



CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY REPORT

15th ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING ON MARITIME SECURITY (ARF ISM on MS)

6 May 2024, Jakarta, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

1. The 15th Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS) was held in hybrid format on 6 May 2024. The Meeting was Co-Chaired by Mr. Rolliansyah Soemirat, Director of ASEAN Political Security Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia; H.E. Mr. Jayant N. Khobragade, Ambassador of India to ASEAN; and Ms. Kate Rebholz, Deputy Chief of Mission, United States Mission to ASEAN.

2. The Meeting was attended by all ARF Participants, except Bangladesh, DPRK, Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, and Sri Lanka. Representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat were also in attendance. The List of Participants appears as **ANNEX 1**.

AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING SESSION AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3. In his opening remarks, Mr. Rolliansyah Soemirat emphasised the importance of maritime security in the Asia-Pacific region, noting that the strategic sea lanes and significant shipping routes are crucial for the livelihood of the region's population. He further underlined that despite the growing challenges such as geopolitical tensions, climate change, environmental degradation, and increased trade volume, cooperation between the 27 ARF Participants has contributed to the peace and stability in the region over the past thirty years. Mr. Soemirat also shared the need to ensure structured coordination and sustained collaboration to further build trust and lasting peace in the region. In addition, he informed the Meeting on the publication of the ASEAN Maritime Outlook (AMO) in 2023, and underlined the importance of close cooperation between the ARF and other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN

Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)/ADMM-Plus as well as the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF) and its Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) to minimise duplication of efforts and ensure complementarity between the various ASEAN-led maritime-related mechanisms.

4. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Jayant N. Khobragade highlighted India's decade-long Act East policy, which places ASEAN at its center, and noted the connection between ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. He emphasized India's active participation in various ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), ADMM-Plus, and the ARF, and the successful convening of the inaugural ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise in 2023, which enhanced interoperability between India and ASEAN navies. Ambassador Khobragade further highlighted the importance of ensuring peaceful resolution of disputes in line with international law and enhancing cooperation to ensure peace and stability in the region. He expressed hope that the ongoing COC negotiations will not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of all nations under international law, including those not party to the negotiations. He mentioned Indian Navy's extensive operations to prevent piracy and armed attacks since the recent crisis in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. In particular, he illustrated India's role in the capture of 35 pirates onboard MV Ruen, and their trial in India. He reiterated the importance of Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) through which a majority of global trade flows and India's contribution to the 'Aids to Navigation Fund' in SOMS for enhanced safety. He shared that India is committed to ensure maritime security in the region, including through strengthening efforts and cooperation on countering piracy, maritime safety, as well as search and rescue.

5. In her opening remarks, Ms. Kate Rebholz reaffirmed the United States (U.S.)' commitment to supporting connectivity in the region and ASEAN centrality, in line with ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. She emphasised the importance of the ARF as a platform for dialogue on maritime security and other security issues, highlighting the Ha Noi Plan of Action II and the ARF Work Plan on Maritime Security as key frameworks for cooperation in the ARF. Ms. Rebholz shared that the U.S.' approach involves three main efforts: (i) promoting international law and a rules-based order through diplomacy, (ii) building capacity for maritime law enforcement and militaries, and (iii) conducting operations to demonstrate freedom of navigation. Noting the various maritime-related challenges in the region, including illegal fishing and climate change, she underlined the importance of high-level discussions and collaborations as well as the need for sharing information and best practices in the ARF, and looked forward to further discussions to enhance maritime security cooperation.

