident in the growing breadth and depth of the ROK's partnership and cooperation with ASEAN. The initial unveiling of the visions and principles of the ROK's Indo-Pacific Strategy at the ASEAN-ROK Summit well demonstrates ASEAN's prominence in this new doctrine.



Indeed, the Strategy highlights the ROK's commitment to deepening bonds with ASEAN based on its firm support for ASEAN Centrality and the principles of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

### **c. Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative**

To put this commitment into action, the ROK launched the Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative (KASI) as a regional policy specifically tailored to ASEAN within the framework of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. KASI builds on the existing solid partnership with ASEAN spanning trade, economy, and social-cultural areas towards fostering a more comprehensive partnership that encompasses security cooperation as well as future and emerging areas. In April 2023, the Action Plan of KASI, consisting of eight core lines of effort, was announced. They were selected after identifying priority areas of cooperation with ASEAN, with meticulous review of ASEAN's major initiatives and goals.

#### **KASI's Eight Core Lines of Effort**

1. Upgrade the ASEAN-ROK partnership and strengthen bilateral relations with ASEAN Member States
2. Enhance ASEAN-ROK cooperation within ASEAN-led mechanisms
3. Expand ASEAN-ROK comprehensive security cooperation
4. Promote ASEAN-ROK strategic coordination
5. Expand cooperation in future and emerging areas for shared prosperity and development
6. Jointly address and respond to regional and global challenges
7. Promote future-generation exchanges as drivers of future prosperity
8. Increase ASEAN-ROK cooperation resources

The Joint Statement of the 24th ASEAN-ROK Summit contained ASEAN's warm message of welcome for KASI. Through KASI, ASEAN and the ROK are heading towards a meaningful, substantive, and mutually beneficial partnership, encompassing all three pillars of ASEAN Community. The ROK is now fully and actively implementing KASI by increasing ASEAN-ROK cooperation resources and launching flagship projects in various areas of focused cooperation, such as digital transition (Korea-ASEAN Digital Transformation and Innovation Flagship) and climate change (Partnership for the ASEAN-ROK Methane Action). Furthermore, efforts are underway to elevate the ASEAN-ROK partnership to the highest level of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in conjunction with the celebration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-ROK dialogue relations in 2024.

## **2. National Security and Defence Policy**

### **a. Overview of national security and defence policy**

The ROK government has established and been promoting its National Security Strategy that includes the vision of a global pivotal state contributing to freedom, peace, and prosperity 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 been promoting defense policies to realize the defense vision of Elite, Advanced, Strong Military. 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 an science-and-technology-based strong military with the implementation of the Defense Innovation 4.0. Furthermore, the ROK seeks to foster an advanced military culture in order to build a trusted military that stands by the people and to realize a nation the military is proud to serve.

### **b. Data contribution to ARF Arms Register**

Total defence expenditure on annual basis

- a) Defence expenditure (in KRW billions): 57,014
- b) Defence expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP): 2.54%
- c) Defence expenditure per capita (in KRW billions): 0.001

## **3. National Contributions to Regional Security**

### **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 in its position that terrorism should be eradicated and not be tolerated in any form. As a member of the UN Security Council for the 2024-2025 term, the ROK is redoubling 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. Since 2017, the ROK government has been providing annual contributions for various UNOCT programmes.

In 2021, the ROK government took part in the UNOCT Global Counter-Terrorism Programme to help countries strengthen their border security and increase their capacity for countering and preventing terrorism. As a follow-up activity, the ROK

government co-hosted a workshop in October 2022 together with the UNOCT to promote best practices in border security and management in the Southeast Asian region. Additionally in 2023, the ROK government worked with the UNOCT on Countering Terrorism in Travel and Transport in Africa as part of the efforts for launching the UN Joint Appeal for Counter-Terrorism in Africa.

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 UNSCRs 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 (WMD) and their means of delivery continue to pose grave challenges to the global community. In particular, North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs remain a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. The ROK will continue to faithfully implement relevant UNSCRs and strengthen its cooperation with ARF Participants until the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all of North Korea's WMD and ballistic missiles programs is 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 nonproliferation 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, including in the 2nd Preparatory Committee Meeting for the 11th NPT Review Conference in July 2024, to achieve 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 its subgroup 2, the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV), and in the Stockholm Initiative. Furthermore, the ROK will closely cooperate with its partners to achieve concrete deliverables and will continue to seek an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its universalization. The ROK also calls for an immediate start of the negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

In response to the growing risk of WMD terrorism, the ROK is working toward a full implementation of UNSCR 1540. The ROK welcomes the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2663 in 2022 to extend the mandate of the 1540 Committee to November 2032. The ROK has been making efforts to implement UNSCR 1540 effectively, as it is vital to prevent WMDs and related materials from falling into the hands of terrorists. Such efforts include the chairmanship of the 1540 Committee in the 2013-2014 term; the hosting of industrial outreach conferences in 2016 and 2018; and financial

contributions to the UNSCR 1540 online education program in 2018 and 2019 and to the project that applies emerging technologies to help strengthen the implementation of UNSCR 1540 in 2022.

As one of the original States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the ROK welcomes the full elimination of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles in July 2023. The ROK will continue to participate in international efforts to support and strengthen the nonproliferation regime and prevent chemical weapons use. The ROK believes the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (CCT), which opened in 2023, will serve as a technical hub to strengthen the capacity of the OPCW and all States Parties. As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the CCT project in 2017, the ROK will continue its support for the successful operations of the CCT. Since 2012, the ROK has been hosting the annual Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry in collaboration with the OPCW to facilitate regional cooperation in chemical safety and security.

The ROK has supported the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) 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 Philippines, and the U.S. co-hosted. The ROK actively participated in the Working Group discussions on strengthening the Convention in 2023 and will continue its contribution to reinforcing the BWC.

The rapid advancement of emerging technologies in diverse areas, including autonomous weapons systems, artificial intelligence (AI), and outer space, poses multiple challenges to the current international disarmament and nonproliferation regime. In response to them, the ROK has actively participated in the relevant fora on specific disarmament issues, including the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). The ROK is also leading international efforts to build norms and governance around the military application of AI. The ROK, along with the Netherlands, co-hosted the Summit on the Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) in the Hague in 2023. The first REAIM Summit raised global awareness on the pressing nature of the military use of AI and called for action from the international community. The second REAIM Summit will be held in Seoul in September 2024.

The ROK also has constructively engaged in the UN Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules, and Principles of Responsible Behaviours and the Group of Governmental Experts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) to contribute to developing norms in these areas.

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 served as the President of the 9th session of the Conference of States Parties to

the ATT in 2023. The ROK will continue to not only actively promote the treaty's universalization as the Co-Chair of the Working Group on Treaty Universalization (WGTU) but also seek to strengthen inter-agency cooperation for effective implementation of the provisions and for 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. Following the ROK's hosting of the High-Level Political Meeting (HLPM) and Eastern Endeavor 23 in 2023, the ROK will actively participate in this year's meetings and Pacific Protector 24 to enhance the interdiction capabilities of participating countries. Furthermore, the ROK welcomes the new endorsement of the PSI by the six states in the African region: Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Togo, Zambia, and Madagascar. The ROK will continue working closely with 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 22nd conference was held for the first time in Geneva in December 2023 under the theme of "Governance of Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain." The two-day conference brought together experts from governments, international organizations, industry, and academia. Participants discussed the advantages and risks of military applications of AI and examined ways to establish norms on AI in the military domain. The ROK-UN Joint Conference will continue to provide a forum where experts from diverse fields can exchange their views on disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

The ROK has been championing youth engagement in the field of disarmament and nonproliferation. Since 2019, the ROK has been leading the adoption of a resolution titled "Youth, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation," and the third resolution was adopted at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in 2023. In carrying out the resolution, the ROK hosted diverse events and programs to promote youth participation, including the Korean Youth Envoys for Disarmament and Non-proliferation since 2023. The ROK will continue and reinforce its efforts to promote youth engagement in the field of disarmament and nonproliferation through diverse programs and activities.

### **c. Transnational Crime**

ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) has been a major platform to discuss transnational crimes such as terrorism, arms smuggling, and illicit human and drug trafficking. It facilitates exchange of best policies and experiences on related issues and enables 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. The 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 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. Under Article 13 of the Act on the Prevention of Human Trafficking and Protection, etc. of Victims, which came into effect in January 2023, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family developed indicators for identifying victims of human trafficking and issued a public notice in March 2023 with the aim of detecting and protecting victims of human trafficking, including women, foreigners, and other vulnerable groups, as early as possible. To promote the use of the indicators, the Ministry recommends that related agencies (prosecutors, judicial police officers, immigration officers, and officers working with foreign nationals) actively use the indicators and refer identified victims to protection facilities. 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 being implemented.

Furthermore, the ROK is putting a special effort into preventing human trafficking and violation of human rights by workers in the marine and fishing industry. For instance, the ROK conducts annual crackdowns to protect 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 that are 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 an 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 the 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 2024.

#### **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, and Yemen. To alleviate the suffering of the affected people and to minimize damage from disasters, the ROK government provided approximately 215 million US dollars in humanitarian assistance in 2023.

In response to unexpected disasters, which are growing in size and frequency due to factors such as climate change, the ROK government provided approximately 18 million US dollars to help relieve the damage caused by unexpected disasters —such as the earthquake in Turkiye and the floods in Libya, as well as the earthquake in Morocco. It also helped ASEAN countries to overcome natural disasters including Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar and the typhoon in the Philippines. In addition, the ROK provided humanitarian assistance in response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Regarding protracted humanitarian crises such as those in Yemen and Syria, it provided humanitarian assistance to improve the humanitarian situations in these countries.

Given that Asia-Pacific is a disaster-prone region, 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 Viet Nam 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 2023, the ROK further strengthened cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) by signing a three-year Memorandum of Understanding in which the ROK committed to providing unearmarked funding for 2023-2025, in a multi-year format in order to support the 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 Center 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 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**

Among the wide range of issues pertaining to maritime security, the ROK has taken an active role in countering and preventing piracy and armed robbery against ships in the region and worldwide.

At the regional level, 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).

Ever since the ROK became a party to ReCAAP in 2006, it has continuously contributed to the organization. The ROK has sent Korean staff to the ReCAAP Information Sharing Center since 2007. Moreover, the ROK has made voluntary financial contributions to ReCAAP to support regional capacity building. The ROK provided approximately 90,000 USD annually from 2008 to 2012 and, from 2013 onwards, the ROK's annual contribution has reached 130,000 USD—nearly a fifty percent increase—to broaden its role and scope in combating piracy in Asia.

The ROK is also taking an active part in the global efforts to combat piracy. The ROK started deploying the Cheonghae Anti-Piracy Unit to the high seas off the coast of Somalia in 2009, and since then the 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 and the World Food Programme, among others.

Also 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). Until the group announced its plan to close the trust fund by 2021, the ROK had contributed a total of 1.7 million US dollars to the fund, with the aim of helping strengthen the capacity of coastal states in countering piracy.

The ROK has also been a member of the G7++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea since 2013 to facilitate international cooperation promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. The ROK participates in working groups focusing on maritime domain awareness, education, training, exercises, and operations.



Moreover, the ROK made financial contributions totaling 800,000 US dollars to the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Djibouti Code of Conduct Trust Fund to strengthen the judicial capacity of Somalia and its neighboring countries in tackling piracy from 2009 to 2017. The ROK also provided 100,000 USD annually to the IMO West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund from 2018 to 2020. Since 2021, the ROK has provided around 200,000 USD annually, in light of the recent rise in piracy attacks near West Africa. 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 centers.

#### **f. Cybersecurity**

The rapid development of information and communications technology is opening up new possibilities for fostering social and economic development, but at the same time it is posing potential risks. The recent increase in the number of malicious cyber activities and the level of sophistication of such activities is posing serious challenges to international peace and security.

In response to the changing security landscape, the ROK launched a new version of the National Cybersecurity Strategy in February 2024. The new strategy covers a broader strategic scope, with a special focus on enhancing more robust defense capabilities against cyber threats and deepening international cooperation.

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 7th ROK-U.S. Cyber Policy Consultations was held in Seoul in January 2024 to reaffirm the commitment to promoting international cyberspace stability and deepening 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 co-chaired the ISM on ICTs Security in 2021-2023 along with Indonesia, Australia, and Russia and co-hosted the 5th ISM on ICTs in 2023 with Indonesia and Russia, providing an opportunity for member states to exchange their views on regional CBMs.

The ROK co-organized the Workshop on Fostering Cybersecurity Professionals with the Government of Viet Nam in Hanoi. The Workshop was part of CBMs adopted at the Ministerial Meeting in 2022. With more than 50 participants from governments, academia, and private sectors, the workshop provided a chance to share each country's cybersecurity workforce fostering policies, laying the groundwork for greater collaboration within ASEAN.

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 Center. The ROK is also carrying out the Capacity Development Project for Nurturing Cybersecurity Professionals in Indonesia in cooperation with the U.S.

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 order to strengthen international cooperation on cybercrime, the ROK also submitted a letter of intent to the Council of Europe in October 2022 and was invited to accede to the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) in February 2023, with a view to acceding to the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) in the near future.

#### **4. 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 2023-2024, which include the Inter-Sessional Support Group Meeting, Inter-Sessional Meetings, and the Defense Officials' Dialogue, along with other workshops and seminars.

In particular, this year, the ROK co-chaired the 16th Meeting of the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) in Seoul with Brunei Darussalam. The ROK hosted the inaugural gathering of the ARF EEPs 18 years ago. The 16th meeting was held in person for the first time in five years after a long break due to COVID-19 pandemic-related complications, and it served as an opportunity to vitalize the ARF's track II activities and exchange views on how to strengthen the ARF mechanism. Participants had in-depth discussions on the necessity of enhancing the link between track I and track II. The ROK and Malaysia will co-chair the 17th Meeting of the ARF EEPs for 2024-2025 in Malaysia.

## **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 and tectonic shifts, 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 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 and the vision of the ASEAN-ROK CSP, 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**

### **1. Regional Security Situation**

Growing dynamics of global political and economic processes related to the emerging multipolar world order has put the Asia-Pacific, with its new centers of growth and influence, under increasing pressure from the Western countries seeking to impose their own development patterns on this region.

The "Indo-Pacific Project" of the United States and its allies designed to erase completely the political and economic identity of the Asia-Pacific as a common space of equal pragmatic cooperation by replacing inclusive cooperative mechanisms with closed bloc structures, poses serious risks to the ASEAN-led architecture of regional interaction. Building upon the exclusive minilateral formats NATO comes into Asia to project enforcement potential across the continent through ideological narrative of the "indivisibility of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security".

The Western confrontational "containment and deterrence" agenda aimed at narrowing the unifying space for co-development, focuses on taking the lead in regional trade, investment, supply, and technological chains by forcing out political opponents and economic competitors.

Attempts to establish an "axis" from Australia to South Korea under the US control are destabilizing and provoking an arms race. Japan's policy of strengthening its military power, including by building up its own strike missile capability, is a cause for concern.

