



## 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 2025, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The Meeting was co-chaired by YBhg. Dato' Mohd. Suhaimi Jaafar, Undersecretary, Malaysia's High Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision, and Ms. Natasha Burley, Political Officer, European External Action Services (EEAS), European Union (EU). The Meeting was attended by representatives from all ARF Participants, except the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). 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 their opening remarks, the Co-Chairs emphasised the vital role of the ARF as a key platform for fostering dialogue, promoting mutual trust and understanding among its Participants, particularly in light of the increasingly complex security landscape. Acknowledging the significant global changes since the ARF's inception thirty years ago, they underscored the need to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance. In this regard, it was noted that, as part of Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship priorities, ASEAN has begun to undertake an exercise to review and revitalise the ARF by taking stock of its achievements, assessing its challenges, and developing recommendations to enhance the Forum's efficiency and effectiveness.

3. The Co-Chairs further highlighted that the evolving security landscape continues to present complex and multifaceted challenges, requiring a strategic shift from confidence-building measures to preventive diplomacy, and to remain effective, the ARF must adapt to these emerging threats while upholding ASEAN centrality. In the face of both traditional and non-traditional challenges such as maritime security, cyber threats, and climate change, it was underlined that the ARF must remain open

and adaptive, complementing traditional security measures with innovative approaches. In this context, and given that the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action (HPOA) II is set to expire this year, the development of a new, updated, and relevant POA is both timely and essential. The Co-Chairs further underscored that the new POA should be comprehensive and reflective of the current security environment, and formulated through extensive consultations to ensure it addresses current priorities and sets realistic, actionable goals.

## **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 AND PREPARATIONS OF THE ARF INTER-SESSIONAL MEETINGS, PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARF WORK PLANS AND OTHER MEETINGS**

### **4.1. 7<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of ICTs (ISM on ICTs Security) and ARF Work Plan on Security of and in the Use of ICTs**

6. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the 7<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on ICTs Security, co-chaired by the Philippines and Canada on 26 March 2025 in Manila. The Meeting also noted that six concept notes for new activities in the Inter-Sessional Year (ISY) 2025-2026 were tabled at the 7<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on ICTs Security for consideration, reflecting the ARF's high level of interest in advancing collective resilience in the field of ICTs. The Meeting took note that inputs are currently being consolidated by its respective proponents.

7. Further to the mandate given by the 31<sup>st</sup> ARF in July 2024, the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security have reviewed and assessed the action lines of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action (HPOA) II, related to the security of and in the use of ICTs, noted that all ten action lines have been implemented. It was further noted that at the 15<sup>th</sup> ARF Open-Ended Study Group on Confidence Building Measures to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs (OESG) on 25 March 2025 in Manila, an informal discussion and breakout groups were conducted to exchange views on the way forward of the HPOA II and ARF Work Plan on ICTs Security, whereby ARF

Participants shared the view that many elements of the 2015 ARF Work Plan on ICTs Security remain relevant in guiding the work of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security and highlighted the need to ensure that succeeding ARF Plans of Action are complementary to the ARF Work Plan on ICTs Security. Meanwhile, the Meeting took note of the observation that such discussions in breakout groups format, rather than plenary session, were not in line with the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol. The Meeting further took note that the 8<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on ICTs Security is scheduled to be held in Manila in 2026.

#### **4.2. 21<sup>st</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC) and ARF Work Plan for Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime 2024-2026**

8. The Meeting noted that discussions at the 21<sup>st</sup> ARF ISM on CTTC held in Dhaka on 9-10 April 2025, co-chaired by the Philippines, Bangladesh and the United States, focused on the five priority areas of the ARF Work Plan on CTTC. The Meeting further took note that three proposals for new activities in the next ISY were discussed and that in-depth scenario-based discussions were convened in which ARF Participants shared best practices on preventing terrorism and transnational crime.

