

# 2024 CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 31ST ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

*Issued in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 27 July 2024*

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1. The Thirty-First Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 27 July 2024. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Saleumxay KOMMASITH, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, under the Lao PDR's ASEAN Chairmanship theme "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience".
2. The Meeting was attended by the Foreign Ministers and Representatives of all ARF Participants, as well as the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The list of delegates appears as **ANNEX 1**.

### OVERVIEW OF THE ARF PROCESS

3. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of the ARF as the leading regional security forum in the Asia-Pacific region for fostering constructive dialogue and cooperation among its Participants on political and security issues of common interest and concern, with ASEAN as the primary driving force. The Meeting noted that security challenges are becoming more inter-connected and increasingly complex, thus requiring greater coordination and concerted efforts. In this respect, the Meeting encouraged all ARF Participants to exert greater efforts in advancing the ARF process to promote its effectiveness and relevance in the evolving regional architecture.
4. With regard to the ARF's efforts on preventive diplomacy, the Meeting was pleased to note the progress in the implementation of the ARF Work Plan on Preventive Diplomacy since its adoption in 2011. Recognising that the Work Plan is an essential document for cooperation in the ARF, the Meeting was of the view that there is a need to intensify efforts to advance cooperation in this area, in accordance with the principles reflected in the ARF Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy whilst continuing confidence building measures. Towards this end, the Meeting further noted that there may be a need for the ARF to review and update the Work Plan to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.
5. The Meeting underscored the key role of the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) (HPOA II) in paving the way for the ARF as an action-oriented forum at a pace comfortable to all. The Meeting noted the progress in the implementation of the HPOA II and encouraged stronger commitment of ARF Participants to expedite the implementation of the remaining action lines. The Meeting commended the work of the ARF Unit in monitoring and assessing the implementation of the HPOA II and noted that challenges to determine the quantifiability of some of the action lines continue to be encountered due to the lack of information and capabilities. In this regard, the Meeting tasked the Co-Chairs of each ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM), with the assistance of the ARF Unit to assess the implementation progress of each area of cooperation under their purview as well as to lead discussions on ways to further promote the implementation of the HPOA II by 2025. The Meeting also looked forward to the development of the next Plan of Action for the ARF.
6. The Meeting reaffirmed ASEAN Unity and Centrality as the driving force in maintaining and promoting regional peace, security, stability, and prosperity, as well as the commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law. The Meeting stressed the need to maintain constructive dialogue and cooperation among ARF Participants on political and security issues of common interest and concern to address and reduce threats to regional peace and security.

7. The Meeting reaffirmed, through its inclusive and consensus-based process, that the ARF has contributed remarkably to developing a rules-based regional security architecture with ASEAN at the centre that upholds international law and fostered an environment conducive to peace and prosperity in the region.

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

8. The Meeting deliberated on cooperation and joint efforts to address various traditional and non-traditional regional issues. The Meeting commended the region's continued commitment to addressing the complex challenges posed by terrorism, violent extremism conducive to terrorism (VECT), and transnational organised crime, including through cross sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation in border management and combating terrorism, trafficking in persons, and illicit drugs. In this connection, the Meeting was encouraged by the efforts of all ARF Participants in supporting the implementation and updating of the ARF Work Plan on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime 2023-2025 and the active participation in the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC). 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 countering terrorism, VECT and radicalisation and the ADMM-Plus endeavours toward sharing experiences and best practices, as feasible, and enhancing capacity through relevant capacity-building initiatives.
9. The Meeting recognised the increasing importance of security of and in the use of ICTs to economic growth and addressing the challenges arising from the rapidly changing ICT environment. In this regard, the Meeting welcomed and encouraged new initiatives undertaken to further promote confidence building measures and trust 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 underlined the need to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation in ensuring ICTs security, given its cross-sectoral nature. The Meeting took note of the work of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security which focuses on forging a common understanding and confidence-building.
10. The Meeting exchanged views on various challenges relating to maritime domain, and shared concern over piracy, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, the degradation of marine eco system and biodiversity caused by the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine debris and marine pollution. The Meeting, therefore, noted the progress of various maritime cooperation through raising public awareness, practical engagements, and continued constructive dialogue, and stressed the importance of coordination among various frameworks in addressing maritime challenges under the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS) and other ASEAN and ASEAN-led frameworks such as the ASEAN Maritime Forum (AMF), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), the ADMM, the ADMM Plus, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC), as well as other similar arrangements such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships (ReCAAP).
11. The Meeting noted the need to further strengthen cooperation on disaster management particularly in areas of early warning and preparedness, 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 anticipatory actions, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief 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).