The Taiwan issue remains one of the major sources of tension in the Asia-Pacific. Washington regularly orchestrates provocations in the Taiwan Strait aimed at aggravating the situation around the island and worsening its relations with the mainland. Despite the formal declaration of the "one-China principle", the United States and its allies have been strengthening Taiwan's military capabilities, engaging in political contacts, and cooperating through military and intelligence agencies. The Russian side consistently advocates the fact that there is only one China, that the PRC government is the only legitimate government representing all of China, and that Taiwan is an integral part of China.

Russia stands for settling territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) 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 SCS (DOC) and the 2011 Guidelines for the Implementation of the DOC. The Code of Conduct in the SCS drafted by China and member States of the Association should become an effective mechanism for resolving disputes. The involvement of extraregional forces in solving territorial disputes, as well as the increasing number of naval exercises in the subregion under the pretext of "ensuring freedom of navigation" with the participation of Washington which has been refusing to accede to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for 30 years now, and of its allies, only contribute to complicating the situation in these waters.

A prerequisite for international efforts at resolving the situation in Myanmar is the commitment to the principles of non-interference in internal affairs. We oppose attempts to use instruments at UN and the UN Security Council to put pressure on Nay Pyi Taw. The US policy of strengthening sanctions against the Myanmar authorities while supporting the radical opposition is destructive. Such actions undermine the regional community's efforts to restore peace in the country and pose a direct threat to the security of neighboring states and Southeast Asia as a whole. We support the willingness of ASEAN, in particular the active position of the Lao PDR Chairmanship, to give additional impetus to efforts to implement the provisions of the Five Point Consensus in close cooperation with the Myanmar authorities.

The military and political situation on the Korean Peninsula continues to deteriorate. The main reason for the escalation of tensions is the increased joint military activity of the United States, the ROK and Japan, which jeopardizes the security of all the Northeast Asian states.

US efforts to make Australia a rear base for deploying US troops in the Asia-Pacific cause concern. The accelerated militarization of Australia destabilizes the regional military and political situation, reduces the level of mutual trust and provokes an arms race.

Despite the counterterrorism and anti-drug efforts of the Afghan authorities, the spreading menace of terrorism and drug trafficking stemming from the territory of Afghanistan remains a significant factor in the deterioration of regional security. ISIS and other terrorist organizations such as the Islamic Movements of Uzbekistan and Eastern Turkestan, Jamaat Ansarulla, Al Qaeda, etc. are still present in the country. Afghanistan remains one of the world's largest suppliers of opiates (80%). There is a high level of drug-related crime and increased production of methamphetamine. The steps taken within the Moscow Format of Consultations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the mechanism of Afghanistan's neighboring countries play an important role in the Afghan settlement and the country's integration into regional systems of economic development.

## **2. Defense 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 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' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), where Russia (together with Myanmar) oversaw the counter-terrorism agenda in 2020-2023. Its work was focused on the issues of counter-terrorism security in the Asia-Pacific and worldwide, as well as sharing experiences in combating international terrorism including such international terrorist groups as, among others, Al Qaeda and ISIS. In 2023, a table top exercise

(August, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar) and international counterterrorism field exercise (September, Vladivostok, Russia) were conducted with participation of military contingents from ASEAN Member States and a number of dialogue partners. Since 2024, Russia, together with Laos, has been leading the humanitarian mine action track in ADMM-Plus.

The Russian Defence Ministry actively develops ties with key partners in the Asia-Pacific, primarily China and India, as well as the ASEAN Member States.

The armed forces of Russia and China in strict compliance with the norms of international law regularly organize joint naval and air patrols, conduct military exercises, including within the framework of the SCO, as well as with the participation of the armed forces of partners in other regions of the world.

Experts from the International Mine Action Center of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation continued to provide assistance in clearing Laos territory of explosive remnants of the Indochina War and training de-miners from among the Lao military personnel.

Enhancement of the defence cooperation with the Asia-Pacific countries is facilitated by their active participation in the International Army Games regularly organized by the Russian Defence Ministry.

### **3. Nuclear and Missile Disarmament, Nuclear Security, and Non-Proliferation of WMD in the Asia-Pacific**

Activities of a group of states led by the United States, aimed at undermining the strategic balance and building up their own power potential to the detriment of the security of other countries in the Asia-Pacific, result in the escalation of tensions in the region.

The American side deliberately dismantled a number of treaties which hampered its pursuit of decisive military superiority. In doing so, it has created a situation in which the implementation of a number of agreements has become counterproductive for other parties. At the same time, Washington seeks to engage them in cooperation on issues of its own priority and in a way that is favorable to the United States.

The United States has been expanding its network of military alliances and implementing destabilizing military-technical programs aimed at weakening those states in the region which it has identified as opponents. Relying on subordinate alliances, Washington has been implementing projects in the Asia-Pacific, which are destructive to regional security, aiming at building a local segment of the US global anti-missile defence system, preparing for the deployment of ground-launched intermediate- and shorter-range missiles, and expanding the scope of military exercises with the so-called "dynamic" use of strategic forces and means, including nuclear weapons carriers.

Of particular concern are statements made by the US military about its intention to deploy weapons in the Asia-Pacific as early as 2024 that were previously banned under

the INF Treaty, which was deliberately ruined by Washington. Such a move, if implemented, would force Russia to immediately reconsider its unilateral self-imposed restrictions on the deployment of ground-launched intermediate- and shorter-range missiles until similar US-made weapons are deployed in the relevant regions.

The US efforts to further engage its Asia-Pacific allies in various "extended nuclear deterrence" programs are fraught with the serious negative consequences for regional security. The agreements between Washington and Seoul on joint nuclear planning lead to the duplication of some elements of NATO's "joint nuclear missions" in the region. The US-ROK Nuclear Consultative Group, which Japan is expected to join in the future, is also a destabilizing factor.

Russia urges 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 Race of 3 January 2022, which postulates the priority of preventing war and any military confrontation between nuclear States as well as the need of mutual recognition of interests and concerns of each other in the area of security.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains crucial element of the international security system despite its implementation related issues and discrepancies in the stances of its States Parties.

The increasing development of cooperation between the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom within the AUKUS partnership which envisages significant military, technological and political interaction, entails the risk of emergence of the infrastructure of nuclear States in a formally non-nuclear country bound by the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga). Despite the assurances from AUKUS participants that the implementation of joint projects does not provide grounds for the transfer of nuclear weapon, the actual probability of its deployment in Australia is increasing.

Russia is open to consultations with ASEAN Member States to sign the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty of 1995) as soon as possible with standard reservations and an interpretative statement, 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.

#### **4. Combating International Terrorism and Transnational Crime in the Asia-Pacific**

The crucial area of international cooperation such as counterterrorism turns into arena of acute confrontation under the pressure of destructive Western policy. This leads to

blocking of relevant cooperation mechanisms and negatively impacts the situation in the Asia-Pacific.

In view of the processes of radicalization in Southeast Asia under the influence of terrorist and extremist ideas spread, inter alia, with the use of ICTs, the countering of recruitment and propaganda, which fuel international terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda and ISIS, whose activity in the region is increasing, becomes much more acute.

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 this area by promoting the concept of violent extremism, aimed at substituting the existing international legal regime with some "rule-based order" that allows interference in the internal affairs of states, are unjustified.

The use of terrorist and extremist groups by the collective West and giving support to them, promotion of xenophobic, nationalistic and neo-Nazi ideas in order to destabilize the situation in different regions for the sake of advancing their own geopolitical interests is unacceptable.

The increase of multilateral cooperation to combat the global drug threat in accordance with the three relevant UN conventions meets the common objectives. We welcome the initiative of ASEAN to create a drug-free Southeast Asia. We regularly exchange best practices with regard to countering new drug crimes, including illicit use of ICTs for drug trafficking and money-laundering. We plan to expand anti-drug courses within ASEANAPOL framework on the basis of relevant educational institutions of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, based on the needs of the states of the region.

Russia is interested in developing regional cooperation in the sphere of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, including prevention of the use of ICTs for these purposes.

In this context, 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 Representatives for Security Issues, as well as greater cooperation on common security threats between ASEAN and other regional organizations, in particular the SCO and the CSTO, are of particular relevance.

## **5. International Information Security in the Asia-Pacific**

Taking into account the growing cross-border threats in the digital sphere in the Asia-Pacific, Russia is striving to mutually beneficial multilateral and bilateral cooperation in the field of international information security (IIS).

The basis for it is the establishment of a fair legal regime governing the information space, with the UN coordinating role, constructive cooperation within the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of ICTs 2021-2025, and the UN



Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes.

It is necessary to promote secure and stable operation and development of the Internet on the basis of equal participation of states in its governance, and by joint efforts within the International Telecommunication Union to prevent interference into the internal affairs using low-orbit Internet satellite systems.

We attach particular importance to the development of practical cooperation in the IIS area within the ARF. As co-chair (with Indonesia) in the mechanism 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, and implementing confidence building measures. This is illustrated by the workshops held on ICT terminology, on countering the use of ICTs for criminal purposes, and the capacity-building initiatives in the above-mentioned area.

The impact of ASEAN-Russia Dialogue on ICT Security-Related Issues is increasing. Its third meeting (videoconference, 18 December 2023) confirmed the readiness of the parties to deepen inter-agency cooperation.

Major regional conferences on IIS, in particular the VIII Singapore International Cyber Week (Singapore, 16-18 December 2023), provide a good opportunity for an exchange of views.

Russia, together with China, is the Coordinator of the Security of and in the Use of ICTs thematic area of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). In-depth discussion at the seminar on digital forensics (videoconference, 2-3 October 2023) testified to the interest of the participating countries in the Russian initiatives.

## **6. 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. In this context, the ARF is regarded as one of the key platforms.

Increased attention is being paid to developing practical cooperation and sharing experience in this area with the ASEAN Member States. The Russian EMERCOM delegation took part in the 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Disaster Resilience Forum and ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management (Singapore, August 2023), during which the Russian side highlighted the opportunities for systematic use of ICTs to enhance preparedness for natural disasters caused by global climate change.

Russian EMERCOM experts shared experience with their colleagues during the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Heads of Departments of SCO Member States responsible for prevention and elimination of emergency situations (New Delhi, April 2023); they were also present at the Meeting of International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Team Leaders (Singapore, February-March 2023).

Special emphasis is placed on developing emergency response cooperation with neighboring states at the cross-border level. On the margins of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ministerial meeting of the Joint Russian-Chinese Commission on Cooperation in the Field of Prevention and Elimination of Emergency Situations (Beijing, July 2023) a plan of joint activities for 2023-2025 was signed. Promising areas of cooperation, including the development of interaction between educational institutions, inter alia, in the field of medical support, fire and rescue sports, were discussed.

During the visit of the head of the Russian EMERCOM to Mongolia in September 2023, the two sides expressed their strong commitment to continue working together in training firefighters and rescuers, conducting joint exercises and training.

Active discussions are held with representatives of Myanmar on the establishment of a joint humanitarian response center in the country.

The provision of humanitarian assistance within the framework of the UN World Food Program is continuing. In 2023, Russia made an earmarked contribution of US\$2 million to assist Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh, and supplied 469.2 tons of sunflower oil to Sri Lanka.

## **7. Regional Security Architecture and Trends of Multilateral Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific**

The Western policy of restructuring the existing model of interstate relations in the Asia-Pacific through the fragmentation of ASEAN, which is the basis of the regional security architecture, and removing practical cooperation issues from its agenda poses additional threats to the stability of the ASEAN-led system.

Russia has always stood for strengthening ASEAN based on positive interaction, peaceful settlement of emerging disputes, a culture of compromise, and a freedom of each participant to choose its national development path. An important role in regional crisis response efforts belongs to the East Asia Summit expert consultations on the regional security architecture.

We view the ASEAN Regional Forum as a key regional platform for developing confidence-building measures and introducing preventive diplomacy tools. We call for further consolidation of the Forum 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 maintain ARF's high standards of inclusivity.

The Russian initiative to establish the Greater Eurasian Partnership is aimed at creating a common space for collective efforts to promote broad cooperative agenda in the transcontinental dimension. It may be implemented by combining integration potentials of such leading multilateral formats as ASEAN, the SCO, and Eurasian Economic Union in the interests of consolidating non-politicized practical cooperation 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 brought into focus the importance of the fundamental norms of international law and the UN Charter, which prohibit acts of aggression against sovereign states. Non-traditional security threats such as transnational crime and terrorism remain unabated, and increased reliance on digitalisation has further exacerbated society's vulnerability to cybercrime. It is now all the more important that ASEAN and its partners continue using ASEAN-led mechanisms to strengthen mutual confidence and trust, and enhance practical cooperation to tackle common challenges. These mechanisms include the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM- Plus), East Asia Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). 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 continue to 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. Over the years, Singapore has invested steadily and prudently in defence 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.

### **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. In 2023, Singapore and Indonesia co-sponsored the Guidelines for the Implementation of Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste in ADMM, ADMM- Plus, and its Related Meetings. The Guidelines elaborated on how Timor-Leste's participation in ADMM and ADMM-Plus meetings and capacity building activities could be facilitated, in support of their accession to ASEAN. 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. The Network has recently begun developing a set of CBR sampling guidelines for adoption by all ASEAN Member States (AMS), to ensure that the region is able to effectively respond to CBR incidents. During its fifth Annual Meeting last year, the Network also conducted a CBR disinformation table-top exercise, in conjunction with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the European Union CBRN Centre of Excellence. Another area of contribution is in the cyber and information domains. In July 2023, Singapore officially opened the ADMM Cybersecurity and Information Centre of Excellence (ACICE), in order to enhance information sharing and capacity building among defence establishments against cyber and information threats. The opening was held in conjunction with the inaugural Digital Defence Symposium (DDS) – which brought together senior government officials, renowned academics, and industry experts to discuss the latest developments in the cybersecurity and information landscapes, and the inaugural ASEAN Roundtable – which allowed the AMS to come together to exchange views on the implications of cyber and information challenges, and to explore areas of cooperation within the defence sectoral. The second run of the ASEAN Roundtable is slated for July 2024, together with the 2nd DDS. The ACICE and the ASEAN Cyber Defence Network's (ACDN) work are complementary to each other, 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 actively participating in the fifth EWG cycle from 2024-2027, where we will co-chair the EWG on HADR with New Zealand.

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 Republic of Korea's (ROK) 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 Plus partners.

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. The 20th SLD was held from 2 to 4 June 2023. It was attended by 46 Ministerial-level delegates and more than 30 senior defence officials, including Chief of Defence Forces, and prominent academics from 41 countries. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese delivered the keynote address where he shared about Australia's vision for the Indo-Pacific and called for "guardrails" and dialogue to avert disaster amid intensifying competition between US and China. This year marks the 21st edition of the SLD, which will be held from 31 May to 2 June 2024, with Philippines President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. delivering the keynote address. 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.

### **III. (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, and thus hosted the 8th AOE Working Group meeting in March 2024. The AOE enhances strategic information exchange on counter-terrorism among ASEAN defence establishments. To complement the AOE, we operationalised the Counter Terrorism Information Facility (CTIF) in January 2021 as an operational level CT information-sharing initiative. Singapore’s Network of ASEAN CBR Defence Experts facilitates information exchange and cooperation between CBR experts from all 10 AMS through its secure web portal and workshops, and has been developing a harmonised sampling protocol. This will ensure a baseline standard for CBR Sampling in ASEAN and promote greater regional counter-terrorism preparedness against CBR threats.

