

# 2021 CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 28<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

*Adopted on 6 August 2021*

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1. The Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held via video conference on 6 August 2021. The Meeting was chaired by The Honourable Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam.
2. The Meeting recognised the severe challenges and disruptions caused by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic to the well-being of the peoples of the region, and the pandemic's multi-faceted impacts on societies and economies, as well as on the stability, prosperity and security of the region and the world at large. The Meeting emphasised the importance of enhancing regional and international solidarity and cooperation towards a collective and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing global recovery, including the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. In this regard, the Meeting acknowledged the progress made this year in the ARF given the context of and in addressing the pandemic.

### OVERVIEW OF THE ARF PROCESS

3. The Meeting was pleased to note the progress of the ARF, including the implementation of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) (HPOA II) since its adoption in 2020, with the view to maintaining the ARF's relevance and significance, among others, as an action-oriented Forum. The Meeting stressed the importance for all action lines in the HPOA II to be fully and effectively addressed within the implementation period. The Meeting recognised that the ARF is an ASEAN-led mechanism, thereby acknowledged ASEAN's intention for the implementation of the HPOA II to be consistent with its Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol. The Meeting noted the Executive Summary of the Status of Implementation of the HPOA II as prepared by the ARF Unit which appears as **ANNEX 1**, and expressed its appreciation for the work of the ARF Unit in monitoring the implementation of the HPOA II. Moving forward, the Meeting endorsed the recommendation of the ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held on 29 June 2021 and requested all ARF Participants to provide input to the ARF Unit on the progress of implementation of the HPOA II on an annual basis.
4. The Meeting reiterated the importance of the ARF as a primary forum to foster constructive dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues of common interest and concern in the region, as well as to identify potential areas of cooperation among ARF Participants. In this respect, the Meeting expressed satisfaction on the progress of the ARF in achieving its objectives and encouraged ARF Participants to exert greater effort to advance the ARF's evolutionary approach of promotion of confidence building measures, development of preventive diplomacy, and elaboration of approaches to conflict resolution. The Meeting decided to strengthen efforts to address common regional challenges in a strategic and holistic manner, particularly in the areas of disaster relief, counter-terrorism and transnational crime, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament, peacekeeping operations, defence cooperation, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) security. The Meeting emphasised the importance of strengthening the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy and other ARF Work Plans in a consistent and comprehensive manner. In this regard, the Meeting decided to extend the implementation period of the ARF Work Plan on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime until 2022 and adopted the ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief 2021-2023, which appears as **ANNEX 2**.

5. The Meeting reaffirmed the role of ASEAN as the main driving force of the ARF, including in ensuring the ARF continues its crucial role in the evolving regional security architecture. The Meeting further reaffirmed the importance of upholding the ARF's principles of decision-making by consensus, non-interference and moving at a pace comfortable to all ARF Participants.

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

6. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to work together to prevent and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious disease outbreaks, mitigate and subsequently eliminate their adverse and multi-faceted impacts, as well as advance comprehensive regional recovery, in particular in ensuring universal and equitable access to safe, quality, effective, and affordable vaccines, expanding vaccine manufacture and supply, through bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including the COVAX Facility, in the spirit of solidarity, unity, cooperation and mutual assistance. In this regard, the Meeting emphasised the importance of strengthening cooperation in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora, including through the United Nations (UN) system, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organisations as relevant; and supporting ASEAN's effective implementation of the Regional Strategic Action Plan on ASEAN Vaccine Security and Self-Reliance for 2021-2025 which was adopted on 14 May 2021. The Meeting looked forward to further strengthening cooperation on the development, production and distribution of anti-viral medicines and vaccines for COVID-19 and other diseases in future public emergencies. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of keeping markets open, assisting people and businesses suffering from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and the most vulnerable groups, preserving supply chain connectivity in order to maintain food security and prevent further disruption of global and regional supply chains, as well as increase sustainable economic activities in the context of major infectious diseases outbreaks. In this vein, the Meeting welcomed the commitment to preserve the essential movement of people and goods by implementing fast-track procedures in the region and by facilitating regional Free Trade Agreements, including the early entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement.
7. The Meeting discussed the recent developments in Myanmar and expressed concern over the situation in the country, including reports of fatalities and violence. The Meeting also heard calls for the release of political detainees including foreigners. The Meeting welcomed Myanmar's commitment to the Five-Point Consensus adopted at the ASEAN Leaders Meeting on 24 April 2021 and acceptance for the timely and complete implementation of the Five-Point Consensus namely, the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and for all parties to exercise utmost restraint; constructive dialogue among all parties concerned to commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people; a Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair to facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary-General of ASEAN; ASEAN to provide humanitarian assistance through the ASEAN Secretary-General and assisted by the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre); and the Special Envoy and delegation to visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned. The Meeting welcomed the appointment of the Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam to be the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar, who will start his work in Myanmar, including building trust and confidence with full access to all parties concerned and providing a clear timeline on the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus before the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The Meeting welcomed the continued support from ASEAN's external partners for ASEAN's efforts in the swift and complete implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, with immediate attention given towards the provision of humanitarian assistance.

