

2021 CONCEPT PAPER ON THE ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING'S EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENTS

Issued on 15 June 2021

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INTRODUCTION

1. Since the establishment of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in 2006 and the ADMM-Plus in 2010, there has been increasing interest from both Plus countries and other external parties to engage the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus.
2. Since the initial stages of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus, the ADMM has adopted Concept Papers, Protocols, Guidelines, and other documents to accommodate such increasing interest with the end goal of contributing to an open, transparent, inclusive, and rules-based regional security architecture while maintaining ASEAN Centrality.
3. During the ASEAN Defence Senior Officials' Meeting (ADSOM) Working Group (WG) Meeting in Da Nang, Viet Nam in January 2020, it was agreed upon that a Concept Paper on the ADMM's External Engagements would be crafted to further refine modalities and working processes while reaffirming ASEAN Centrality within the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus.

PURPOSE

4. This Concept Paper is intended to provide a set of guiding principles, modalities, processes, and guidelines to enable the ADMM to assess, evaluate, and respond to requests or proposals regarding engagements with ASEAN's external partners.

OBJECTIVES

5. The following are the objectives of this Concept Paper:
 - a. Contribute to the realisation of a dynamic and outward-looking region as envisioned in the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint 2025.
 - b. Review and reaffirm the principles that were previously agreed upon by the ADMM with regard to engaging ASEAN's friends and Dialogue Partners.
 - c. Ensure that the ADMM's external engagements are conducted in a way that reaffirms ASEAN Centrality in accordance with Article 41 of the ASEAN Charter and the Guidelines for ASEAN's External Relations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

6. Any external engagement of the ADMM shall be conducted in accordance with the principles provided for in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) with ASEAN Centrality as the primary guiding principle in the conduct of such engagements.

7. Furthermore, such engagements shall be in accordance with the purposes of existing Concept Papers, Protocols, Guidelines, and other documents which have been adopted by the ADMM.
8. The ADMM-Plus shall be the main platform of external engagement for defence establishments that seek to engage ASEAN.
9. Any request for engagement outside the ADMM-Plus platform shall be deliberated on through the existing ADMM process and decided on through consensus at a pace comfortable to all ASEAN Member States.

OVERVIEW OF ASEAN'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND ASEAN CENTRALITY

10. The ASEAN Charter outlines ASEAN's goal to maintain the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture that is open, transparent and inclusive.
11. This was echoed in the 2009 Joint Declaration of ASEAN Defence Ministers on Strengthening ASEAN Defence Establishments to Meet the Challenges of Non-Traditional Security Threats, which also recalled the goal of the ASEAN Political-Security Community of promoting a dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world.
12. Furthermore, the "centrality of ASEAN in external political, economic, social and cultural relations while remaining actively engaged, outward-looking, inclusive, and non-discriminatory" is one of the principles that ASEAN and its Member States shall act in accordance with as outlined in the ASEAN Charter.
13. The Charter further states that "external parties may be invited to ASEAN meetings or cooperative activities without being conferred any formal status, in accordance with the rules of procedure."
14. The APSC Blueprint 2025 highlights that "ASEAN will continue to deepen cooperation with Dialogue Partners, strengthen engagement with other external parties, reach out to new potential partners for mutually beneficial relations, and play a responsible and constructive role globally based on an ASEAN common platform on international issues."
15. In the 2006 Concept Paper for the Establishment of an ADMM, it was underscored that the "ADMM shall be an integral part of ASEAN, add value and complement the overall ASEAN process, and be open, flexible, and outward looking in respect of actively engaging ASEAN's friends and Dialogue Partners as well as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)." It also emphasised that "ASEAN shall be in the driver's seat in the ADMM's interactions with ASEAN's friends and Dialogue Partners."
16. Furthermore, the 2007 Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the ADMM highlights that the "ADMM shall actively engage ASEAN's friends and Dialogue Partners in dialogue and cooperation on defence and security matters, through an ADMM-Plus process, at a pace comfortable to all ASEAN Member States, while respecting the principles of consensus-based decision making, independence, sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs."
17. In addition, the 2007 Protocol recognized that the "fundamental principles of cooperation and good neighborliness enshrined in the TAC have since become the norm in the relations among the nations in Southeast Asia as well as in ASEAN's relations with its friends and Dialogue partners."