### **III. (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, in 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 became a High Contracting Party to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) in March 2024. The

CCW, as a framework convention, has yielded important protocols that have further enhanced international law. Singapore's accession to the CCW underscores our commitment to international humanitarian law.

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. As a member of the PSI Operational Experts' Group (OEG) and the PSI Asia-Pacific Exercise Rotation (APER), 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 High-Level Political Meeting, Exercise Eastern Endeavor, and the OEG meeting hosted by the ROK in May and June 2023.

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 28th Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in November and December 2023. 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 seventh instalment of the course was conducted in May 2023, which benefitted 9 participants from 7 of the OPCW Member States in Asia, and Singapore will continue to conduct the eighth run of the course in 2025. The course has been a platform for the sharing of experiences on the management of hazards. The Network of ASEAN CBR Defence Experts also conducted courses on detection, deterring and responding to biological and radiological threats in conjunction with EU CBRN CoE, UNICRI and IAEA in November 2023, benefiting 40 AMS participants. In addition, Singapore had contributed experts to serve on the Scientific Advisory Board of the OPCW between 2017 and 2019 and the Technical Requirement Team of the OPCW ChemTech centre between 2020 and 2021. In 2024, Singapore contributed a technical expert to serve on the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) Temporary Working Group (TWG) on chemical forensic. Singapore is also committed to the non-proliferation of biological and toxin weapons. We participated in the 9th Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in November 2022 as well as the Meeting of States Parties in December 2023, and have submitted returns on 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 August 2023, the U.S. Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), U.S. Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS), Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and Singapore Customs organised The 11<sup>th</sup> Joint Industry Outreach Seminar on Strategic Trade Management, which

provided invaluable opportunities for the industry to hear from the government regulators and private sector practitioners/experts, and enhance the industry's understanding of recent developments on strategic trade management.

### **III. (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.

Singapore strongly supports regional and global efforts against money laundering (ML) and terrorist financing (TF). We joined the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 1992 and are a founding member of the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), a FATF-Style Regional Body formed in 1993.<sup>1</sup> We have been active contributors to the FATF and APG's work, regularly providing inputs on ML/TF typologies and other policy matters, as well as contributing experts and assessors to support the mutual evaluations of countries.

On 1 July 2022, Singapore assumed the Presidency of the FATF for a term of two years. In this capacity, we have spearheaded initiatives aimed at strengthening global asset recovery efforts. This includes enhancing countries' domestic capabilities and advocating for stronger regional and international cooperation to interdict and recover proceeds linked to criminal activities, including scams. We have:

- a. Pushed for enhancements to the FATF standards on asset recovery, which require countries to strengthen their frameworks to freeze, seize and confiscate criminal proceeds more effectively, both domestically and through international cooperation. The revised standards were adopted in October 2023 and all countries will be assessed against them during the upcoming round of FATF mutual evaluations.
- b. Singapore also worked with INTERPOL and Egmont Group at the FATF to co-lead a project to counter the illicit funding of cyber-enabled fraud. The report was published in November 2023 and included a set of best practices/recommendations to enable countries to effectively recover proceeds of cyber-enabled fraud.

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<sup>1</sup> FATF Style Regional Bodies (FSRB) are autonomous regional bodies which help to implement FATF's policies and Standards across the global network of over 205 jurisdictions (compared to only 40 FATF members) by conducting mutual evaluation of their members.

- c. Seeded the FATF-INTERPOL Roundtable Engagement on Asset Recovery (FIRE), bringing together policy and operational experts from around the world to discuss and find practical solutions to the challenges of asset freezing, seizure and confiscation. The inaugural FIRE took place in Singapore in September 2022, and the second



iteration was held in Lyon in September 2023. More than 200 experts, including those from ASEAN, gathered to exchange views and best practices through sharing of case studies. SPF also participated in the second iteration.

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.

□ The ASCom participated in two such operations in 2023. The first was INTERPOL's Operation First Light, which involved more than 76 countries. During the operation, more than 2,000 persons were investigated and over 5,300 bank accounts were frozen in Singapore, leading to the recovery of more than \$11.5 million. In addition, a total of more than \$30 million worth of virtual assets were seized by the ASCom.

□ The second was INTERPOL's Operation HAECHI, which involved 32 countries. During the operation, the ASCom investigated more than 800 suspects involved in scams and money laundering, blocked more than 4,900 bank accounts and seized over \$16.4 million in Singapore. More than 300 virtual accounts were also blocked, with over \$500,000 in virtual assets seized by the ASCom.

□ 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 USD 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 and 2023, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) organised four training workshops – two virtual and two in-person – for their international partners. The workshops provided a platform for senior officials from various countries to exchange and share experiences and best practices in drug control. In total, 60 officers from 20 countries attended the in-person workshops, of which eight were from AMS. CNB also organised the 19th Integrated Narcotics Enforcement Programme (INEP) for AMS in November 2023. 21 participants across nine AMS and Timor Leste, participated in the programme. Through INEP, participants had the opportunity to learn more about each other's drug enforcement experiences and hear from dialogue partners, such as the Australian Border Force and US Homeland Security Investigation, about their experiences and strategies in dealing with Transnational Serious and Organised Crime, both domestically and internationally. 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. Notably, Singapore has pledged at the 67th CND to sponsor a chapter in the 2025 World Drug Report examining the societal impact of illicit drug use globally. The chapter will enhance our understanding of the world drug problem and aid in our collective efforts in developing strategies to address the harms that drugs bring to our communities.

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.

### **III. (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.

From 2024-2027, Singapore will co-chair the fifth cycle of the ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR with New Zealand. The EWG on HADR will seek to promote both military-military and civil-military HADR cooperation amongst the ADMM-Plus countries, and strengthen regional awareness of the impact of climate change on HADR preparedness and response, to facilitate more effective and resilient HADR responses in the region.

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 USD 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.

In February 2023, Singapore co-organized the Emergency Telecommunication Network Workshop and Training of Trainers on Emergency Telecommunication Systems for Disaster Response with the AHA centre at SCDF premises. The activities contribute towards ASEAN efforts in strengthening capacities of AMS in telecommunication systems and technologies during emergencies.

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. Two officers from Singapore's Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) were facilitators for the AHA Centre's ERAT Course in April 2023.

In May 2023, ASEAN mobilized humanitarian response to support the emergency relief efforts in Myanmar due to the severe impact of Cyclone Mocha. One ASEAN-ERAT officer from Singapore was deployed as a member of the ASEAN-ERAT team to support the rapid needs assessment following Cyclone Mocha.

In August 2023, Singapore also hosted 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 was 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. In May 2023, the RSAF and RHCC transported humanitarian aid in support of the AHA Centre's relief efforts to Myanmar following tropical cyclone MOCHA. In November 2023 and March 2024, the RHCC was involved in the coordination of Singapore's relief efforts to delivery humanitarian aid to affected populations in Gaza, via Egypt and Jordan respectively.

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 most recent iteration of Ex COORES was held in October 2023, and saw international participation from 26 militaries and 25 civilian organisations, including the AHA Centre.

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 August 2024, Singapore would be organising SPDDM 2024 which would see attendance of foreign counterparts and knowledge partners. 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.

In 2008, Singapore was classified as a Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team by the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). Singapore maintains a dedicated 79-member contingent on standby codenamed Operation Lionheart which its core function to provide urban search and rescue and/or humanitarian relief assistance to countries afflicted by major disasters. In February 2023, Singapore deployed its Operational Lionheart contingent to provide assistance for the Türkiye-Syria Earthquake.

### **III. (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 transboundary 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. In January 2024, the RSN also participated in Operation Prosperity Guardian to contribute to the 39-nation Combined Maritime Forces' Combined Task Force 153: Red Sea Maritime Security. The SAF deployed a team of planners and a team from the IFC to work with international partners to ensure the security of key sea lines of communication.

Singapore is one of the founding members 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 shipping industry members alike.

The ReCAAP ISC has collaborated with partner organisations and the shipping industry, maritime training centres and institutes of higher learning to produce and review useful reference materials for the maritime community, such as the Regional Guide 2 to Counter Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia

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<sup>2</sup> The 21 countries are Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Denmark, Germany, India, Japan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, the ROK, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the UK, the US, and Vietnam.

in March 2022 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. In November 2023, the ISC launched the online ReCAAP Data Visualisation Map and Panel (Re-VAMP) tool that enhances the delivery and analysis of key information on piracy and armed robbery incidents in Asia. 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).

### **III. (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 still the only region to do so. At the 8th AMCC, the meeting recognised the heightened level of cyber threats, including the emergence of new threats to critical information infrastructure protection, ransomware, AI-enabled cyber threats and scams.

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 ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting (ADGMIN) in 2019. Its objective is to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination on cybersecurity while preserving the exclusive work domains of the sectoral bodies. The 4th ASEAN Cyber-CC meeting was held in November 2023.

At the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Network Security Action Council (ANSAC) Meeting and 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Regional Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) were noted, and the scope of work for the ASEAN CERT was agreed on.

The objective of the ASEAN Regional CERT is to promote and facilitate information sharing related to cyber incident response to complement the operational mandate exercised by individual national CERTs in each AMS. It would also include capacity building initiatives to better equip AMS' national CERTs with the tools and knowledge to deal with increasingly sophisticated cross-border cyber threats. Following AMS' agreement in 2020 to establish the ASEAN Regional CERT, Singapore, in consultation with AMS, tabled an ASEAN Regional CERT Implementation Paper at the 2nd ADGMIN in January 2022, the Operational Framework (OF) at the 3rd ADGMIN in February 2023, and the Financial Model at the 4th ADGMIN in February 2024, which were all successfully adopted. AMS have agreed for Singapore to host and fund approximately USD10.1 million for 10 years to finance the ASEAN Regional CERT. Once established, the ASEAN Regional CERT will allow AMS to work together even more closely to further strengthen regional cyber resilience, in the face of increasingly sophisticated and transboundary cyber threats facing ASEAN, and the negative impact that such threats and successful attacks can have on the digital economy.

Singapore has also been convening an annual ASEAN CERT Incident Drill (ACID) for the last 18 years to strengthen the cybersecurity preparedness of AMS, reinforce regional coordination drills, and enhance regional cooperation.



Alongside Malaysia and Japan, Singapore co-chaired the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ARF ISM on ICTs Security) from August 2018 to July 2021. The ARF ISM on ICTs Security and its Open-ended Study Group (OESG) focuses on the adoption of CBMs to facilitate communication, information sharing as well as the exchange of know-how and 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 Protection 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 April and August 2024.

In ASEAN, Singapore and Malaysia co-lead the efforts on norms implementation and have worked together with AMS to develop a Regional Action Plan (RAP) Matrix on Norms Implementation which was eventually approved at the 2nd ASEAN Cyber-CC meeting in November 2021. At the 4th ASEAN Cyber-CC meeting in November 2023, AMS agreed to review and update the RAP Matrix with their ongoing and future national and regional initiatives. AMS also have regular discussions on the progress of the RAP at platforms such as the ASEAN Network Security Action Council meetings. The final RAP Matrix will be presented at the 5th ASEAN Cyber-CC Meeting in 2024.

In line with guidance from ASEAN Cybersecurity Ministers and Senior Officials at the ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity in 2018, Singapore is working with AMS to finalise the ASEAN Norms Implementation Checklist to support of the practical implementation of 11 voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible State behaviour. The Checklist will be further developed with AMS through workshops held over the course of 2024. Given the steady progress in ASEAN and ASEAN's commitment to norms implementation, ASEAN is well-positioned to contribute to the norms implementation discussions at the UN.

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) has successfully adopted its Second Annual Progress Report by consensus in 2023. 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 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, to provide easy access to ACICE's products and updates on ACICE's events. ACICE's Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) enables the 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. ACICE conducted the inaugural cybersecurity course in February 2024 which provided an opportunity for ASEAN military cyber practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of cybersecurity and exchange perspectives on cyber challenges and threats across Southeast Asia. ACICE conducted the 2nd Advisory Board meeting in-person on 18 July 2023, 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. The 3rd Advisory Board meeting will be held in-person on 25 July 2024. ACICE Experts Panel was formed in June 2023, and comprises 10 academics and industry professionals from diverse geographical representation. Its aim is to advise ACICE on emerging trends and developments in the cyber and information domains. ACICE Experts Panel had its inaugural meeting in July 2023, and a virtual meeting in January 2024, and provided useful suggestions and feedback for ACICE to enhance its events and product offerings.

Singapore continues to participate actively in discussions that will shape the future cybersecurity mechanism at the UN OEWG. The discussions continue to gather much

interest with many countries expressing support for a single-track outcome-oriented process.

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.

In order to bolster our regional efforts to effectively address the growing cybercrime threat, Singapore worked closely with the INTERPOL ASEAN Cybercrime Operations Desk (ASEAN Desk), to second officers from ASEAN to man the desk. In February 2021, the ASEAN Desk published its 2nd ASEAN Cyber Threat Assessment Report that provided analyses and insights on the latest cyberthreat landscape in ASEAN and highlighted strategies and the way forward for the region. The ASEAN Desk also coordinated 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. The ASEAN Desk has since been renamed to the Asia and South Pacific Desk.

We have also actively contributed to capacity and awareness building efforts. In conjunction with the Singapore International Cyber Week (SICW), the 6th ASEAN Cybercrime Prosecutors' Roundtable Meeting (ACPRM) and the 9th Senior Officials Roundtable on Cybercrime (SORC) were organised in October 2023. 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 AMS and ASEANAPOL, explored the cybercrime fighting efforts of the Italian agencies and discussed strengthening cooperation between Italy and the ASEAN region. In March 2023, Singapore co-organised the ASEAN-Australia Cyber Capacity Building Workshop in Singapore. Themed 'Recognising and Responding to Cybercrime Activity Presented or Exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic', the Workshop provided an overview of cybercrime trends, responses, and challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, along with case studies of operations against cybercrime.

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) CyberCrime Command (CCC) also organised the ASEAN Plus Three Cybercrime Conference (APTCC) in November 2023. 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 and 2022.

The 6th APTCC was held virtually on 8 and 9 November 2023, with the theme “Fighting Cybercrime Together – A Transnational Effort”. The conference saw speakers from cybersecurity companies such as Microsoft and Beosin sharing their role and efforts in combatting cybercrime. Speakers from the INTERPOL Cybercrime Directorate, the US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Homeland Security Investigations and the Australian Federal Police also shared their experiences in combatting cybercrime. A total of 80 participants took part in the conference.

### **1) ASEAN Plus Three Cybercrime Conference (APTCC)**

□ The ASEAN Plus Three Cybercrime Conference (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 conferences in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

### **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.

□ CCC also collaborated with US Homeland Security Investigations to organise the HSI – SPF Regional Cybercrime Symposium from 1 to 3 August 2023.

□ Speakers from HSI, US Inland Revenue Services, Chainalysis, Mastercard, Trend Micro and AnChain presented on topics such as network intrusion, artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency tracing and smart contract investigations to participants from SPF, local external agencies and law enforcement agencies from Malaysia, Indonesia 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**

### **B. Contributions by Member Countries**

#### **1. Overview**

Thailand and Southeast Asia, alongside the global community, have made significant strides in overcoming the prolonged challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and are poised for a steady recovery. Despite this progress, the international landscape remains fraught with geopolitical tensions, presenting ongoing uncertainties and escalating risks. Beneath a relatively calm setting lies a complex web of geopolitical rivalries in the region that stems from competing interests and trust deficit. These could heighten potentials of miscalculations and conflict escalation among major powers.

