

2019 CONCEPT PAPER ON THE ROLE OF ASEAN DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENTS IN SUPPORTING BORDER MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

1. Since the formal establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015, ASEAN has increasingly transformed into interconnected community. Such greater integration and connectivity provide wider opportunities for ASEAN people to be in closer contact, including in the areas of cultural and tourism exchanges, benefits for flowing commodities, trade and investment as well as security cooperation, which resulted to more rapid regional growth and development.

2. However, this interconnectedness also presents cross-border challenges, such as drug trafficking, illegal migration, transnational crimes, terrorism, and epidemics. It is widely recognised that security threats on any single country could become a problem for ASEAN as a whole, and that no single country can comprehensively solve the problem.

3. ASEAN Member States (AMS) have traditionally dealt with cross-border challenges by utilizing various regional and sub-regional mechanisms such as the ASEAN Directors-General of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (DGICM), the Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD), ASEAN Directors-General of Customs, ASEAN Our Eyes (AOE) and ASEAN Chiefs of Police (ASEANAPOL) Conference as well as Border Liaison Office (BLO), the Malacca Straits Coordinated Patrol (MSCP), among others. Most AMS defence establishments assume a supporting role in border management by providing security in the area and the people. AMS defence establishments cooperation in border management support, unlike those aforementioned, are mainly conducted within bilateral frameworks. There has not been an attempt to incorporate such bilateral cooperation into the same general framework in order to tackle cross-border challenges in a more holistic and comprehensive manner for the entire ASEAN Community.

4. The development of this Concept Paper is in accordance with two ASEAN documents:

- (a) The ASEAN Charter, which provide for “Respecting the fundamental importance of amity and cooperation, and the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, non-interference, consensus and unity in diversity”; and
- (b) The ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together (ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025), in Section B.3.7 Strengthen cooperation on border management, which states:
 - (i) Strengthen cooperation on border management, in accordance with respective domestic laws and policies, to jointly address matters of common concern including forgeries of identification and travel documents, as well as explore the use of relevant technologies to manage borders more effectively to stem the flow of terrorists and criminals; and

- (ii) Explore, where appropriate, coordinated border patrols and coordinated inspections between ASEAN Member States to combat transnational crimes, particularly drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, and smuggling of goods, people and weapons, in accordance with respective domestic laws, rules, regulations and policies.
- (c) The ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together, APSC Blueprint 2025, Section III. Implementation and Review (A. Implementation Mechanism), which states:
 - (i) Strengthen coordination on cross-sectoral issues within the APSC and on cross-pillar issues amongst the three Pillars.
- (d) From the ASEAN 2012: ASEAN Plan of Action for Cooperation on Immigration Matters in Section II. Objectives (A. General Objectives):
 - (i) The overall objective of the ASEAN Plan of Action on Immigration Matters is to forge and strengthen immigration cooperation with a view to establish an effective network to promote modernization of immigration facilities, systems and operations; upgrade human resources capabilities and capacities of immigration officials to support the economic aspirations of ASEAN; and support in combating transnational crime.

Principles

5. This concept paper is guided by the following principles:
- (a) It is acknowledged that not all ASEAN defence establishments have a role in border management;
 - (b) Participation and contribution shall therefore be flexible, non-binding and voluntary;
 - (c) Participation shall be based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and in accordance with respective domestic laws, rules, regulations and policies;
 - (d) Decisions made shall be based on consensus.

Purpose and Objectives

6. Purpose:

The purpose of this Concept Paper is aimed at raising awareness on the importance of AMS defence establishments' role in supporting border management and confidence building measures along the border encompassing land, sea and air.

7. Objectives:

- (a) To enhance cooperation amongst ASEAN defence establishments in dealing with cross-border challenges in order to sustain security and stability, and to promote confidence building measures in border areas for facilitating economic, social and cultural development;

- (b) To strengthen the role of defence establishments that are involved in border management by enhancing the effectiveness of existing border management mechanisms in AMS;
- (c) To encourage interaction with existing mechanisms dealing with transnational crimes and cross-border issues, namely DGICM, SOMTC, ASEANAPOL, ASOD, ASEAN Directors-General of Customs, AOE, BLO, MSCP and other related cooperation platforms.

Scope and Forms of Activities

8. The scope of this paper focuses on cooperation amongst ASEAN defence establishments in supporting border management which may be achieved at a comfortable pace through the following forms of activities, where appropriate:

- (a) Convening of platforms for discussion on roles in border management that may entail the following:
 - (i) Share and exchange of experiences and best practices on border management on a voluntary basis;
 - (ii) Enhancement of interoperability amongst ASEAN defence establishments' that are involved in border management;
- (b) Exchange visits amongst working-level personnel;
- (c) Initiating discussions with representatives from DGICM, SOMTC, ASOD ASEANAPOL, AOE, BLO, MSCP and other related cooperation platforms to share the best practices with ASEAN defence establishments;
- (d) Other activities, such as education and training exchange and social activities, that contribute to strengthening cooperation amongst defence establishments in support to border management may be held subjected to consensus.

9. Territory or boundary line issues or disputes are beyond the scope of this document.

Review and Report

10. The updates of activities shall be reported to the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) through the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting (ADSOM), and ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting Working Group (ADSOM WG).

Conclusion

11. The Concept Paper on the role of ASEAN defence establishments in border management aims to encourage AMS to realise the importance of ASEAN border management with the goal of achieving comprehensive cooperation, enhancing confidence building, and strengthening security strategic partnership amongst AMS in response to transnational challenges. Additionally, effective border management cooperation will not only lead to sustainable peace and stability under the purview of APSC, but also assist in facilitating prosperous future for ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Ultimately, this would result to a sustainable balance towards achieving a safe, secure and prosperous ASEAN Community for our peoples.