



ARF Chairman's Statement (abridged)

The Seventh Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Bangkok on 27 July 2000, highlighted by the participation for the first time of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). This is a highly abridged version of the Chairman's Statement. The full text is available upon request (PacNet 31A).

Overview of the ARF Process

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the significant progress which the ARF had made in terms of enhancing political and security dialogue and cooperation. They emphasized the importance of confidence-building measures (CBMs) to the overall ARF process and agreed that such efforts be intensified. They also welcomed the progress in the implementation of the proposals in the overlap between CBMs and Preventive Diplomacy (PD) as well as the continued efforts to develop concept and principles of PD applicable to the ARF context.

The Ministers noted the progress in implementation of the enhanced role for the ARF Chairman in liaising with external parties and promoting interaction between Track I and Track II. They noted that as Chair of the ARF, Thailand had initiated informal contact with the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Recognizing the contribution of non-ARF Track II activities, particularly the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), the Ministers noted that the ARF Chair, carrying out the enhanced role, could serve as a useful channel for the ARF to draw on the resources of these Track II fora. They welcomed the informal contact that had been established between the ARF and CSCAP. As a practical step in further enhancing the role of the ARF Chair, the Ministers agreed that the Chair could serve as a conduit for information sharing in between ARF meetings, thus enabling ARF participants to exchange information in a timely manner and on a voluntary basis. The Ministers welcomed the establishment of the ARF Register of Experts/Eminent Persons to be available for use by ARF members on the voluntary basis.

The Ministers welcomed the first volume of the ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO), produced by individual participants on a voluntary basis at the Track I level and compiled without editing by the ARF Chair. They shared the view that the ASO could help promote confidence, understanding, and transparency as well as facilitating the exchange of views among ARF participants.

Highlights of Issues Discussed

The Ministers reviewed the political and security situation in the Asia-Pacific region since July 1999 and had a substantive exchange of views on security perceptions and

major political and security issues. They shared the views that the overall security environment of the Asia-Pacific region was marked by a number of positive developments, including continued recovery from the economic and financial crisis and greater interaction and exchanges between and among countries in the region. While the security outlook for the region remained positive, there were uncertainties and challenges which would increasingly require the attention of the ARF, particularly those posed by globalization. In responding to globalization, it was necessary for nations to strengthen their individual and collective capacities to meet the various challenges affecting their common security.

The Ministers emphasized that the constructive roles of, and stable relations between, the major powers remained significant to regional peace and stability. They welcomed the recent improvement in these relations, including regular dialogue and exchange of visits at the heads of state/government level. They also welcomed the summit meetings held during the Informal Meeting of the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN in Manila on 28 November 1999, and the adoption of the Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation by the ASEAN+3 Summit.

The Ministers recognized the purposes and principles contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as a basis for the promotion of cooperation, amity, and friendship. They welcomed progress regarding the implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), which contributed towards non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. They also expressed support for continued consultations between the State Parties of the SEANWFZ Treaty and the Nuclear Weapon States regarding the latter's accession to the Treaty Protocol.

The Ministers agreed that a united democratic and economically prosperous Indonesia was fundamental to the maintenance of regional security. In this context, they emphasized their support for Indonesia's territorial integrity. The Ministers reviewed developments in East Timor. While they welcomed the positive trends as well as cooperation between Indonesia and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), the Minister deplored the death of a UN peacekeeper in East Timor and emphasized the need for further collective action to resolve the refugee problem including dealing with continuing militia activity. The Ministers also underscored the need for continued international attention to and support for reconstruction, rehabilitation, and nation building of East Timor.