12. The Meeting noted the concerns raised by some participants over the declining commitment and cooperation in global non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament mechanisms, and called on countries, especially Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), to maintain and fully implement their commitments under these mechanisms. The Meeting reiterated the importance of strengthening international and regional cooperative efforts in nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and chemical, biological and nuclear technology, as well as advancing the ultimate goal of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the prevention of their proliferation. 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.
13. The Meeting called on the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to fulfil their obligations in advancing nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to recognise the need to completely eliminate nuclear weapons, which remains the only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances. The Meeting reiterated the commitment to preserving the Southeast Asian region as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) and free of all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty and stressed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty.
14. The Meeting discussed the situation in the South China Sea, during which concerns were expressed by some Ministers, on the land reclamations, activities in the area, including actions that put the safety of all persons at risk, 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. The Meeting further reaffirmed the need to 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 self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.
15. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, and prosperity. The Meeting underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety. The Meeting was pleased with the progress achieved so far in the ongoing negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), notably the commencement of the third reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) and encouraged continued positive momentum in this regard. The Meeting looked forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive COC that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

16. The Meeting discussed the developments in Myanmar during which deep concern were expressed over the escalation of conflicts and humanitarian situation. The Meeting reaffirmed support for the ASEAN Leaders' Five-Point Consensus (5PC) which remains the main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar. The Meeting also reaffirmed the relevant Leaders' decisions. The Meeting condemned the continued acts of violence against civilians and public facilities and called for immediate cessation. The Meeting urged all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt indiscriminate violence, denounce any escalation, exercise utmost restraint, ensure the protection and safety of all civilians and create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogue.
17. The Meeting welcomed the progress of the provision of ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance under Phase 1 (Life-Saving/COVID-19 response) and Phase 2 (Life-Sustaining) by the AHA Centre in coordination with Myanmar to implement Point 4 of the ASEAN Leaders' 5PC. The Meeting noted that as of 10 July 2024, the total distributed value under the Phase 2 response is around USD 1.88 million through the provision of food (rice and food packages composed of rice, pulses, oil, salt) and non-food items (family kits and personal hygiene kits) reaching the affected populations in Sagaing Region, Magway Region, southern Shan State and Mon State. In this regard, the Meeting commended the AHA Centre for its continuous efforts in delivering ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar, and welcomed Thailand's humanitarian initiative, which are in line with the 5PC and coordinated with the ASEAN Chair through the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar. The Meeting appreciated the contributions by ASEAN Member States, external partners, and the private sector, and called for all relevant parties in Myanmar to ensure the safe and transparent delivery of humanitarian assistance, to the people in Myanmar without discrimination, towards the more effective implementation of Point 4 of the 5PC. The Meeting called for scaled-up additional financial support from the international community for humanitarian assistance, including to ensure the safety and livelihood of internally displaced persons (IDPs).
18. The Meeting commended the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar for efforts made to promote progress in the implementation of the 5PC in its entirety. The Meeting welcomed his efforts to continue reaching out to parties concerned in a sustainable manner, and to help the people of Myanmar to achieve an inclusive and durable peaceful resolution that is Myanmar-owned and -led for peace, security and stability in the region.
19. The Meeting expressed concern over the recent developments in the Korean Peninsula and stressed the importance of continued peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties in order to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. Many Ministers expressed grave concern over the recent surge in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) intercontinental ballistic missile testing and ballistic missile launches and the increased tension in the Korean Peninsula, which are a worrisome development that threatens peace and stability in the region. Many Ministers called on the DPRK to comply fully with all relevant UNSC Resolutions and called for peaceful dialogue among the concerned parties, and continue working towards the realisation of lasting peace, and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. Many Ministers called for the full implementation of all relevant UNSC Resolutions and noted international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. Diplomatic efforts, including the creation of a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties should remain a priority. The Meeting reiterated our readiness to play a constructive role, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms such as the ARF in promoting a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue amongst the concerned parties. Some Ministers also emphasised the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions and detainees issues.