8. The Meeting reaffirmed its support for diplomacy and dialogue in achieving complete denuclearisation and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. The Meeting recognised the efforts made by all parties concerned for the resumption of dialogue. The Meeting also welcomed the restoration of inter-Korean communication lines, and noted that it will contribute to further improving and developing the inter-Korean relations. The Meeting urged all parties concerned to continue working together constructively towards realising lasting peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula, including through the full and expeditious implementation of the 2018 Panmunjom Declaration and Pyongyang Joint Declaration between the ROK and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the Singapore Joint Statement by the United States (U.S.) and the DPRK's Leaders. The Meeting also urged the DPRK to fulfil its stated commitment to complete denuclearisation and its pledge to refrain from conducting further nuclear and missile tests. The Meeting underscored the significance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and were encouraged by the efforts to advance inter-Korean dialogue, engagement, and cooperation to restore the virtuous cycle where inter-Korean relations and U.S.-DPRK relations advance in a mutually reinforcing manner. The Meeting reiterated the commitment to the full implementation of all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The importance of international efforts to bring about the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula was stressed in the Meeting. The Meeting stressed the need to promote a conducive atmosphere to peaceful dialogue among the concerned parties, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms, such as the ARF. The Meeting noted views expressed by some ARF Participants on the importance of addressing the humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.
  
9. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, prosperity, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes, without coercion, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Meeting underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. The Meeting noted the positive progress in the ongoing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) despite the challenging COVID-19 situation, including the recent resumption of the textual negotiations of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT), which has resulted in provisional agreement on the Preamble section after delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and looked forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is consistent with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. The Meeting emphasised the need to promote an environment conducive to the COC negotiations and thus, welcomed 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.
  
10. The Meeting discussed the situation in the South China Sea, during which some concerns were expressed on the land reclamations, activities and serious incidents in the area, including 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 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 DOC that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.

11. The Meeting emphasised the importance of ASEAN Centrality in promoting ASEAN's sub-regional development with the view to ensuring sustainable, equitable and harmonious development, and narrowing the development gap within ASEAN. The Meeting recognised the important role and contribution of sub-regional cooperation framework, including the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) and those in the Mekong area, in narrowing the development gap.
  
12. The Meeting commended the region's continued commitment to addressing the complex challenges posed by terrorism, violent extremism conducive to terrorism (VECT), and transnational crime against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through cross-sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation in border management and combating terrorism, illegal weapons smuggling, trafficking in persons, and illicit drugs. The Meeting also condemned the acts of terrorism, including the bombing of a church in Makassar, Indonesia, in March 2021. In this connection, the Meeting were encouraged by the efforts of all ARF Participants in supporting the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime. The Meeting took note of the adoption of the Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (PoA PCRVE) 2019-2025 (Bali Work Plan) at the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) in November 2019. Meanwhile, 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 VECT, radicalisation, and terrorism, and in strengthening regional counter-terrorism preparedness and cooperation against Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) threats by bringing together regional CBR defence experts, as well as the practical cooperation on the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter Terrorism (EWG on CT) with three Field Training Exercise (FTX) of the EWG on CT, one of which is a combined FTX of the EWG on CT and the EWG on Maritime Security. The Meeting encouraged engagement with local communities and, when appropriate, non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter terrorist and VECT narrative, including by empowering youth, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and other concerned groups of civil society and adopting tailored approaches to countering recruitment and promoting social inclusion.
  
