



Chairman's Statement the Seventh Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Bangkok, 27 July 2000

1. The Seventh Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Bangkok on 27 July 2000. The Meeting was chaired by Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

2. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers of all ARF participating countries or their representatives. The Secretary-General of ASEAN was also present. The List of Delegates appears as ANNEX A.

3. The Ministers welcomed the participation for the first time of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) at the Seventh ARF Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok. With regard to the issue of membership, the Ministers reaffirmed the decision taken at the Fifth ARF and agreed that with the current 23 participants, the focus should now be on consolidating the process of dialogue and cooperation among the present participants of the ARF.

Overview of the ARF Process

4. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the significant progress which the ARF had made in terms of enhancing political and security dialogue and cooperation within the Asia-Pacific region. In the context of the circumstances prevailing in the region, they noted that the ARF participants were able not only to engage in a free-flowing and productive exchange of views with a greater comfort level, but also to address, in a constructive manner, key political and security issues with bearing on regional-peace and stability, including new issues that have emerged as a result of globalization. The Ministers 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 as to be applicable to the ARF context. In this regard, the Ministers agreed that these developments had enhanced the continuity and relevancy of the ARF process.

5. The Ministers reaffirmed that as it moved forward, the ARF should continue to develop at a pace comfortable to all participants, decision be made by consensus, and confidence-building remain key to the process. The Ministers expressed support to ASEAN in exercising its leading role in the ARF. At the same time, they also concurred that it was incumbent upon each ARF participant to contribute to advancing the ARF process.

6. In recalling the decision of the Sixth ARF in July 1999 on the overlap between CBMs and PD, the Ministers, noted the progress in the implementation of the enhanced role for the

ARF Chairman in liaising with external parties and promoting interaction between Track I and Track II. The Ministers noted that as Chair of the ARF, Thailand had initiated informal contact with the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). They agreed to consider how these links could be further followed up by exchanging of information and sharing of experiences. At the same time, 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. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the informal contact that had been established between the ARF and CSCAP through the ARF Chair. In addition, as a practical step in further enhancing the role of the ARF Chair, the Ministers agreed that the ARF Chair could serve as a conduit for information sharing in between ARF meetings, thus enabling the ARF participants to exchange information relevant to the ARF in a timely manner and on a voluntary basis.

7. 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. In proceeding on this matter, they agreed that pending further discussions and agreement on the terms of reference for the Register, the ARF participants proceed with collating nominations of experts/eminent persons for the Register on a voluntary basis with the ARF Chair serving as a focal point.

8. 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. While noting the voluntary nature of the ASO, it was hoped that the production of ASO, should be an annual exercise and that the ARF participants try to further enhance the value of ASO, to the ARF process.

9. The Ministers noted the importance of the participation of defence and military officials in the ARF process. They therefore welcomed the contribution of greater and active interaction among defence and military officials towards the promotion of mutual understanding and transparency and encouraged continued participation of defence and military officials in all relevant ARF activities.

Highlights of Issues Discussed

10. The Ministers reviewed the political and security situation in the Asia-Pacific, region since the Sixth ARF in July 1999 and had a substantive exchange of views on security

perceptions and major political and security issues that impact on regional security environment. The discussions were conducted in an open and friendly atmosphere, thereby contributing further towards better understanding and confidence among ARF participants.

11. The Ministers 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. They further noted that while the security outlook for the Asia-Pacific region remained positive, there were uncertainties and challenges which would increasingly require the attention of the ARF, particularly those posed by globalization. In this regard, the Ministers felt that it was timely that Thailand initiated the discussions on security implications of globalization, which was pertinent to the efforts within the context of the ARF. It was noted that in addressing regional security issues, the ARF should give due consideration to economic, social and human components of security, and the need to promote regional cooperation.

12. The Ministers discussed both the positive effects and the repercussions brought about by globalization, including greater economic interdependence among nations and multiplication of security issues. It was felt that 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. They further agreed on the need for the countries in the region to continue efforts, through dialogue and cooperation, at national and international levels in addressing economic, social and political impacts of globalization so as to ensure sustained economic and social development. It was also essential to strengthen cooperation within such regional frameworks as the ARF in order to enhance international peace and security.

13. 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. In this regard, they expressed the hope that such a trend would continue.

14. The Ministers also welcomed the summit meetings held during the Informal Meeting of the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN in Manila on 28 November 1999, particularly the Meeting between the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN Member States, the People's Republic of China (PRC). Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), as well as the informal breakfast meeting of the leaders of the three Northeast Asian countries. The Ministers also welcomed the adoption of the Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation by the ASEAN+3 Summit in Manila on 28 November 1999 as a contribution towards regional cooperation as well as peace, stability and prosperity of the region in the long term.

15. 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 within Southeast Asia. The Ministers also noted the progress, made on strengthening the TAC as an instrument of peace in Southeast Asia and the process of consideration by non-Southeast Asian countries to accede to the TAC. They also noted the entry into force of the Second Protocol amending the TAC.

16. The Ministers welcomed the 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 welcomed in particular the operation of the Commission for SEANWFZ and the Executive Committee for SEANWFZ, and the dialogue between the State Parties to the Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as provided for in the Treaty. The Ministers also expressed support for the continued consultations between the State Parties of the SEANWFZ Treaty and the, Nuclear Weapon States regarding the latter's accession I to the Protocol to the Treaty.

17. 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.