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

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

7. The Meeting noted the ASEAN Secretariat's briefing on maritime-related efforts undertaken by the various ASEAN-led mechanisms across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community and took note that the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) as the Lead Sectoral Body for maritime cooperation, had developed and launched the inaugural AMO at the 13th AMF in August 2023. The Meeting took note that the AMO is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of maritime cooperation within ASEAN and utilised as a tool to identify areas for development as well as to minimise duplication of efforts. The Meeting was also briefed on: (i) activities and initiatives in the ADMM and ADMM-Plus such as the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI), the ADMM Guidelines for Maritime Interaction and ADMM+1 Exercises; (ii) developments in AMF/EAMF including the establishment of the EAMF website and pool of experts; (iii) developments on blue economy including the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Task Force on Blue Economy and the ASEAN Blue Economy Forum scheduled to be held in August 2024; and (iv) efforts undertaken by the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) in combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing including the establishment of the ASEAN Network on Combatting IUU Fishing (AN-IUU), the operationalisation of its interactive platform, and the adoption of the Guidelines for Sharing, Access to, and Use of IUU Fishing-Related Information for the AN-IUU interactive platform. The Meeting noted that these efforts reflect ASEAN's commitment to enhancing regional maritime cooperation, ensuring sustainable maritime development, and combating illegal fishing to promote the sustainable use of marine resources.

AGENDA ITEM 3: FOLLOW-UP TO THE ARF ISM ON MS WORK PLAN 2022–2026

3.1. Outcomes of and updates on ARF ISM on MS activities during Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024

3.1.1. 5th ARF Workshop: Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues

8. The Meeting was briefed on the outcomes of the 5th ARF Workshop on Implementing United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and Other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues, co-chaired by Viet Nam, Australia, Canada, the European Union (EU) and New Zealand in November

2023. It was noted that the workshop provided a platform for experts, scholars, officials, and practitioners from ARF Participants to network and have in-depth discussion on the application and implementation of international instruments in addressing contemporary maritime challenges. It aimed to enhance understanding of maritime issues, explore strategies for sustainable ocean management, and promote adherence to international laws and agreements governing maritime activities.

3.1.2. 5th ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety

9. The Meeting noted that the 5th ARF Workshop on Ferry Safety, to be co-chaired by Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and China, will be carried forward for implementation in the ARF Inter-Sessional Year (ISY) 2024-2025 and is tentatively scheduled to be held in September 2024 in Guangzhou. It was noted that the three-day workshop is intended to provide a platform for ARF Participants to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned on ferry safety, including ways to address various safety concerns particularly those related to domestic ferry operations.

3.1.3. ARF Workshop on the Law of the Sea

10. The Meeting took note that the ARF Workshop on **the** Law of the Sea, to be co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia in July 2024, **which is aimed at focusing** on the importance of dispute settlement by peaceful means for ensuring regional security and promoting adherence to international law, including the UNCLOS.

3.1.4. ARF International Ship and Port Facility Security Code Training Series and Manual: Part Three

11. The Meeting was briefed on the ARF International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code Training **Series and Manual: Part Three**, co-chaired by the Philippines, India, Papua New Guinea, and the U.S. in Port Moresby on 23-25 April 2024. It was noted that the training series **was** aimed to enhance Participants' comprehension and effective implementation of the ISPS Code.

3.1.5. ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions (Part One and Two)

12. The Meeting noted that the ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions parts one and two, co-chaired Thailand, the US, and China, will be carried forward for implementation in the ISY 2024-2025. It was noted that further details will be communicated in due course.

3.1.6. 2nd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building

13. The Meeting took note that the 2nd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building is aimed at enhancing ferry safety capabilities through a comprehensive training programme, including capacities and measures to mitigate risks and foster sustainable development in the maritime domain. The Meeting noted that the activity will be carried forward for implementation in the ISY 2024-2025 and co-chaired by Thailand and China.

3.2. New Proposals under ARF ISM-MS for inter-sessional year 2024-2025

3.2.1. 3rd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building

14. Drawing upon the positive outcomes of previous similar activities, China proposes to convene the third iteration of the ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building. The Meeting took note that the proposed training is intended to provide a platform for ARF Participants to share best practices, experiences, challenges, and solutions related to ferry safety, focusing on enhancing capacity building and promoting the use of medically purposed vessels. It was noted that China is seeking an ASEAN Member State to co-chair this activity.