13. The Meeting recognised the increasing importance of security of and in the use of ICTs and ensuring the integrity of ICT supply chain to economic growth, the emerging regional and global challenges arising from the rapidly changing ICTs environment, as well as the growing dependence on ICTs to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed and encouraged initiatives to further promote confidence building and trust, information sharing, capacity building and the voluntary and non-binding norms of responsible State behaviour in the ARF 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 were encouraged by the efforts to discuss terminology in the field of security of and in the use of ICTs. The Meeting underlined the need to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation in ensuring ICTs security, given its cross-sectoral nature. In this regard, the Meeting noted the establishment of the cross-sectoral and cross-pillar ASEAN Cybersecurity Coordinating Committee (ASEAN Cyber-CC), which held its Inaugural Meeting in November 2020. The Meeting further noted the convening of the 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting (ADGMIN) and Related Meetings on 21–22 January 2021 via videoconference, where it was noted that enhancing cybersecurity cooperation is key to the security of the future economy and digitalisation initiatives, especially in view of the recent rise of global cybersecurity and supply chain attacks and threats. The Meeting noted the proposal by the ADGMIN to enhance ASEAN cybersecurity cooperation through the formalising of existing ASEAN Member States' (AMS) National Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT)-level exchanges through the establishment of an ASEAN CERT information exchange mechanism as a core component of the future ASEAN CERT, which will support national CERTs through the exchange

of information and best practices, and coordinate CERT capacity building programmes in the region. The Meeting noted that the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security (EWG on CS) inaugural cycle 2017-2020 was able to accomplish: (i) the development of the compiled Glossary of Cyber Terminologies; (ii) the development of the Points of Contact and Technical Personnel Director; (iii) the conduct of a Table-Top Exercise (TTX); and (iv) the set-up of the ADMM-Plus EWG on CS Portal. The Meeting was briefed on the Global Initiative on Data Security proposed by China. The Meeting noted that the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN), a collaborative platform to facilitate the development of smart and sustainable urban development, has identified the safety and security of our networked infrastructure as one of its six focus areas. The Meeting endeavoured to promote ICTs security through cooperating in areas such as incident response, raising awareness on threats related to the security of and in the use of ICTs, and sharing best practices which are relevant for maintaining ICTs security and can contribute to the maintenance of regional peace and stability. The Meeting also looked forward to the finalisation of the Consolidated Strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution for ASEAN as one of ASEAN's priorities in 2021, that will incorporate political-security, economic, and socio-cultural perspectives, and thereby contributing towards the region's overall long-term resilience.

14. The Meeting noted the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/75/239 emphasising in the Preamble, the universal and unified character of the 1982 UNCLOS, and reaffirming that the Convention sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and is of strategic importance as the basis for national, regional and global action and cooperation in the marine sector, and that its integrity needs to be maintained. The Meeting exchanged views on various challenges relating to the maritime domain, including concerns over the impact of activities that affect the marine environment, ecosystem and biodiversity. In this regard, the Meeting encouraged all ARF Participants to enhance dialogue and cooperation on maritime security-related issues through, inter alia, the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS), including the implementation of its Work Plan. The Meeting reiterated the need to enhance coordination and synergy on maritime issues between the ARF and other relevant ASEAN led-mechanisms, including the ADMM-Plus and the East Asia Summit (EAS). The Meeting noted the practise of Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) at the 2019 ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security Field Training Exercise. The Meeting noted the ongoing deliberation among ASEAN navies in view of operationalising the Guidelines for Maritime Interaction and the efforts to strengthen cooperation in the area of piracy and armed robbery against ships under the ambit of the AMMTC and other similar arrangements such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). The Meeting also reiterated the need to enhance cooperation in addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and other issues which have impact on environment in the region.
15. The Meeting emphasised the importance of further strengthening cooperation on disaster management, taking into account the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, climate change and rising sea levels. The Meeting underlined the importance of enhancing capabilities and capacities of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and resilience 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) and the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