Nevertheless, ASEAN and its pivotal ASEAN-led mechanisms, particularly the ASEAN Regional Forum, continue to play a crucial role in fostering multilateralism, regional cooperation, and stability across the Asia-Pacific region. Constructive and regular dialogues among nations have proven instrumental in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Thailand remains steadfast in collaborating closely with regional and international partners to bolster confidence-building measures to reduce trust deficit among nations, particularly the major powers. These efforts aim to cultivate an environment conducive to peace, security, and prosperity, underpinned by initiatives such as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), cooperation in related regional frameworks and adherence to shared norms and principles of international law.

Thailand is committed to tackling the emerging non-traditional security challenges, such as transnational crimes, terrorism and violent extremism, as well as cyber and health security, in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. Through our long-standing efforts, Thailand has also strived to build consensus and promote constructive dialogues and solutions to key regional issues of common concerns.

#### **ASEAN Centrality in the Evolving Regional Architecture**

Major power rivalry 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 the increasingly widened 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. As we approach the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the TAC, it is timely to reinforce the TAC and its principles to strengthen regional norms and promote peace and stability.

Our shared long-term goal is to realise a new strategic 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 34<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in June 2019 adopted the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), which is “ASEAN’s Vista” on the evolving regional geo-strategic landscape anchored in existing norms and principles including those enshrined in the TAC, and in engagement with its dialogue partners. It aims to promote win-win cooperation in the areas that are mutually beneficial, based on the principle of inclusiveness and the 3Ms: Mutual Trust, Mutual Respect, and Mutual Benefit.

The ASEAN-centered 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 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 region and beyond.

### **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 attain long-term sustainable growth. Additionally, non-traditional security issues, such as transnational crimes, terrorism and violent extremism, as well as cyber and health security, have also brought new challenges and posed threats to our security landscape.

### **Situations in the Region and Beyond**

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. On 13-15 May 2024, Thailand hosted the 43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of JWG-DOC in Bangkok which discussed the ways to

accelerate the negotiations towards an early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Meanwhile, all parties concerned should create an environment conducive to the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance 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, to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight above the South China Sea.

On Korean Peninsula, the situation remains a pressing security issue in the region. In response to the launch of ballistic missile tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 12 July 2023, ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a statement on 13 July 2023 entitled "The Ballistic Missile Launch on the Korean Peninsula" expressing grave concern over the said launch of the ballistic missile, calling on the DPRK to de-escalate tension and engage in peaceful dialogue with concerned parties while re-emphasising the importance of full compliance with all relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and other relevant international law, and reaffirming ASEAN's readiness to play a constructive role, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms such as the ARF. Thailand is concerned with the continued escalated tension on the Korean Peninsula and its surrounding areas, especially after the suspension of the Inter-Korean Comprehensive Military Agreement, and encourages the use of ASEAN-led consultations and dialogues, such as the ARF, where the DPRK and concerned parties can utilise to further discuss the future of the Korean Peninsula in a constructive manner.

On the situation in Ukraine, the escalation of hostilities and the use of military force have led to the loss of lives and the destruction of property and civilian infrastructure. The adverse ramification of the situation, including food insecurity, energy crisis, and displaced refugees, is severely felt by the Asia-Pacific region. The current humanitarian situation in Ukraine and humanitarian consequences of the crisis are of grave concern. Thailand is deeply concerned with the prolonged war, which will only continue to worsen the global economy and security. All relevant parties must cease all hostilities and violence as well as exercise utmost restraint before the conflict could reach the point of no return. Thailand supports all efforts for peaceful settlement through dialogue and diplomacy, particularly the peaceful dialogue between all parties concerned. 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.

On the situation in the Middle East, Thailand remains gravely concerned about the spiraling situation and calls on all parties to exercise utmost restraint to prevent further deterioration. To date, six Thai nationals are still held captive in Gaza. Thailand therefore welcomes assistance from all parties concerned to secure their safe release.



Recently on 6 June 2024, Thailand joined the United States, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and the United Kingdom in issuing the Leaders' Joint Statement on Gaza, supporting the movement towards a ceasefire and the release of hostages. Ultimately, we support the two-State solution that allows both Israelis and Palestinians to live side-by-side in peace and security, consistent with relevant United Nations resolutions.

On the situation in Myanmar, Thailand shares the vision of a peaceful, stable, and unified Myanmar which is crucial for regional interests. Thailand also joins other ASEAN Member States in calling for immediate cessation of all forms of violence. This is essential in creating an environment conducive to inclusive national dialogues as well as the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to those most in need. As Myanmar's close neighbour, Thailand is also deeply concerned about the escalating transnational crimes stemming from prolonged conflict, such as trafficking in persons, online scams, or drug trafficking. These issues significantly impact regional security and stability. Thailand therefore pledges to work closely with Myanmar, ASEAN Member States, and relevant partners to also effectively tackle these transnational crime issues.

Thailand continues to uphold the ASEAN way of engagement, non-interference, and mutual respect, guided by the principles of Consultation, Cooperation, and Consensus (3Cs). These principles underpin our collective efforts to support Myanmar in finding a peaceful political solution. Aligned with ASEAN's stance, Thailand is fully committed to the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) to assist the people of Myanmar in finding a Myanmar-owned and led solution. Thailand continues to provide unwavering support to the ASEAN Chair as well as to the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar in advancing the implementation of the 5PC.

As part of ASEAN's collective efforts, Thailand's initiative to scale up humanitarian assistance in Myanmar received full support from all ASEAN Member States at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR on 29 January 2024. This initiative was carried out on 25 March 2024 by the Thai Red Cross Society who handed over 4,000 relief bags of essential supplies to the Myanmar Red Cross Society in a ceremony at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge in Tak Province, Thailand. The relief supplies were then transported by convoy to three villages in Kayin State for an estimated 20,000 displaced persons. The distribution was conducted by representatives of Myanmar Red Cross Society together with village leaders and local civil society organisations. The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) provided technical support to monitor the distribution, ensuring effectiveness, credibility, and transparency. Thailand will continue to consult closely with relevant partners on ways to further expand humanitarian assistance to support the affected population in Myanmar, especially those living near the Thai-Myanmar border.

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 which addresses the root causes with the promotion of durable peace, stability, and harmony among local communities. Thailand reaffirms its commitment and support for the implementation of projects identified under the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) in Rakhine State. Thailand 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 the repatriation of displaced persons in Rakhine State in a safe, voluntary, and dignified manner, and encourages continued cooperation between Bangladesh and Myanmar in conducting the pilot project on this critical matter.

## **National Security and Defence Policy**

### **Overview of 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 region. The mission of the Ministry of Defence covers a wide range of issues, including enhancing defence cooperation with neighbouring nations, ASEAN Member States and international organisations, both at bilateral and multilateral levels. It also aims to enhance the integration of strengths and capabilities across every sector, maintain capability of the armed forces and the national defence system, increase the armed forces' capability to counter non-traditional threats, and strengthen defence industry.

The Ministry of Defence also places great importance on efforts to strengthen the ASEAN-led security architecture, promoting mutual interests and enhancing capabilities in response to security challenges, particularly within the frameworks of ADMM and ADMM-Plus. The Ministry of Defence is advancing cooperation through (1) ASEAN Defence Establishments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Cooperation on Non-Traditional Security Issues, (2) the role of ASEAN Defence Establishments in supporting border management, (3) the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM), (4) the co-chairmanship of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security (EWG on MS) 2021-2024, and (5) the harmonisation of ADMM and ADMM-Plus initiatives.

The ACMM continues to play a crucial role in facilitating and coordinating efforts among ASEAN Member States and Plus Countries to enhance military medicine capacities and support collaborative efforts under the ADMM framework. Additionally, the ASEAN Military Emergency Response Team Guideline for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations has been updated. The ACMM Work Plan 2024 focuses on inter-regional cooperation in tropical medicine, which poses a persistent health threat

to military operations in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the three-year work programme (2024-2027) will also be drafted in accordance with the ADMM Work Programme.

## **National Contribution to Regional Security**

### **Joint Exercise**

Joint Exercise Cobra Gold is one of the largest multinational security cooperation exercises in the Asia-Pacific region, which has been held annually in Thailand since 1982. It aims to strengthen military ties and improve capabilities and interoperability of participating countries. The 43<sup>rd</sup> iteration of the Cobra Gold theater exercises took place on 27 February-8 March 2024, providing a training for 9,590 participants from 30 nations. The training course was comprised of training on command, individual's assistance project, namely construction project and table top exercise, and physical training, aiming for a military planning in enforcing peace by using military forces, including the training to support non-traditional security, namely humanitarian assistance, disaster, relief and cyber security.

### **Peacekeeping**

Thailand has been a steadfast troop-contributing country to the UN peacekeeping missions since 1950. Over 27,000 Thai military and police personnel, including men and women, have served in more than 20 UN peacekeeping and related missions. At present, Thailand contributes the Thai Horizontal Military Engineering Company (HMEC) of 273 personnel, including 10 female personnel, to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as military and police officers to three other UN peacekeeping missions, namely UNMISS in South Sudan, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Thailand has consistently deployed female military and police officers to UN peacekeeping missions worldwide. In 2023, 21 female military personnel and 5 female police personnel were deployed in two UN peacekeeping missions, namely UNMOGIP in India and Pakistan and UNMISS in South Sudan. Moreover, one female military personnel and one female police officer have been serving as seconded personnel at the Department of Peace Operations, UN Headquarters in New York.

As part of UNMISS, the HMEC's main responsibilities include road reconstruction and infrastructure building. 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 support sustaining peace, which complements the 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) collaborates with other countries by exchanging trainers and instructors and providing

training courses, such as the UN Staff Officers Course (UNSOC) and Child Protection Course. These aim to increase awareness of child protection in conflict areas and establish a Centre of Excellence on peacekeeping and child protection in ASEAN. In line with the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy (2021-2028), the POC aims to promote the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda by increasing participation of female peacekeepers, implementing the UN Triangular Partnership Project 2022-2023, and enhancing cooperation on capacity building and joint training.

### **Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**

Regarding the WPS agenda, Thailand developed National Measures and Guidelines on WPS 2017-2021, taking action through the establishment of Children and Women Coordinating Center in Southern Thailand. The National Measures and Guidelines has been extended to 2023-2026. In 2023, Thailand, in coordination with UN-Women, drafted a National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) for 2024-2027 to promote women's capacity in resolving conflicts and preventing situations of violence against women in various forms. The NAP is based on 3 principles: (1) gender equality, (2) human rights, and (3) different needs of the target groups, all of which are linked to the main pillars of the WPS agenda. In 2024, the draft NAP will be submitted to the Committee on Policy and Strategy for the Development of Women Status for final approval.

### **Counter-terrorism**

Various conditions such as 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 the 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, values of moderation, and peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies.

Thailand ratified 12 out of 19 existing conventions and protocols related to counter terrorism under the UN frameworks and recently adopted the Counter-Terrorism Action Plan of Thailand (2023-2027), focusing on prevention, response, and rehabilitation. The Action Plan also highlights the importance of inter-agency and multi-stakeholder cooperation 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 aims 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**

Landmines have long posed threats to safety and security of the people and hindered economic development in the region due to past conflicts. As a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and a member of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, Thailand fully supports the universalisation of the APMBC and the fulfilment of mine clearance 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 percent of safe land to its people.

Abandoned mines along the border pose risks to life, health, and cross-border connectivity, hindering regional 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 proposed the drafting of the "Non-Binding Guideline on Cross-Border Humanitarian Demining" within the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) framework. We believe that this would serve as a guideline for ASEAN Member States in their cooperation to clear landmines along the border areas and to strengthen the humanitarian mine action efforts in the region.

As the previous 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 knowledge, 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 for the people, while leaving no one behind, 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 weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery, as well as fully observes commitments and obligations on non-proliferation of WMD.

Thailand reaffirms the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a cornerstone for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. The failure to adopt an outcome at the 10<sup>th</sup> 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. As the upcoming 11<sup>th</sup> Review Conference will play an instrumental role in strengthening the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, it is crucial that States Parties put their collective efforts in strengthening the NPT review process, including by enhancing transparency and accountability to build trust and confidence amongst States.

As one of the first three countries to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), Thailand welcomes the successful conclusion of its First and Second Meetings of States Parties in 2022 and 2023. Given that 93 States have signed the TPNW and 70 States are parties to the Treaty at the time of writing, it is crucial to promote universalisation of the TPNW, in order to ensure that a general and complete disarmament will finally be achieved.

Thailand recognises the complementarity and synergy between various disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and frameworks, including the TPNW, the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. As an informal co-facilitator, together with Ireland, on the “Complementarity” of the TPNW, the NPT, and other instruments, Thailand believes that, through our collective will and efforts under different fora, we can accelerate progress towards our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

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). As our contribution to promote ASEAN’s non-proliferation efforts, 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.

On 29 April-1 May 2024, Thailand co-chaired the 15<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ISM on NPD) with the United States and Sri Lanka in Honolulu, Hawaii, United States. 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. The 3 co-chairs have thus concluded their 2022-2024 term, of which Thailand hosted the 13<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on NPD in Bangkok in 2022.

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 remains 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 the 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 to Thailand and countries in the region.

The National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Transnational Organised Crimes still plays a central role in Thailand's 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 "Concept Paper: ASEAN Border Management Cooperation Roadmap", adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> AMMTC on 29<sup>th</sup> 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. Last 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. The Action Plan draws elements from and aligns itself to the Concept Paper'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 Concept Paper 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 Concept Paper.

In August 2023, the 26<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Division of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs Meeting (DGICM) endorsed Thailand’s proposal to further develop the Concept Paper into a comprehensive Roadmap that will serve as a non-binding comprehensive framework for regional collaboration to enhance ASEAN’s efforts in combatting against transnational crime and cross-border challenges.

Illicit drug trafficking remains a grave challenge for ASEAN due to an increase in opium cultivation, heroin production, and methamphetamine tablets and crystal methamphetamine manufactured in the Golden Triangle. Thailand is currently the host country of the ASEAN Narcotics Cooperation Center (ASEAN-NARCO), and is fully committed to enhancing regional cooperation in combatting drug crimes through close collaboration with ASEAN Member States, Interpol, and other relevant stakeholders in sharing expertise, intelligence, and best practices.

Under the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), Thailand, as lead shepherd for illicit drug trafficking, will continue to promote cooperation and activities in a concerted manner according to the ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025.

Thailand has also joined the US-led Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats in March 2024 that would strengthen Thailand’s cooperation with other participating countries in tackling threats from synthetic drugs, including Fentanyl.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand continues 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 percent from 2020. Thailand also attaches great importance to ensure the safety and protection of victims and implements 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 inside 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).