18. The APSC Blueprint 2025 also encouraged holding consultations and promoting cooperation on regional defence and security matters between ASEAN and Dialogue Partners as well as other external parties, including through the ADMM-Plus.

ADMM-PLUS

19. The ADMM established the ADMM-Plus as a “robust, effective, open and inclusive component of the regional security architecture that would enable the ADMM to cooperate with the non-ASEAN countries to build capacity and better prepare ASEAN to address the complex security challenges.”
20. The 2007 Concept Paper on the ADMM-Plus provides for the objectives and principles for an ADMM-Plus, and emphasises that ASEAN is at the centre of the ADMM-Plus, which needs to be open and inclusive. It also underscored that the ADMM-Plus shall be an integral part of the ADMM.

CONFIGURATION, COMPOSITION, AND MEMBERSHIP

21. The 2010 Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Configuration and Composition refers to an ADMM+X configuration where “X” refers to countries that are able to fulfill the membership criteria. The ADMM+X configuration was determined to be the most appropriate for ASEAN and the region as it would allow the ADMM to bring onboard the non-ASEAN countries that could best contribute to the peace and stability of the region.
22. The said 2010 Concept Paper found that the ADMM+1 and ADMM+3 configurations are not suitable for the region. Multiple ADMM+1s could lead to a proliferation of meetings with separate agendas and reduce the overall transparency of the ADMM-Plus, thereby limiting opportunities for open dialogue and mutual consultation between countries. Meanwhile, ADMM+3 configurations will only provide for the ADMM’s engagement with a specific geographical region in the Asia-Pacific and omits other major players that could contribute positively to the peace and stability of the Southeast Asian region.
23. While the ADMM will only involve the ten (10) ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat in accordance with the 2014 Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers for the Establishment of an ADMM and the ADMM-Plus, the membership of the ADMM-Plus shall remain to be in accordance with the 2009 Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Principles for Membership and the 2010 Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Configuration and Composition.
24. The 2010 Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Configuration and Composition found that Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia, and the United States of America (USA) have fulfilled the membership criteria at the time of the establishment of the ADMM-Plus and that other Dialogue Partners may be considered once they have fulfilled the membership criteria.
25. It may be recalled that the 7th ADMM endorsed the recommendation made by the ADSOM for the ADMM-Plus to consolidate and build on its initial success before expanding coverage as reflected in the 2017 2nd Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers on the Establishment of ADMM and ADMM-Plus.
26. The following Principles for Membership shall continue to be the criteria for assessing new applications for ADMM-Plus membership in the future:

- a. The ADMM-Plus country shall be a full-fledged Dialogue Partner of ASEAN, where Dialogue Partners' status is in accordance with the ASEAN Charter.
 - b. The ADMM-Plus country shall have significant interactions and relations with ASEAN defence establishments.
 - c. The ADMM-Plus country is able to work with the ADMM to build capacity so as to enhance regional security in a substantive manner.
27. As stated in the 2009 Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Principles for Membership, extra-regional countries may only be invited to join the ADMM-Plus after they meet the criteria and upon the consensus of all ASEAN Member States. Applications shall be submitted to the Chair of the ADMM who will then consult other members of the ADMM.
28. Decisions on inviting extra-regional countries to be a member of the ADMM-Plus shall be made by the ADMM in accordance with established principles and existing modalities provided in previously adopted Concept Papers. Any proposed changes to the ADMM-Plus membership criteria will have to be considered and approved by the ADMM.
29. The decision of the ADMM to invite a new member of the ADMM-Plus shall be conveyed to the rest of the ADMM-Plus members during the ADMM-Plus or through ad-referendum means in the event that the ADMM-Plus is not able to convene.