18. The Ministers reviewed developments in East Timor. While they welcomed the positive trends which had taken place there 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 the continuing militia activity. The Ministers stressed the need for the international community to help East Timor promote peace, stability and prosperity during the latter's transition to full independence, which would contribute to the overall stability of the region. The Ministers also underscored the need for continued international attention to and support for the reconstruction, rehabilitation and nation building of East Timor as well as cooperation with the UNTAET.

19. With regard to the situation in 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 the freedom of navigation in this area. The Ministers welcomed dialogue and consultations, particularly dialogue 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.

20. The Ministers welcomed the appointment of Mr. Razali Ismail as Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Myanmar. In this regard, they welcomed his visit to Myanmar on 29 June-3 July 2000, during which Mr. Razali met with the leaders of the Myanmar Government and parties

concerned, they welcomed the results of the visit, particularly the constructive dialogue initiated and hoped that this would facilitate positive developments.

21. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the positive developments on the Korean Peninsula, including the increased dialogue and exchanges between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and several ARF countries. The Ministers welcomed in particular the historic Summit between the leaders of the DPRK and the ROK held in Pyongyang on 13-15 June 2000 and expressed their support for the "June 15 North-South Joint Declaration", the first agreement signed by the two leaders since the division of Korea in 1945. In this regard, the Ministers were of the view that the Summit represented a turning point in inter-Korean relations, and that the on-going momentum of dialogue and interaction would be carried forward with a view to achieving lasting peace and eventual reunification on the Korean Peninsula. 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).

22. The Ministers exchanged views on 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.

23. 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.

24. 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). In this regard, they noted the outcome of the NPT Review Conference, convened in New York on 24 April-19 May 2000. 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 and the call made in the NPT Review Conference Final Document on the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. 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 undertaken by Mongolia in pursuance of the UN General Assembly resolution A/53/77D on "Mongolia's international security and nuclear weapon-free status".

25. The Ministers reiterated their support for the work of the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) on the negotiations on a verification protocol for the BWC and their call for a speedy conclusion of the said negotiations.

26. 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 could 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 other 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. The Ministers 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 the impact of transnational crime problems differ across regions. In this Context, 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.

Reports of Track I and II Activities for the Current Inter-session Year (July 1999-July 2000) Track I

27. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the, successful implementation of Track I and II activities during the current inter-session year (July 1999-2000). They noted in particular the reports of the following major Track I activities:

a. Co-Chairmen's Summary Report of the Inter-session Support Group on Confidence-Building Measures (ISG on CBMs), co-chaired by Singapore and Japan, held in Tokyo on 13-14 November 1999 and in Singapore on 5-6 April 2000 (Annex B)

b. Co-Chairmen's Report of the Fourth Inter-session Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR), co-chaired by Vietnam and Russia, hold in Hanoi on 4-6 May 2000 (ANNEX C).

28. The Ministers commended the work of the ISG on CBMs and the ISM on DR in contributing to the advancement of the ARF process. They endorsed the recommendation contained in the, above-mentioned reports.

29. The Ministers also noted that the following Track I activities took place under the auspices of the ISG on CBMs:

a. Third ARF Meeting of Heads of Defence Universities, Colleges and institutions in Ulan Bator on 22-24 September 1999;

b. ARF Professional Training Programme on China's Security Policy in Beijing on 10-19 October 1999;

c. ARF Seminar on the Law of Armed Conflict in Newcastle on 13-17 December 1999;

d. ARF Defence Language School Seminar in Melbourne on 28-31 March 2000;

e. ARF Expert Group Meeting on Transnational Crime in Singapore on 4 April 2000;

f. ARF Professional Development Programme in Bandar Seri Begawan on 23-28 April 2000;

g. Conclusion of the ARFNET study group.

30. The Ministers noted that the ARF Train the Trainers Seminar. "Towards Common Approaches to Training in Disaster Relief" was held in Bangkok on 25-28 January 2000 under the auspices of the ISM on DR.

Track II

31. The Ministers took note of the ARF Track II Expert Meeting on Pacific Concord in Moscow on 21-22 February 2000 and the work-in-progress on the draft Pacific Concord. In this regard, they welcomed the joint work at the Track II level between Russia and the ASEAN-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS). Hope was expressed that further efforts would be made with a view to advancing the idea of a Pacific Concord within the ARF framework.

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

32. The Ministers agreed that the ISG on CBMs continue their work and welcomed the offer by Malaysia and the ROK to co-chair the ISG on CBMs 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 ISO on CBMs to further explore the ARF's role and contribution in addressing transnational crime.

33. The Ministers endorsed the programme of work for the next inter-sessional year as contained in ANNEX D.

Future Direction of the ARF Process

34. 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 (PD) 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.

35. The Ministers underscored the significance of confidence-building as a foundation and the primary focus of the ARF process. They agreed that while moving towards PD, the ARF continue to strengthen its confidence-building

process so as to ensure affective implementation of CBMs which would meaningfully augment the comfort level, trust, confidence and understanding as well as cooperation among the ARF participants. The Ministers also noted that the ARF has made progress in the discussions on the concept and principles of PD within its context based on the paper prepared by Singapore, as in ANNEX E, which they agreed could be a basis for the ARF's evolving consensus on this subject. They expressed the hope that all ARF participants would continue to cooperate in intensifying the consultations regarding the concept and principles of PD, which would in turn advance the ARF process.

36. 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.