



## **CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 30<sup>th</sup> ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM**

**Jakarta, 14 July 2023**

1. The Thirtieth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 14 July 2023. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Retno L. P. Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, under Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth."
2. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers and Representatives of ARF Participants and the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The list of delegates appears as **ANNEX I**.
3. The Meeting envisaged a strengthened ASEAN in accordance with the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter that is able to implement the ASEAN Charter in its entirety and navigate geopolitical dynamics in the region while maintaining its unity and Centrality. The Meeting was also determined to build a resilient economic architecture serving as the centre of regional economic growth and an engine for global growth through robust cooperation. In this regard, the Meeting supported Indonesia's Key Deliverables under the theme of "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth".
4. The Meeting reiterated the ARF Participants' strong commitment to upholding regionalism and multilateralism and emphasised the importance of fundamental principles of international law, shared values and norms as enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, the ASEAN Charter, the Declaration on Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon (NPT), 2011 Declaration on the East Asia Summit on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations, and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

### **OVERVIEW OF THE ARF PROCESS**

5. The Meeting reiterated the importance of the ARF's role in promoting dialogue and cooperation among its Participants for the past 30 years and as a key platform for building mutual trust and confidence, as well as fostering constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern in the Asia-Pacific region. The Meeting reaffirmed the need to enhance its effectiveness further and maintain its relevance in the evolving regional security architecture with a view to building capacity, developing expertise and enhancing coordination in areas that can contribute to promoting regional peace, stability and security. The Meeting noted with satisfaction the progress of cooperation in the ARF and commended the provisional measures undertaken to ensure the continuity of

cooperation and operations of the ARF in the recovery from COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting was encouraged by the progress made in the implementation of the Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) and looked forward to furthering discussion on efforts and follow-up actions to streamline and enhance the efficiency of the ARF based on the approved 2020 Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol.

6. The Meeting recognised that the ARF has played a constructive role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust and promoting transparency in the region. The Meeting noted with satisfaction that the number of ARF activities on preventive diplomacy continued to increase while confidence-building measures continued to be strengthened. The Meeting underlined the importance of sustaining the momentum and encouraged the ARF Participants to undertake further preventive diplomacy activities in line with the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy and consistent with the principles reflected in the ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper and the ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy.
7. The Meeting stressed the importance of enhancing the ARF's relevance and effectiveness in seizing opportunities and addressing the increasingly complex challenges amidst the continuously evolving regional landscape in a strategic, holistic, and comprehensive manner. The Meeting noted that the ARF has been successful in the promotion of peace, security, and stability in the region through enhanced cooperation in the areas of disaster relief, counter-terrorism and transnational crime, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament, peacekeeping operations, defence cooperation, and security of and in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).
8. The Meeting reaffirmed ASEAN Unity and Centrality as the driving force in maintaining and promoting regional peace, security, stability, and prosperity, as well as the commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law. The Meeting stressed the need to maintain constructive dialogue and cooperation among ARF Participants on security issues of common interest and concern to address and reduce threats to regional peace and security.
9. The Meeting reaffirmed, through its inclusive and consensus-based process, that the ARF has contributed remarkably to developing a rules-based regional security architecture and fostered an environment conducive to peace and prosperity in the region.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSIONS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

10. The Meeting deliberated on cooperation and joint efforts to address various regional security challenges. The Meeting commended the region's continued commitment to addressing the complex challenges posed by terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational organised crime against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through cross-sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation in border management and combating terrorism, human trafficking, and illicit drugs. The Meeting was encouraged by the efforts of all ARF Participants in supporting the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime 2021-2023 and the active participation in the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC). The Meeting stressed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (Bali Work Plan) 2019-2025 to address radicalisation and violent

extremism in the region in a holistic manner. The Meeting also took note of the ongoing work under the ambit of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in facilitating strategic information exchanges on countering terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation and the ADMM-Plus' endeavours toward building regional counter-terrorism capabilities and information sharing.

