2019 CONCEPT PAPER ON THE EXPANSION OF THE ASEAN DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING PROCESS TO THE PLUS COUNTRIES

Adopted in Bangkok, Thailand on 11 July 2019

Introduction

1.   In the 8th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 20 May 2014, the ASEAN Defence Ministers adopted the Concept Paper on Establishing an ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI) in the ADMM Process. The Concept Paper pushed forward the objective of establishing a permanent, rapid, reliable and confidential means by which any two ASEAN Defence Ministers may communicate with one another and arrive at mutual decisions in handling crisis or emergency situations[1].

2.   Since then, the ADMM has made positive progress in setting out the overall framework, policy principles, technical architecture and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide the evolution of the establishment of ADI within the ASEAN defence establishments. These efforts have ultimately led to successful launching of ADI during the 4th ADMM-Plus in the Philippines on 24 October 2017.

3.   The infrastructure however is still running in phases as was agreed among the ASEAN Member States that the ADI would be implemented in three phases. The initial stage – Interim Phase 1 to comprise of secure voice communication and secure fax capability. The subsequent phases would establish a suitable secure email communication system.

4.   This Concept Paper puts forward the framework and modalities of expanding the ADI to the Plus Countries as previously deliberated by the ASEAN Member States. Following the discussions from the First Technical Workshop and the Ad-Hoc Working Group Meetings on Establishing an ADI in the ADMM Process, the ASEAN Member States agreed to keep ADI flexible for the consideration of expanding the communication lines to the Plus Countries.

5.   This Paper outlines the working mechanisms for the implementation of the ADI to the ADMM-Plus. The Paper should be read with the Concept Paper on Establishing ADI in the ADMM Process adopted at the 8th ADMM. The Operational Concept of the ADI in the ADMM Process drafted during the Technical Working Group on Establishing the ADI in the ADMM Process in August 2014 in Brunei Darussalam additionally serves as a reference material.

Purpose and Objective

6.   The expansion of the ADI to the Plus Countries is directed at fulfilling the overarching goal of shaping ASEAN as a rules-based and inclusive community that will respond effectively to emerging challenges in a dynamic region and play a responsible and constructive role globally while maintaining ASEAN centrality.

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[1] Paragraph 5 from the Concept Paper on Establishing the previously termed Direct Communications Link (DCL) in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Process.

7.   The extension of the ADI to the Plus Countries will seek to establish stronger linkages between ASEAN Member States and the Plus Countries to address security challenges in a manner which is open, transparent and inclusive.

8.   Furthermore with the objective of strengthening strategic cooperation with the Plus Countries, the ADI can complement existing information-sharing mechanisms within the region and enhance regional confidence and security building measures.

9.   The ADI under the ADMM Process provides a platform for the ADMM-Plus members to engage in a dialogue on emergency and crisis situations in order to promote de-escalation[2].

Guiding Principles

10.   The establishment of the ADI among the Plus Countries shall be guided by similar policy principles as those established in the initial Concept Paper of the ADI, most particularly[3]:

   i.   "The ADMM shall provide the framework for the setting up of the ADI, which includes concept building, development and implementation."

   ii.   "Each ADI will be bilateral and stand alone."

   iii.   "The ADI will consider information assurance policies that address issues pertaining to authentication including counter impostors, integrity of data and availability of connection, confidentiality as well as non-repudiation."

   iv.   "Each defence establishment would be responsible for the arrangements of ADI on its own installation and facilities including set-up 24/7 manned operation and transmission and reception of messages."

   v.   "Periodic review of ADI shall be held regarding the implementation and usage to take advantage of technological innovations in communication systems."

11.   Consistent with the objective of ADI as a means to foster the de-escalation and to defuse misunderstandings and misinterpretations during crisis or emergency situations, the fundamental importance of amity and cooperation will continue to guide the manner of conduct in which the ADI will be used among the ADMM-Plus.

12.   The ADMM ADI Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) will be the main and only reference by which the ADI is to be operated for all the ADMM-Plus Countries.

Membership and Working Mechanism

13.   The invitation for expansion of the ADI to the ADMM-Plus will extend to all the Plus Countries of the ADMM-Plus.

14.   While the ADI among all ten ASEAN Member States are established, the establishment of bilateral links between a Plus Country and the ASEAN Member States is voluntary.

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[2] However the ADI does not necessarily provide the only suitable means for a complete resolution to underlying issues as referenced in the ADMM ADI Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

[3] Paragraph 9 from the ADI Concept Paper.

15.   Two Plus Countries may also seek to establish the ADI between themselves through a bilateral agreement. Where bilateral secure communication systems do not exist, the ADI will provide a neutral solution for the ADMM-Plus Countries to adopt. The ADMM-Plus Countries are required to operate using the modalities directed within the ADI system capabilities.

16.   Where necessary, the Ad-Hoc Working Group consisting of Plus Countries (thereafter referred to as Ad-Hoc Working Group-Plus) may discuss the following matters:

    i.   Share knowledge and information on the technical parameters of the ADI as well as technological advancements.

    ii.   Future modalities of the technical infrastructure.

    iii.   Project management, implementation approaches.

    iv.   Security considerations on the ADI system.

    v.   Financial and acquisition matters.

    vi.   Further refinements to the ADMM ADI SOP.

17.   The Ad-Hoc Working Group-Plus will be composed of policy, technical and operational officials from the ADMM-Plus and are responsible for the overall operational supervision of the ADI and continuous review of the ADI architecture.

18.   In line with the principle of ASEAN Centrality, any news proposal and changes to the ADI system and the SOP shall first be discussed and considered by the ASEAN Member States prior to consideration from the Working Group-Plus. Similar to the working mechanisms of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, the Working Group-Plus will be held back-to-back with the Ad-Hoc Working Group where appropriate.

Review and Report

19.   The outcome of the meetings/workshops should be duly reported to and assessed by the ADMM-Plus through the ADSOM-Plus and the ADSOM-Plus WG.

Conclusion

20.   The ADMM and ADMM-Plus platforms remain the relevant fora to address the security threats as well as challenges in the ASEAN Political Security Community.

21.   Guided by the APSC Blueprint 2025 in which efforts are made to elevate ASEAN political-security cooperation, ADI will provide that opportunity by functioning as a neutral platform and practical means to prevent the escalation of conflicts and to foster regional practical cooperation. The setting-up of ADI along with the Plus Countries will fundamentally underscore ADMM's and ADMM-Plus' resolve to maintain regional peace, security and stability.