



CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT

ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM INTER-SESSIONAL SUPPORT GROUP MEETING ON CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY (ARF ISG ON CBMs AND PD)

9 May 2024, Vientiane, Lao PDR

INTRODUCTION

1. The Meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Sitsangkhom Sisaketh, Deputy Director-General of ASEAN Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR and Mr. John Riley, Unit Manager of Asia Regional Division, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade. The Meeting was attended by representatives from all ARF Participants, except for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka. Representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat were also in attendance. The List of Delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING REMARKS BY CO-CHAIRS

2. In his Opening Remarks, Mr. Sitsangkhom Sisaketh noted the significant progress in the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and expressed sincere thanks to non-ASEAN ARF Participants for their continued support in building the ASEAN community. He further highlighted that the effective implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 has consolidated a politically cohesive, economically integrated, and socially responsible ASEAN community that is rules-based and people-oriented. Noting the ongoing development of the Strategic Plans for the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, he stressed the importance of continued cooperation and support from non-ASEAN ARF Participants and recognised the ARF as the primary forum for fostering constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific region. He further underlined that the ISG on CBMs and PD provided an opportunity to review and discuss ongoing work and activities under the ARF framework to further strengthen cooperation through the evolutionary approach of promoting confidence-building measures, developing preventive diplomacy policies and deliberating on conflict resolution strategies.

3. In his Opening Remarks, Mr. John Riley congratulated ASEAN on the achievements of the ARF, acknowledging the important role of the ARF in helping the region manage security challenges both regionally and globally. Noting that the region faces new security issues that challenge norms, systems, and approaches, he emphasised the need to ensure that shared regional processes are further strengthened and remain relevant. He expressed confidence that today's Meeting could contribute to this goal and that discussions would be constructive, productive, and meaningful.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

AGENDA ITEM 3: BUSINESS ARRANGEMENTS

5. The Meeting noted the Administrative Arrangements, which appears as **ANNEX 3**.

AGENDA ITEM 4: REPORTS OF THE ARF INTER-SESSIONAL MEETINGS, PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARF WORK PLANS, AND PREPARATIONS OF OTHER ARF MEETINGS

6. The Meeting noted that in the current ARF Inter-Sesional Year (ISY), the majority of the ARF meetings including the ARF Inter-Sessional Meetings (ISMs) were held almost back-to-back in the span of two weeks prior to the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD. On this note, Lao PDR as the current ARF Chair, underlined the need to ensure that all ARF Participants are provided with ample time to review the outcomes of these ARF meetings and requested for the Co-Chairs of all ARF meetings to schedule their respective meetings far in advance of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD in the future.

4.1. 6th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of ICTs and ARF Work Plan on Security of and in the Use of ICTs

7. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the 6th ARF ISM on ICTs Security, co-chaired by Indonesia and Russia on 24 April 2024 in Moscow, Russia, in a hybrid format. It was noted that, as approved by the 30th ARF in 2023, the following activities will be held in the current ISY: (i) the ARF Workshop Series on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes, to be co-chaired by Thailand, China, and Russia in a hybrid format in Moscow, Russia, from 23–24 May 2024; and (ii) the ARF Workshop on the Protection of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructures, to be co-chaired by Singapore and the European Union (EU) from 6–7 June 2024 in Singapore. The

Meeting also noted that three proposals for the next ISY were tabled at the 6th ARF ISM on ICTs Security for the consideration of ARF Participants.

4.2. 20th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime and ARF Work Plan for Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime

8. The Meeting noted that discussions at the 20th ARF ISM on CTTC, co-chaired by the Philippines, Bangladesh and the United States in Honolulu on 2–3 May 2024, focused on the trafficking of illicit drugs, persons, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials, as well as countering violent extremism. It was noted that a scenario-based exercise was convened, in which ARF Participants identified potential solutions to interdict and curb terrorist activities and transnational crime, and shared good practices on preventing and deterring terrorism and transnational crime. With regard to the ARF Work Plan on CTTC, the Meeting noted that the Co-Chairs of this ISM are proposing to add border security management as a priority area of cooperation and that upon consensus, the draft Work Plan would be submitted to the ARF SOM for consideration prior to submission to the ARF Ministers for adoption.