With regard to the South China Sea, the Ministers encouraged the exercise of self-restraint by all countries concerned and the promotion of confidence building measures in this area, and welcomed their commitment to resolving

disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the recognized principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), as well as to ensuring freedom of navigation in this area. They welcomed dialogue and consultations, particularly in the ASEAN-China Senior Officials Consultations, the exchange of views in the ARF, as well as in the Informal Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea. The Ministers welcomed in particular the on-going efforts between ASEAN and China to develop and adopt the Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the positive developments on the Korean Peninsula, including the increased dialogue and exchanges between the DPRK and several ARF countries. They welcomed in particular the historic Summit between the leaders of the DPRK and the ROK and expressed their support for the "June 15 North-South Joint Declaration." The Ministers also expressed the hope for further efforts by all parties concerned within the frameworks of inter-Korean dialogue, the US-DPRK and Japan-DPRK talks, the Four-Party Talks, and broader international efforts, as well as for further positive developments regarding the temporary moratorium by the DPRK on missile test launches and for the full implementation of the 1994 Agreed Framework, including the work of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).

The Ministers exchanged views on the situation in South Asia and some expressed their continuing concern. The Ministers expressed the hope that efforts be made to bring about positive developments in the region.

The Ministers took note of developments in the South Pacific in view of their implications for the overall security with the ARF geographical footprint. They welcomed the efforts of the new Solomon Islands government to bring together the parties for discussions aimed at establishing a cease-fire. The Ministers noted a cease-fire was a first step towards the restoration of law and order. The Ministers also welcomed the recent release of the hostages in Fiji, but noted the interest of ARF countries in an early return to democratic government.

The Ministers discussed matters related to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as well as the implications of ballistic missile defence systems. They noted expressions of support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The Ministers also took note of the call for all states to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to accede to the NPT. The Ministers further emphasized the importance of systematic and progressive effort by Nuclear Weapon States on nuclear disarmament and called on them to work towards the objective of total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Meeting noted further the recent adoption by the Mongolian Parliament of a Law on its Nuclear Weapon-Free Status as an important unilateral measure.

The Ministers discussed issues pertaining to transnational crime, especially issues of piracy, illegal migration, including trafficking in human persons, particularly women and

children, and illicit trafficking in small arms. They recognized that these transnational issues not only pose challenges to regional peace and stability, but also impair individual countries' efforts in promoting national economic development and improving people's livelihood. Hence, cooperative approaches were necessary to deal with these problems. They also noted the seriousness of the implications of drug production and trafficking as well as the need to address issues such as money laundering, corruption, and computer crime. The Ministers underlined the importance of greater bilateral, regional, and international cooperative efforts in this regard. They also expressed support for the on-going negotiations on the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols as well as the convening of the International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001. They nonetheless noted that the extent of impact of transnational crime problems differ across regions. The Ministers agreed that the ARF continue to address transnational crime issues which affect security of the Asia-Pacific region and explore how the ARF could increase regional awareness and complement the work undertaken in other existing fora.

Programme of Work for the Next Inter-sessional Year (July 2000-July 2001)

The Ministers agreed that the ISG on CBMs continue its work and welcomed the offer by Malaysia and the ROK to co-chair the ISG in the next inter-sessional year. They also agreed that the Meeting of ARF Expert Group on Transnational Crime be convened in conjunction with the first meeting of the ISG on CBMs to further explore the ARF's role and contribution in addressing transnational crime.

Future Direction of the ARF Process

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to promoting the ARF as an effective and relevant forum for political and security dialogue and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. They also reaffirmed their intention to the evolutionary approach towards the development of the ARF process from confidence-building to preventive diplomacy to elaboration of approaches to conflict, and agreed that the ARF continue to move at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants and on the basis of consensus, with ASEAN playing its role as driving force in the process. The Ministers underscored the significance of confidence-building as a foundation and the primary focus of the ARF process.

The Ministers requested the ISG on CBMs to continue its work in exploring the overlap between CBMs and PD and strengthening the four CBM/PD overlap proposals already agreed upon, namely an enhanced role of the ARF Chair, the ARF Register of Experts/Eminent Persons, the Annual Security Outlook, and voluntary background briefing on regional security issues. They also requested the ISG on CBMs to intensify its efforts in developing further the concept and principles of PD by the ARF, and to submit recommendations to ARF SOM and ARF Ministers at their next meetings.

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