20. With regard to Ukraine, as for all nations, the Meeting continued to reaffirm our respect for sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity. The Meeting reiterated our call for compliance with the UN Charter and international law. The Meeting underlined the importance of reaching a just and lasting peace based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter in all their entirety and an immediate cessation of hostilities and the creation of enabling environment for peaceful resolution. The Meeting supported the efforts of the UN Secretary-General in the search for peaceful solution. The Meeting also called for the facilitation of rapid, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those in need, and for the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and persons in vulnerable situations. Some Ministers also took note of views expressed on the recent developments and the need to address the root causes.

21. The Meeting expressed grave concern over the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has been exacerbated following the 7 October attacks. The Meeting condemned all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, which have resulted in the alarming number of casualties, particularly women and children, and deterioration of the humanitarian crisis, and called for more to be done to facilitate access to food, water, and other basic needs in Gaza. The Meeting urged all relevant parties to accept the ceasefire proposal as outlined in paragraph 2 of UN Security Council Resolution 2735. The Meeting called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, including 23 ASEAN nationals, women, children, the sick and the elderly. The Meeting underscored the importance of release from any arbitrary detention. The Meeting commended the efforts of various ASEAN Member States and various East Asia Summit Participating Countries in providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and urged all ASEAN Member States and external partners to continue providing and facilitating such assistance for Gaza. The Meeting supported the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the execution of its mandate and the UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza to discharge her task effectively and efficiently, and to begin the work on post-conflict reconstruction as well as the work of other international aid organizations. The Meeting called for rapid, safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to all those in need, including through increased capacity at border crossings, including by sea. The Meeting called on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The Meeting urged all parties concerned to work towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict with a view to realising the two-State solution in accordance with international law and the relevant UNSC and UNGA resolutions. The Meeting took note, and some Ministers underlined the importance of the order on provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 26 January 2024. The Meeting acknowledged the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ on 19 July 2024. In this context, the Meeting reaffirmed the importance of upholding international law. The Meeting expressed great concern over the escalation of tension in the Middle East and called on all parties concerned to exercise self-restraint, avoid acts that may aggravate the situation, and resolve differences through diplomacy and dialogue in the interest of maintaining peace and stability in the region.

#### **REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES OF THE CURRENT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2023-2024)**

22. The Meeting expressed satisfaction with the success of the following ARF meetings and activities held in the Inter-Sessional Year 2023-2024:

- (a) 25th ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutions Meeting (HDUCIM) held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 1-3 August 2023;
- (b) 5th ARF Workshop on Implementing UNCLOS and other International Instruments to Address Emerging Maritime Issues held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, on 9 November 2023;
- (c) 12th ARF Open-Ended Study Group on Confidence Building Measures to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs (OESG) held via videoconference on 26 February 2024;