16. The Meeting reiterated the importance of strengthening international and regional cooperative efforts in the areas of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, with the view to working towards the elimination, and non-proliferation, of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting the peaceful uses of 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 noted with appreciation, and 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 and Technology and Applications, Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards, which was signed in September 2019.
17. The Meeting underscored the importance of Myanmar's continued efforts in addressing the situation in Rakhine State. The Meeting stressed the importance of the voluntary return of displaced persons in a safe, secure and dignified manner, when conditions allow in accordance with the bilateral agreements with Bangladesh. The Meeting reiterated its appreciation to the Secretary-General of ASEAN for his efforts in leading the implementation of the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA). We also looked forward to the conduct of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and encouraged the Secretary-General of ASEAN to continue identifying possible areas that can effectively facilitate conditions that will allow for the eventual repatriation of displaced persons from Rakhine State. The Meeting appreciated the contribution from ASEAN Member States and some external partners, in supporting ASEAN activities, including the prioritised projects in Rakhine State to facilitate the repatriation process, when conditions allow, and to promote sustainable development. The Meeting further underscored the importance of efforts to addressing the root causes of the situation in Rakhine State.
18. The Meeting noted the importance of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) as a guide for ASEAN's engagement in the wider Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. The Meeting noted discussions to promote engagement and undertake cooperation in the priority areas identified in the Outlook through practical projects of common interest and mutual benefit, through existing ASEAN-led platforms.
19. The Meeting heard concerns expressed over the recent developments in the Middle East region. In this regard, the ceasefire announced on 21 May 2021 was welcomed as a step toward creating conditions conducive for dialogue, including 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. In this regard, both sides were urged to actively take positive steps to allow for negotiations to gain traction and work together towards the resumption of negotiations to achieve an enduring peace. Furthermore, full support was expressed by some ARF Participants for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for an independent State of Palestine under a two-state solution with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

## **REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES OF THE CURRENT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2020-2021)**

20. The Meeting was encouraged by the determination of ARF Participants in ensuring the continuation of the operation of the ARF amidst the unprecedented challenges and severe disruption posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting commended the ARF Unit for the effective and continued assistance rendered to the ARF Chair and Co-Chairs of ARF ISMs throughout the year.

21. The Meeting commended the work of the ARF SOM held on 29 June 2021 and the ARF Inter-sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ARF ISG on CBMs and PD) co-chaired by Brunei Darussalam and Australia on 24 May 2021. The Meeting was pleased to note that despite the unprecedented challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, both meetings were convened through video conference and participated by the majority of ARF Participants. The Meeting was of the view that this high level of participation reflected the commitment of ARF Participants in moving ARF processes forward. The Meeting endorsed the recommendations of the ARF SOM and the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD. The Summary Reports of the ARF SOM and ARF ISG on CBMs and PD appears as **ANNEXES 3 and 4**, respectively.
22. The Meeting appreciated the valuable contributions made by ARF defence officials and emphasised the importance of greater interaction of the defence track in the ARF process. The Meeting endorsed the suggestion to institutionalise a standing agenda on developments of regional defence cooperation in future ARF Defence Officials' Dialogues (DODs) and looked forward to recommendations for future consideration. The Meeting noted the reports of the ARF DOD held on 20 May 2021 and the 18<sup>th</sup> ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) held on 27 May 2021, which appears as **ANNEXES 5 and 6**.
23. Noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the operations of the ARF, the Meeting commended the Co-Chairs of the ARF ISMs on Maritime Security, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Disaster Relief, ICTs Security and other ARF annually-held meetings for their hard work in successfully convening their Meetings to continue the progress of cooperation in the respective areas. In this connection, the Meeting noted the respective reports of the Co-Chairs of the ISMs which appear as **ANNEXES 7 to 11**.
24. The Meeting noted the successful conduct of the following ARF meetings and activities held in the Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021:
- a) ARF Workshop on Nuclear Risk Reduction, videoconference, 18–19 November 2020;
  - b) ARF Workshop series on Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Mitigation Part One: Seminar, videoconference, 8–16 December 2020;
  - c) 6<sup>th</sup> ARF Open-Ended Study Group on Confidence Building Measures to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs (OESG), videoconference, 26 January 2021
  - d) 2<sup>nd</sup> ARF Workshop on Aviation Security and Information Sharing, videoconference, 22–24 February 2021;
  - e) ARF Workshop on Women, Peace and Security, videoconference, 2–4 March 2021;
  - f) 3<sup>rd</sup> ARF Workshop on Enhancing Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation, videoconference, 16–17 March 2021;
  - g) 17<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, videoconference, 22 April 2021;
  - h) ARF Workshop on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes, videoconference, 23 April and 26 April 2021;