### **Cybersecurity and Cybercrime**

Thailand firmly adheres to international law applicable in cyberspace and the norms of responsible State behaviour. We fully support global and regional efforts to promote an open, secure, stable, accessible, interoperable, and peaceful ICT environment. Thailand has actively engaged in the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025. We welcome the establishment of the Global Point of Contact (POC) Directory as a tool for building confidence amongst States and mitigating the risk of cyber incidents. On the domestic front, Thailand continues to strengthen its cybersecurity efforts under the 2022-2027 National Policy and Plan on Cybersecurity, with the primary aim to enhance Critical Information Infrastructures (CIIs) protection and resilience against cyber threats.

Recognising that cybercrime has increasingly become a major threat to the development of the global digital economy and to the well-being of societies, Thailand actively participates in the negotiation on a cybercrime convention under the Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) to Elaborate on a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. Thailand views the conclusion of such instrument as crucial to the international efforts to address this pressing transboundary issue.

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 Thailand and ASEAN to enhance cyber capabilities and strengthen common understanding to reduce cyber risks.

The recent 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting (ADGMIN), held in Singapore on 1-2 February 2024, recognised the good progress of implementing the ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025 (ADM 2025) amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting welcomed the ADM 2025 Mid-Term Review (MTR), which took stock of the ADM 2025’s progress in building trusted digital services, preventing consumer harm, and increasing the quality and coverage of fixed and mobile broadband infrastructure.

Key outcome of the meeting included the establishment of ASEAN Working Group on Anti-Online Scam (WG-AS), an initiative proposed by Thailand, as a platform for ASEAN Member States to cooperate and collaborate on capacity building, training, and sharing of information related to combating online scams, and scams across digital and telecommunication channels, with its first meeting held on 19 March 2024 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Professor Wisit Wisitsora-at, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES) of Thailand, was nominated as the WG-AS Chair.

As Online Scam is a major societal issue, the MDES has prioritised the resolution of online scam problems through close collaboration with related parties, including law enforcement authorities, banks, and telecommunication providers, and established an Anti-Online Scam Operation Center (AOC) as a One-Stop Service Center, commencing its operations on 1 November 2023. The AOC, accessible via the 24-hour hotline number 1441, plays a critical role in assisting victims by promptly suspending affected bank accounts upon request, facilitating issue resolution, expediting the return of stolen funds, and leveraging technology to combat scams.

Thailand Computer Emergency Response Team (ThaiCERT) has been actively monitoring and assessing risks, and providing support and guidance to address cyber threats for agencies. During October 2022 to September 2023, a total of 1,808 incidents were reported including hacked websites, fake websites, financial scams, data leaks, vulnerability, data breaches, DDoS, and ransomware.

The ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC), based in Bangkok, 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. Between March-December 2023, the AJCCBC conducted 7 training activities with 158 trainees in total, namely (1) CYDER & Network Forensics, (2) CSET Tool Introduction, (3) Cybersecurity Trend Update, (4) CYDER & Malware Analysis, (5) CYDER & Network Forensics, (6) CTF competition, and (7) Trainer training of Network Forensics. AJCCBC will conduct 11 training activities from April-November 2024 both online and in-person, including Cloud Security Training, CYDER and Malware Analysis, Security Incident Management Maturity Model (SIM3), Cyber SEA Game 2024, CYDER and Network Forensics, and Operational Technology (OT).

Since March 2023, Thailand's implementing agency of the AJCCBC was changed from Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA) to National Cyber Security Agency (NSCA). The financial supporter was also changed from Japan ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) to Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for operations in the period of March 2023-February 2027. Currently, the Centre is implementing the second phase of the Capacity Building Programme for Cybersecurity and Trusted Digital Services (2023-2026) and is also exploring the possibility of expanding the cooperation network to include interested third parties.

## **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 among 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 AHA Centre, will continue to strengthen ASEAN’s efforts in the area of disaster management and reaffirm its support for the active role of the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) and other ASEAN tools to address Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) challenges.

Thailand supports regional efforts to enhance capacity in disaster response and management in line with the ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on Disaster Health Management, adopted at the 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summit in Manila. The Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA), launched on 7 December 2012, is a key mechanism enabling the 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 World Food Programme’s United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) on logistics and technical aspects.

During the 34<sup>th</sup> 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 for emergencies in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Thailand. Recently, the Warehouse delivered 2,900 personal hygiene kits to support Cambodia’s COVID-19 response in 2020, along with 500 family tents, 2,000 mosquito nets, and 1,500 personal hygiene kits to Thailand in 2021. Furthermore, relief materials from the Warehouse have also 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, various forms of transnational crime, and issues related to marine environment and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

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 emerging threats. Under the Act, Thai Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center has been upgraded to the Thai Maritime Enforcement Command Center (THAI-MECC), with an augmented role and greater authority in managing maritime security affairs. The Center participated in the National Crisis Management Exercise 2020 (C-MEX 20) to articulate understanding amongst relevant agencies in preparation for interception of WMD, address water pollution, and

tackle 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 also participated in regional efforts such as the Malacca Straits Patrol Joint Coordinating Committee (MSP JCC) 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).

Under the ADMM-Plus, the Ministry of Defence of Thailand and the Department of Defense of the United States, as co-chairs of the ADMM-Plus Experts’ Working Group on Maritime Security (ADMM-Plus EWG on MS) from 2021-2023 under the theme “Strengthening Maritime Security Cooperation for Sustainable Development of ASEAN Member States,” hosted the 20<sup>th</sup> ADMM-Plus EWG on MS and the Handover of the Co-Chairmanship on 19-22 March 2024 in Bangkok. The meeting noted the significant progress that the EWG had accomplished over the past three years, including the adoption of Maritime Security Roadmap 2024, which focuses on climate change and marine environmental protection.

Thailand continues to uphold the ASEAN Regional Action Plan (RAP) in support of marine environment protection at both national and regional levels. To address the leakage of debris into the sea through riverine systems, Thailand is implementing innovative methodologies and conducting comprehensive monitoring of both macrodebris and microplastics within marine ecosystems. Furthermore, Thailand actively shares best practices for addressing marine debris issues, including initiatives to foster community engagement in marine environment preservation efforts, and establishes a structured approach for managing marine and coastal debris. Through collaboration with private enterprises and non-profit entities, Thailand has launched initiatives aimed at mitigating riverine debris, thereby demonstrating a holistic commitment to marine debris prevention. The other marine environmental issues are spilled oil and tar ball. The impact of oil spills is a matter of serious concern. Thailand has organised workshops on Capacity Development for ASEAN Member States, focusing on the Identification and Differentiation of Spilled Oil and Tar balls, with support from the Government of Japan. Through these workshops, ASEAN Member States can strengthen their capabilities in oil fingerprinting and identifying the sources of oil spills, as well as developing national oil fingerprint libraries. Thailand will also 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 or 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 the private sector aiming to end distribution of single-use plastic bags by department and convenience stores.

## **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 (2020-2025) (HPoA II) at the 27<sup>th</sup> 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 53<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, in conducting ARF initiatives and activities.

As for the Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024, Thailand co-chaired the 15<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on NPD and ARF Workshop on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes. In 2024-2025, Thailand will co-chair the following activities in accordance with ARF’s purposes and principles: (1) 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, Singapore, and Malaysia, (2) 2<sup>nd</sup> ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building, with China, (3) ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions, with the United States and China, (4) ARF Workshop on Risk Reduction, Preparedness, and Response, Preceding the Renewal of AADMER, with the EU, and (5) ARF Seminar on Combating Online Scam, with China and Singapore.

## **Future of the ARF**

With diverse expertise of ARF Participants, the ARF can serve as an inclusive platform for concrete and practical cooperation on issues affecting regional security, ranging from security flashpoints, major power rivalries, public health emergencies, cybersecurity, maritime security, transnational crime, terrorism, and disaster relief. While Participants may have divergent views on regional and international issues, the Forum is still a prime venue that allows all parties to discuss and seek practical way

forward by consensus-making progress towards Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and Preventive Diplomacy (PD) at a pace comfortable to all.

As the HPoA II approaches its expiration in 2025, with current implementation progress standing at only 47.6 percent, the ARF must intensify efforts to complete outstanding action lines and prepare for the drafting of the next Plan of Action (PoA). The upcoming PoA should build upon the comprehensive and inclusive framework of the HPoA II, addressing existing concerns and technical challenges while considering ongoing discussion on revitalising the ARF. It is crucial that the new PoA enhances the ARF's effectiveness and relevance amidst an evolving geopolitical landscape.

After 30 years at work, the ARF also needs to actively work towards identifying gaps and challenges in moving the ARF process forward from Stage I - CBMs to Stage II - PD, as well as enabling 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 in the region. PD measures/mechanisms must be subjected to a step-by-step, non-coercive, voluntary approach 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. Novel ideas 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's 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 frameworks. In doing so, the ARF will remain relevant and credible in bringing regional players and stakeholders together for constructive dialogues and security cooperation in the region.

## **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

### **Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

For over 30 years, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has worked to advance stability and cooperation within the Indo-Pacific region, by using open dialogue, tangible cooperation, civil society, inclusivity, and results-driven initiatives to find common understandings and solutions to emerging challenges. Through our engagement in the ARF, the United States affirms its commitment to finding inclusive and consensus-based solutions that reflect a shared respect for international law and mutual 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, practical and transparent approaches in the ARF will yield the largest benefits to long-term regional stability. We support the ARF in its goal of advancing from Confidence Building to Preventive Diplomacy to Conflict Resolution. Furthering coordination between the various ASEAN-centered multilateral fora and supporting 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 collective 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 U.S. 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. The coming years hold both considerable promise and historic obstacles for the Indo-Pacific. Working with our ARF 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 positive opportunities of the 21st century.

### **U.S.-ASEAN Relations**

Elevation of the U.S.-ASEAN relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in November 2022 has already yielded concrete results across all eight dialogue processes of foreign affairs, defense, economics, transportation, energy, environment and climate, health, and women's empowerment. At the 2023 U.S.-ASEAN Leaders Summit in Jakarta, the Vice President announced our intent to establish a U.S.-ASEAN Center in Washington, D.C., to facilitate official ASEAN engagements and support further exchange between our people, businesses, and academic institutions. The

Department of State selected Arizona State University as its partner and officially opened the center on December 14, 2023. U.S.-ASEAN people-to-people ties are further strengthened by the Young Southeast Asia Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), a youth exchange program celebrating its 10-year anniversary with over 6,000 alumni.

### **Mekong-U.S. Partnership**

The United States is working to strengthen our engagement with Mekong countries through the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP). 2024 marks 15 years of Mekong partnership – from the establishment of the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) in 2009 and its expansion to the MUSP in 2020. Since launching the MUSP in 2020, the United States broadened our engagement across a range of strategic areas, to focus U.S.-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 sustainable development and prosperity. Through close collaboration and discussion at our Senior Officials’ Meetings and our annual Policy Dialogues, the Mekong country partners and the United States have agreed in principle to the 2024-2026 Mekong-U.S. Partnership Plan of Action, which lays out our priorities and engagements over the next three years. Four areas of engagement guide the MUSP’s work: economic connectivity; human resource development; transboundary 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, countering human trafficking, and countering trafficking in drugs and wildlife. The United States leads the Friends of the Mekong (FOM) mechanism, which aims to improve donor coordination in programming development assistance in the Mekong sub-region. 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. India, the United Kingdom, and the ASEAN Secretariat participate in FOM meetings as observers.

### **U.S.-Brunei Security Relations**

United States defense engagement with Brunei remains robust. In addition to continuing our annual bilateral Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise and our annual multilateral naval exercise Southeast Cooperation and Training (SEACAT), Brunei organized the Exercise Planning Conference for Pahlawan Warrior, the largest bilateral event between the U.S. Army and the Royal Brunei Land Force. The latest iteration of Pahlawan Warrior took place in 2024. Additional defense highlights include Prince Mateen’s trip to the United States in 2023 to train with U.S. Army Green Berets, Navy SEALs, and Top Gun, and the signing of a Section 505 Agreement related to the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act that makes Brunei eligible to compete for U.S. military grants.



### **U.S.-Cambodia Security Relations**

The United States and Cambodia are exploring increased mil-mil cooperation on the heels of a historic Secretary of Defense visit. The United States previously cooperated with Cambodia in areas of mutual concern ranging from international peacekeeping, defense reform, and professionalization, but in recent years had limited mil-mil cooperation. On June 4, 2024, Lloyd Austin visited Cambodia for the first-ever bilateral visit by a U.S. Secretary of Defense. Secretary Austin met PM Hun Manet, Defense Minister Tea Seiha and Senate President Hun Sen. During the visit, Secretary Austin discussed possible opportunities to strengthen the U.S.-Cambodia bilateral defense relationship – including through the resumption of military training exchanges and exploring defense-related dialogues – while seeking opportunities to increase bilateral cooperation in humanitarian mine action, medical research, and accounting for U.S. POW/MIA personnel.

### **U.S.-Indonesia Security Relations**

The United States and Indonesia address strategic challenges as comprehensive strategic partners. The U.S. military values its close partnership with Indonesia in areas such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and HA/DR. To build capacity and readiness, the U.S. 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, the United States and Indonesia expanded Garuda Shield, previously an annual Army-to-Army exercise, into Super Garuda Shield – a joint, multi-national event with all Indonesian National Armed Forces components and more than 14 participating countries. The United States Coast Guard and Indonesian Maritime Security Agency have been working together closely on maritime security, and the United States funded construction of a maritime training center which opened in 2024.

### **U.S.-Laos Security Relations**

Laos's chairmanship of ASEAN and the signing in 2016 of a Comprehensive Partnership between the United States and the Lao PDR provided new opportunities for bilateral engagement. While we continue to address the legacy issues of unexploded ordnance and accounting for U.S. Prisoners of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) personnel, we continue to build stronger military-to-military ties between our two countries as we look for opportunities to expand the U.S.-Laos bilateral relationship. The many facets of our cooperation include development assistance, law enforcement cooperation, food nutrition and agricultural support, educational support and language training, cultural preservation, disaster preparedness, energy, and rule of law programs, as well as working through multilateral platforms such as the Mekong U.S. Partnership (MUSP) and the Sister River Partnership between the Mississippi and Mekong River Commissions.

**U.S.-Malaysia Security Relations**

The relationship between the United States and Malaysia has reached new heights in recent years as we continue working with our Malaysian partners to increase regional and global security. We are working closely on maritime security, counterterrorism, counterproliferation, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and military medical cooperation. The U.S. Coast Guard and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency work closely to address maritime security issues in Malaysia's EEZ. This year, the United States also hosted Malaysia for the Malaysia-U.S. Strategic Talks. 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.

**U.S.-Philippines Security Relations**

The United States-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty continues to promote stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Our bilateral cooperation focuses on upholding international law in the South China Sea, as well as cooperation in the areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, counterterrorism, countering violent extremism, and nonproliferation. The United States-Philippines Enhanced Defense 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' defense 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 defense and security cooperation through the ASEAN Defense 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 neighboring countries in bilateral military exercises, such as Exercise BALIKATAN.

**U.S.-Singapore Security Relations**

Singapore and the United States partner regionally and globally to ensure peace and stability. Our two countries have close defense ties with several bilateral and multilateral exercises each year. Singapore hosts the rotational deployment of U.S. 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. Progress in recent years has included the renewal of the 1990 MOU governing our presence in Singapore; the signing of an MOU to establish an enduring Singapore fighter training presence in Guam by 2029; and the signing of a Foreign Military Sales case for the F-35B. We work closely together on trade security and counterproliferation efforts.

