

2018 JOINT STATEMENT BY THE ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS ON COUNTERING TERRORISM IN ASEAN

Adopted in Singapore on 7 February 2018

We, the Defence Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), note with grave concern the rise of terrorism in our region, perpetrated by individuals and groups with increasingly sophisticated and deadly tactics and weapons.

We condemn in the strongest terms the attacks carried out by terrorists in Southeast Asia and around the world, and express our deepest condolences to the families of the many innocent victims of these attacks.

In this regard, we are heartened by the strong collaboration among ASEAN and our external partners. This includes the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. We also welcome other sub-regional collaborative efforts such as the Malacca Straits Patrol, the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangements and the Our Eyes Initiative, and efforts under other sectoral bodies such as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime. These exemplify the ASEAN spirit of regional cooperation and friendship.

However, the scale and complexity of the terrorist threat faced by our region continues to grow with the influx of returning foreign terrorist fighters and cross border movement of terrorists. The ASEAN Defence Ministers agreed to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation among our defence establishments, and with our external partners. We will step up practical cooperation through joint exercises and training, information sharing, and increase dialogue and sharing of best practices across ASEAN Member States.

We will explore new forms of counter-terrorism collaboration where ASEAN defence establishments can make meaningful contributions on account of their niche capabilities, training, and equipment. We will also strengthen cross-sectoral counter-terrorism cooperation with our partners in the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and other ASEAN-led mechanisms through workshops, seminars, and other exchanges.

We will cooperate to counter terrorist propaganda and promote positive messages of respect, inclusion, and moderation, including through developing a compendium of regional counter narratives. In this regard, we welcome initiatives of centres within ASEAN which promote religious tolerance, inclusivity, and moderation.

Terrorism is a severe threat to ASEAN's progress, prosperity, and very way of life. We remain resolutely committed to defeating this scourge for the benefit of the people of ASEAN.