9. With regard to the CTTC-related action lines of the HPOA II, the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on CTTC assessed that fourteen out of twenty-one action lines have been implemented. In this connection, ARF Participants were encouraged to explore proposing activities that address the seven pending action lines. It was further noted that the 21<sup>st</sup> ARF ISM on CTTC deliberated on the way forward for the post-2025 ARF POA and suggested the inclusion of action lines related to Border Security Management in the new POA. The Meeting further took note that the 22<sup>nd</sup> ARF ISM on CTTC will be held in Manila in 2026.

#### **4.3. 16<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS) and ARF Work Plan for Maritime Security 2022-2026**

10. The Meeting noted that the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on MS, co-chaired by Cambodia and China in Beijing on 24 April 2025, had an in-depth discussion on maritime-related frameworks, marine environmental protection, submarine cables construction and protection, and maritime safety and cooperation. The Meeting also noted that in the current ISY, the following activities were convened: (i) 5<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety; (ii) 2<sup>nd</sup> ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building; and (iii) 6<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments. The Meeting was further informed that the Philippines, India, Papua New Guinea and the United States, as the co-sponsors of the Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, are currently consolidating inputs from ARF Participants. The Meeting was also informed

that China proposed to hold the 6<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety and compile the Compendium of Best Practices on Safeguarding and Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety among ARF Participants in the inter-sessional year 2025-2026. Several participants noted the importance of timely circulation of invitation packages to the ARF activities to ensure their inclusiveness and the efficiency of ARF process.

11. Given that the current ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security is set to expire in 2026, the Meeting was informed that a new Work Plan would be developed by the new set of co-chairs of the ARF ISM on MS, which will be identified in the next ISY. On the implementation of maritime security-related action lines of the HPOA II, the Meeting noted that nine action lines have been implemented while three action lines remain pending. The Meeting noted that the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on MS will continue consultations to further assess the implementation of the ARF HPOA II and provide an update in due course.

#### **4.4. 16<sup>th</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ISM on NPD) and the ARF Work Plan on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**

12. The Meeting noted that the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on NPD, co-chaired by the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, was held in Manila on 19-21 March 2025. The Meeting further noted that participants exchanged views on nuclear disarmament, conflict risk reduction, youth perspectives on disarmament, and space security, as well as on the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on NPD. Regarding the implementation of NPD-related action lines under the HPOA II, the Meeting acknowledged that five out of thirteen action lines have been implemented. The Meeting further took note that the 17<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on NPD will take place in Manila in 2026.

#### **4.5. 23<sup>rd</sup> ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR) and the ARF Work Plan for Disaster Relief 2024-2027**

13. The Meeting noted that the 23<sup>rd</sup> ARF ISM on DR will be co-chaired by Viet Nam, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, tentatively in the first week of June 2025 in Sri Lanka.

#### **4.6. 22<sup>nd</sup> ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC)**

14. The Meeting noted that the 22<sup>nd</sup> ASPC is tentatively scheduled to be held on 11-12 June in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

#### **4.7. ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD)**

15. The Meeting noted that discussions at the ARF DOD held on 8 May 2025, were focused on three key areas: (i) strengthening regional security architecture in addressing current and future challenges; (ii) the challenges of emerging technologies on defence and security; and (iii) developments in regional defence cooperation. It was noted that the DOD expressed broad support towards ASEAN Centrality and ASEAN-led mechanisms, particularly in their role in reinforcing the regional security architecture. The DOD concluded with a shared understanding of the need for the ARF DOD to continue evolving and respond to the increasingly complex security landscape shaped by both traditional and non-traditional security threats. Participants emphasised the importance of promoting confidence building measures and enhancing information sharing and fostering greater synergy with platforms such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus.

#### **4.8. 26<sup>th</sup> ARF Heads of Defence Universities/ Colleges/ Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM)**

16. The Meeting noted that discussion at the 26<sup>th</sup> ARF HDUCIM, co-chaired by Cambodia and Sri Lanka in Colombo on 23-24 January 2025, focused on three sub-themes: (i) Influence of Critical Technologies on Defence Leadership; (ii) Responding to Climate Change and Systemic Risks, and (iii) Achieving Energy Security through an Integrated Response to Energy Transitions. It was noted that the key outcomes of the 26<sup>th</sup> ARF HDUCIM included: (i) reaffirmation of regional cooperation among ARF Participants; (ii) the need to facilitate discussion on key security issues; (iii) the need to ensure a high level of participation and robust international education.