### **U.S.-Thailand Security Relations**

The United States and Thailand have been treaty allies for nearly 70 years, and we continue to collaborate to address humanitarian and security issues such as counterterrorism, counternarcotics, disaster relief, health and infectious diseases, nonproliferation, and maritime security. Our security partnership with Thailand is bilateral and regional in scope. The U.S.-Thailand Joint Vision Statement 2020, signed by the U.S. Secretary of Defense and Thailand's Minister of Defence in November 2019, 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 have co-hosted Cobra Gold since 1982 and it has expanded to become the Indo-Pacific region's largest annual multilateral military exercise. Since 1950, Thailand has received U.S. military equipment, essential supplies, training, and assistance in the construction and improvement of facilities. As part of our mutual defense 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.

### **U.S.-Vietnam Security Relations**

United States-Vietnam relations have transformed since we normalized ties in 1995. In 2023, we elevated our ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), which continues to broaden our political, security, economic, and people-to-people ties through a set of annual dialogues. The United States and Vietnam are cooperating in areas such as peacekeeping operations, trade, nonproliferation, health, the environment, science and technology, education, WPS, and human rights. Defense ties have grown rapidly, including through 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. The United States has transferred three high endurance cutters to the Vietnamese Coast Guard. 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 to combat transnational crime, effectively and fairly prosecute crimes, and enhance maritime security in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

### **U.S.- Myanmar Relations**

The United States has suspended defense engagement with Myanmar since the February 1, 2021, coup. Since the coup, the United States has also reprogrammed aid that had been previously intended to assist Myanmar's government to humanitarian, pro-democracy, and other efforts that show our continued support for the people of Myanmar. 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 Myanmar's path to inclusive, multiparty democracy.

## **Quad Cooperation**

The Quad partnership continues to actively address some of the region's most important challenges, such as health security, economic recovery from the pandemic, the impact of climate change, humanitarian assistance, securing critical and emerging technologies, counterterrorism, and cooperation on infrastructure building, among others. By responding to regional priorities and harnessing the considerable resources of the four Quad ASEAN dialogue partners – the United States, Australia, India, and Japan – the Quad is advancing an ambitious agenda of practical cooperation for the benefit of the region.

## **U.S.-Australia Security Relations**

The United States has no closer or more reliable ally than Australia. Defense and security cooperation between the United States and Australia is founded in the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) security treaty, an anchor for security and stability across the Indo-Pacific. The United States and Australia continue to deepen longstanding bilateral security and defense cooperation with other Allies and partners in the region and around the world. The Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) is an annual “2+2” dialogue between the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense and their Australian counterparts. Marine Rotational Force – Darwin (MRF-D) has evolved from a bilateral training activity designed to improve interoperability into a platform for multilateral engagement with countries such as Tonga, Fiji, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Sri Lanka. The United States and Australia have expanded cooperation to enhance regional stability and security through additional multilateral groupings, such as the-Australia-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) and AUKUS. 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 is intended to span decades and culminate in the design and delivery of a new class of nuclear-powered submarine, the SSN-AUKUS. AUKUS partners are committed to ensuring cooperation on naval nuclear propulsion that sets the highest nonproliferation standard and strengthens the global nuclear nonproliferation regime.

## **U.S.-India Security Relations**

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 holds regular consultations with India on a range of political, economic, and security issues in both bilateral and multi-country formats. Cabinet-level engagements and leader-level meetings and teleconferences are underpinned by numerous high-level dialogues and working groups, including climate, defense, regional security, counternarcotics, counterterrorism, peacekeeping, trade, energy,

oceans, health, cybersecurity, and education. Since India's designation as a Major Defense Partner in 2016, we finalized major defense 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 U.S.-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.

### **U.S.-Japan Security Relations**

The United States-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security is the cornerstone of our strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific and our alliance advances a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. We are committed to peacefully resolving disputes and to opposing coercion, as well as cooperating on a wide range of regional and global security issues. Our cooperation 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 U.S. 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 defense capabilities to counter threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). From strengthening the trilateral partnership with Japan and the ROK, to delivering through the Quad and bringing together the first U.S.-Japan-Philippines Leaders' Summit, we are working in innovative ways to deliver results for the region.

### **U.S.-South Korea Security Relations**

The Mutual Defense 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 defense of the ROK. We will continue to enhance ongoing work within the U.S.-ROK 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. The United States and ROK have taken prudent steps to strengthen our extended deterrence in response to the DPRK's efforts to advance its unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and its destabilizing and dangerous rhetoric.

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, the Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG). The U.S. 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 U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation, including resumption of the Defense Trilateral Talks and trilateral military exercises, and are working to build on established cooperation in missile defense. We continue to support information sharing on DPRK missile and nuclear capabilities. The United States has also prioritized efforts to implement the multiple UN Security Council resolutions concerning the DPRK, while leading a multinational effort to counter illicit DPRK sanctions-evasion activity in the maritime space. U.S.-ROK collaboration also includes global health security, peacekeeping activities, stabilization and reconstruction activities, WPS, and HA/DR efforts.

### **U.S.-Timor-Leste Security Relations**

The United States values defense cooperation with Timor-Leste in areas of mutual concern including maritime security, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, border security, and defense reform and professionalization. Since June 2021, the United States has supported the multi-million-dollar rehabilitation of the Baucau Airfield and completed the first phase of rehabilitation in 2022. Timor-Leste demonstrated commitment to regional security by participating in several multinational exercises, including the 2023 Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training/Marine Exercise (CARAT/MAREX), which enhanced 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. 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 exchange agreement in February 2023 to enhance professional development and training.

### **U.S.-New Zealand Security Relations**

The United States-New Zealand bilateral relationship continues to strengthen and mature. Our two nations conduct joint military exercises more frequently and continue to seek 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. The two sides began holding formal defense policy dialogues in 2013, most recently meeting in December 2023. 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.

### **U.S.-European Union Relations**

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 was seen in the first-ever U.S.-EU joint naval exercise March 23-24, 2023. We regularly collaborate with the EU through numerous senior-level forums.

### **U.S.-People's Republic of China Relations**

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 compete to support American interests and values like transparency, the rule of law, market-based economic competition, freedom of navigation and overflight, human rights, and religious freedom. 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, and engaging in distortionary trade practices.

### **U.S.-PNG Security Relations**

Papua New Guinea (PNG)'s strategic location makes it a critical partner for the United States and allies in preserving freedom of navigation in the South Pacific. U.S. and PNG military forces participate in regional exercises, work to locate missing U.S. World War II personnel, and remove unexploded ordnance. United States military personnel continue planning and coordination with the PNG Defense Force to build and develop a variety of facilities at the naval base in Lombrum, Manus. Exchange opportunities range from conferences and workshops on common priorities like fisheries enforcement and port security to exploratory talks between national law enforcement agencies in each country to develop capacity building training programs. PNG co-hosted the ARF port security training with the United States, India and the Philippines, on April 25, 2024 that included over 90 participants from 17 countries.

### **U.S.- Bangladesh Security Relations**

U.S.-Bangladesh security coordination has strengthened under the Indo-Pacific Strategy. We welcomed the 2023 release of Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook and look forward to continued cooperation in areas where our interests overlap. U.S.-Bangladesh counterterrorism cooperation has improved security within Bangladesh,

which is the second largest Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund partner in South Asia. The United States provides counterterrorism related assistance focusing on crisis response, bomb disposal, training for prosecutors and judges, and prevention of violent extremism. The United States also continues to support Bangladesh's considerable contributions to international peacekeeping. The United States joined Bangladesh and the Philippines to co-chair the ARF Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime Intersessional Meeting for 2024-2026 and supported the in-person meeting of the group in May 2024. Bangladeshi military students continue to enroll in premier U.S. military courses of instruction, with 12 students completing courses at various military colleges since 2022 and four Cadets currently enrolled at the U.S. Military Academy and U.S. Naval Academy. The United States continues to conduct annual bilateral exercises with each branch of the Bangladesh Armed Forces. Amidst growing security cooperation, we continue to push for sustained accountability for serious human rights abuses committed by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and its members. The United States is the largest single donor to the regional Rohingya humanitarian response, providing nearly \$2.4 billion since 2017, including nearly \$2 billion for the refugee response in Bangladesh.

### **U.S.-Sri Lanka Security Relationship**

The U.S.-Sri Lanka security relationship continues to grow amid tenuous economic recovery and ongoing human rights concerns. The USG supports Maritime Security and interoperability with multilateral partners, Maritime Domain Awareness, Counterterrorism, support for United Nations Peacekeeping missions, and HA/DR. In 2024, the United States approved the transfer of an ex-U.S. Coast Guard 210-foot Medium Endurance Cutter to the Sri Lanka Navy, which will supplement the three previous U.S. Coast Guard vessel transfers from 2004, 2019, and 2021. The Montana National Guard and Sri Lanka began a State Partnership Program in 2020. Other key security activities include exercises with the Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force to enhance cooperation on HA/DR and maritime security. U.S. advisors and assistance continue to help Sri Lanka in promoting transparent procurement processes, enhancing the rule of law, and supporting government and civil society efforts to promote good governance, accountability, justice, reconciliation, and human rights.

### **National Security and Defense Policy**

The Biden-Harris administration released the U.S. National Security Strategy in October 2022. 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 assistance, economic measures, 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 Defense transmitted to Congress the classified 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), setting out how the Department of Defense will contribute to advance



and safeguard vital U.S. national interests – protecting the American people, expanding America’s prosperity, and realizing and defending our democratic values.

The Defense 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 the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific, then the Russia challenge in Europe.
4. Building a resilient joint force and defense 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 full-scale invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated. Answering this “call to action,” the Department will incorporate the perspectives, competencies, and advantages of our allies and partners at every stage of defense planning.

*Resources:*

- a) United States National Security Strategy: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>
- b) 2022 National Defense Strategy Fact Sheet: <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/NDS-FACT-SHEET.PDF>
- c) A broad range of data is publicly available from the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) at <https://comptroller.defense.gov/Budget-Materials/>

**Annual defense expenditures**

**Figure 1.1 DoD Budget**

<i>\$ in billions</i>	<b>FY 2023 Actuals</b>	<b>FY 2024 Request</b>	<b>FY 2024 CR<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>FY 2025 Request</b>
Base	815.9	842.0	817.3	849.8
Supplementals <sup>1</sup>	35.8	58.3	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>851.7</b>	<b>900.3</b>	<b>817.3</b>	<b>849.8</b>

*Discretionary Budget Authority*

*Numbers may not add due to rounding*

<sup>1</sup> FY 2023 includes supplemental funding for Ukraine (\$35.7 billion) and Disaster Relief (\$147 million). FY 2024 includes supplemental funding request for Ukraine (\$44.4 billion), Israel (\$10.6 billion), and Submarine Industrial Base (\$3.3 billion).

<sup>2</sup> Reflects Continuing Resolution (CR) (P.L. 118-15), as amended

The President’s FY 2025 Budget Request includes \$849.8billion for the Department of Defense. The Budget Request reinforces the Department of Defense’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 entire U.S. National Defense Budget proposal for 2025 and additional materials are available at:

<https://comptroller.defense.gov/Budget-Materials/Budget2025/>

**Total number of personnel in national armed forces**

**Table A-5. Active Component End Strength**

Service	FY 2023 <sup>1</sup>	FY 2024 Request	FY 2024 Authorized	FY 2025
Army	453,551	452,000	445,000	442,300
Navy	332,322	347,000	337,800	332,300
Marine Corps	172,577	172,300	172,300	172,300
Air Force	318,698	324,700	320,000	320,000
Space Force	8,879	9,400	9,400	9,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,286,027</b>	<b>1,305,400</b>	<b>1,284,500</b>	<b>1,276,700</b>

<sup>1</sup> FY 2023 actuals

**Table A-6. Reserve Component End Strength**

Service	FY 2023 <sup>1</sup>	FY 2024 Request	FY 2024 Authorized	FY 2025
Army Reserve	176,680	174,800	174,800	175,800
Navy Reserve	55,072	57,200	57,200	57,700
Marine Corps Reserve	33,036	33,600	32,000	32,500
Air Force Reserve	66,216	69,600	69,600	67,000
Army National Guard	325,066	325,000	325,000	325,000
Air National Guard	104,974	108,400	105,000	107,700
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>761,044</b>	<b>768,600</b>	<b>763,600</b>	<b>765,700</b>

<sup>1</sup> FY 2023 actuals

**National Contributions to Regional Security**

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

The United States continues to implement its nonproliferation and disarmament commitments and is looking ahead to address potential challenges related to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and advanced computing, among others. We look forward to continuing to work with all ARF members to advance shared nonproliferation and disarmament goals that make our world a safer place.

The United States appreciated its close cooperation with Sri Lanka and Thailand in co-chairing the ARF's NPD ISM. We welcomed over 60 representatives from 23 ARF countries and the ASEAN Secretariat to Honolulu, Hawaii on April 30-May 1, 2024, where we engaged constructively through interactive sessions on nuclear risk reduction, clean energy civil nuclear technology, counterproliferation, youth empowerment, and emerging technology, among many other topics.

Russia's threatening nuclear rhetoric in the context of its further invasion of Ukraine is of serious concern to all countries. Russia has violated several of its obligations under the New START Treaty, endangering both this last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and Russia and the future of arms control. The United States calls for Russia to return to the Treaty's full and mutual implementation. Washington has offered to engage with Russia on nuclear risk reduction and arms control, given the importance of doing so even and especially during times of tension, and Russia must take its responsibility as a nuclear-armed country seriously.

The United States supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and is committed to work to achieve its entry into force. In line with 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. We also continue to support efforts to begin negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and we have maintained our unilateral moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. We urge the PRC – the only NPT Nuclear Weapon State that has not done the same – to join us.

The United States also supports practical efforts to advance the global capacity for nuclear disarmament verification like the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV). We are grateful for the continuing engagement of our Indo-Pacific partners Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and the ROK, especially during the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Partnership, and we hope that all our partners will help to spread the word about the vital work being done by the Partnership. We, along with several partners in the region, also continue to support the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) initiative, which convened plenary meetings in September 2023 and May 2024 to further advance dialogue on the underlying security concerns that cause countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their security and to pursue effective measures that will help create an environment conducive to disarmament.

In the Indo-Pacific region, the PRC's rapid and opaque expansion of its nuclear arsenal is a key concern for the United States and its allies and partners. As the PRC continues its nuclear weapons buildup, the United States will continue to ensure our strategic deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective and that our extended deterrence commitments to our allies and partners remain strong and credible. These extended deterrence commitments also contribute to nonproliferation by giving allies and partners confidence that they can resist strategic threats and remain secure without acquiring nuclear weapons of their own. Following bilateral U.S.-PRC consultations in November 2023, the United States has pressed for a substantive response to risk reduction proposals and to continue discussions on arms control and nonproliferation. However, the PRC has unfortunately suspended this important channel and has chosen not to engage on nuclear risk reduction. The PRC's unwillingness to engage undermines global stability and should be a subject of concern.