3.2.2. ARF Statement on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety

15. The Meeting was briefed on the development of a draft ARF Statement on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety, proposed by China. It was noted that the draft Statement is intended to highlight the necessity to enhance regional cooperation on ferry safety, to bolster capacity building, secure transportation management, and ensure people's safety, connectivity, and economic resilience. The Meeting took note of Cambodia's expression of interest to co-sponsor this draft Statement.

3.2.3. ARF Concept Paper on Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the ISPS Code among ARF Participants

16. The Meeting noted the ARF Concept Paper on Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the ISPS Code among ARF Participants, proposed by the Philippines, India, Papua New Guinea, and the U.S. The Meeting took note that the proposed compendium is intended as a compilation of best practices on ISPS code and serve as a valuable tool and resource material, which could be adapted to the

specific needs of each country. The Meeting further noted that upon receiving inputs from all ARF Participants, the compendium is intended to be published in the next ISY.

3.2.4. ARF Concept Paper on Building Capacity for Implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement in the ASEAN Region

17. The Meeting took note of the concept paper on Building Capacity for Implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement in the ASEAN Region, proposed by the U.S., which is aimed at enhancing the implementation of Port State Measures Agreement to ensure food security and sustainable blue economies, as well as to support the resilience of coastal communities, particularly in addressing the threats posed by IUU fishing.

3.2.5. ARF Concept Paper on Building Resilience to Ensure Food Security in the ARF Region

18. The Meeting noted the concept paper on Building Resilience to Ensure Food Security in the ARF Region, proposed by the U.S., which is intended to provide a platform for ARF Participants to exchange views on policy measures to address climate change impacts on blue foods and technologies to enhance access to nutritious food and establish resilient, adaptive systems.

3.2.6. Concept Note of Sixth ARF Workshop: Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues

19. Viet Nam briefed the Meeting on the proposed 6th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues, to be co-chaired with Australia, Canada, the EU and New Zealand. It was noted that the sixth iteration of this proposed workshop aims to build on the outcomes of previous workshops, delving into legal aspects of issues related to maritime security, and exploring new themes such as climate change and marine environmental protection, maritime connectivity, blue-ocean economy and maritime technology.

AGENDA ITEM 4: MARITIME SECURITY AND COOPERATION

20. This session was chaired by Commodore Nitin Parvataneni, Director (Military Affairs), MEA, India. He stated the five pillars of maritime cooperation – information sharing, capability development, capacity building, operation coordination and public messaging – and emphasised how information sharing formed the foundational pillar of such cooperation. He **expressed** India's appreciation for the comprehensive listing

of maritime security challenges in the ASEAN Maritime Outlook. He **noted** that while threat priorities may differ among States in a region, it is important to recognise the links between maritime challenges such as narcotics smuggling, weapons trafficking and piracy as well as armed attacks. He therefore, **underscored the need for holistic deliberation on this priority area during this session.**

4.1. Enhanced MDA Collaboration in the Light of Current Operations

21. The Meeting was briefed by Commander Naveen Deshmukh from the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC), on the critical role of collaborative information sharing in enhancing maritime domain awareness (MDA) and security. He highlighted the vast strategic, economic, and cultural significance of the maritime domain, which also faces challenges due to the sheer scale of maritime traffic and the complexity of monitoring efforts. On this note, he stressed the necessity for a collaborative approach among stakeholders to ensure comprehensive MDA, citing incidents where prompt information sharing led to successful responses to maritime threats. The Meeting noted an example from an incident involving a luxury yacht under attack near the coast of Yemen, in which swift dissemination of critical information to relevant agencies facilitated a coordinated response, thus showcasing the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in mitigating maritime threats.