4.3. 15th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security and ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security

9. The Meeting noted that the 15th ARF ISM on MS discussed and shared views on topics of common interest under the three priority areas of the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security: maritime security and cooperation, protecting critical maritime infrastructure, and environmental management and conservation; and reviewed the outcomes of various activities supporting the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security. The Meeting also took note that several new proposals for the ISY 2024-2025 have been tabled at the 15th ARF ISM on MS.

4.4. 15th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament and the ARF Work Plan on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

10. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the 15th ARF ISM on NPD held from 29 April to 1 May 2024 in Honolulu. Co-chaired by the United States, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, it was noted that the ISM discussed the progress made in verifying arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation agreements, as well as increasing transparency and ensuring the irreversibility of disarmament. The Meeting highlighted the need for further efforts to mitigate the risk of strategic conflict in the region and to ensure that the ARF plays a productive role in these efforts.

11. The Meeting noted the concerns raised by Russia regarding visa issuance for their delegation, which hindered their in-person attendance at the 15th ARF ISM on

NPD in violation of existing ARF rules and procedures. On this note, the United States informed the delegations that administrative processing delays regrettably prevented timely visa issuance and noted that virtual attendance was an option for all delegations. In this regard, the ARF Chair emphasised the importance of constructive, equal, full and effective participation for ARF Participants in all ARF activities.

4.5. 22nd ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief and the ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief

12. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the 22nd ARF ISM on DR held on 22 April 2024 via video conference, co-chaired by Viet Nam, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Key highlights of the ISM included the sharing of national experiences and practices in disaster response and management. Participants emphasised proactive planning, training and drills, effective coordination among government agencies, emergency responders, NGOs, and international organizations, and proper allocation and management of resources. The importance of regional and international cooperation in disaster response was underscored, particularly in maximising resources, expertise, and capabilities. The Meeting further noted that the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on DR are currently developing an updated ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief, which will be submitted to the ARF SOM and subsequently to the 31st ARF for adoption.

4.6. 21st ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC)

13. The Meeting noted that the 21st ASPC will be convened from 1–3 July 2024 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR and that the invitation package will be circulated through the ARF Unit in due course.

4.7. ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD)

14. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the ARF DOD, co-chaired by Lao PDR and New Zealand, which was held on 8 May 2024 in Vientiane. The Dialogue focused on key regional security issues, enhancing regional resilience, and responding to emerging and future security challenges through cooperation and confidence-building measures among ARF members. The Dialogue acknowledged the increasing complexity and tension in the current security environment and emphasised the importance of transparency and trust among defence organisations to address both traditional and non-traditional security challenges. The Meeting noted that key discussions included the impact of climate change on the frequency and intensity of natural disasters and the importance of regional and international cooperation to enhance resilience and readiness in HADR response. On this note, the need for collaboration, capacity-building activities, and civil-military cooperation to overcome evolving challenges were underscored.

4.8. 25th ARF Heads of Defence Universities/ Colleges/ Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM)

15. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the 25th ARF HDUCIM, hosted by the National Defence University of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur from 1–3 August 2023. Co-chaired by Malaysia and Sri Lanka under the theme of "Defence Education Diplomacy for Sustainable Peace and Security", discussions revolved around infusing peace education into military curricula, the role of the military in peacebuilding operations, and enhancing collaboration among defence institutions. It was noted that key outcomes included enhanced collaboration among defence universities, colleges, and institutions by sharing best practices, research outcomes, and educational approaches. Recognising the role of the ARF HDUCIM in building regional confidence and collaboration, fostering trust and transparency among defence institutions, it was noted that the outcomes will be used to advocate for the broader integration of peace education and defence education diplomacy to further promote sustainable peace and security in the region.