The United States will continue to fulfill its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to pursue the objectives of the NPT across its three pillars of nonproliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, science and technologies, and to strengthen the global nuclear nonproliferation regime. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and critical to our common security. 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 nonproliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The United States supports the International Atomic Energy Agency's work assisting countries achieve national development priorities through the non-power application of nuclear science and technologies in areas such as human and animal health, food security, water resource management, and climate change. 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. U.S. extra-budgetary contributions to the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Program and Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI) support IAEA activities that build 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.

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 nonproliferation 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 welcome the commitment to universalization of the IAEA Additional Protocol made at the 2012 ASEAN-U.S. Leaders' Meeting and renewed in the Joint Vision Statement of the

ASEAN-U.S. Special Summit in 2022. 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 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 nonproliferation, 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 clean energy nuclear reactors, including small modular reactors (SMRs), offers a new civil nuclear power pathway for countries. These technologies have economic and safety advantages, can be right-sized for 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 nonproliferation 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 exploring potential SMR deployments that prioritize the highest nuclear security, safety, and nonproliferation standards under the Foundational Infrastructure for Responsible Use of SMR Technology (FIRST) program. The United States co-hosted with Vietnam an ARF-approved workshop on *Nuclear Nonproliferation Safety and Security Standards and the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology* under the FIRST program and is providing FIRST capacity-building support to select ASEAN Member States considering including secure and safe SMRs in their nuclear power programs.

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 will continue to partner to build capacity in countries that request cooperation to implement UNSCR 1540, which aims to prevent WMD, delivery systems and related materials from unregulated acquisition by non-state actors and detecting the unregulated transfer of these goods and related know-how between national borders. The United States will also continue to promote greater cooperation between the ARF and the UN Security Council 1540 Committee as well as its U.N. Office of Disarmament Affairs Secretariat, to support regional partners' efforts to fulfill their 1540 obligations. The United States seeks to strengthen partner implementation of strategic trade control (STC) systems through legal and regulatory mechanisms, customs enforcement, and border and port of entry security in order to mitigate proliferation activities. The United States has supported efforts in the ARF toward this end as well.

The United States encourages countries concerned by the threat WMD proliferation poses to international peace and security to endorse the Proliferation Security

Initiative's (PSI's) statement of principles, which align with UNSCR 1540's requirements that states prevent transfers of WMD-related goods from falling outside of regulatory control. Many ARF participants are among the 113 countries that have already endorsed the PSI, demonstrating concrete commitment to regional peace and security. The United States will continue to support ASEAN member countries to implement 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, acquisition of luxury goods, and illicit export of labor to fund its WMD programs.

The United States continues to encourage cooperation among ARF participants to prevent the use and reemergence of chemical and biological weapons and their proliferation. The United States underscores the importance for all ARF states to work together to uphold the norms against the use of chemical and biological weapons and to fully comply with obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The United States urges support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its work as well as the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU), and to further support the universalization of both the CWC and BWC.

**DPRK:**

The DPRK's unlawful nuclear WMD and ballistic missile programs remain a serious threat to international peace and security. Through sophisticated sanctions evasion tactics, the DPRK continues to support these unlawful weapons programs by abusing the international financial system, conducting cybercrime activities, and generating revenue, including through overseas IT workers. Russia continues to deepen its military cooperation with the DPRK and engage in unlawful arms transfers, including the procurement of DPRK ballistic missiles and thousands of containers of munitions which Russia has repeatedly used against Ukraine. By vetoing the renewal of the 1718 Committee Panel of Experts mandate, Russia has sought to conceal and evade scrutiny for its violation of UN sanctions on the DPRK's unlawful ballistic missile and nuclear programs. The United States remains committed to pursuing dialogue with the DPRK without preconditions and maintains close contact with allies and partners to coordinate our approach to the DPRK; our alliances remain ironclad and our work with all our regional partners supports the maintenance of 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.

## Counterterrorism

The United States is actively engaged in multilateral and regional efforts to strengthen partnerships and to promote continued regional cooperation on counterterrorism measures. ISIS has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to direct and inspire attacks in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, including the horrific attacks in the southern Philippines in December 2023 and Moscow in March 2024. It is critical that United States and partners cooperate purposefully to counter ISIS and its violent extremist outgrowths. The United States seeks to encourage and support strategic counterterrorism policies in the Indo-Pacific by building institutional capacity 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 Southeast Asia and the terrorist group's ability to inspire attacks in the region, particularly as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) moves towards elections in 2025. 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 U.S. Department of State works closely with its partners at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to strengthen global aviation security by engaging foreign partners in bolstering aviation screening. 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 foreign terrorist fighters and their accompanying families, which includes obligations to strengthen border security, watchlisting, and information sharing.

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 U.S. 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 U.S. Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism.

The United States co-chairs the ARF Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) workstream pillar with Bangladesh and the Philippines for 2024-2026 and hosted the first Intersessional Meeting for the group in May 2024. The ARF CTTC Work Plan contributes to regional security through work in its priority areas – Illicit Drugs; Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN); and Counter Radicalization as well as a currently-proposed area on border security management. The United States is co-leading efforts to combat illicit drugs and CBRN.

### **Transnational Crime**

The United States supports the region on a broad range of transnational crime issues through United States federal, state, and local experts and international and nonprofit organizations. These programs include capacity building for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate transnational crime cases, cooperate during interdiction efforts on land and in maritime environments, and facilitate international legal cooperation. Capacity building efforts often focus on specialized topics such as combatting human trafficking, drug trafficking, and nature crimes, including wildlife trafficking; corruption; money laundering and financial crimes; and best practices in implementing 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 works to protect regional economic activity 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—a joint Thai-U.S. effort—continues to serve as a platform for advanced civil law enforcement training. The ILEA is an important platform for addressing areas of mutual concern, including transnational organized crime, cybercrime, financial crimes, corruption, human trafficking, and drug and wildlife trafficking. The ILEA promotes regional law enforcement networks among partner states, builds relationships with the U.S. 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 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.



Illicit drug production and trafficking are challenges for all ARF member nations. There are vast networks of highly organized drug trafficking organizations that span the region and threaten regional and U.S. national security through their production and trafficking of illicit synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals. The U.S. 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. We encourage all countries who have not yet done so to implement the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, 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.

### **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

ARF participant countries 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, the United States continues to provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations and works to reduce disaster vulnerability in communities and build national, provincial, and local response capacities. The United States also supports programming at the nexus of climate and migration, providing governments with the information needed to make evidence-based policy decisions and preparations. U.S. government agencies are implementing programs to enhance the availability and accessibility of early warning information to reduce exposure to climate risks and build local capacity to prepare for and respond more effectively to emergency situations. The U.S. military sponsors and participates in numerous HA/DR-related exercises with regional partners every year.

U.S. programming provides substantial assistance to refugees across the region. For example, in Bangladesh, U.S. programming focuses on providing life-saving humanitarian assistance; supporting the resilience of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi host communities; and developing durable solutions. The U.S. works to deliver water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and nutrition services; provide shelter and health services; protect vulnerable women and children; empower women and adolescents through skills development and raising awareness to prevent gender-based violence; and establish education programs for children. In Indonesia, U.S. programming funds the IOM to assist Rohingya asylum seekers arriving by boat from Burma and Bangladesh, and an NGO to provide comprehensive protection and care for unaccompanied and separated refugee and asylum-seeker children. In Thailand, our NGO partners work in nine refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border, providing health facilities and services; WASH; empowerment programs for women and girls; and livelihoods support.

## **Maritime Security**

The United States supports navigational rights and freedoms, including all the rights and freedoms relating to sea and airspace for all ships and aircraft, including military ships and aircraft, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Upholding UNCLOS is in the interest of the entire international community and remains vital to the peace, security, and prosperity of all nations. The United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, as U.S. forces currently do all around the world.

For 70 years, the U.S. 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, transnational criminal activity 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, the use of MLE vessels to coerce rival claimants and unsafe air and maritime behavior raise the risk of miscalculation or conflict.

Regarding the South China Sea, the United States insists 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 UNCLOS. 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

The PRC's efforts to assert its unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea threaten the rules-based order and undermine international law. China's 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 urges all claimants, including the PRC, to manage and resolve disputes peacefully and in accordance with UNCLOS. The United States encourages all parties to employ diplomatic and other peaceful avenues for resolving disagreements, including the use of 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.

In the East China Sea, we remain concerned about the PRC's provocative behavior. We support calls for diplomacy and crisis management procedures to avoid a miscalculation or a dangerous incident.

The United States will employ whole-of-government resources in response to challenges in the maritime domain, including maintaining military presence and

capabilities to protect our interests and those of our allies and partners against potential threats and challenges to the rules-based system in the maritime domain as reflected in UNCLOS.

The United States, in partnership with our Quad partners, is implementing 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.

The United States regularly conducts maritime exercises with regional partners to build confidence and maritime readiness. Cooperative activities such as 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.

The United States is enhancing the capacity of the coast guards, navies, and law enforcement and judicial sectors of partner nations to address the broad scope of illicit maritime activity ranging from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing to human trafficking and the trafficking of arms and narcotics. Cooperative training programs supported by the U.S. Departments of Defense, Justice, and State, NOAA, the United States Coast Guard, and USAID deliver training and technical expertise.

The Oceania Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI) continues to operate with United States Navy Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) and United States Coast Guard Cutters. OMSI is a joint maritime security operation designed to enhance maritime domain awareness, increase law enforcement presence, and expand at-sea law enforcement capabilities throughout Oceania.

### **Fisheries Management**

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, which 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. Seafood caught by IUU fishing accounts for as much as 30 percent of the global seafood harvest. As coastal waters become overfished, 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 leads to labor rights abuses, including labor trafficking, in 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. The United States champions the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), which works to prevent foreign-flagged vessels engaged in IUU fishing from using ports and landing their catches. The PSMA reduces the incentive of such vessels to continue to operate and blocks fishery products derived from IUU fishing from reaching national and international markets.

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 supports 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-labor standards and sustainable fishing practices. In particular, SuFiA works in close collaboration with the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center (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. In addition, and in coordination with the ASEAN Senior Labor Officials, the U.S. Department of Labor's Addressing Labor Exploitation in Fishing in ASEAN (ALFA) project strengthens the capacity of ASEAN sectoral bodies and member countries to address forced labor and abusive working conditions in the region's fishing industry. s

### **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 can impact national and regional security and economic prosperity – especially in Asia, where e-commerce is a significant and increasing portion of many countries' economic growth. In a nationally significant cyber-incident, 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 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.

## **Role of the ARF**

### **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-centered 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 fulfill the ARF's mandate to advance from confidence-building measures to preventive diplomacy, to effective conflict resolution.

### **Future of the ARF**

The ARF serves as an important platform for senior and working-level security policy dialogue and 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 to shape 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. The United States is committed to building on its active and enduring presence in the Indo-Pacific region and working with its partners to support the ARF as an effective mechanism for confronting current and future transnational and emerging security issues troubling the region.

## **VIET NAM**

### **1. Overview of the Regional Security Environment**

Over the past year, the regional security environment has been defined by continued geopolitical and geostrategic shifts, as well as fast-changing and complicated developments. Cooperation and development remain a major trend in international relations, but are facing with various challenges, including fiercer strategic competition among major powers, heightened tension of regional flashpoints, and increasing seriousness of emerging non-traditional security issues.

Situated in one of the world's most dynamic regions, ASEAN has felt and been impacted by the intense strategic competition among major powers in various dimensions. Against this backdrop, ASEAN has continued 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 other ASEAN fundamental documents. At the same time, ASEAN has made great efforts to further consolidate ASEAN centrality, promote dialogue and cooperation, and strengthen the effectiveness of ASEAN-led mechanisms as well as encourage its external partners to constructively contribute to regional cooperation and development. ASEAN has also reaffirmed its determination in leading the shaping of a regional architecture that is open, inclusive, transparent, rules-based and anchored in international law, with ASEAN at the center.

Among regional flashpoints, the situation in the South China Sea remains a source of great concern for the international community. Complex developments and serious incidents and activities, violating international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, and infringing on the legitimate rights of coastal states, continue to take place on the ground. Actions that put the safety of all persons at risk and cause damage to the marine environment also continue to occur. These have further eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and undermined peace, security and stability in the region. In an increasingly interconnected world, any major conflict or disruption in the South China Sea will surely affect the interests of all countries.

It is, therefore, vital for regional countries and the international community to work together in good faith to safeguard the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, cooperation and development. It is important for external partners, while operating in the region, to respect ASEAN's principled position on the South China Sea, which includes, among others, such key principles as self-restraint, non-threat or use of force, and peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS. External partners should also contribute to the promotion of a conducive environment for negotiations towards an effective and substantive COC, consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, while supporting ASEAN's efforts to fully and effectively implement the DOC.

The worsening situation in Myanmar continues testing the responsibility and wisdom of ASEAN and the international community in the endeavor to assist Myanmar to seek a workable and enduring solution. In the face of such a daunting task, ASEAN has

been sparing no effort to assist Myanmar through promoting the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC), while respecting the principle of non-interference. At the same time, ASEAN has further urged parties concerned in Myanmar to cease all forms of violence, engage in inclusive dialogue and reconciliation, and work constructively with ASEAN in the implementation of 5PC, including facilitating the timely and effective delivery of ASEAN's humanitarian assistance to those in need in Myanmar without discrimination.

Over the years, non-traditional security issues have undoubtedly presented complex challenges to the regional countries' security and sustainable development.

The emerging maritime-related issues, including marine debris and pollution, piracy and armed robbery against ships, cyber-attacks against ships and port facilities, etc., have posed enormous threats to the security and development of the region. ASEAN has recognised the importance of securing maritime domain for the sake of its people, and is committed to taking an integrated and comprehensive approach to address these challenges, given their cross-cutting nature. The first edition of the ASEAN Maritime Outlook adopted last August provides a good reference for ASEAN in further enhancing cooperation in maritime domain and strengthening the synergy of various mechanisms and processes related to the issue under ASEAN's three Community pillars as well as with its external partners.

Another emerging non-traditional security issue that deserves greater attention of ASEAN is the challenges resulting from the lack of rules and norms in managing and governing advanced technologies and ICT, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI). While recognising the opportunities offered by advanced technologies, it is imperative that ASEAN should cooperate and coordinate to actively, effectively and responsibly respond to the impacts of the misuse or abuse of such advanced technologies, and to secure a better future for its peoples.

## **2. National Security and Defence Policy of Viet Nam**

### **a) Overview of national security and 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 national interests and people; to maintain political stability and a peaceful environment for national construction and development. In this regard, Viet Nam implements a defence policy which is peaceful and self-defensive in nature. Viet Nam resolutely and consistently settles all disputes and divergences through peaceful means in accordance with 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 another, giving any country the 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 other countries to improve its capabilities to protect the country and address common security challenges. Depending on circumstances and specific conditions, Viet Nam will consider developing necessary defence and military relations at appropriate levels with other countries on the basis of mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity as well as fundamental principles of international law, and cooperation for mutual benefits and common interests of the region and 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.

#### **b) Viet Nam's data contribution to ARF Arms Register**

Viet Nam builds its military capability according to a unified strategy as required by the tasks of national defence and development. The combat competency and readiness of the armed forces are demonstrated in their organisation, structure, weaponry, military art and science and technology, logistics warranty facilities, which are frequently maintained, improved, and developed to meet the requirements of the people's war for safeguarding the Homeland.