11. The Meeting recalled the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Caused by the Abuse of Technology and committed to promoting a more robust and effective regional and international cooperation against human trafficking. The Meeting reiterated the need to mobilise resources, modalities and strategies against the criminal use of technology in human trafficking.
12. The Meeting recognised the increasing importance of security of and in the use of ICTs to economic growth and addressing the challenges arising from the rapidly changing ICT environment. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed and encouraged new initiatives adopted to further promote confidence-building measures and trust, notably around the protection of critical infrastructure through the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of ICTs (ISM on ICTs Security) and where appropriate, other relevant ASEAN-led mechanisms. The Meeting underlined the need to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation in ensuring ICTs' security. In this regard, the Meeting appreciated the work of the ASEAN Cybersecurity Coordinating Committee (Cyber-CC) and noted that the ARF Points of Contact Directory on Security of and in the Use of ICTs could further strengthen coordination efforts.
13. The Meeting emphasised the importance of close coordination between the ARF and other relevant fora, such as the ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting (ADGMIN), the ADMM-Plus, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), and the ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity (AMCC) on matters pertaining to ICTs Security. The Meeting looked forward to implementing the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN GGE Norms of Responsible State Behavior in Cyberspace and the implementation of the enhanced cybersecurity measures consistent with the ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy 2021-2025. The Meeting also took note of the work of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security, which supports increased defence cooperation on regional cyber security challenges.
14. The Meeting exchanged views on various challenges in the maritime domain and welcomed positive developments in maritime cooperation among ARF Participants, including through continued constructive dialogue on issues of common interest and concern relating to the maritime domain. The Meeting also shared concerns over piracy and armed robbery against ships, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the degradation of marine eco-system and biodiversity caused by the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine debris and marine pollution, especially marine plastic litter and microplastics. The Meeting, therefore, noted the progress of cooperation in the maritime domain, including through raising public awareness, practical engagements, and continued constructive dialogue. The Meeting stressed the importance of coordination among various frameworks in addressing maritime challenges under the ARF and other ASEAN-led frameworks such as the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus, the AMMTC, as well as other similar arrangements such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP).
15. The Meeting noted the need to strengthen cooperation on disaster management further, taking into account the region's vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change-related phenomena such as rising sea levels. The Meeting underlined the

importance of enhancing capabilities and capacities of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts in the region through the sharing of information and exchange of best practices under the ambit of the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR). The Meeting also noted that under the ambit of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, work is ongoing to facilitate expeditious and coordinated deployments of ASEAN Member States' militaries in times of disaster response to natural hazards.

16. The Meeting noted the concerns raised by some Participants over the declining commitment and cooperation in global non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament mechanisms and called on countries, especially Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), to maintain and fully implement their commitments under these mechanisms, including in the NPT. The Meeting reiterated the importance of strengthening international and regional cooperative efforts in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as advancing the ultimate goal of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the prevention of their proliferation, as well as the peaceful uses of chemical, biological and nuclear technology. The Meeting was pleased to note that the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ISM on NPD) continues to provide a platform for dialogue and exchange of views on non-proliferation and disarmament issues. The Meeting encouraged the continued implementation of the Practical Arrangements (PA) between ASEAN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Cooperation in the Areas of Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications, and Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards, which was signed in September 2019.
17. The Meeting underlined that the objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation should be pursued to the prevailing international law and within the framework of the United Nations and welcomes any inclusive multilateral initiative to discuss in-depth the possible elements in furthering the creation of a conducive nuclear disarmament environment as a basis to achieve a greater goal in creating the world free of nuclear weapons. The Meeting further reaffirmed its position that all pillars of the NPT, namely nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, must be implemented in a balanced, transparent and comprehensive manner.
18. The Meeting called on the NWS to fulfil their obligations in advancing nuclear disarmament in accordance with the Article VI of the NPT and to recognise the need to completely eliminate nuclear weapons, which remains the only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances. The Meeting reiterated the commitment to preserving the Southeast Asian region as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) and free of all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the SEANWFZ Treaty and stressed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Treaty.
19. The Meeting discussed the situation in the South China Sea, during which concerns were expressed by some Ministers on the land reclamations, activities, serious incidents in the area, including actions that put the safety of all persons at risk, damage to the marine environment, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region. The Meeting reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability, and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation, and that safeguards the rights and interests of all parties in the South China Sea. The Meeting further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all

other states, including those mentioned in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.

20. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, and prosperity. The Meeting underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety. The Meeting welcomed on-going efforts to promote the implementation of the DOC, including confidence building measures and exploring practical maritime cooperation initiatives. The Meeting welcomed the progress achieved so far in the ongoing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), including the completion of the second reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) and encouraged continued positive momentum in this regard. The Meeting further looked forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting emphasised that the COC should be consistent with 1982 UNCLOS, including on the rights of other countries under 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting emphasised the need for practical measures that could reduce tensions and the risk of accidents, misunderstandings, and miscalculation. The Meeting stressed the importance of undertaking confidence-building and preventive measures to enhance, among others, trust and confidence amongst parties, and reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, which is of universal character and sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.
21. The Meeting discussed the need to maintain and further strengthen stability in the maritime sphere in the region and underlined the importance of strengthening maritime cooperation and exploring new initiatives towards this end.
22. The Meeting emphasised the importance of and reiterated continued support for Myanmar's commitment to ensuring safety and security for all communities in Rakhine State as effectively as possible and facilitating the voluntary return of displaced persons in a safe, secure, and dignified manner. The Meeting noted the cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh for the pilot repatriation project, to facilitate 7,000 returnees by the end of 2023 and welcomed Myanmar's efforts to work towards the implementation of this project.
23. The Meeting looked forward to ASEAN's continued facilitation of the repatriation process through the implementation of the projects as the follow up to the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA). The Meeting also looked forward to the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) when conditions allow and encouraged the Secretary-General of ASEAN to continue identifying possible areas for ASEAN to effectively facilitate the repatriation process.
24. The Meeting discussed the developments in Myanmar and reaffirmed united position that the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) remains the main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar. The Meeting strongly condemned the continued acts of violence, including air strikes, artillery shelling, and destruction of public facilities and urged all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt indiscriminate violence, denounce any escalation, and create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogue.
25. The Meeting appreciated the Chair's efforts in intensifying engagement with all relevant stakeholders in Myanmar to build trust and confidence, create a conducive environment, and bridge gaps and differences leading toward an inclusive dialogue

for a comprehensive political solution. The Meeting supported sustaining such engagements to push for the implementation of the 5PC in its entirety, in line with ASEAN Leaders' decision at the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit. The Meeting called for continued support of the External Partners, including the UN and neighbouring countries of Myanmar, to work with ASEAN for concrete implementation of the 5PC.

26. The Meeting expressed concerns over launch of the ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 12 July 2023. The Meeting stressed the importance of continued peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties in order to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. The recent surge in the DPRK's intercontinental ballistic missile testing and ballistic missile launches and resulting tensions in the Korean Peninsula are a worrisome development that threatens peace and stability in the region. The Meeting urged all concerned parties resume peaceful dialogue and continue working towards the realisation of lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. The Meeting reiterated commitment to the full implementation of all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and noted international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. Different views were expressed at the Meeting on the root causes of the tensions. Diplomatic efforts, including the creation of a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties should remain a priority. The Meeting reiterated readiness to play a constructive role, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms such as the ARF in promoting a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue amongst the concerned parties. Some Ministers emphasised the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions and detainees' issues.
27. With regard to the war in Ukraine, as for all nations, the Meeting continued to reaffirm its respect for sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity. The Meeting discussed the war in Ukraine, and views were expressed on the recent developments and the need to address the root causes. The Meeting reiterated its call for compliance with the UN Charter and international law. The Meeting underlined the importance of an immediate cessation of hostilities and the creation of an enabling environment for peaceful resolution. The Meeting also called for the facilitation of safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those in need in Ukraine, and for the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and persons in vulnerable situations. The Meeting underscored the commitment of ARF Participants to redouble efforts to mitigate the economic and financial impacts to the ASEAN region, including on issues of energy and food insecurity. The Meeting underlined the shared interest of ARF Participants to cooperate to maintain peace and stability in Southeast Asia and to maintain and strengthen the region as the epicentre of growth for the region and the world.
28. The Meeting expressed concern over the developments in the Middle East region and reiterated the need for a comprehensive, just, and sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East region. The Meeting urged both sides to actively take positive steps to allow for negotiations to gain traction and work together towards the resumption of negotiations to achieve enduring peace. The Meeting fully supported the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for an independent State of Palestine with the realisation of two states, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.
29. The Meeting recognised the strategic importance of the region for peace, security, stability, and prosperity, as well as for those of ASEAN's external partners. ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms remain inclusive and open avenues that facilitate

constructive dialogue and concrete cooperation, thereby contributing to the development of the evolving regional architecture in line with the ASEAN Charter and the AOIP.

