



CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 32ND ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

Kuala Lumpur, 11 July 2025

1. The Thirty-Second Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 11 July 2025. The Meeting was chaired by The Honourable Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, under Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship theme, "Inclusivity and Sustainability".
2. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers and Representatives of all ARF Participants, as well as the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The list of delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

Overview of the ARF Process

3. The Meeting was pleased to note that for more than thirty years, the ARF has continued to reaffirm itself as the leading security forum for promoting confidence building and mutual trust in the region through the exchange of views and cooperation on issues of common interest and concern. The Meeting reiterated that the ARF plays a crucial role in promoting peace and stability in the region, and should continue to maintain its relevance and effectiveness as an inclusive ASEAN-led platform for constructive political-security dialogue and cooperation.
4. The Meeting recognised the impact of rising geopolitical tensions and the complexities of evolving security challenges. The Meeting emphasised the need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation to promote regional peace, security, stability, and prosperity, as well as address challenges in a strategic and holistic manner, on the basis of consensus, with ASEAN Centrality as the primary driving force. The Meeting further underscored the need to make further progress on preventive diplomacy efforts in accordance with the principles reflected in the ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy, whilst continuing with confidence-building measures in the ARF's key areas of cooperation.

5. The Meeting noted the progress in the implementation of the ARF Hanoi Plan of Action (HPOA) II 2020–2025, which has served as policy guidance for the ARF to develop and implement concrete measures and activities, and will conclude by the end of 2025. The Meeting appreciated the efforts of ARF Participants in implementing its action lines, as well as the role of the ARF Unit in monitoring and assessing their progress. Noting that the ARF HPOA II will conclude by the end of 2025, the Meeting looked forward to its end-of-term review, as emphasised in the HPOA II, which should highlight achievements and best practices, as well as lessons learned and challenges faced in the implementation. The Meeting agreed that the ARF Plan of Actions beyond 2025 should be developed to include concrete measures and measurable goals that ensure cooperation in the ARF remains relevant, effective and inclusive.

6. The Meeting commended efforts to revitalise the ARF and agreed that the ARF Vision Statement be updated in line with the ASEAN Community Vision 2045. The Meeting also recognised that updating the Vision Statement is needed to enhance the efficiency and agility of cooperation in the ARF to addressing security issues of common concerns, as well as to threats to regional peace and security.

7. The Meeting welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future by the ASEAN Leaders to guide ASEAN Community-building in the next 20 years. In this regard, the ARF Participants expressed their commitment to support ASEAN Community-building, including through ASEAN-led mechanisms as well as concrete activities in collaboration with the relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies to realise the ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future. The Meeting agreed that all future ARF cooperation should align with the objectives outlined in the ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future.

Regional and International Issues

8. The Meeting agreed on the need to strengthen the ARF's role as the leading security forum in the Indo-Pacific region and to support its capacity to manage, address and reduce threats to regional peace and security, including through advancing its confidence building and preventive diplomacy mandates.

9. The Meeting deliberated on cooperation and joint efforts to address various traditional and non-traditional regional issues. The Meeting commended the region's continued commitment to addressing the complex challenges posed by terrorism, violent extremism conducive to terrorism (VECT), cyber-enabled and transnational organised crime, particularly online scams, which continue to grow in scale, sophistication, and impact across the region, including through cross sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation in border management and combating terrorism, trafficking in persons, and illicit drugs. In this connection, the Meeting was encouraged by the efforts of all ARF Participants in supporting the implementation and updating of the ARF Work Plan on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime 2023-2025 and the active participation in the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and

Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC). The Meeting also took note of the ongoing work under the ambit of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in facilitating strategic information exchanges on countering terrorism, VECT and radicalisation and the ADMM-Plus endeavours toward sharing experiences and best practices, as feasible, and enhancing capacity through relevant capacity-building initiatives.