4.9. 16th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) Meeting

16. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the 16th ARF EEPs Meeting, held on 25–26 April 2024 in Seoul. Co-chaired by Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Korea (ROK), the 16th ARF EEPs Meeting featured discussions on a range of issues, including traditional threats such as nuclear proliferation emerging threats such as artificial intelligence (AI), ICT-security, economic security, and climate change, and women and youth experience and their perspectives on peace and security. It was noted that participants of the EEPs Meeting expressed their commitment to play a more active and constructive role in the ARF process, and formulated concrete draft recommendations which include, among others, strengthening coordination between ARF and ARF EEPs, to include AI safety and security issues on the agenda of future ARF EEPs meetings and to maintain the momentum of discussion on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). The Meeting was informed that the EEPs highlighted the need for a monitoring mechanism to track the implementation of previous ARF EEPs recommendations, which aims to enhance accountability and ensure the continuous progress of ARF initiatives and noted the suggestion for the ARF Chair to task the ARF Unit to compile these recommendations for consideration and implementation. The Meeting took note that the draft recommendations was circulated for input and will be finalised for submission to the 31st ARF in July.

4.10. 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting

17. The Meeting took note that the 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts Meeting, to be co-chaired by Indonesia and Japan, is scheduled to be held on 25–26 June 2024 in Jakarta and will focus on issues related to the principles under the UN Action for

Peacekeeping initiative in supporting peacekeeping personnel through training and capacity building. It was noted that the invitation package will be shared in due course.

4.11. ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy

18. Lao PDR briefed the Meeting on the progress of implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy which was adopted in 2011. Despite a rise in the number of ARF activities focused on preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures in recent years, the Meeting noted that no activity has been carried out in the current ISY; and that out of the eleven action lines, three action lines have yet to be implemented. Noting that the Work Plan is a living document, the Meeting underscored the importance of reviewing the Work Plan to ensure its continued relevance and responsiveness to current regional developments. On this note, the ARF Chair emphasised the need to assess the unimplemented action lines and encouraged ARF Participants to bring forward new ideas and activities that align with the preventive diplomacy objectives and to ensure their full implementation.

4.12. Updates on ARF activities for the current Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024

19. The Meeting took note of the following:

- Singapore and the EU will be co-chairing the ARF Workshop on the Protection of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructures, on 6–7 June 2024 in Singapore;
- The ARF Workshop on Detection, Response and Deterrence of CBR Incidents, also to be co-chaired by Singapore and the EU, is scheduled to be held on 26–27 June 2024 in Singapore;
- Thailand, China and the United States will be co-chairing the ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions via video conference later this year;
- The 2nd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building, to be co-chaired by Thailand and China, is scheduled to be held in September 2024 in China; The next iteration of the ARF Series of Workshops on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes, co-chaired by Thailand, China and Russia, is set to be held on 23–24 May in Moscow in a hybrid format; and
- The schedule and format of the 5th ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety, to be co-chaired by Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and China, will be announced in due course.

20. In this regard, all co-chairs of these activities were encouraged to finalise their preparations and ensure active participation in these upcoming activities. The importance of continuous engagement and collaboration in the ARF framework to effectively address evolving challenges was also reiterated.

AGENDA ITEM 5: CONSIDERATION OF CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES (CBMS) AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY (PD) INITIATIVES

5.1. Proposed ARF Statements and Initiatives for the 31st ARF

5.1.1. ARF Statement on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety

21. The Meeting noted that China is proposing an ARF Statement on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety to be adopted at the 31st ARF. Building on the outcomes of previous ARF Workshops on Ferry Safety, the Statement is intended to reiterate commitment to facilitate sustained practical cooperation and future collaboration on ferry safety in the region, particularly given that 70% of global ferry accidents occur in this area, resulting in significant casualties and property losses. China further highlighted that the increasing volume of passengers and freight post-COVID-19, underscores the need for enhanced experience sharing on ferry safety.