Viet Nam's defence budget is considered in line with the country's socio-economic development speed, meeting the requirements of strengthening defence potentials to protect the Homeland, but not becoming a burden of the country's economy.

### **3. National Contributions to Regional Security**

#### **i. 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 pretext of counter-terrorism. Viet Nam supports the international community's cooperation efforts, and has taken significant steps to enhance regional security through active participation in counter-terrorism efforts, demonstrating its commitment to both regional and international stability in accordance with the UN Charter and relevant international laws as well as Viet Nam's Constitution, law and conditions.

In that connection, Viet Nam has worked closely with other ASEAN member states in implementing the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism and the ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism, and actively participated in various regional mechanisms such as the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime



(AMMTC), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

To be specific, Viet Nam joined the “Peace and Friendship 2023” exercise in November 2023 in Zhanjiang, China, with the participation of anti-terrorism forces from Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and China. The main objective of the exercise was to enhance tactical capabilities in shooting, helicopter operations, and urban hostage rescue scenarios, which thereafter helps improve the readiness and effectiveness of anti-terrorism units, ensuring their preparedness to address a wide range of security threats in the future.

Viet Nam also co-chaired with the United States and Mongolia the ARF Workshop on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Terrorism in April 2024 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The workshop, with the participation of 16 countries, including Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, United States, and Viet Nam, focused on strengthening the legal frameworks and capacities of the ARF participants to effectively prevent, detect, and respond to CBRN terrorism threats as well as enhancing cooperation and coordination among the ARF participants and relevant international organizations.

## **ii. Non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament**

Viet Nam is strongly committed to global disarmament and non-proliferation, actively supporting and contributing to the common efforts of the international community for peace, security and disarmament. Viet Nam welcomes any initiatives that prevent the development, production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction; commits to strictly fulfilling obligations of a signatory to conventions, agreements, protocols on non-proliferation, counter-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, including SEANWFZ, Convention on Nuclear Safety, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, Convention on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects, Convention on the Physical of Nuclear Material, Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), and Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.

One significant demonstration of Viet Nam’s commitment was its involvement in the TPNW. At the second meeting of state parties to the TPNW (New York, 2023), Viet Nam emphasised the necessity of eliminating nuclear weapons and enhancing strategic trust through compliance with international law. This stance highlights

Viet Nam's advocacy for a nuclear-free world and support for legal frameworks that promote disarmament.

Moreover, Viet Nam engages with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to underscore its dedication to chemical weapons non-proliferation. Viet Nam calls for the full and responsible implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and commits to upholding international norms and ensuring the eradication of chemical weapons. This approach aligns with Viet Nam's broader foreign policy goals of promoting peace, stability, and international cooperation.

Regionally, Viet Nam actively contributes to the joint efforts of ASEAN member states 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).

### **iii. Transnational Crime**

Viet Nam actively participates in regional initiatives and cooperation frameworks to combat transnational crime, emphasising the importance of information sharing, intelligence exchange, and collaborative actions. This reiterates Viet Nam's commitments to implement such guiding documents as the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (ACTIP), the Protocol on the Prevention and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime for the maintenance of peace, security, stability and development in the region and beyond. Viet Nam also cooperates closely with neighbouring countries in the Mekong basin to strengthen border management practices through the Regional Border Liaison Office (BLO) Network.

Viet Nam has actively participated in the negotiation of the ASAN Treaty on Extradition; negotiated and concluded a series of bilateral agreements on cooperation to combat transnational organised crimes, trafficking in persons, and transfer of sentenced persons, with different countries in the region and the world. Viet Nam is in the final stage of internal procedures to accede to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air.

At the 17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), Viet Nam's Deputy Minister of Public Security proposed several recommendations to enhance ASEAN's effectiveness in combating transnational crime, including the need to set up a mechanism to promptly share information on the situation, trends, methods, and tactics of transnational crimes, as well as experiences and best practices to prevent and combat transnational crime among law enforcement agencies of the ASEAN member states.

Viet Nam actively promotes bilateral and multilateral cooperation to prevent the diversion of precursors into illicit drug manufacture, including regular and intermittent collaboration, whether institutionalized or ad hoc, with other ARF participants, and strengthens cooperation with ASEAN's external partners in the field of capacity building, law enforcement capability, technical assistance for combating transnational crime.

Strengthening transport security against international terrorism is another priority for Viet Nam, involving coordinated efforts with other ASEAN member states to ensure the safety and security of transport networks.

Viet Nam also proactively and effectively engages in bilateral cooperation with the management forces of neighboring countries to enhance border security. This includes joint patrols and crime prevention initiatives along shared borders, particularly with Laos, to enhance surveillance, information sharing, and coordinated responses to cross-border crime, reflecting a practical and effective approach to regional security.

#### **iv. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief**

Viet Nam advocates efforts of the international community in providing humanitarian relief and assistance as well as demonstrates a strong commitment to regional disaster response efforts through its active participation in simulation exercises and collaborative initiatives, including meetings and joint training exercises on HADR, Search and Rescue (SAR) and relevant mechanisms and initiatives of ASEAN and the region, such as ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR, ASEAN Militaries Ready Group (AMRG) on HADR, ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). This highlights Viet Nam's dedication to enhancing regional disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

Besides, 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 and forecasting information, and supporting disaster response; strengthen the support and transfer of search and rescue facilities and equipments among ASEAN member states; continue to participate in HADR exercises at different levels as well as training courses and other activities on disaster management and HADR. One notable example is Viet Nam's participation in the ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) 2023 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This exercise simulated responses to a potential earthquake, with Viet Nam's significant contribution to the exercise control team and the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team. Under the ARF framework, Viet Nam has assumed the co-chairmanship of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM-DR) with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka for the 2023-2026 period. On 22 April 2024, the co-chairs virtually hosted the 22<sup>nd</sup> ARF ISM-DR Meeting, which served as a platform for the ARF participants to share information and best practices, and explore measures to enhance regional and international coordination in disaster relief efforts,

as well as expedite the implementation progress of the ARF Work Plan for Disaster Relief.

#### **v. Maritime Security**

Maintaining and promoting peace, stability and security in the maritime sphere in Indo-Pacific are in the interest of not only regional countries but also the international community as a whole. Being home to some of the world's busiest shipping lanes, any disruption to maritime trade in this region could result in significant economic consequences for all countries. With its strategic location at the crossroads of international maritime routes, facilitating nearly one-third of the global trade, including crucial energy supplies, the South China Sea is of strategic importance to peace, stability, security and maritime trade in Indo-Pacific.

As such, it is the consistent policy of Viet Nam to work closely with all countries to preserve the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, cooperation and development. Viet Nam, therefore, follows closely with deep concern complex developments and incidents in the South China Sea that may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region. Viet Nam reaffirms the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, safety, security, stability, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the maritime sphere in Southeast Asia, particularly the South China Sea. Viet Nam reaffirms that all activities in the South China Sea must be carried out in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS, respecting the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction of countries established in line with the 1982 UNCLOS. Viet Nam also reaffirms the need to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes, and affect peace and stability, avoid actions that may further complicate the situation, and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS.

Viet Nam upholds international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. The 1982 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 maintaining and promoting peace, stability, security, safety and freedom of navigation and overflight as well as marine environmental protection in the South China Sea; building and consolidating trust and confidence among countries; actively supporting the promotion of a rules-based regional maritime order and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means on the basis of international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS. Furthermore, Viet Nam is committed to working closely with other countries to promote the full and effective implementation of the DOC, and actively participating in and substantively contributing to the COC negotiation process towards the early conclusion of a

substantive and effective COC that is consistent with international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS.

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), the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM-MS), the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), and the ADMM Plus (ADMM+). These are strategic frameworks for ASEAN, and between ASEAN and its 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 a comprehensive and holistic 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.

Viet Nam welcomes any efforts and initiatives to promote maritime security and safety, freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded commerce, full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, the non-use of force or threat to use force, and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS.

Accordingly, Viet Nam, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the European Union co-chaired the 5th ARF Workshop on UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues on 9 November 2023 in a hybrid format, attracting around 150 delegates from 27 ARF participants, international and regional organizations, diplomatic representative agencies, research institutes, experts, reputable scholars, and ministries and branches. This Workshop aimed at: (i) discussing 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) enhancing the understanding of contemporary challenges at sea in the region, including emerging ones; (ii) exploring 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. With its relevance, the 6<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on UNCLOS and other international instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues will continue to be organized in 2025.

Bilaterally, Viet Nam has been closely coordinating with maritime law enforcement agencies of regional countries to conduct a number of practical cooperation activities, such as exchange of delegations, information sharing, joint training courses for capacity building, etc. For instance, on 14-15 March 2024, the Viet Nam People's Navy and the Royal Cambodian Navy conducted the 74<sup>th</sup> annual joint patrol. On 10 April 2024, the Viet Nam People's Navy carried out the 49<sup>th</sup> joint patrol with the Thai Navy.

These joint patrols have contributed to maintaining peace and security in the waters, and fostering cooperation, mutual understanding, and trust between Viet Nam and respective countries. On 27-29 April 2024, the Viet Nam Coast Guard (VCG) and the China Coast Guard (CCG) held the first joint patrol of the year, conducting activities, including talks, telephone calls, inspection and supervision of the nations' fishing vessels operating in the adjacent waters of the demarcation line, dissemination of relevant legal regulations for the two countries' fishermen. On 2 May 2024, the Vietnamese and Cambodian navies also convened the 33<sup>rd</sup> experience sharing conference on joint patrol activities between Viet Nam's Naval Region 5 and Cambodia's Ream Naval Base in the port city of Sihanoukville, in which the two sides agreed to maintain open communication channels to ensure prompt and harmonious coordination in handling maritime incidents in the spirit of cooperation as well as respect for international law, and each other's independence and sovereignty.

#### **vi. ICTs Security**

Viet Nam has proactively conducted various international cooperation activities on ensuring safety and cyber security, preventing crimes using high technology in various initiatives such as Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST), Association of Asia-Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT), Cybersecurity Alliance for Mutual Progress (CAMP), Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE).

Regionally, Viet Nam is committed to actively and responsibly participating in the cooperation frameworks of ASEAN in general, and cooperation in information and communications technologies in the field of defence in particular, including the ADMM Cybersecurity and Information Centre of Excellence (ACICE), ASEAN Direct Communication Infrastructure (ADI) in the ADMM process, ASEAN Cyber Defence Network (ACDN), ADMM-Plus EWG on Cybersecurity, ARF Inter-sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ISM ICTs), and the ARF Open Ended Study Group (OESG) on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies.

Within the ARF mechanism, in the first half of 2023, Viet Nam also took part in many initiatives relating to cybersecurity, including the 6<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the use of ICTs (ISM-ICTs); the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> ARF Open-Ended Study Group (OESG) on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs; the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARF Workshop on the Protection and Resilience of ICT-enabled Critical Infrastructure and the ARF Workshop on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes.

In October 2023, the delegation from the Ministry of Public Security of Viet Nam attended the Singapore International Cyber Security Week 2023 (SICW 2023) and the 8<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cyber Security (AMCC-8) in Singapore. At the AMCC-8, as Head of the delegation, Deputy Minister of Public Security Luong Tam

Quang shared Viet Nam's viewpoint on current and emerging threats to the digital environment and cyberspace, contributing remarkably to the Conference's theme "Regional efforts in fighting existing and emerging threats in cyberspace and technology". He called on ASEAN countries to intensify the effective implementation of cooperation on cybersecurity, build common intra-bloc and international regulations on cyber security, establish a mechanism to support the ASEAN member states in handling cyber security matters and preventing cyber-attacks. He also stressed the need to share information about cybercrime, coordinate the fight against cybercrime, establish communication channels and hotlines to handle unexpected developments timely, and strengthen relevant public-private cooperation, among others.

In 2024, Viet Nam continues to take part in the ongoing 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.

#### **4. Role of the ARF**

##### **a. National contribution to enhancing the ARF and regional security**

As a founding member of the ARF, Viet Nam is committed to actively and responsibly participating in various activities of the Forum with a view to further enhancing its effectiveness and relevance, and promoting the culture of dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern.

Through Viet Nam's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2010 and 2020, two key ARF guiding documents, namely the Ha Noi Plan of Actions to Implement the ARF Vision Statement and the Ha Noi Plan of Action II (HPOA II), were developed with hundreds of action lines implemented, contributing to sustaining the habit of dialogue and cooperation, enhancing mutual trust and confidence as well as building capacity for the ARF participants to better respond to emerging challenges in the region. Viet Nam also proposed and coordinated with other ARF participants to develop the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol in 2020, serving as the basis for cooperation among the ARF participants to promote a holistic and comprehensive process of streamlining and strengthening the ARF in the years to come.

Recently, in 2023, Viet Nam successfully co-chaired, with the United States and Mongolia, the ARF Workshop on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) terrorism, and the 5<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other international instruments to address emerging maritime issues with Australia, Canada, the EU, and New Zealand. Viet Nam

also assumed the co-chairmanship of the ARF ISM-DR for the 2023-2026 period with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Accordingly, Viet Nam hosted the online 22nd ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief on 22 April 2024, and is leading the development of the ARF Work Plan for Disaster Relief 2024-2027 as a guiding document to continue enhancing regional capabilities for disaster risk reduction, preparedness, and response through various initiatives and plans.

In the 2024-2025 period, Viet Nam will tentatively co-chair some ARF activities, including the 6<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop: Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues with EU, New Zealand, Canada and Australia, the ARF Workshop on Health Security – Health Security Across the Region with the United States, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Overall, through its constructive participation, Viet Nam reiterates its commitment to enhancing the objectives and principles of the ARF, contributing to joint efforts of promoting CBMs and PD for peace, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

#### **b. Future of the ARF**

Since its inception in 1994, the ARF has well served as a key platform in the region to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern, contributing to the efforts of building trust, confidence, and preventive diplomacy for peace, security, and stability in the region.

As the regional and international security landscape in the Asia-Pacific region has undergone drastic and unprecedented changes since then, bringing about several multi-faceted challenges to regional countries, there is an urgent need for the ARF participants to discuss ways and means to increase the Forum's effectiveness and relevance so as to make sure that it can respond effectively to emerging issues through comprehensive and collective approaches.

This can be achieved through, among others, drawing up more substantive agendas for the ARF's meetings and activities, developing the next ARF Plan of Action, and striving for a balanced and inclusive approach to issues of common interest and concern. Moreover, efforts to promote cooperation should be made at a pace comfortable to all participants, based on consensus.

In addition, it is also vital for the ARF participants to uphold the objectives and principles of the Forum, and continue supporting ASEAN centrality, both in word and deed, in the ARF process. The participants should also take advantage of the Forum for enhanced dialogue, consultation and trust building to manage and address differences among them rather than utilizing it for the "blame and shame" game, consequently deepening their problems. By embracing the dialogue-and-consultation-based approach, the ARF can maintain its role and value as a cornerstone of regional security cooperation, capable of navigating the present and future geopolitical



landscape, thus contributing to the building of an open, transparent and inclusive regional architecture, anchored in international law. In this process, Viet Nam is fully committed to working closely and constructively with other ARF participants.