



CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT
16TH ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING
ON MARITIME SECURITY

Beijing, China, 25 April 2025

INTRODUCTION

1. The Meeting was co-chaired by Mr Noy Choumneanh, Deputy Director-General, General Department of ASEAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Cambodia; and Mr Tan Qingsheng, Deputy Director-General, the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China. The Meeting was attended by all ARF Participants, except the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the European Union, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka. Representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat were also in attendance.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING SESSION

2. Mr Tan Qingsheng underscored the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS) as a vital platform for fostering mutual understanding and enhancing regional responses to maritime security challenges. While overall maritime stability in the Asia-Pacific has been maintained, he noted the increasing complexity of both traditional and non-traditional security threats amid geopolitical competition, international crime, natural disasters, and environmental degradation. Four key points were highlighted, emphasising: (i) the importance of upholding shared security; (ii) peaceful settlement of disputes; (iii) promoting maritime prosperity through cooperation; and (iv) strengthening multilateralism.

3. Mr Noy Choumneanh welcomed ARF Participants and expressed appreciation for their continued commitment to ARF ISM on MS as a constructive platform for dialogue and cooperation. He acknowledged the significant developments in regional maritime governance, driven by increased globalisation and maritime activity, including trade and resource exploration. At the same time, he noted the growing complexity of maritime security challenges, including environmental degradation,

transnational crimes, and territorial disputes, which no single country can address alone. In this context, he underscored the importance of regional cooperation in upholding stability, prosperity, and sustainable development. He called for stronger collaboration in addressing both traditional and non-traditional maritime security threats and reaffirmed its support for the effective implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security. The Meeting was seen as an opportunity to renew collective commitment and generate practical ideas to promote regional peace and address emerging maritime challenges.

AGENDA ITEM 2: COORDINATION, CONSULTATION, AND SYNERGY BETWEEN MARITIME-RELATED FRAMEWORKS

4. The ASEAN Secretariat briefed the Meeting on maritime-related developments in other ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, including ongoing initiatives and discussions under the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting, as the Lead Sectoral Body for maritime cooperation; ASEAN Maritime Forum and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum; the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting and ADMM-Plus; the law enforcement sector comprising the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime and the ASEAN Seaport Interdiction Task Force, a subsidiary mechanism of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters; the ASEAN Labour Ministers' Meeting; the ASEAN Transport Ministers' Meeting; the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry; ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment; as well as the ASEAN Blue Economy.

5. The Meeting also took note of the briefing by Indonesia on the ASEAN Coordinating Task Force on Blue Economy, which was adopted by ASEAN Leaders at the 43rd ASEAN Summit in September 2023 and part of Indonesia's Priority Economic Deliverables under its ASEAN Chairmanship that year. Indonesia underscored the framework's intended role as a non-political, economic tool to help middle-income ASEAN Member States' transition to high-income status through green industries; and highlighted opportunities in marine biotechnology, renewable energy, and sustainable fisheries, while stressing the importance of regional cooperation and capacity-building for equitable implementation.

AGENDA ITEM 3: COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

6. The Meeting noted a presentation from China on its marine plastic reduction efforts, highlighting national policies that have significantly decreased shoreline waste

through systematic clean-ups and regional partnerships. The Meeting also noted Cambodia's presentation on coastal climate resilience, which highlighted community-based adaptation projects and nature-based solutions supported by international funding. It was noted that these approaches demonstrated practical pathways for addressing marine environmental challenges at different scales, underscoring the value of information sharing to strengthen regional cooperation.

AGENDA ITEM 4: ENHANCING COOPERATION ON SUBMARINE CABLES CONSTRUCTION AND PROTECTION

7. The Meeting noted presentations from Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority on regional efforts to streamline repair permits and coordinate maritime activities; China's Academy of Information and Communications Technology on its national framework for cable protection using AI surveillance and penalties for violations in designated coastal buffer zones; Indonesia's maritime agency on balancing cable routes with fishing and shipping in its archipelagic waters; India's National Maritime Foundation on Indo-Pacific partnerships to address repair ship shortages; and S.B. Submarine Systems (SBSS), a provider of subsea cable installation and maintenance services, which presented industry data showing rising cable damage in Asia (204 incidents in 2024, 86% caused by anchors and fishing gear) and warned of repair delays due to permit bottlenecks and shortages of specialised ships in the region. The Meeting underscored the importance of aligning national laws and regulations with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and addressing maritime disputes peacefully and emphasised ASEAN's role in bridging technical and geopolitical divides.

AGENDA ITEM 5: MARITIME SAFETY AND COOPERATION

8. The Meeting noted presentations from the Guangdong Maritime Safety Administration, China, on regional ferry safety initiatives, including AI-driven monitoring systems and satellite-based emergency communications to mitigate risks such as overloading and navigation hazards; Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority on digitalisation efforts such as cross-border electronic ship certification, real-time vessel coordination platforms, and automated port clearance systems to enhance operational efficiency while prioritising safety; Malaysia's Prime Minister's Department on the trilateral cooperation mechanism among Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines in the Sulu-Celebes Seas, which significantly reduced piracy and kidnapping incidents through joint patrols and intelligence-sharing; and the Regional

Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP ISC) on combating piracy and armed robbery through regional data-sharing frameworks. The Meeting underscored the effectiveness of these collaboration models and real-time alert systems in addressing transnational threats, while emphasising the integration of digital tools to harmonise regional safety protocols. It also highlighted the urgency of replicating successful frameworks, standardising legal measures to close jurisdictional gaps, and adopting a “whole-of-government” approach to safeguard critical shipping lanes and enhance incident response across ASEAN waters.