PROCEDURES, MODALITIES, AND COUNTRY COORDINATORSHIP

30. The 2014 Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers for the Establishment of an ADMM and the ADMM-Plus highlighted that there is no other endorsed format of external engagement other than the ADMM and ADMM-Plus and that all deviations, including ad-hoc activities held under the ADMM or ADMM-Plus, will have to seek the approval of the ADMM and ADMM-Plus through ADSOM or ADSOM-Plus. It further highlighted that applications to participate in the ADMM-Plus shall be submitted to the Chair of the ADMM who will then consult the other members of the ADMM.
31. Furthermore, the 2014 Additional Protocol emphasised that in line with the principle of ASEAN Centrality, all new proposals and initiatives of the ADMM-Plus shall be discussed and considered by ASEAN Member States before being considered by the ADSOM-Plus WG and ADSOM-Plus.
32. External parties shall submit proposals, requests, or concerns that they wish to raise before the ADMM through their country coordinator, if applicable, as identified under the ASEAN External Relations Coordinatorship. If the said external party has no assigned country coordinator to ASEAN, such as non-Dialogue Partners and international organisations, such proposals, requests, or concerns may be conveyed directly to the ADMM Chair, and ASEAN would retain the prerogative to engage these countries, as appropriate.
33. The country coordinator shall convey the proposal, request, or concern to the current ADMM Chair for the said matters to be included in the agenda of the ADSOM WG for discussion and deliberation.
34. Any ADMM Member, who has been approached by an external party that has no country coordinator, may opt to convey the external party's proposals, requests, or concerns to the ADMM

Chair or simply advise the external party to convey the said matters to the ADMM Chair for the said matters to be included in the agenda of the ADSOM WG.

35. During the ADSOM WG and ADSOM, the country coordinator, when called upon by the Chair, shall introduce and initially discuss the said proposals that were submitted by the Plus country or Dialogue Partner to be followed by a discussion of the ADSOM WG and ADSOM. If the external party has no country coordinator, the proposal, request, or concern will be introduced and initially discussed by the ADSOM WG and/or ADSOM Chair.
36. In accordance with the existing process, the recommendations of the ADSOM WG shall be submitted to the ADSOM for subsequent endorsement to the ADMM.
37. The country coordinator is mainly tasked with conveying the proposals of the external party in question for the consideration of the ADMM but shall reserve the right to convey its own position on the proposals. Once a decision has been reached, the country coordinator shall inform the external party of the ADMM's collective decision. The ADMM Chair shall inform the external party of the said decision if the external party has no country coordinator.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMAL MEETINGS

38. Since 2011, individual Plus countries have requested for separate informal meetings with the ADMM, which are usually held at the sidelines of the ADMM, the ADMM Retreat, or the ADMM-Plus.
39. The 2014 Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers for the Establishment of an ADMM and the ADMM-Plus recalled the agreement at the ADMM Retreat in Brunei Darussalam in 2013 that the ADMM-Plus is the ADMM's main platform of external engagement. Thus, all engagements with individual Plus countries shall be kept informal.
40. In response to the need for procedures and guidelines to be developed to deal with the request by the Plus countries for more exclusive interactions, the ADMM adopted the Guidelines to Respond to the Request for Informal Engagements or Meetings by the ADMM-Plus Countries in 2015.
41. In the 2017 Concept Paper on the Annualisation of the ADMM-Plus, it was stated that the ADMM shall no longer consider requests for informal ADMM+1 meetings, but recognizes the value for ADMM+1 meetings, and thus retains the prerogative to call for special meetings with individual Plus countries if there are urgent and/or important issues to discuss.
42. The 2017 Guidelines Regarding the Conduct of ADMM's Informal Engagements or Meetings with Plus Countries provided that informal meetings shall only be called by the ADMM when it deems that there is an urgent and/or important matter to be discussed with a Plus country.
43. However, it has been observed that Plus countries have continued to request for informal meetings and that more Plus countries are interested in conducting such meetings on a regular basis.
44. While such a development is welcomed by the ADMM as an indicator of continued interest from external parties to engage ASEAN, there remain to be concerns on the proliferation of meetings with overlapping agenda as recognized in the 2010 Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Configuration and Composition and the precedents that have been set for other Plus countries to follow suit, which may undermine the ADMM-Plus platform. Increasing informal meetings also pose difficulties for