#### **4.9. 17<sup>th</sup> ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) Meeting**

17. The Meeting noted that the 17<sup>th</sup> ARF EEPs Meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur on 7-8 April 2025, co-chaired by Malaysia and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The Meeting was informed that the 17<sup>th</sup> ARF EEPs discussed evolving dynamics between major powers in the Asia-Pacific, the effect of regional security issues on ASEAN Centrality, and digital security in the context of transnational crime. The EEPs also underlined the importance of ASEAN Centrality and strengthening ASEAN-led multilateral mechanisms, and deliberated on the future direction of the ARF. The Meeting further noted that the recommendations of the EEPs have been circulated to all ARF Participants for comments and input by 15 May, and that the recommendations would be submitted to the ARF SOM for endorsement and subsequently to the 32<sup>nd</sup> ARF.

#### 4.10. Updates on ARF activities for the current Inter-Sessional Year

18. The Meeting took note that, thus far, five out of fourteen workshops have been convened. In this connection, the Meeting was informed of the following:

- a. Planning is underway for the ARF Training on Developing Exercises to Counter CBRN Terrorism. The Philippines and the United States, as co-chairs of this activity, intend to convene the activity in this calendar year;
- b. The schedule for the ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions is currently being discussed by Thailand, China and the United States as its co-chairs;
- c. The ARF Unit has circulated the link for ARF Participants' input to the Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, co-sponsored by the Philippines, India, Papua New Guinea and the United States. The co-sponsors requested that input to the Compendium be submitted by 30 May 2025;
- d. The ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy for addressing Climate Change, co-chaired by Cambodia, Timor-Leste and the United States, is being withdrawn due to a change in policy of the United States' current administration;
- e. Consultations among the Philippines, ROK and United States as co-chairs of the ARF Workshop on Best Practices for Port State Measures to Combat IUU Fishing are ongoing, and the schedule for this workshop will be shared in due course;
- f. Further information on the schedule for the ARF Seminar on Combating Online Scam, to be co-chaired by Thailand, Singapore and China, will be shared in due course; and
- g. Updates on the 3<sup>rd</sup> ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building to be co-chaired by Cambodia and China, as well as the ARF Symposium on Nuclear Technologies for Public Security to be co-chaired by Myanmar and China, and the ARF Training Course on Earthquake and Tsunami Monitoring, Early Warning and Mitigation Technology, to be co-chaired by Indonesia, China and the EU, will be shared in due course.

#### 4.11. Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy

19. The Meeting noted that, despite the growing number of preventive diplomacy-related activities in recent years, none were convened during this ISY. The Co-Chairs further informed the Meeting that three out of the eleven action lines in the Work Plan remain unimplemented, namely: (i) action line 9 on the establishment of a regional risk reduction centre; (ii) action line 10 on developing optional and voluntary preventive diplomacy mechanisms; and (iii) action line 11 on exploring and consider the potential

for mediation/facilitated dialogue and conciliation. Noting the challenges in implementing aspirational action lines, the Co-Chairs emphasised the pressing need for the ARF to assess and exchange ideas on ways to address these outstanding action lines.