AGENDA ITEM 6: FOLLOW-UP TO THE ARF ISM-MS WORK PLAN 2022-2026

9. The Meeting took note of the outcomes of the following activities in the current ISY 2024–2025:

- a. 5th ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety, co-chaired by Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and China, held in Guangzhou, China, in October 2024;
- b. 2nd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building, co-chaired by Thailand and China, held in Guangzhou, China, in October 2024; and
- c. 6th ARF Workshop: Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues, co-chaired by Viet Nam, Australia, Canada, the European Union and New Zealand, in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, in March 2025.

10. The Meeting further took note of the update from the Co-Sponsors of the Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, the Philippines, India, Papua New Guinea and the United States, that they had recently circulated a link for Participants to submit input by 30 May 2025. It was noted that this Compendium will be a collection of best practices on the implementation of the ISPS Code across the region, as highlighted at the three ARF training activities held between 2022 and 2024 that showcased exemplary models, practices, and key resources on the effective implementation of the ISPS Code.

11. The Meeting further noted the outcomes of the ARF Workshop on the Law of the Sea, co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia in July 2024 under the ARF ISY 2023–2024, which focused on dispute settlement mechanisms under the Law of the Sea. The Meeting noted that, as the Workshop was held after the 15th ARF ISM on MS in 2024, its Co-Chairs took the opportunity to brief the current ARF ISM on MS on the Workshop’s outcomes.

12. Noting that the following activities would be considered as implemented in the next ISY 2025–2026 if not conducted before the 32nd ARF in July 2025, the Meeting took note of the updates on the yet-to-be-convened activities in the current ISY 2024–2025:

- a. On the 3rd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building, to be co-chaired by Cambodia and China, the Meeting noted China's intention to convene the activity in the last quarter of 2025;
- b. On the ARF Workshop on Best Practices for Port State Measures to Combat Illegal, Unreported, or Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, to be co-chaired by the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and the United States, the Meeting noted that the Co-Chairs look forward to scheduling this Workshop soon and will provide an update in due course; and
- c. On the ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions, to be co-chaired by Thailand, China and the United States, the Meeting noted that the schedule for the Workshop remains to be determined following final consultations among Co-Chairs.

13. On the new proposals for the next ARF ISY 2025–2026, the Meeting noted two concept papers proposed by China, which had been circulated prior to the Meeting, namely: (i) 6th ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety, and (ii) Compendium of Best Practices on Safeguarding and Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety among ARF Participants. On the latter, the Meeting took note of the Philippines' support for this Compendium and its intention to co-sponsor the initiative.

14. The Meeting further took note of the introduction of two additional proposals: one by Indonesia for an ARF workshop on enhancing the safety of the maritime sphere in the Asia-Pacific region; and another by Australia 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). The Meeting further noted that the concept papers for these proposals are being finalised and both proponents intend to circulate them prior to the ARF Inter-Sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ISG on CBMs and PD) through the ARF Unit. The Meeting further took note of Viet Nam's intention to co-chair the Workshop proposed by Australia.

15. The Meeting noted that the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security would not require updating until after 2026. The Meeting also acknowledged the Philippines' query to the Co-Chairs on whether they intend to assess the implementation progress of the maritime security-related action lines of the Ha Noi Plan of Action (HPOA) II (2020–2025), as tasked by the 31st ARF in 2024. Co-Chair Cambodia indicated that it would seek the ARF Unit's assistance to ensure the Co-Chairs fulfil this task.

AGENDA ITEM 8: CLOSING SESSION

16. The Co-Chairs expressed appreciation to all ARF Participants for their active engagement and valuable contributions to the 16th ARF ISM on MS. Underscoring the importance of continued practical cooperation, information sharing, and confidence-building measures in addressing traditional and non-traditional maritime security threats, the Co-Chairs encouraged all ARF Participants to uphold the principles of peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable use of the oceans, while acknowledging that existing differences should not hinder collective efforts to maintain regional peace and stability.

17. The Co-Chairs welcomed the substantive discussions held, including on issues such as submarine cable protection, maritime safety, and illegal fishing; and reaffirmed support for ongoing regional initiatives, including the effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the advancement of negotiations on a Code of Conduct (COC), which are seen as crucial to promoting peace and trust in the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

18. The Meeting expressed sincere thanks to the Co-Chairs for their leadership, warm and gracious hospitality, and excellent arrangements in convening the Meeting.

ISSUES TO BE FOLLOWED UP

No.	Key Decision/Issues	Timeline	Follow-up By
1.	Circulation of the concept papers for the new proposed activities for the next Inter-Sessional Year	Prior to the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD	Proponents of activities