Defence Ministers to attend multiple meetings on top of the regular ADMM, ADMM Retreat, and ADMM-Plus.

45. In view of the reality of continued requests for informal meetings and recognizing the value of meeting individual Plus countries when necessary, the ADMM shall retain the prerogative of calling for informal meetings with an individual Plus country when there is an urgent matter to discuss.
46. With regard to requests for informal meetings, the interested Plus country shall submit the request to conduct the Informal Meeting to the Chair of the ADMM through the country coordinator. The said request shall include details on the agenda of the requested informal meeting.
47. The ADMM Chair will consult other ASEAN Member States and will include the said request in the agenda of the ADSOM WG to be deliberated on and submitted to the ADSOM for subsequent endorsement to the ADMM before the convening of any Informal Meeting.
48. When evaluating requests, the following guidelines shall be observed:
 - a. Up to six (6) informal meetings may be held within the year depending on the ADMM Chair's prerogative to convene a separate ADMM-Plus and an ADMM Retreat.
 - b. At most two (2) informal meetings shall be held at the sidelines of either the ADMM, the ADMM-Plus, or the ADMM Retreat, and over meals as a general guideline. In the event that the ADMM-Plus will be convened back-to-back with the ADMM, only two (2) informal meetings shall be conducted at the sidelines of the said meetings.
 - c. No informal meeting may be conducted separately from the said main meetings. Even if the meeting was initiated by a Plus country, the said meeting shall not be held in the Plus country. Any meeting initiated by a Plus country held in the said country shall not fall under the category of informal meetings within the ambit of the ADMM-Plus.
 - d. Those that are not accommodated in the current year shall be queued in the following year, but such are not guaranteed as the ADMM shall have the prerogative to decide if it will accommodate any request for informal meetings in any given year.
 - e. Priority is subsequently accorded to a requesting Plus country that has not yet met with the ADMM through an informal meeting.
 - f. The decision to accept the requests shall be decided through consensus, on a case-to-case basis based on considerations to include but not limited to urgency of the meeting and indicative list of topics. There shall be no follow-on activities or initiatives to be introduced and discussed in the informal meetings.
49. The requesting Plus country shall be informed of the decision of the ADMM by the country coordinator. In the event that the proposed schedule does not allow the ADMM to make the decision when they sit, an ad-referendum approval must be obtained.
50. In line with the informal nature of engagements with individual Plus countries, there shall be no support mechanisms, such as working groups or senior officials' meetings, to be established with individual Plus countries.
51. There shall not be official record of an informal meeting, in writing and otherwise, and its outcomes, if any, shall not require follow-on actions.