10. The Meeting recognised the increasing importance of security of and in the use of ICTs to economic growth and of addressing the challenges arising from the rapidly changing ICT environment. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed and encouraged new initiatives undertaken to further promote confidence building measures and trust through the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of ICTs (ISM on ICTs Security) and, where appropriate, other relevant ASEAN-led mechanisms. The Meeting underlined the need to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation in ensuring ICTs security, given its cross-sectoral nature. The Meeting took note of the work of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security which focuses on forging a common understanding and confidence building.

11. The Meeting exchanged views on various challenges relating to the maritime domain, and shared concern over piracy, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, the degradation of marine eco system and biodiversity caused by the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine debris and marine pollution. The Meeting, therefore, noted the progress of various maritime cooperation through raising public awareness, practical engagements, and continued constructive dialogue, and stressed the importance of coordination among various frameworks in addressing maritime challenges under the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS) and other ASEAN and ASEAN-led frameworks such as the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ADMM, the ADMM Plus, the ADMM plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), as well as other similar arrangements such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships (ReCAAP).

12. The Meeting noted the need to further strengthen cooperation on disaster management particularly in areas of early warning and preparedness, taking into account the region's vulnerability to disasters, climate change and rising sea levels. The Meeting underlined the importance of enhancing capabilities and capacities of anticipatory actions, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) efforts in the region through the sharing of information and exchange of best practices under the ambit of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR).

13. The Meeting noted the concerns raised by some participants over the declining commitment and cooperation in global non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament mechanisms, and called on all countries, especially Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), to maintain and fully implement their commitments under these

mechanisms. The Meeting reiterated the importance of strengthening international and regional cooperative efforts in nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and chemical, biological and nuclear technology, as well as advancing the ultimate goal of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the prevention of their proliferation. The Meeting was pleased to note that the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ISM on NPD) continues to provide a platform for dialogue and exchange of views on non-proliferation and disarmament issues. The Meeting noted with appreciation, and encouraged the continued implementation of the Practical Arrangements (PA) between ASEAN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Cooperation in the Areas of Nuclear Science and Technology and Applications, Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards, which was signed in September 2019.

14. The Meeting called on the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to fulfil their obligations in advancing nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to recognise the need to completely eliminate nuclear weapons, which remains the only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances. The Meeting reiterated the commitment to preserving the Southeast Asian region as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) and free of all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and stressed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

15. The Meeting discussed the situation in the South China Sea, during which concerns were expressed by some Ministers, on the land reclamations activities, in the area, including actions that put the safety of all persons at risk, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region. The Meeting reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability, and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. The Meeting further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Meeting emphasised the importance of self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.

16. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, and prosperity. The Meeting underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety. The Meeting welcomed the

progress achieved so far in the ongoing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), notably the completion of the third reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) and encouraged continued positive momentum on the Draft COC. The Meeting looked forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting emphasised the need to maintain and promote an environment conducive to the COC negotiations, including the situation in the South China Sea, and thus welcomed practical measures that could reduce tensions and the risk of accidents, misunderstandings, and miscalculation. The Meeting stressed the importance of undertaking confidence building and preventive measures to enhance, among others, trust and confidence amongst parties, and reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

17. The Meeting expressed its deep concern over the escalation of conflicts and humanitarian situation in Myanmar, and encouraged progress on the implementation of the ASEAN Leaders' Five-Point Consensus (5PC). The Meeting noted ASEAN's united position that the 5PC remains its main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar and further reaffirmed the relevant Leaders' decisions. The Meeting denounced the continued acts of violence against civilians and public facilities and urged all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt indiscriminate violence, exercise utmost restraint, ensure the protection and safety of all civilians and civilian infrastructures, and create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogue. The Meeting welcomed the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on an Extended and Expanded Ceasefire in Myanmar. The Meeting also welcomed the continued progress in the provision of humanitarian assistance to Myanmar by the AHA Centre in support of Point 4 of the ASEAN Leaders' 5PC.

18. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the efforts of H.E. Tan Sri Othman Hashim as the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar. In carrying out his mandate, the Special Envoy has actively engaged a wide and diverse range of Myanmar stakeholders. The Special Envoy has also engaged ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Dialogue Partners, Myanmar neighbouring countries, international and regional partners, civil society organisations, humanitarian actors, and think tanks towards finding an inclusive and sustainable resolution to the crisis. This inclusive engagement reflects ASEAN's commitment to collaborative efforts in addressing the complex challenges in Myanmar.

19. The Meeting expressed concern over the recent developments in the Korean Peninsula and stressed the importance of resuming peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties in order to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. The Meeting expressed grave concern over the recent surge in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) intercontinental ballistic missile testing and ballistic missile launches and the increased tension in the Korean

Peninsula which are a worrisome development that threatens peace and stability in the region. The Meeting called on the DPRK to comply fully with all relevant UNSC Resolutions and called for peaceful dialogue among the concerned parties, and continue working towards the realisation of lasting peace, and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. The Meeting called for the full implementation of all relevant UNSC Resolutions and noted international efforts to bring about the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. Diplomatic efforts, including the creation of a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties should remain a priority. The Meeting reiterated its readiness to play a constructive role, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms such as the ARF in promoting a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue amongst the concerned parties. Some Ministers also emphasised the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions and detainees issues.

20. The Meeting continued to reaffirm its respect for sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The Meeting reiterated its call for compliance with the UN Charter and international law. The Meeting underlined the importance of an immediate cessation of hostilities and the serious engagement in a genuine dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Meeting supported the efforts of the UN Secretary-General in the search for a peaceful solution, and in this regard noted efforts to discuss the way forward for a ceasefire in Ukraine. The Meeting also called for the facilitation of rapid, safe, and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those in need in Ukraine, and for the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and persons in vulnerable situations.

21. The Meeting expressed grave concern over the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has been exacerbated following the 7 October 2023 attacks and the resumption of hostilities on 18 March 2025. The Meeting condemned all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, which have resulted in the alarming number of casualties, particularly among women and children, the continued restricted access to humanitarian aid, relief supplies and other basic needs, leading to the further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Meeting urged all relevant parties to accept the ceasefire proposal as outlined in paragraph 2 of UNSC Resolution 2735. The Meeting called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, especially women, children, the sick and the elderly. The Meeting underscored the importance of release from any arbitrary detention. The Meeting commended the efforts of various ASEAN Member States in providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and urged all ASEAN Member States and external partners to continue providing and facilitating such assistance for Gaza. The Meeting reaffirmed its support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the execution of its mandate. The Meeting called for the full resumption of rapid, safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to all those in need, including through increased capacity at border crossings,

including by sea. The Meeting called on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

22. The Meeting reaffirmed its longstanding support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the rights to self-determination, and to their homeland. In this regard, the Meeting urged all parties concerned to work towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict with a view to realising the two-State solution in accordance with international law and the relevant UNSC and UNGA resolutions, including UNGA resolution A/RES/ES-10/23 on the Admission of New Members to the UN dated 10 May 2024, and UNGA resolution A/RES/ES-10/27 on protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations dated 12 June 2025. The Meeting took note, and some of us underlined the importance of, the order on provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 26 January 2024. The Meeting acknowledged the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ on 19 July 2024, which is of the opinion, among others, that the United Nations, and especially the General Assembly, which requested this opinion, and the Security Council, should consider the precise modalities and further action required to bring to an end as rapidly as possible the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In this context, the Meeting reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law.

23. The Meeting expressed concern over the escalation of tensions in the Middle East since 13 June 2025, and welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and Iran on 24 June 2025. The Meeting urged all parties to respect the ceasefire and avoid further escalation of this conflict. The Meeting reaffirmed the obligation of all States to resolve their differences through peaceful means and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, in line with international law, including the United Nations (UN) Charter. The Meeting further reiterated the obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructures in armed conflicts consistent with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The Meeting supported ongoing efforts, including those led by the UN, aimed at de-escalating tensions and facilitating the resumption of constructive engagement among parties involved.

