

2023 ASEAN DECLARATION ON COMBATING ARMS SMUGGLING

Adopted in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia on 21 August 2023

The Seventeenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (17th AMMTC) was convened in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia on 21 August 2023;

RECOGNISING that arms smuggling remains a pervasive issue in ASEAN, which jeopardises socio-economic and political development and creates challenges in preventing and curbing cross-border illicit trade and smuggling of firearms and its ammunition;

RECALLING concern that the arms smuggling in the world and the ASEAN region as well as the increased misuse of technology by criminal networks, continue to threaten peace and national security particularly pose direct consequences to regional, political, and socioeconomic development;

APPREHENSIVE of the great danger to the lives and well-being of the people of ASEAN, as the result of illegal use of arms;

RECOGNISING that the growth of arms smuggling would create significant challenges in preventing and curbing transnational crime particularly terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, sea piracy, and trafficking in persons (TIP);

RECOGNISING that cooperation on the development of strict and effective measures against arms smuggling will contribute to efforts in combating transnational crime, particularly the implementation of the ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects;

BEARING IN MIND the necessity to combat arms smuggling is attainable through cooperation of relevant institutional mechanisms among ASEAN Member States;

HAVE HEREBY RESOLVED, IN A SPIRIT OF AMITY AND COOPERATION, TO:

1. **SEEK AND UTILISE** all means or modalities to eradicate illicit arms manufacturing, processing, and smuggling in ASEAN;
2. **STRENGTHEN AND PROMOTE LINKAGES** among existing institutional mechanisms in the ASEAN region involved in the fight against arms smuggling more effectively, in particular, transnational border cooperation in building and implementing of key projects and campaigns against arms smuggling;
3. **INTENSIFY** cooperation, including with ASEAN Dialogue Partners and other external parties to help curb arms smuggling, particularly in the areas of law enforcement, border management and capacity building of frontline border officers, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, timely information exchange and community engagement, practical experience sharing in countering illicit arms transfers;
4. **SEEK AND INVITE** the review of legal frameworks and other instruments of ASEAN related to manufacturing, trafficking, and use of arms, and especially a move for stricter application of legal measures on those who are involved in arms smuggling.

5. **UPDATE ON REGULAR BASIS** national records/statistics, on arms smuggling for effective use, sharing, and tracking of illicit arms manufacturing and trafficking, as well as for verification and evaluation on arms that are legally permissible for use and possession.
6. **ENCOURAGE** relevant institutions of the ASEAN Member States to carry out awareness raising programmes among citizens on the danger and repercussions of arms smuggling, to promote sharing of information and cooperation with the authorities, in order to prevent and combat arms smuggling;
7. **ENCOURAGE** the ratification of relevant international treaties and agreements on arms smuggling, in view of strengthening ASEAN's cooperation to combat arms smuggling facilitated by the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherd for arms smuggling priority area.
8. **CALL FOR** closer partnership and coordination actions between Member's relevant officers or specialised units, in line with Member's respective national mechanisms, as well as noting the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime, in view of strengthening ASEAN's cooperation to prevent, disrupt, and combat arms smuggling.
9. **TASK** the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) to remain seized of the matter and report the implementation of this Declaration to the AMMTC.

ADOPTED in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, on Twenty-First Day of August in the year Two Thousand and Twenty-Three, in a single original copy in the English language