PROPOSALS FOR ADMM+1 ENGAGEMENTS

52. In addition to informal meetings, there has also been an increase in the proposals for the conduct of activities with individual Plus countries, including exercises, and exchanges.
53. As the ADMM-Plus is the main platform for engagement with Plus countries, the ADMM should encourage the Plus country to undertake practical defence cooperation with the ADMM through the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Groups (EWGs).
54. In the event that a Plus country still wishes to submit proposals for the ADMM's consideration, such proposals shall be submitted through the country coordinator. The said submission shall include a Concept Paper, Non-Paper, or Discussion Paper containing details to enable the ADMM to evaluate the proposal.
55. Upon receipt of the proposals, the country coordinator shall submit the proposals to the ADMM Chair. The proposals shall be included in the agenda of the ADSOM WG for discussion and deliberation.
56. Upon ADSOM WG's review of the Plus country's proposal, the proposed activity shall be dovetailed with an EWG Field Training Exercise (FTX) if the area of cooperation of the said activity falls under the ambit of the established EWGs.
57. The ADSOM WG's recommendations shall be submitted to the ADSOM for subsequent endorsement to the ADMM.
58. The Plus country in question shall be informed of the decision of the ADMM by the country coordinator.
59. Interested Plus countries may continue to pursue existing defence initiatives with ASEAN defence establishments outside the ADMM-Plus banner. An individual invitation may be extended by the Plus country to the ADMM members on a bilateral basis. Such activity, which are not approved by the ADMM, shall not be considered to be endorsed by ASEAN. The said activity shall be understood as an initiative of the Plus country outside the ambit of the ADMM in which individual ASEAN Member States may choose to participate on a flexible, non-binding, and voluntary basis.

EVALUATING APPLICATIONS FOR OBSERVERSHIP AND REQUESTS FOR ENGAGEMENT BY NON-ADMM-PLUS MEMBERS

60. The 2017 2nd Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers on the Establishment of ADMM and ADMM-Plus recognized the increasing demand or interest by Non-Plus countries.
61. The 2018 Concept Paper on Observership of ADMM-Plus EWG Activities emphasises that the ADMM shall have the prerogative to determine the criteria to select Non-Plus countries as observers of the ADMM-Plus EWG activities.
62. The following principles were provided for the participation of Non-ADMM-Plus Members in the EWGs' activities:
 - a. The engagement with Non-Plus countries should not dilute the ADMM and ADMM-Plus processes.

- b. Non-Plus countries shall not participate in EWG meetings.
 - c. Non-Plus countries shall only participate in EWG activities as observers. Such activities include seminars, workshops, and exercises. As observer, the Non-Plus countries shall have no decision-making authority during their observership of the EWG activities.
 - d. Non-Plus countries shall only participate in a maximum of two (2) EWGs.
 - e. Each EWG shall only accommodate one (1) Non-Plus country per activity.
 - f. Non-Plus countries shall not contribute in organising EWG's activities and shall not be provided with any courtesies during the said activities.
 - g. Participation of Non-Plus countries shall not in any way be interpreted as application for membership to the ADMM-Plus.
 - h. Participation as observer is not a guarantee or a basis for eventual membership in the ADMM-Plus.
63. The selection criteria that were approved by the ADMM include the following:
- a. The Non-Plus country shall demonstrate that it has an interest in strengthening the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region.
 - b. The Non-Plus country shall have relevant expertise in the EWG(s) they wish to observe.
64. Considering that there may be multiple applications and given that EWGs may only accommodate one (1) Non-Plus country per activity, the following additional criteria shall be considered for evaluating applications provided that the applicants have met the selection criteria in the previous paragraph:
- a. Priority shall be accorded to applicants that have been conferred with the formal status of a Dialogue Partner, in accordance with Articles 41 and 44 of the ASEAN Charter.
 - b. Consideration may also be given to applicants that have been conferred with the formal status of a Sectoral Dialogue Partner or Development Partner of ASEAN.
 - c. Additional consideration may be given to applicants that have acceded to the TAC.
65. Interested Non-Plus countries shall submit during the current EWG cycle its observership applications to the country coordinators, if applicable, stating the specific EWG(s) that they wish to observe in order of priority and demonstrating the applicant's interest in strengthening the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region and expertise in the selected EWG(s). Otherwise, the application shall be submitted directly to the ADMM Chair.
66. The application shall be first discussed by the ADSOM WG with recommendations to be submitted to the ADSOM. The ADSOM will then endorse final recommendations for the ADMM's consideration. The observership status of successful Non-Plus countries shall commence in the next EWG cycle, last the duration of one (1) EWG cycle, and expire at the end of each EWG cycle.
67. Based on the ADMM's decision on which Non-Plus countries may observe EWG activities as well as the specific EWGs where they may attend as observers, the co-chairs of the EWGs in question

shall decide which activity the Non-Plus country may observe, bearing in mind that each EWG activity shall only accommodate one (1) Non-Plus country.