- (d) ARF Workshop on Strengthening CBRN Counterterrorism Legal Frameworks held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 16-18 April 2024;
- (e) 22nd ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM on DR) held via videoconference on 22 April 2024;
- (f) 13th ARF OESG held in Moscow, Russia, on 23 April 2024;
- (g) 6th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ISM on ICTs Security) held in Moscow, Russia, on 24 April 2024;
- (h) ARF International Ship and Port Facility Security Code Training Series and Manual: Part Three held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on 23-25 April 2024;
- (i) 16th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons' (EEPs) Meeting held in Seoul, Republic of Korea (ROK), on 25-26 April 2024;
- (j) 15th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ISM on NPD) held in Honolulu, Hawaii, United States, on 29 April-1 May 2024;
- (k) 20th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CTTC) held in Honolulu Hawaii, United States, on 2-3 May 2024;
- (l) 15th ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISM on MS) held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 6 May 2024;
- (m) ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue (DOD) held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 8 May 2024;
- (n) ARF Inter-sessional Support Group Meeting on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ISG on CBMs and PD) held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 9 May 2024;
- (o) ARF Workshop on Countering the Use of ICTs for Criminal Purposes held in Moscow, Russia, on 23-24 May 2024;
- (p) ARF Workshop on the Protection of ICT-Enabled Critical Infrastructure held in Singapore, on 6-7 June 2024;
- (q) ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 8 June 2024;
- (r) 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 25-26 June 2024;
- (s) ARF Workshop on Detection, Response and Deterrence of CBR Incidents held in Singapore, on 26-27 June 2024; and
- (t) 21st ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) held in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, 1-3 July 2024.
- (u) ARF Workshop on Law of the Sea held via virtual conference, on 18 July 2024.

23. The Meeting commended the work of the ARF SOM chaired by Lao PDR on 8 June 2024 and the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD co-chaired by Lao PDR and New Zealand on 9 May 2024. The Meeting noted the discussions at the ARF SOM and ARF ISG on CBMs and PD.

24. The Meeting endorsed the ARF SOM's recommendations on the adoption of the ARF Work Plan on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime 2024-2026, and the ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief 2024-2027, which appear as **ANNEXES 2**, and **3** respectively.

25. The Meeting welcomed the contributions made by defence officials in the ARF process, including through exchange of views and sharing of information at the ARF DOD, co-chaired by Lao PDR and New Zealand in Vientiane on 8 May 2024 and the 21st ASPC chaired by Lao PDR in Luang Prabang on 1-3 July 2024.

26. Acknowledging the contributions of the ARF EEPs to the ARF's work, the Meeting encouraged the ARF EEPs to continue providing recommendations as deemed appropriate by their respective governments, including recommendations for the future direction of the ARF. In this regard, the Meeting noted the recommendations of the 16th ARF EEPs Meeting, which appears as **ANNEX 4**.

27. Noting that many Summary Reports of ARF meetings and activities have yet to be finalised, the Meeting requested the Co-Chairs of these meetings and activities to submit the respective final Summary Reports to the ARF Unit as the institutional memory and repository of all ARF documents by 4 October 2024.

28. The Meeting adopted the ARF Statement on Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Ferry Safety, which appears as **ANNEX 5**.

#### **PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE NEXT INTER-SESSIONAL YEAR (2024-2025)**

29. The Meeting welcomed the following Chair and Co-Chairs for the period of 2024-2025:

- (a) Malaysia as Chair of the 32nd ARF, ARF SOM and 22nd ASPC;
- (b) Malaysia and the European Union as Co-Chairs of the ARF DOD and ARF ISG on CBMs and PD;
- (c) Viet Nam, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka as Co-Chairs of the 23rd ARF ISM on DR;
- (d) The Philippines, Bangladesh, and the United States as Co-Chairs of the 21st ARF ISM on CTTC;
- (e) The Philippines, Australia and New Zealand as the Co-Chairs of the 16<sup>th</sup> ARF ISM on NPD;
- (f) Cambodia and China as the Co-Chairs of the 16th ARF ISM on MS;
- (g) The Philippines and Canada as the Co-Chairs of the 7th ARF ISM on ICTs Security, as well as the 14th and 15th ARF OESGs;
- (h) Malaysia and the ROK as Co-Chairs of the 17th ARF EEPs; and
- (i) Cambodia and Sri Lanka as the Co-Chairs of the 26th HDUCIM.