22. Several ARF Participants expressed their support for the proposed statement. It was noted that Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam, expressed their intention to co-sponsor the Statement, whilst Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are currently in the process of internal consultations with relevant agencies. Noting that other ARF Participants may require more time to review the draft, the proponent informed the Meeting that an online consultation session would be convened to further discuss and refine the draft Statement.

5.1.2. Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the ISPS Code among ARF Participants

23. The Meeting discussed the proposal for a Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the ISPS Code among ARF Participants, introduced by the United States. This initiative, co-sponsored by the Philippines, India and Papua New Guinea, aims to serve as a key tool and resource for ARF participants, and enhance the implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code. The compendium will compile exemplary models, practices, and key resources from the ARF participants who attended the ISPS Code training series. The proposed compendium will ensure the dissemination and adoption of best practices tailored to each country's specific needs and requirements. Taking into consideration the importance of allowing sufficient time for ARF participants to contribute to the compendium, the Meeting noted that the target is to finalise the Compendium by the next ARF ISM on Maritime Security in 2025.

5.2. Draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024

24. The Meeting reviewed the draft List of Track 1 Activities for the ISY 2024–2025 and noted that as per practice, only activities with complete co-chairmanship and consensus from all ARF Participants will be included in the final list for approval by the Ministers. In this connection, the Meeting noted that the following seven activities from the current ISY will be carried forward for implementation in the ISY 2024–2025:

- (i) ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions, to be co-chaired by Thailand, China and the United States;
- (ii) 2nd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building, to be co-chaired by Thailand and China;
- (iii) 5th ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety, to be co-chaired by Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and China;
- (iv) ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy for Addressing Climate Change, to be co-chaired by Cambodia, Timor Leste and the United States
- (v) ARF Symposium on Nuclear Technologies for Public Security, to be co-chaired by Myanmar and China;
- (vi) ARF Training on Developing Exercises to Counter CBRN Terrorism, to be co-chaired by the Philippines and the United States; and
- (vii) 3rd ARF Workshop on Urban Emergency Rescue, to be co-chaired by Lao PDR, Malaysia and China.

25. The Meeting further noted that the Philippines wished to withdraw its proposal on the ARF Workshop to Support the Victims of Terrorism in the ASEAN Region, and requested for the deletion of the proposed activity which was reflected as item number 28 in the draft list. The Meeting also noted that Canada intended to propose a new activity related to Women, Peace, and Security, and that the concept paper for this activity will be shared in due course. Additionally, the Meeting took note of Viet Nam's expression of interest to co-chair the ARF Workshop on Health Security which was proposed by the United States. Drawing example from recent events, the Meeting re-emphasised the need for all ARF Participants to be provided with equal and unhindered access to all ARF meetings and activities.

26. Noting that discussion on many of the proposals are ongoing, the Co-Chairs highlighted the need for continuous consultation and cooperation among ARF Participants. The Co-Chairs also encouraged ARF Participants to review the draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the ISY 2024-2025 and verify the accuracy of the information reflected in the draft list. In addition, proponents of each activity are requested to obtain consensus on their proposals as well as finalise the co-chairmanship arrangements, and to provide the Chair with an update on the status of each proposal with a deadline of one week prior to the 31st ARF.

AGENDA ITEM 6: CO-CHAIRS OF ARF MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR

6.1. ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and ARF DOD

27. The Meeting noted that Malaysia, as the incoming ARF Chair in 2025, is currently in the process of securing a non-ASEAN Co-Chair for the ARF DOD and ISG on CBMs and PD.

6.2. ARF ISM on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

28. Following the end of Thailand, Sri Lanka and the United States' tenure of co-chairmanship for the ISM on NPD, the Philippines and Australia have expressed their interest to assume co-chairmanship of this ISM for the next cycle.

6.3. ARF ISM on ICTs Security

29. The Meeting noted the Philippines' and Canada's interest to assume co-chairmanship for the next cycle of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security.