68. The ADMM's decision shall be conveyed by the ADMM-Plus Chair to the rest of the ADMM-Plus members during the ADMM-Plus or through ad-referendum means in the event that the ADMM-Plus is not able to convene.

EXPANSION OF EXISTING ADMM INITIATIVES WITH PLUS COUNTRIES

69. All initiatives adopted under the ADMM are to be undertaken under the ADMM format, which involves the ten ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat.
70. The ADMM shall endeavour to operationalize an ADMM initiative among ASEAN Member States prior to expanding such an initiative to Plus countries.
71. In the event that the ADMM wishes to undertake such an expansion, such will be done so through consensus and shall be discussed through the ADSOM WG and ADSOM prior to submission to the ADMM for consideration.
72. The proponent shall indicate if the expansion will be staggered to include individual Plus countries subject to their availability or if the ADMM initiative may fall within the ambit of any of the seven (7) EWGs, i.e., be undertaken through the EWGs.
73. The proponent for the expansion shall prepare a Concept Paper, Discussion Paper, Terms of Reference, or any relevant document that outlines the parameters of the Plus countries' participation to the ADMM initiative as previously undertaken with respect to the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI).
74. If the ADMM has approved the provision to expand the initiative to Plus countries in the original concept paper, the proponent need not resurface the expansion of the initiative to Plus countries for the ADMM's consideration.
75. The decision to invite Plus countries to participate in ADMM initiatives shall be announced by the ADMM Chair during the ADMM-Plus or through ad referendum means in the event that the ADMM-Plus is unable to convene.
76. Details and comments of the Plus countries shall then be discussed during the next cycle's ADSOM-Plus WG and ADSOM-Plus provided that the ADMM already has an agreed upon set of parameters for such an expansion.

PARTICIPATION OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS IN ADMM INITIATIVES

77. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) could be invited to activities under ADMM initiatives to add expertise and perspectives. Their participation shall be conducted in accordance with the following principles:
- a. Engagement with SMEs should not dilute the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus processes.
 - b. Plenary meetings of the ADSOM WG and ADSOM shall be limited to ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat.

- c. Activities under ADMM initiatives that are open for SMEs shall be limited to exercises, workshops, and seminars, while meetings intended to discuss policy matters regarding the ADMM initiatives shall be limited to ADMM members only.
- d. SMEs may be invited as resource persons to specific activities under ADMM initiatives.
- e. SMEs shall not contribute in organising ADMM activities and shall not be provided with any courtesies during the said activities.
- f. Invitations to activities of ADMM initiatives shall be understood as one-off engagements and shall not be construed as an invitation or guarantee of eventual ADMM or ADMM-Plus membership.

SPECIAL GUESTS OF THE CHAIR

- 78. The ADMM and ADMM-Plus Chair shall have the prerogative to invite external parties as special guests to special events of the ADMM, the ADMM-Plus, and the ADMM Retreat.
- 79. To ensure that the special guests have demonstrated an interest in strengthening the peace and security of the Asia-Pacific region, the guests would need to be existing ASEAN Partners (i.e., Dialogue Partners, Sectoral Dialogue Partners, Development Partners) or successful applicants of the ADMM-Plus EWG Observership Programme, before they may be considered as guests.
- 80. Special Guests of the Chair may only be invited to opening and closing ceremonies, media events, official meals, social activities or other special commemorative events of the ADMM, the ADMM-Plus, and the ADMM Retreat.
- 81. Special Guests of the Chair shall not participate in the official meetings of the ADMM, the ADMM-Plus, and the ADMM Retreat.