Review of Activities of Inter-sessional Year 2024-2025

24. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the productive discussions made at the eighteen ARF meetings and activities convened in Inter-Sessional Year 2024-2025, which appears as **ANNEX 2**, and endorsed the recommendations made by the ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held on 11 June 2025, in Penang, Malaysia.

25. The Meeting welcomed the contributions made by defence officials in the ARF process, including through exchange of views and sharing of information at the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue and the 22nd ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC), held on 8 May 2025 and 25 June 2025, respectively in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Meeting acknowledged the important role of the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons

(EEPs) in sustaining and deepening dialogue on regional security issues and working collaboratively to develop proposals to revitalise the ARF. The Meeting noted the recommendations of the 17th ARF EEPs Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, on 7-8 April 2025.

26. Recognising that Summary Reports serve as important reference documents, the Meeting discussed the low submission rate of Summary Reports of ARF meetings and activities. In this regard, the Meeting reminded the Co-Chairs of ARF meetings and activities to submit all pending Summary Reports to the ARF Unit by December 2025. The Meeting further tasked the ARF Unit to develop a template for a succinct Summary Report and to circulate it to ARF Participants by August 2025, to assist Co-Chairs of ARF meetings and activities in finalising their Summary Reports and submitting them to the ARF Unit by the deadline.

27. The Meeting noted that the number of pending activities within the ARF continues to increase, with many being carried forward from the previous Inter-Sessional Year. Co-Chairs of ARF meetings and activities were encouraged to schedule meetings in advance of the ARF Inter-Sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ISG on CBMs and PD) and the ARF SOM, with a view to allowing sufficient time for the full consideration of their outcomes.

28. The Meeting reaffirmed that the *2020 Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol* provides clear guidance for the conduct of ARF activities and initiatives, including work plans, concept papers and statements. The Meeting noted, among others, the requirement outlined in the Guide for proposals to be discussed at the ISM or ISG prior to receiving the endorsement of the ARF SOM. The Meeting emphasised the need for Co-Chairs to send the invitation package early to all ARF participants to ensure full and equal participation in ARF Track 1 Activities.

Programme of Work for Inter-sessional Year 2025-2026

29. The Meeting approved the List of ARF Track 1 Activities for Inter-Sessional Year 2025-2026, which appears as **ANNEX 3**.

Future Direction of ARF

30. The Meeting noted that the ARF HPOA II will expire on 31 December 2025. The Meeting encouraged all ARF Participants to endeavour to complete the outstanding action lines. The Meeting recognised the importance of ensuring continuity in the work of the ARF and agreed that the ARF would continue in implementing confidence building measures through the activities under ARF Inter-Sessional Meetings while the ARF Plan of Action beyond 2026 is being developed. The Meeting further agreed that the ARF Unit to commence the development of a new ARF Plan of Action that includes tangible and practical action that are aligned with the ASEAN Community Vision 2045,

to be adopted in 2026. In this regard, the Meeting noted that subsequent updates should also be made to the ARF ISMs' Work Plans to make them synchronised with the new POA.

31. The Meeting noted that discussions among ASEAN Member States on the revitalisation and future direction of the ARF are ongoing. The Meeting further noted that ASEAN's deliberations on this matter would subsequently be shared with all ARF Participants. The Meeting reiterated its support for ASEAN in this endeavour and looked forward to communicating outcomes.

32. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat for supporting the ARF Chair, the Co-Chairs of ARF ISMs as well as Co-Chairs of other endorsed ARF activities. The Meeting encouraged the further strengthening of the ARF Unit in facilitating and supporting the work of the ARF, including fulfilling its role as depository of ARF documents and serving as institutional memory of the ARF.

33. The Meeting welcomed the publication of the 2025 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO), which included voluntary contributions from 20 ARF Participants. The Meeting shared the view that the ARF ASO serves as an important document for fostering confidence-building and transparency as well as facilitating exchange of views and mutual understanding among ARF Participants. In this regard, the ARF Chair encouraged all ARF Participants to continue to contribute to future editions.

34. The Meeting welcomed the Philippines as the incoming ARF Chair for 2026 and looked forward to working together and further strengthening the ARF.