4.2. Cooperative Measures to Combat IUU Fishing in the Region

22. Ms. Adriani Kusuma Wardani, Acting Assistant Deputy for Maritime Security and Resilience at the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime and Investment Affairs of Indonesia, shared that despite the existence of international resolutions, effective regulation and enforcement to tackle IUU Fishing have been lacking. Considering the detrimental impact of IUU fishing on economies, marine environments and food security, she further underscored the importance of adopting measures outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 14.4 to combat IUU fishing and emphasised the need for collaborative efforts to enhance global transparency, technology advancement, and tighter port controls. In addition to overfishing, IUU fishing also has secondary effects such as facilitating the movement of drugs and contraband, with the usage of drones adding complexity to the issue. In this connection, Ms. Wardani also stressed the significance of enhanced collaboration among nations, regional organisations, government agencies, businesses, and civil society to comprehensively address IUU fishing.

23. The Chair of the session appreciated the speakers' views, deliberations by the discussants and emphasised on the importance of technology in MDA and the effect of technology on the nature of threats. He stated that the

collaboration is the key for actionable information leading to accurate predictions and precise operations for effective outcomes in the maritime domain. He also stated the India is happy to put forth, and support, various proposals for knowledge sharing.

AGENDA ITEM 5: PROTECTING CRITICAL MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1. Protecting Undersea Cables

24. Mr. Yogi Anwar from the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Investment of the Republic of Indonesia, provided an overview of the process for deploying underwater cables in Indonesia. The Meeting was informed that Indonesia's National Management Team, led by the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and includes representatives from key ministries such as Ministries of Transportation, Energy and Mineral Resources; Communication and Information; and Defence, serves as a central hub for project approval and coordination, streamlining the regulatory process and ensuring compliance with relevant regulations. It was also noted that the Indonesian Navy's Hydro Oceanographic Centre oversees the implementation process to ensure technical compliance, whilst the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries sets out corridors and segments for submarine cables, further delineating the regulatory landscape. The Meeting was further informed that detailed regulatory guidelines outlined in Ministerial Decree no. 42/2022, provide a sequential process for compliance, starting from marine surveys to environmental assessments, and culminating in obtaining necessary permits to ensure that subsea cable deployment in Indonesia adheres to strict safety, security, and environmental standards.

5.2. Robust National Architecture for Protecting Critical Maritime Infrastructure

25. The Meeting was briefed by Captain Vishnu Reddy, Senior Defence Specialist at the National Security Council Secretariat of India, regarding India's perspective on countering threats to critical maritime infrastructure. He emphasised that protecting maritime infrastructure is integral to national security and underscored the importance of comprehensive maritime security measures, which extends from coastal and offshore security to safeguarding undersea infrastructure, marine resources, trade routes, and transportation. He further highlighted the complexity of identifying critical maritime infrastructure due to interconnected networks and interdependencies among different sectors. Captain Reddy further shared that India's approach to maritime security involves a multi-agency framework coordinated by the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC), and that

coordination between these agencies is facilitated through multi-agency joint operation centres and national-level command, control, communication, and information networks. In this connection, he further emphasised the need for a coordinated, adaptive, and scalable approach to enable effective response to the evolving maritime security dynamics.

AGENDA ITEM 6: ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

6.1. Leveraging Blue Economy for Trans-boundary Collaboration in Marine Conservation & Sustainable Development

26. In his presentation, Commodore Debesh Lahiri, Senior Fellow of the National Maritime Foundation, focused on marine conservation from a disaster management and prevention perspective, highlighting recent maritime incidents in the Indo-Pacific region. He emphasised that any further degradation of the environment, particularly the loss of biodiversity and ecological balance, would be detrimental and that resource harvesting must be done sustainably. He further shared that joint efforts and technology, such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and remote sensing for potential fishing zones, can aid in preventing and mitigating maritime disasters. Commodore Lahiri further shared several measures to enhance regional cooperation and disaster management, which include developing a comprehensive regional environmental action plan, establishing a Regional Environmental Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Fund, and creating a Regional Marine Environment Centre of Excellence. Such initiatives aim to foster collaboration among all stakeholders, from navies and coast guards to coastal communities and academia, ensuring a coordinated and effective response to maritime environmental challenges.