- i) 7<sup>th</sup> ARF Open-Ended Study Group on Confidence Building Measures to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs (OESG), videoconference, 27 April 2021;
  - j) 3<sup>rd</sup> ARF ISM on Security of and in the Use of ICTs, videoconference, 28 April 2021;
  - k) 12<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Maritime Security, videoconference, 29 April 2021;
  - l) ARF Open-Ended Study Group on Inclusive Processes for Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, videoconference, 4–6 May 2021;
  - m) 19<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Disaster Relief, videoconference, 19 May 2021;
  - n) ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue, videoconference, 20 May 2021;
  - o) ARF ISG on CBMs and PD, videoconference, 24 May 2021;
  - p) 18<sup>th</sup> ARF Security Policy Conference, videoconference, 27 May 2021;
  - q) ARF Workshop on Protection of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructures, videoconference, 31 May 2021;
  - r) 3<sup>rd</sup> ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues, videoconference, 1–2 June 2021;
  - s) 12<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, videoconference, 3–4 June 2021;
  - t) ARF Training on Ferry Safety Capacity Building, videoconference, 22–25 June 2021 and 5–9 July 2021;
  - u) ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM), videoconference, 29 June 2021;
  - v) 14<sup>th</sup> ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) Meeting, videoconference, 6 July 2021;
  - w) ARF Workshop on Preventing Terrorist Use of the Internet, videoconference, 7 July 2021; and
  - x) ARF Enhancement Training on Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Capacity Building and Comprehensive USAR Drill, videoconference, 15–24 July 2021.
25. The Meeting noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 13 activities intended to be convened in the Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021 were postponed and would be carried forward to the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022. The list of activities to be carried forward is as follows:
- a) 8<sup>th</sup> ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting, Co-Chaired by Indonesia, and Japan;
  - b) 3<sup>rd</sup> ARF Workshop on International Cooperation on Maritime Domain Awareness, Co-Chaired by the Philippines and Japan;
  - c) ARF International Ship and Port Facility Security Code Training Series and Manual, Co-Chaired by the Philippines, India, Papua New Guinea, and the United States;
  - d) ARF Seminar on Marine Debris – Solid Waste Management and Scalable Solutions, Co-Chaired by Thailand, China, and the United States;

- e) ARF Table-Top Exercise on Response Capabilities to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Incidents, Co-Chaired by the Philippines, the ROK, and the United States;
- f) ARF Training on Developing Exercises to Counter CBRN Terrorism, Co-Chaired by the Philippines and the United States;
- g) ARF Workshop Nuclear Non-Proliferation Safety and Security Standards and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Co-Chaired by Viet Nam and the United States;
- h) 3<sup>rd</sup> ARF Workshop on Urban Emergency Rescue, Co-Chaired by Lao PDR, Malaysia, and China;
- i) ARF Symposium on Inclusive Processes for Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, Co-Chaired by Singapore, the European Union, and the United States;
- j) ARF Workshop series on Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Mitigation part two: Study Tour, Co-Chaired by Indonesia, New Zealand and the United States;
- k) ARF Workshop series on Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Mitigation part three: Simulation, Co-Chaired by Indonesia, New Zealand and the United States;
- l) ARF Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy for Sustaining Peace, Co-Chaired by Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Singapore, and China; and
- m) ARF Workshop on Health Security and Pandemic Response and Recovery – Lessons Learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Co-Chaired by Viet Nam, Canada and the United States.