30. The Meeting reaffirmed that the 2020 Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures, Practices and Protocol is the basic guideline for the conduct of all ARF activities and initiatives, including work plans, concept papers and statements. In this respect, the Meeting reiterated the procedure that all proposals must be first discussed at the ISM/ISG level and receive endorsement of the ARF SOM.

31. The Meeting approved the List of ARF Track 1 Activities for Inter-Sessional Year 2024-2025, which appears as **ANNEX 6**. It was noted that the majority of ARF meetings and activities were convened back-to-back in the first half of the year, which affects the attendance level of some ARF Participants and limits the time for ARF Participants to consider the outcomes of these meetings. In this connection, the Meeting tasked the Co-Chairs of all ARF meetings and activities to manage the schedule of their respective meetings and ensure that the meetings are not held back-to-back. The Meeting further requested the Co-Chairs of all ARF meetings to schedule their meetings in advance of the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and the ARF SOM, to allow ample time for the consideration of its outcomes. The Meeting also requested Co-Chairs of ARF activities to utilise the second half of the year to convene workshops.

32. The Meeting welcomed the concept paper on the Compendium of Best Practices on the Implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, which appears as **ANNEX 7**. The Meeting noted that the Compendium is intended to be published in the Inter-Sessional Year 2024-2025.

33. Underlining the importance of the ARF as a platform to build confidence and share information among its Participants, the Meeting reiterated the need to ensure active, inclusive constructive, equal, full and effective participation for all ARF Participants in all ARF activities.

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

34. The Meeting reiterated the importance of the ARF HPOA II as a guiding document for the ARF in developing and implementing concrete and practical cooperation. The Meeting underlined the necessity for all ARF Participants to exert greater efforts to ensure its full and effective implementation by 2025. Towards this end, the Meeting noted that the ARF Participants are requested to provide their input to the Matrix of Implementation of the ARF HPOA II developed by the ARF Unit, for further consolidation and assessment. The Meeting further noted that the results of the assessment would be reported to the ARF ISG on CBMs and PD and ARF SOM in 2025 and would be utilised as a basis to develop a succeeding ARF Plan of Action.
35. In view of strengthening efforts to revitalise the ARF and further to the discussion at the 30th ARF's discussion in 2023 on the future direction of the ARF, the Meeting was informed that ASEAN, as the primary driving force of the ARF, is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the ARF process, including assessing the roles, achievements and challenges of the ARF. The Meeting noted that the result of ASEAN's deliberations on this matter would be shared with all non-ASEAN ARF Participants in due course.
36. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the contribution and support of the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat in assisting the ARF Chair, the Co-Chairs of ARF ISMs and other endorsed ARF activities. Taking into account the increasing work of the ARF, the Meeting reiterated support towards strengthening the ARF Unit with necessary resources and capabilities.
37. The Meeting welcomed the publication of the 2024 ARF Annual Security Outlook, which included voluntary contributions from the ARF Participants presented by the Lao PDR. Underlining the importance of the document in fostering confidence building and transparency as well as facilitating exchange of views and mutual understanding among the ARF Participants, the Meeting encouraged all the ARF Participants to contribute actively to future editions.
38. The Meeting reaffirmed the commitment to maintain the ARF as an effective and relevant forum for constructive political security dialogue, consultation and cooperation in the region on political and security issues of common interest and concern, and reiterated their support for ASEAN unity and Centrality in this process. The Meeting further reaffirmed the commitment to exert greater efforts in advancing the ARF process forward, whilst underlining the need to continue moving at a pace comfortable to all and on the basis of consensus, with ASEAN as the primary driving force.