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

### **5.1. Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2025-2026**

20. The Meeting reviewed the draft List of Track 1 Activities for ISY 2025–2026 and noted the following:

- i. The EU and Canada announced their intention to propose an ARF workshop on climate security. It was noted that the concept paper for this proposed activity will be circulated within the next ten days;
- ii. China has put forth two proposals related to maritime security, namely the 6<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety, and Compendium of Best Practices on Safeguarding and Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety among ARF Participants, co-sponsored by the Philippines;
- iii. The United States has circulated two concept papers related to CTTC, namely the ARF Workshop on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism through Effective Reintegration and the ARF Workshop on Preventing and Countering the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) for Terrorist Purposes;
- iv. The United States and Singapore have proposed an ARF workshop on the ASEAN Checklist for implementing the Norms of Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace.
- v. The Philippines has put forth proposals for the ARF Workshop on Victims of Terrorism to be co-chaired with Canada, the ARF Workshop on Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) Identification, and the ARF Workshop on Peace and Security in Outer Space;
- vi. Russia and Myanmar have put forth a proposal for the ARF Workshop on Capacity Building in the field of Countering the use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes;
- vii. Australia and Malaysia put forth a proposal for the ARF Points of Contact Directory Online Simulation. Australia expressed interest to co-chair the ARF Workshop on CII Identification, and the ARF Workshop on Peace and Security in Outer Space with the Philippines. Australia is also proposing for an ARF Workshop relating to the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) as announced at the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on MS. It was noted that Viet

- Nam and Singapore have expressed interest to co-chair the workshop and that the concept paper will be circulated in due course;
- viii. Japan, alongside Thailand and Canada, has proposed for the ARF Workshop on Lessons Learned in Governance of Security of and in the Use of ICTs; and
  - ix. Indonesia shared that as announced at the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on MS, Indonesia will be proposing for a workshop on enhancing the safety of the maritime sphere in the Asia-Pacific region. It was noted that the concept paper will be circulated in due course.

21. The Meeting noted that proponents of new activities are currently consolidating comments and input to the concept papers. It was further noted that per ARF 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 regard, proponents of activities and co-chairs of ARF meetings are requested to study the draft List of ARF Track 1 Activities for verification and provide their updates and confirmation to the ARF Chair and the ARF Unit for further consolidation. The finalised list of ARF activities will be submitted to the ARF SOM for endorsement in June and subsequent approval from the Ministers.

## **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**

22. The Meeting noted that the Philippines, as the incoming ARF Chair in 2026, will be co-chairing the ARF DOD and ISG on CBMs and PD with New Zealand. The Meeting was further informed that the ARF DOD and ISG on CBMs and PD are scheduled to be convened back-to-back in the second week of May 2026 in Manila.

### **6.2. 18<sup>th</sup> ARF EEPs**

23. The Meeting noted that Malaysia is seeking for a non-ASEAN co-chair for the 18<sup>th</sup> ARF EEPs. In this regard, the Meeting noted expressions of interest from Russia and Australia and that further confirmation will be provided in due course.

### **6.3. 27<sup>th</sup> ARF HDUCIM**

24. The Meeting noted that Cambodia will co-chair the 27<sup>th</sup> ARF HDUCIM alongside Canada in Phnom Penh from 18-21 November 2025. It was noted that the discussion at the 27<sup>th</sup> ARF HDUCIM will be primarily focused on two themes: (i) the geopolitical impact on climate change, and (ii) the role of non-State actors in shaping regional

security. The Meeting further noted that the invitation package will be circulated in due course.

#### **6.4. 9<sup>th</sup> ARF PEM**

25. The Meeting was informed that following the success of the 8<sup>th</sup> ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting (PEM) co-chaired by Indonesia and Japan in June 2024, Indonesia encouraged ARF participants to convene the 9<sup>th</sup> ARF PEM in the next ISY.

### **AGENDA ITEM 7: FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF**

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

26. The Meeting noted that pursuant to the tasking by the 29<sup>th</sup> ARF in 2022 and the 31<sup>st</sup> ARF in 2024, Co-Chairs of ARF meetings and activities are mandated to provide assessments on the implementation of action lines relevant to their purview. Following this, the ARF Unit circulated a Matrix to track the progress of implementation of the HPOA II, and based on inputs received from ARF Participants in 2024, it was assessed that 56 out of 107 action lines of the ARF HPOA II have been implemented, resulting in an overall implementation rate of 52.3%. The Meeting further noted that while implementation of *Section 1: Areas of Cooperation* and *Section 2: Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy* is progressing well, 19 out of 22 action lines under *Section 3: Institutional Enhancement* remain pending.