6.4. 26th ARF HDUCIM

30. The Meeting noted that the 26th ARF HDUCIM, to be co-chaired by Cambodia and Sri Lanka, is scheduled to be held from 28–31 August 2024 in Sri Lanka.

6.5. 17th ARF EEPs

31. The Meeting noted that Malaysia will co-chair the 17th ARF EEPs Meeting alongside the ROK in the next ISY.

AGENDA ITEM 7: FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF

7.1. Implementation of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II

32. The Meeting noted that the implementation of the Ha Noi Plan of Action II (HPOA II) 2020-2025 is progressing, with 39 action lines having been implemented, resulting in an overall implementation rate of 36.4%. Noting that 68 action lines remain pending, the Meeting noted that a Matrix will be circulated to all ARF Participants for further feedback and input on the implementation of these action lines. Taking into consideration that the HPOA II is set to expire at the end of 2025, the Chair encouraged all ARF Participants to exert greater effort to implement the yet to be addressed action lines.

33. On the future direction of the ARF, the Chair further informed the meeting that ASEAN is in the process of developing strategic plans intended to implement the ASEAN Community Vision 2045. Recalling that last year, the Ministers requested for the ARF SOM to deliberate on the roles, achievements and challenges of the ARF, the Chair further informed that ASEAN Member States are currently in discussion on ways to revitalise the ARF and that the outcomes of ASEAN's discussion on this matter will be shared with non-ASEAN ARF Participants in due course. In view of the above, the Chair suggested that the development of succeeding ARF Plans of Action should be consistent with ASEAN documents that are currently being deliberated.

AGENDA ITEM 8: OTHER MATTERS

8.1. ARF Annual Security Outlook

34. The Meeting noted that contributions to the 2024 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) should be submitted to the Chair by the end of May 2024 for further consolidation.

8.2. Date of the ARF SOM

35. Lao PDR informed the Meeting that the ARF SOM will be held on 8 June 2024 in Vientiane. The invitation package for this Meeting has been circulated, and a provisional agenda will be shared in due course.

AGENDA ITEM 9: CLOSING REMARKS BY CO-CHAIRS

36. In their Closing Remarks, the Co-Chairs expressed gratitude towards the ARF Participants for their active and efficient participation, and to the ASEAN Secretariat for the support rendered towards the convening of this Meeting. The Co-Chairs noted the extensive work carried out in the ARF and encouraged proponents of proposals to conduct consultations in a timely and inclusive manner. The Co-Chairs further highlighted the need for ongoing collaboration and the effective implementation of activities, so as to contribute to the ARF's evolution and the maintenance of peace and security in the region, as well as the strengthening of the ASEAN Community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

37. The Meeting expressed gratitude and appreciation to the Co-Chairs for their effective co-chairmanship and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting. The Meeting also commended the fruitful discussion and active participation of all ARF Participants and the ASEAN Secretariat that contributed to the success of the Meeting.

ISSUES TO BE FOLLOWED UP

No.	Key Decision/Issues	Timeline	Follow-up By
1.	Identification of non-ASEAN Co-Chair for the next ARF DOD and ARF ISG on CBMs and PD.	By the ARF SOM	Malaysia
2.	Finalisation of the ARF Work Plans on DR and CTTC.	By the ARF SOM	Co-Chairs of ARF ISM on DR and CTTC
3.	Finalisation of the draft ARF Statement on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety.	Prior to the 31 st ARF	China
4.	Finalisation of proposals and confirmation on the status of the proposals, i.e. whether consensus has been reached and whether the proposals have complete co-chairmanship.	Prior to the 31 st ARF	Proponents of respective proposals
5.	Finalisation of the List of ARF Track I Activities for the ISY 2024-2025.	Prior to the 31 st ARF	ARF Chair and ARF Unit
6.	Circulation of the Matrix of Implementation of the ARF HPOA II	Prior to the ARF SOM	ARF Unit
7.	Submission of contributions to the 2024 ARF Annual Security Outlook.	By the end of May 2024	ARF Participants

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