

2025 JOINT STATEMENT BY THE ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS ON COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR

Adopted in Penang, Malaysia on 26 February 2025

1. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Retreat (hereinafter referred to as "ADMM Retreat") was convened in Penang, Malaysia, on 26 February 2025;
2. **RECOGNISING** the complexity of non-traditional security challenges and the proactive role that ASEAN defence establishments can assume as part of a unified approach to effectively address these challenges;
3. **COMMENDING** the positive and robust collaboration among ASEAN Member States and our external partners, including the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Groups (ADMM-Plus EWGs), in addressing existing and emerging non-traditional security challenges;
4. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the development of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Strategic Plan, which aim to enhance ASEAN cooperation in responding to emerging challenges posed by the misuse and exploitation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and artificial intelligence (AI);
5. **WELCOMING** the recent development of AI in ASEAN, such as the launch of the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics, and the establishment of the ASEAN Working Group on AI Governance (WGAI) as well as the ASEAN Responsible AI Roadmap that will complement and enhance responsible ASEAN AI Governance;
6. **NOTING** the Pact for the Future which among other things highlighted the need to continue to assess the existing and potential risks associated with the military applications of AI and the possible opportunities throughout their life cycle, and the Resolution 79/239 entitled "AI in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security" adopted in the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly;
7. **MINDFUL** that AI has been increasingly integrated into a broad array of applications in the defence sector, which both offer potential opportunities and benefits such as increasing precision and accuracy, as well as challenges and risks such as an arms race, miscalculation, overdependence and lowering the threshold for conflict;
8. **UNDERSCORING** our common interest in harnessing the substantial potential of AI in the defence sector while simultaneously mitigating its associated risks, and the need to further assess the possible impacts of AI applications on international security and stability, non-proliferation and disarmament efforts, as well as ASEAN Community building efforts;
9. **REAFFIRMING** the significant potential and transformative role of AI as a major catalyst for technological advancement and innovation in the defence sector;
10. **RECOGNISING** the need to implement appropriate safeguards, including measures that relate to human judgement and control over the use of force, to ensure the responsible application of AI in the military domain/defence sector consistent with their respective obligations under applicable international law;

11. **NOTING** that AI is being incorporated in military applications in the defence establishments of ASEAN Member States;
12. **REALISING** the necessity of bridging the existing digital and AI gaps among ASEAN Member States by enhancing regional cooperation and strengthening capacity-building in the field of AI in the defence sector; and
13. **EMPHASISING** the importance of fostering a deeper understanding and awareness of the implications of AI in the defence sector, including through information exchange and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned among ASEAN Member States and external partners.

WE HEREBY COMMIT TO:

1. **PROMOTE** the accountable and responsible use of AI in the defence sector and ensuring that accountability and responsibility can never be transferred to machines, consistent with international law, including international humanitarian law, ASEAN relevant instruments, ethical guidelines, governance approaches, and frameworks related to the application of AI in the defence sector;
2. **PROMOTE** cooperation and collaborative initiatives aimed at enhancing the technological capabilities of ASEAN defence establishment to foster inclusivity in the advancement of AI and progressively bridge the existing disparities in AI among ASEAN Member States, such as by exchanging best practices and lessons learned, knowledge-sharing activities, transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, technical assistance, sustainable learning, training and joint research;
3. **DEVELOP** cooperation in the field of AI in the defence sector in order to strengthen and build our collective AI knowledge and capacity, including under the ASEAN Cyber Defence Network, ADMM Cybersecurity and Information Centre of Excellence and the ADMM-Plus EWG on Cyber Security; and
4. **ENCOURAGE** ADMM-Plus EWGs to incorporate AI into their works and discussions, where appropriate, to coordinate efforts in leveraging the advantages of AI while proactively addressing its risks and implications.

ADOPTED in Penang, Malaysia, on the Twenty-Sixth Day of February in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Five.