## **PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2021-2022)**

26. The Meeting was pleased to welcome the following Chair and Co-Chairs:

- a) Cambodia as Chair of the 29<sup>th</sup> ARF, ARF SOM and 19<sup>th</sup> ASPC;
- b) Cambodia and China as Co-Chairs of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD, and ARF DOD for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022;
- c) Indonesia, Australia and the ROK as Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022;
- d) Indonesia, India and the United States as Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on Maritime Security for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022;
- e) Thailand, Sri Lanka and the United States as Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on NPD for the period of 2022-2024;
- f) Brunei Darussalam and China as Co-Chairs of the 15<sup>th</sup> ARF EEPs; and
- g) Malaysia and Pakistan as Co-Chairs of the 24<sup>th</sup> ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM).

27. Taking into account the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to the work of the ARF, the Meeting welcomed Lao PDR, Canada and China's proposal for extension of their Co-Chairmanship of the ARF ISM on DR to 2022, which represent the Co-Chairs' strong commitment to the ARF. The Meeting took note of the proposal from Malaysia, the EU, and New Zealand as the current Co-Chairs of the ARF ISM on CTTC, to extend the co-chairmanship of the ISM on CTTC to 2023 and that a decision on extending the term would be made in the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022.
28. Acknowledging the various expressions of interest in co-chairmanship of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security and ARF ISM on Maritime Security, the Meeting noted the need to explore creative solutions to ensure continuation of cooperation in these areas. In this regard, the Meeting approved the rotational arrangements for the co-chairmanship of the ARF ISM on ICTs Security by Indonesia, Australia, the ROK and Russia for the period of 2022-2024, and the ARF ISM on Maritime Security by Indonesia, India, the United States, Cambodia and China for the period of 2022-2026. Underlining the unprecedented nature of such arrangements, the Meeting agreed that such arrangements could only be applied in this instance and should not be replicated nor set a new precedent in the ARF.
29. The Meeting noted the continued use of the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol, which was approved by the 53<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) in 2020, as a basic guideline, in which all ARF activities shall be conducted in a consistent and standardised manner, wherein the role of ASEAN as the primary driving force is further reinforced. The Meeting approved the List of ARF Track 1 Activities for the Inter-Sessional Year 2021-2022 which appears as **ANNEX 12**.
30. In an effort to further contribute to the strengthening of cooperation to address the continuously evolving regional security challenges, the Meeting adopted the Joint Statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at the ARF, which appears as **ANNEX 13**.

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

31. The Meeting highlighted the key role of the 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 encouraged stronger commitment of ARF Participants to implement the action lines of the HPOA II. The Meeting noted that the implementation of the HPOA II should be reported annually to the Meeting through the ARF SOM for evaluation and review. To this end, the Meeting tasked the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat to continue assisting the ARF Chair in recording the implementation of the HPOA II and developing the progress report based on input received from all ARF Participants.
32. Taking into account the increasing activities and work of the ARF, the Meeting called for greater support for the work of the ARF Unit and reiterated the need to strengthen the ARF Unit with necessary resources and manpower. In this regard, the Meeting endorsed the recommendation of the ARF SOM and tasked the ARF Unit to undertake a review of the role and function of the ARF Unit and develop an information paper to facilitate discussions on this issue. Noting that the ARF Unit constitutes a part of the ASEAN Secretariat and operates under the ASEAN Secretariat structure, recommendations and assessments on the capacity of the ARF Unit should first be submitted to the ASEAN Member States for further consideration.

33. In view of supporting the expanding work of the ARF, the Meeting further tasked the ARF Unit to assess and review the Terms of Reference of the ARF Fund and provide recommendations to ensure its effective utilisation. The Meeting requested for recommendations to be submitted to the ARF SOM in 2022 for further deliberation.
34. Recognising the cross-cutting and transboundary nature of regional security challenges, and emerging threats, the Meeting highlighted the importance of promoting complementarities, and 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 sharing of information with other ASEAN-led mechanisms including the ADMM-Plus and the EAS.
35. The Meeting welcomed the publication of the 2021 ARF Annual Security Outlook (ASO) presented by Brunei Darussalam, and underlined the importance of the ARF ASO as an integral document to further promote transparency and confidence among ARF Participants.