### **REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES OF THE CURRENT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2022-2023)**

30. The Meeting was encouraged by the determination of the ARF Participants to ensure the continuity of operations in the ARF amidst the challenges and disruption posed by the geopolitical rivalries and tensions in the region. In this respect, the Meeting expressed appreciation to Indonesia as the ARF Chair for its effective leadership and commended the ARF Unit for the effective and continued assistance rendered to the ARF Chair and Co-Chairs of ARF ISMs throughout the year.
31. The Meeting commended the work of the ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) chaired by Indonesia on 14 June 2023 and the ARF Inter-Sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ARF ISG on CBMs and PD) co-chaired by Indonesia and Timor-Leste on 31 May 2023.
32. The Meeting recognised the valuable contributions made by defence officials, including through the discussions at the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD) on 30 May 2023 and the 20<sup>th</sup> ARF Security Policy Conference on 21 June 2023. The Meeting emphasised the importance of greater interaction of the defence track in the ARF process and encouraged the strengthening of coordination with other ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ADMM-Plus.
33. The Meeting commended the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISMs on Maritime Security, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Disaster Relief, and ICTs Security for their hard work in ensuring that cooperation in the respective areas continues to progress. The Meeting approved the extension of the implementation period of the ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief until 2024.
34. The Meeting noted the successful conduct of the following ARF meetings and activities held in the Inter-Sessional Year 2022 – 2023:
  - i. ARF International Ship and Port Facility Security Code Training Series and Manual: Part One, London, the United Kingdom, 5 – 9 September 2022;
  - ii. ARF Workshop Series on Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Mitigation Part Three – Simulation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 26 – 28 October 2022;
  - iii. 5<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Urban Search and Rescue, videoconference, 21 – 25 November 2022;
  - iv. 4<sup>th</sup> ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 30 November – 1 December 2022;
  - v. 10<sup>th</sup> ARF Open-Ended Study Group on CBMs to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs, videoconference, 2 March 2023;
  - vi. ARF Workshop on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism, Bali, Indonesia, 8 – 10 March 2023;
  - vii. 2<sup>nd</sup> ARF Workshop on Nuclear Risk Reduction, Brisbane, Australia, 22 – 23 March 2023;
  - viii. ARF International Ship and Port Facility Security Code Training Series and Manual: Part Two, Mumbai, India, 11 – 14 April 2023;
  - ix. 11<sup>th</sup> ARF Open-Ended Study Group on CBMs to Reduce the Risk of Conflict

- Stemming from the Use of ICTs, Moscow, Russia, 27 April 2023;
- x. ARF Workshop on Nuclear Non-Proliferation Safety and Security Standards and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 27 – 28 April 2023;
  - xi. 5<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on ICTs Security, Moscow, Russia, 28 April 2023;
  - xii. 14<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 16 – 17 May 2023;
  - xiii. 21<sup>st</sup> ARF ISM on Disaster Relief, videoconference, 23 May 2023;
  - xiv. 19<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, videoconference, 24 May 2023;
  - xv. 14<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Maritime Security, Preah Sihanoukville, Cambodia, 25 – 26 May 2023;
  - xvi. ARF DOD, Dili, Timor-Leste, 30 May 2023;
  - xvii. ARF ISG on CBMs and PD, Dili, Timor-Leste, 31 May 2023;
  - xviii. ARF Workshop on Fostering Professionals in the Field of Security of and in the Use of ICTs, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 13 June 2023;
  - xix. ARF Senior Officials' Meeting, videoconference, 14 June 2023;
  - xx. ARF Workshop on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Addressing Food Security Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region, Chang Chun, China, 19 – 20 June 2023;
  - xxi. 20<sup>th</sup> ARF Security Policy Conference, Jakarta, Indonesia, 21 June 2023;
  - xxii. ARF Workshop on Terminology in the Field of Security of and in the Use of ICTs in the Context of Confidence Building, videoconference, 21 June 2023; and
  - xxiii. ARF Workshop on Health Security – Lessons Learned during COVID-19 Pandemic and Strengthening Regional Health Security into the Future, Ottawa, Canada, 28-30 June 2023.
35. In line with the 2020 Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol, the Meeting also requested for Co-Chairs of these activities to submit the finalised Co-Chairs Summary Reports of their activities to the ARF Unit as the repository of all ARF documents for future reference.

#### **PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2023-2024)**

36. The Meeting was pleased to welcome the following Chair and Co-Chairs:
- i. Lao PDR as Chair of the 31<sup>st</sup> ARF, ARF SOM and the 21<sup>st</sup> ASPC;
  - ii. Lao PDR and New Zealand as Co-Chairs of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and ARF DOD;
  - iii. Indonesia and Russia as Co-Chairs of the 6<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on ICTs Security;
  - iv. Indonesia, India and the United States as Co-Chairs of the 15<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Maritime Security;
  - v. The Philippines, Bangladesh and the United States as Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on CTTC for the Inter-Sessional period of 2023-2026; and
  - vi. Viet Nam, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka as Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on Disaster Relief for the Inter-Sessional period of 2023-2026.