27. The Meeting was further informed that challenges in assessing the implementation of the ARF HPOA II continue to be encountered, primarily due to the ambiguity of many action lines and the lack of information and capability to determine the quantifiability of some of the action lines. In particular, the unavailability of final Summary Reports from many ARF workshops and activities creates difficulties for the ARF Unit to determine the correlation of these activities with the action lines of the HPOA II. This also hinders the ARF Unit's function as the depository of ARF documents and the institutional memory of the ARF. To support the monitoring of the HPOA II implementation, Co-Chairs of ARF meetings and activities were encouraged to submit their final reports to the ARF Unit. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the ARF Unit for its invaluable assistance and noted that the ARF Unit will circulate the Matrix on the Progress of Implementation of the ARF HPOA II for further feedback and input from ARF Participants, with a deadline of 23 May 2025, and the results will be reported to the ARF SOM on 11 June.

28. The Meeting exchanged views on the way forward and future direction of the ARF, noting that the ARF HPOA II is set to expire at the end of 2025. In this regard,

the Meeting agreed to recommend to the ARF SOM to extend the implementation period of the HPOA II by one year until 2026, while concurrently commencing development of a new Plan of Action (POA). This extension would enable ARF Participants to address the outstanding action lines and allow adequate time for the development and adoption of a new POA in 2026. The Meeting took note of the suggestion to institutionalise the reporting on the implementation progress of the HPOA II and subsequent POAs as a standing agenda at all ARF ISMs and the ISG. The Meeting also noted the suggestion that concept papers for proposed ARF activities should include specific action lines that correspond to the activity, to enhance alignment as well as facilitate more accurate monitoring and evaluation.

29. Drawing on the experience from the development of the HPOA II in 2020, the Meeting reiterated that action lines in the new POA should be formulated in accordance with the Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) principles, to create focused and attainable goals. Recognising that the drafting of such a POA will require extensive consultations, the Meeting acknowledged the suggestion that any country proposing the inclusion of an action line in the new POA should also identify ways for its implementation. The Meeting further noted the suggestion that the new POA be aligned with the Work Plans of each ARF workstream, with the aim of enhancing coherence across the ARF's various areas of cooperation, encouraging regular updates, and ensuring more systematic and timely tracking of progress across all action lines.

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

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

30. The Meeting noted that contributions to the 2025 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) should be submitted to Malaysia as the ARF Chair by 5 June 2025. The Meeting further took note that the 2025 edition of the ARF ASO will be issued at the 32<sup>nd</sup> ARF on 11 July 2025.

### **8.2. Date of the ARF SOM**

31. The Meeting noted that the invitation package for the ARF SOM, scheduled to be held on 11 June 2025 in Penang, will be circulated in due course.

## **AGENDA ITEM 9: CLOSING REMARKS BY CO-CHAIRS**

32. The Co-Chairs expressed their appreciation towards the ARF Participants for their active engagement and constructive exchange of views, as well as to the ASEAN

Secretariat for the support rendered towards the convening of the meeting. The Co-Chairs acknowledged the significant work carried out in the ARF thus far, and expressed hope for the continued strengthening of cooperation and collaboration among ARF Participants, with a view to contributing to the ARF's ongoing evolution and the promotion of peace and security in the region.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

33. The Meeting expressed gratitude and appreciation to the Co-Chairs for their effective co-chairmanship and to Malaysia for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting. The Meeting 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.	Finalisation of concept papers	Prior to the 31 <sup>st</sup> ARF	Proponents of respective proposals
2.	Finalisation of the List of ARF Track I Activities for the ISY 2024-2025.	Prior to the 31 <sup>st</sup> ARF	ARF Chair and ARF Unit
3.	Circulation of the Matrix of Implementation of the ARF HPOA II	Prior to the ARF SOM	ARF Unit
4.	Submission of contributions to the 2025 ARF Annual Security Outlook.	By 5 June 2025	ARF Participants