ENGAGEMENTS WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND CSO/NGO

- 82. The ASEAN Charter provides that "ASEAN shall develop friendly relations and mutually beneficial dialogue, cooperation, and partnerships with countries and sub-regional, regional and international organisations and institutions."
- 83. In the Bali Concord II, "the ASEAN Security Community shall explore enhanced cooperation with the United Nations as well as other international and regional bodies for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- 84. The 2014 Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers for the Establishment of an ADMM and the ADMM-Plus provides the co-chairs of the EWGs with the flexibility to determine if the participation of non-military/defence government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations would benefit the EWGs.
- 85. The ADMM has also initiated cooperation with Civil-Society Organisations (CSOs) to address non-traditional security issues when it adopted the Concept Paper on the ASEAN Defence Establishments CSOs Cooperation on Non-Traditional Security.

86. When conferring a formal status (i.e., Dialogue Partner, Sectoral Dialogue Partner, Development Partner) on an external party, one of the criteria identified in the Guidelines for ASEAN's External Relations is that the external party must be a sovereign state or international organisation as defined in the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Hence, the ADMM may engage international organisations if it deems that engagement with the said organisation may benefit the ADMM.
87. To respond to any application for membership of an organisation, only regional and international organisations that have been conferred with the formal status of a Dialogue Partner and meet the other membership criteria in the Concept Paper on ADMM-Plus: Principles for Membership shall be considered.
88. Regional and international organisations that are interested in attending EWG activities as observers shall abide by the same principles, modalities, and processes and shall be considered based on the same criteria as other applicants.
89. The co-chairs of the EWGs shall retain the prerogative to invite resource persons from international organisations to activities of EWGs if this is deemed to be beneficial for the EWG. These resource persons attend/participate in EWG activities to share their expertise or experiences and not as members of the EWGs. They shall abide by the same principles provided for the participation of Non-ADMM-Plus Members in EWG activities.
90. It is understood that invited organisations are participating in the EWG activities as resource speakers to share their expertise or experiences and not as members of the EWGs. They shall abide by the same principles provided for the participation of Non-ADMM-Plus Members in EWG activities.
91. Any engagement between the ADMM and a CSO for practical cooperation shall be conducted in accordance with the 2009 Concept Paper on the ASEAN Defence Establishments and CSOs Cooperation on Non-Traditional Security.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENTS OF OTHER DEFENCE-RELATED PLATFORMS UNDER ADMM

92. As recalled in the 2014 Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers for the Establishment of an ADMM and the ADMM-Plus, the ADMM is at the apex of all defence-related meetings within the ASEAN framework, all ASEAN defence and military meetings and cooperation shall be convened under the purview of the ADMM. Thus, it is important for ASEAN defence and military-related meetings to consult the ADMM on major issues, such as their external engagement with ASEAN's friends and Dialogue Partners.
93. There have been previous initiatives for defence and military-related platforms to establish external engagements, such as when the ADMM Three-Year Work Programme 2014-2016 included an action line to "explore the expansion of Track 2 forum to include Plus countries through the Network of ASEAN Defence and Security Institutions (NADI) to promote further understanding of individual country's view" and when the draft Concept Paper on the ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting-Plus (ACDFIM)-Plus was raised in 2016.

94. In the meantime, the said defence and military-related platforms shall focus on strengthening cooperation within existing mechanisms.
95. In the event that the establishment of a mechanism to engage the counterparts of the ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Meeting (ACDFM) or NADI is considered, such engagement shall first be agreed upon at the level of the said platforms. Only when such consensus has been reached shall the matter be elevated to the level of the ADMM through the ADSOM WG and ADSOM for consultation to ensure consistent policy decision across all ASEAN defence and military meetings.

CONCLUSION

96. The Concept Paper on the ADMM's External Engagements shall be read in conjunction with Concept Papers, Protocols, Guidelines and other documents that were previously adopted by the ADMM in relation to the matter of external relations with Plus countries and other external parties. Specifically, this Concept Paper supersedes the 2017 2nd Additional Protocol to the Concept Papers on the Establishment of ADMM and ADMM-Plus, and the 2018 Concept Paper on Observership of ADMM-Plus EWG Activities.