6.2. Climate Resilient Fisheries

27. The Meeting noted the presentation by Ms. Ann Singeo, Executive Director and Founding Member of Ebill Society, regarding fisheries management in Palau known as “bul”. It was noted that bul operates on three tiers: (i) national government regulations, (ii) state resource management and regulations, and (iii) community response and restoration, with the latter often overlooked or neglected, primarily due to a lack of awareness. She further shared that resilient fisheries necessitate recognising and incorporating community stewardship, and that engagement with and empowerment of communities for stewardship would enable responsive management and generational access. It was further noted that responsive management entails increased community awareness, immediate observation and information sharing among users, agreed-upon responses based on community resources, and intergenerational monitoring and evaluation.

6.3. Best practices for sustainable aquaculture

28. In his presentation, Mr. John Edgar, Director of the ASEAN Office of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), highlighted the potential benefits of aquaculture including for poverty reduction and improving food security. He further shared the challenges of aquaculture including disease outbreaks, environmental pollution, and ocean acidification, which have been exacerbated by climate change. He noted that these issues could further amplify, leading to significant impacts due to high-density environments of aquaculture systems and delayed removal of infected fish. He also underscored the importance of effective mitigation strategies such as proper site selection, crop integration, and alternative feed sources, as well as the need to implement innovative practices such as restorative agriculture and integrated multi-trophic aquaculture to enhance sustainability and productivity.

AGENDA ITEM 7: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

29. Recognising the multifaceted nature of maritime issues, the Meeting underlined the importance of strengthening regional maritime cooperation to promote peace, security and stability in the region. The Meeting noted the critical importance of ensuring maritime security in the region, particularly considering the high volume of trade and reliance on maritime transport. ARF Participants exchanged views on the increasingly complex challenges within the maritime sphere such as sea-piracy, marine environmental degradation, illegal smuggling, and IUU fishing, highlighting the need for concerted efforts to combat these challenges. This includes confidence building activities such as workshops in the ARF as well as through other existing mechanisms such as the AMF and EAMF.

30. Some ARF Participants expressed concerns on the situation in the South China Sea and urged all parties to refrain from actions that would escalate tensions, emphasising the importance of peaceful resolution of disputes and adherence to international law including UNCLOS. Some ARF Participants also welcomed the ongoing negotiations of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea and expressed hope for the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct. In this context, the importance of dialogue, trust building and cooperation were emphasised.

AGENDA ITEM 8: OTHER MATTERS

31. The Meeting noted that Cambodia and China will co-chair the 16th ARF ISM on MS in the ISY 2024-2025.

CLOSING REMARKS

32. In their closing remarks, the Co-Chairs expressed appreciation to all ARF Participants for the robust discussion and underlined the importance of comprehensive approaches to address maritime security challenges. Noting the significance of initiatives such as the AMO in fostering regional cooperation, the Co-Chairs expressed hope that collaboration and capacity building efforts will continue to flourish, including through the convening of workshops and seminars to enhance maritime security within the ARF framework.

ISSUES TO BE FOLLOWED UP

Issues arising from the Meeting that need to be followed up are:

No.	Key Discussions/ Issues	Timeline	Follow-up by
1	To finalise the concept paper of the 3 rd ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building	30 May	China
2	To finalise the draft ARF Statement on Ferry Safety	30 May	China
3	To finalise the concept paper of the ARF Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the ISPS Code among ARF Participants	30 May	The Philippines, India, Papua New Guinea and the U.S.
4	To finalise the concept paper of the ARF Workshop on Building Capacity for Implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement in the ASEAN Region	30 May	The U.S.
5	To finalise the concept paper of the ARF Workshop on Building Resilience to Ensure Food Security in the ARF Region	30 May	The U.S.
6	To finalise the concept paper of the 6 th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International	30 May	Viet Nam, Australia, Canada, the EU

	Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issue		and Zealand	New
--	---	--	----------------	-----