37. The Meeting further noted that the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) Meeting, to be co-chaired by Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Korea, and the 25<sup>th</sup> ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM), to be co-chaired by Malaysia and Sri Lanka, will be carried forward for implementation in the Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024.
38. The Meeting reiterated that the 2020 Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol should be utilised as a basic guideline for the conduct of all ARF activities and initiatives, including, among others, work plans, concept papers and statements. The Meeting noted that the majority of ARF meetings and activities in the current Inter-Sessional Year were convened in the first half of 2023, thereby affecting the ability for some ARF Participants in attending the activities. In this respect, the Meeting emphasised the need for the Co-Chairs of all ARF meetings and activities to manage the schedule of their respective activities prior to the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and ARF SOM and encouraged Co-Chairs of activities to utilise the second half of 2023 to convene workshops.
39. The Meeting approved the List of Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024 which appears as **ANNEX II**.
40. The Meeting reiterated the importance of constructive, equal, full and effective participation for all ARF Participants in all ARF activities.
41. In light of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ARF, the Meeting also adopted the ASEAN Regional Forum Statement on the Commemoration of 30 Years of the ARF and welcomed the Concept Paper of the Collection of Documents Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the ASEAN Regional Forum. The Statement and Concept Paper appear as **ANNEXES III and IV**, respectively.

#### **FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE ARF PROCESS**

42. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the ARF as a key platform for fostering constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern and reiterated their support for ASEAN Centrality in the ARF. The Meeting encouraged ARF Participants to enhance cooperation at a pace comfortable to all based on consensus and to step up efforts in confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in adherence to the principles stipulated in the 2011 ARF Preventive Diplomacy Work Plan and 2013 ARF Concept Paper on Moving Towards Preventive Diplomacy.
43. The Meeting looked forward to continuing to work together towards revitalising the ARF so that it continues to function as the leading regional security forum in the Indo-Pacific region and to further promoting concrete and practical cooperation to address political and security issues of common interest and concern, with a view to building capacity, developing expertise and enhancing-coordination in areas that can contribute to the region's peace, security and stability. The Meeting also emphasised the need to further develop feasible preventive diplomacy capabilities through, amongst others, norm-building and enhanced channels of communication, as well as to promote the role of the ARF Chair, including enhancing the Friends of the ARF Chair mechanism that, with the consent of the ARF Participants involved, can help address situations of common concerns.
44. The Meeting highlighted the key role of the ARF HPOA II in paving the way forward for the ARF to become a more 'action-oriented' forum at a pace comfortable to all. In view of strengthening the work of the ARF and taking into consideration the period of implementation, the Meeting tasked the Co-Chairs of the respective areas of cooperation, proponents of adopted Statements and approved activities and

other ARF Participants to determine the progress of implementation of the HPOA II and provide their input to the ARF Unit.

45. Taking into account the increasing activities and work of the ARF, the Meeting called upon ARF Participants to provide greater support to the work of the ARF Unit and reiterated the need to strengthen the ARF Unit with the necessary resources and manpower. In this respect, the Meeting also tasked the Co-Chairs of respective meetings and activities to provide the finalised Summary Reports of their meetings and activities to the ARF Unit as the ARF's institutional memory and depository of ARF documents.
46. Recognising the cross-cutting and transboundary nature of regional security challenges, and emerging threats, the Meeting highlighted the importance of promoting complementarities, ensuring coherence, and avoiding unnecessary duplication of efforts. In this respect, the Meeting acknowledged the importance of promoting cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination and encouraged ARF Participants to further strengthen and enhance the sharing of information with other ASEAN-led mechanisms including the ADMM-Plus framework and the East Asia Summit.
47. The Meeting encouraged the ARF EEPs to continue providing recommendations as deemed appropriate by their respective governments based on their expertise, including providing recommendations for the future direction of the ARF.
48. The Meeting tasked the ARF Senior Officials to deliberate on the ARF's roles, achievements, and challenges over the past 30 years to provide recommendations for the future direction of the ARF and submit a progress report to the 31st ARF.
49. The Meeting welcomed the publication of the 2023 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) presented by Indonesia and underlined the importance of the ARF ASO as an integral document to further promote transparency and confidence-building among ARF Participants.

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